SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES IN FRANCE:
NEW PERSPECTIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

Current second language programmes in elementary school in France that aim at providing instruction in regional, foreign European or immigrant languages are critically examined, not separately, as it has been done up to now, but all together and in a broader context. The historical development leading to the dominance of French, but also to the demand for instruction in other languages, is presented to explain the existence and objectives of the various programmes. The concept of language needs, often used but seldom defined, is discussed briefly, and the arguments for early language instruction are reviewed. The chronology, successes and failures of the various foreign language programmes or experiments, in particular the most recent one, are investigated using official documents and results of evaluations. The analysis reveals shortcomings in organization and teachers' training and the necessity of improving teaching methods to meet the challenges of instruction in a variety of languages at a high level of quality. For the latter purpose, methods that have been successful in other contexts are reviewed, in particular the immersion method and the self-learning method used in Canada, and the methods of the so-called European Schools. The conclusions are as follows. In order to respond to the demands of the public and the pressure of the international economic and political situation, French schools should be able to produce at least bilingual citizens. To this end, it is highly desirable to start foreign language instruction as early as possible. It should start at the beginning of elementary school for all children in France, and every child should continue to learn the language it has had in elementary school in secondary school. Instruction in elementary school should focus on comprehension, but after secondary school the students should be able to speak at least one foreign language. To make the instruction more efficient, a more flexible method that incorporates ideas from immersion and self-learning is proposed. Moreover, to improve organizational aspects, it is proposed that parents get the opportunity to control the programme more strictly. Eventually, these programmes should evolve after the model of the European School, which has proven very successful.
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INTRODUCTION

i. General setting: the linguistic situation of Europe

With the evolution of the European Community¹ (EC) toward economic, monetary and political unity,² the question of language has acquired primary importance: not only does the Community include nine different national languages,³ but regional languages in each member country play an important role. Further, the large number of immigrants from non-EC-countries has made it necessary to consider their languages of origin.

The Council of Europe,⁴ a parliamentary organization founded in 1949 with broad responsibilities in the economic, social, cultural and judicial domains, has issued several directives about language. On November 16, 1981, the parliament of the Council of Europe voted for a 'Charter of rights of ethnic minorities' (Lapierre, 1988) for both immigrant and resident ethnic minorities.

Already in 1977, the European Council, one of the institutions of the European Community,⁵ issued a precise directive on the education of migrant workers in Europe.

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¹ Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal.
² The European Community (European Common Market) was created in 1958 by the Rome treaty. In 1986, a treaty was signed to create a unified internal market for 1993. The final stage of unification (mainly in the monetary domain and foreign politics) is stipulated in the Maastricht treaty, which, if ratified by all members, will come into effect in 1997.
³ English, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Danish, Greek.
⁴ All the democracies of Western Europe (21) are members, except for Finland and micro-states like Monaco, the Vatican and San Marino.
⁵ The institutions of the European Community are: the European Parliament (directly elected), the European Council (a reunion of the ministers of each member country, changing according to the subject treated: foreign ministers, ministers of economy, ministers of education, etc.), the European Commission (whose role it is to protect the treaty and examine possible amendments) and the European Court of Justice. In contrast to the Council of Europe, the institutions of the European Community have real decisive powers, that will increase after the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty in 1997.
That directive required host countries to promote the teaching of mother tongues (Council of the European Community, 1977). Another declaration of the Council of the European Ministers of Education (1983) acknowledged migrant workers' right to maintain their own cultures and to offer their children an education in their parental languages. Host countries were asked to "integrate in a dynamic way the cultural contributions of migrants ... with the aim of achieving an intercultural dimension of education" (European Ministers of Education, 1986:5).

The protection of linguistic minorities has been extended to regional minorities and their languages in a 'Charter of the regional languages and cultures' adopted by the European Community.

Finally, a new official EC language programme (LINGUA⁶) aims at the promotion of foreign language education. Its goal for the near future is to ensure that all Europeans have the opportunity "to acquire an adequate knowledge of two Community languages during their period of schooling and professional training" (Commission of the European Communities, 1991).

In addition to these European projects, every member country has its own programmes for language education intended to satisfy particular demands in that country. The national laws and directives together with the European recommendations present a strong challenge to the educational system. It is not yet clear how these various ideas and proposals can be coordinated and implemented in schools. The French case shows how many impediments lie in the way of a national implementation of those European projects.

ii. Special problem: the example of France

In this thesis, the situation and the possibilities of language instruction in France will be examined in detail. The complexity of the French linguistic 'landscape' can be outlined as follows. There are seven regional language minorities: Breton, Basque, Catalan, Occitan, Corsican, Alsatian (a dialect of German) and Flemish. The dominant non-European immigrant minority is the North African community, most of which speaks

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Arabic or dialects thereof as a native tongue. The French government has passed several laws about the teaching of regional and immigrant languages ('langues d'origine') which have been implemented with varying success. Also, European languages have traditionally been taught at secondary school level (mainly English, German, Spanish and Italian); and a few other languages which do not belong to the European community, for example, Russian and Japanese, are offered at school.

Not only is the linguistic situation complex, but national and international politics and economics, the social structure, the historical past and the cultural practices all work together and make the definition and implementation of any linguistic policy in France particularly difficult.

iii. Research question

The growing self-consciousness of minorities, political and popular interest in a united Europe, and economic necessity leave the French school system with a considerable educational task. Its provision of second/foreign language instruction must satisfy the demands of immigrant minorities, regional minorities, and the French majority. I propose to analyze the programmes currently offered in elementary school for foreign languages, regional languages and immigrant languages in order to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent does the French elementary school system already fulfil the task defined above?

2. How could elementary school second language education reach the desired level?

My research concentrates on elementary school because, as I will argue, it is educationally better for children to learn additional languages as early as possible (see chapter 2.2), and also because an analysis of the entire school system would be beyond the scope of one thesis.
iv. Significance of the study

An accurate description of the situation in all its linguistic aspects, bringing out relations between them, would be useful to anyone responsible for planning a language curriculum that can respond to current demands. Studies of language education in France have sofar dealt only with parts of the problem, taking into account either national, regional, or immigrant languages, or at most a combination of two of those elements. But all three should be incorporated into the design of a comprehensive school programme, and any study of only a subset of the requirements is incomplete.

Besides the importance of such an analysis for French education, its significance increases in a global situation where the exigencies of international communication as well as the demands of national minorities put pressure on public education in almost all countries.

v. Methodology

My thesis does not present a primarily quantitative or 'experimental' analysis of the situation, for several reasons. The difficulty of carrying out such a study in a country so distant is obvious. Even to do a review of the multitude of experiments that have run or are currently running in France would have been difficult. A too-restricted choice would have biased the results or would have produced few significant results. But the most important reason is that critical analysis of a situation is often undervalued. In the present case, the diversity of methods and experiments calls for an analysis.

The introduction will set the framework for the study, describing the general linguistic situation in Europe and especially France. The first chapter will present an historical overview of the developments that have led to the present linguistic situation.

I turn then to present and discuss the three main linguistic issues (foreign, regional and immigrant languages) that appear in the central research question. My sources include the official texts of laws, decrees, directives, and declarations issued by the French government. A discussion of the role public schools in France play for each language follows. The new language teaching programme Enseignement d'une langue
vivante étrangère à l'école élémentaire is presented and discussed in details as it suggests the likely future development of language instruction.

This will lead to an examination of alternative language teaching models used elsewhere for their possible application to the French situation. Finally, I will attempt to formulate a programme that might fulfill France's linguistic goals.

vi. Languages in Europe

Describing the language situation in Europe, Denison (1982) uses the metaphor of a 'linguistic ecology.' He sees languages as organisms that constantly interact and compete with each other for a "geographical, social and functional Leibensraum" (Denison, 1982:6). Not only do languages change and evolve, but later generations of a people may adopt different languages, thus shifting social weight from one language to another. The languages in his ecology are ordered hierarchically because some of them have more 'power' than others. They derive their power from the economic or political importance of the countries in which they are spoken, as well as from the sheer number of people who speak them. The speakers at the top of the hierarchy - those having a 'powerful' language as their first - do not need to know as many additional languages as the speakers at the bottom of the hierarchy. Thus, powerful languages are spoken much more - as first and as second languages - than 'weaker' languages, and therefore tend to supplant them.

A truly Darwinian view would have it that the stronger survive and the weaker disappear. However, Denison argues in an environmentalist mode that the variety of the species has to be protected in order to maintain a viable and stable environment. To achieve a certain equilibrium in which all levels of the hierarchy can survive, every speaker has to be bi- or multilingual. Languages low in the hierarchy should vigorously defend their Leibensraum and will need material and moral support.

In order to understand such an ecology and to see what kind of equilibrium one can obtain, a clear understanding of the situation is necessary.
National languages

With the formation of the European Community, problems that go beyond ‘simple’ international communication have arisen. The supranational administration of the EC must function multilingually. Countries have to communicate in various fields: economy, culture and politics. As Coulmas puts it: "Die Hauptaufgabe der Institutionen der EG besteht praktisch darin, zu kommunizieren" (Coulmas, 1991:25).

The final goal of the Community is some kind of federation, and through the Schengen agreements of 1991, the Maastricht discussions of this year, and the ‘Great Market’ that began operating on January 1, 1993, this goal is closer than ever before. But such a construction demands much from its participants, not only in national economics and politics, but above in individuals’ mentalities and languages. Getting away from traditional rivalries and looking beyond their ethnic and national identities, the French, Germans, Italians, Dutch, and others have to get used to thinking of themselves as Europeans. This means they must come to know their European neighbours, and to communicate with them by trying to speak their languages. Much has been done since the Second World War, but much remains to be done.

Van Deth (1991), reflecting on the political aspects of a multilingual Europe, points out that the European Community does not want to become a ‘United States of Europe’ after the American model, because the different nations do not want to abandon their identity and language in a unification. It should rather evolve into a ‘United Nations of Europe’, because people want to become something more, without giving up what they are. He writes that English, because of its global importance, has become a language of communication in Europe as well, mainly in the economic sector. But politics and historic development show there will be no unilingual Europe. If that is true, language instruction in the schools should be intensified in order to achieve the directives of the European Council and to assure the development of a truly multilingual Europe.

Several studies in the 1991 yearbook of European sociolinguistics Sociolinguistica (Coulmas, 1991; Gehnen, 1991; Haselhuber, 1991) back this opinion. Coulmas presents the official linguistic situation of the most important EC organs: the European commission, the Council, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. They all

7. The main task of the institutions of the European Community is, in fact, to communicate.
employ citizens of all the member nations. Officially, all nine languages are working languages, but because French has been the main language since the beginnings of the EC (Great Britain did not belong to it in 1957), it is very often used for official communications. German used to be the second language, but since Great Britain and Ireland joined the EC in 1973, English has become very important. Coulmas notes that, for organizational and financial reasons, it is almost impossible to use all the languages on an equal footing, as official directives would require. The speakers of 'smaller' languages (Danish, Dutch, Portuguese, and so on) have a tradition of multilingualism and easily communicate in other languages. But Germany has urged the EC to reinstate German as an official communication language alongside English and French. With the probable joining of Austria to the EC in 1995, and perhaps of Switzerland and some East European countries at the turn of the century, the importance of German will certainly be enhanced.

Gehnen (1991) has investigated the use of working languages in the EC Commission. She sent questionnaires to the 23 General Directorates that constitute the Commission, asking for their language use. Her information led her to conclude that French is still the most important language for communication in the administration, although English has made progress in recent years. The theoretical multilingualism of the Commission is seldom evidenced in practice. Small languages are used only orally, to assure quick and clear communication. In written communication, French dominates. The limitations of Gehnen's study (as pointed out by herself) are that she had to rely on voluntary participation and could not include direct observation, making it difficult to verify the actual use of the languages. However, the information given shows the administration's official position on language policy.

Haselhuber (1991), on the other hand, studied the actual use of the different languages in the EC Commission. He asked young people who were doing their vocational training in the Commission about their language habits in their daily work. Again it appears that although French still is the most important language of communication within the institutions, English is on the verge of taking this place as a younger generation enters the Commission. German still is at third place but much further back. The observation of Coulmas (1991) that speakers of 'small' languages are much more flexible and can use more languages fluently than can speakers of more 'powerful' languages is confirmed. Indeed, observations abound about the fact that speakers of those 'powerful' languages
have less necessity, and therefore less motivation, to learn another language, whereas speakers of 'small' languages have a different attitude towards their own language as well as towards foreign languages. Another interesting point of the study is the importance of the hierarchical factor: in a given administration, the language of the head of the department is mostly used in daily communication. French, English or German are used when dealing with other parts of the administration, depending on the preferences of the latter. For official multilateral communication, English, French or German must be used, though another language will be used if the communication occurs with a given country. Although the study has been made in a very restricted context and with individuals who are not necessarily representative of the whole European population, it nevertheless shows certain tendencies which seem to grow stronger in general European communication between individuals and groups.

At the European level, despite officially multilingualism, the languages of administration and of industry and commerce are English, French and German. But the importance of the 'small' languages should not be underestimated, as they are almost always used in bilateral communication. Hence, every national language of the EC keeps its role, even though English and French clearly dominate in multilateral communication. The importance of German will probably increase with the joining of countries where German is either a national language (Austria, Switzerland) or traditionally used as a vehicular language (many East European countries).

This situation gives a strong argument in favour of a school language instruction that offers at least two foreign languages: one of the 'powerful' languages (in France, that would be English or German) as the first foreign language and a minimum requirement for all and one of the 'small' languages (that is either a minority language, or a language spoken as a national language from only a relatively small number of people - Danish, Dutch, Portuguese...) as the second foreign language, whereas the importance of those should not be underestimated.

Regional languages

Within as well as across national borders, the existence of linguistic minorities has always been an educational and, of course, political issue. From quiet cultural movements
to violent separatist terrorism, these minorities have claimed their right to differ from the national unity.

Although France had probably more inhabitants who spoke another language than French itself until the 19th century, the Revolution and its ideology of the 'one and indivisible' Republic started a policy of repression of regional languages. The spread of free and obligatory schooling (with French as the school language) towards the end of the 19th century accelerated their regression. They were increasingly regarded as 'dialects,' 'bad French,' and became a symbol of ridiculousness and backwardness. Various movements tried to return those languages to the status they deserved. The strongest ones took place during the 1960s and 1970s.

Vermes's comprehensive study (1988) states the situation of Alsatian, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Flemish, Franco-Provençal and Occitan. Franco-Provençal is not standardized and breaks down into a multitude of different dialects that cannot be taught; it has essentially disappeared. Flemish, a Dutch dialect, is spoken in a very small part of northern France and is related to the Dutch part of Belgium. Some schools offer Flemish. Breton and Occitan exist only in France. Both may be taught at school (elementary and secondary) since a 1951 law allowed them in the elementary schools as an optional subject.

The situation of Alsatian, Catalan and Basque is quite different, as these languages belong to communities that extend beyond the French border and are official languages there. Alsatian, a dialect of German, has High German as written form. Children speaking Alsatian have a clear advantage when learning German; this is one reason why the language is popular, and German is introduced early at school. Basque and Catalan have experienced a revival since they became official languages in the Spanish provinces of the post-Franco era, and even more since Spain joined the EC in 1986 and the international exchanges have intensified. The economic power and consequently the linguistic importance of such cross-border regions is now playing a role at European level. Corsican has a different status, due to its isolation. It is an Italian dialect that has now been recognized as a language of its own, but the partly violent independence struggle of Corsica keeps the linguistic question in the background.
The picture that we get through Vermes's book is quite detailed but, on the other hand, the amount of detail makes it difficult to get a global view of the situation. The vitality of the different languages has not been compared, nor has their actual use in the schools, though they all have an official educational status.

More studies have been done on other European regional minorities (there are around 40 in all of Europe) and their language instruction. For example, there are quite a few studies on Welsh and Gaelic in Great Britain and Ireland, on Danish and Frisian in Germany and the Netherlands, on Swedish in Finland and so on. But France seems to have more difficulties in dealing with its linguistic minorities. The reasons for this are mainly historical and political: for a very long time after the Revolution had devalued the regional languages, French policy was to more or less deny their existence in order not to have to deal with them. The laws that were passed subsequently mainly seemed to aim at 'tranquilizing' the demands. Indeed, the time that passed between the publication of such a law and its implementation was much longer than even the extremely centralistic French state was used to. After the militant period of the 1970s, the linguistic movements acquired broader recognition and the issue of language became an accepted subject of discussion.

Immigrant languages

The third aspect of linguistic problems in Europe concerns immigrant minorities. Many immigrants to northern Europe came from countries now belonging to the European Community (Spain, Portugal, Italy). Their situation is ambiguous: on the one hand, they are sometimes treated as guest workers and must therefore cope with an uncomfortable social position; on the other hand, their belonging to a country of the Community gives them a favoured situation compared to immigrants from non-European countries.

Immigrants from non-European communities occupy a more difficult position. They generally come from developing countries, most of which had direct contacts with Europe during and after the colonial period. As a result, certain nationalities are concentrated in certain countries. Great Britain has important Indian and West Indian minorities; the Netherlands has an Indonesian minority; France has a North African and Black African one. Other concentrations are due instead to geographical position, like the Yugoslavian and Turkish minorities in Germany.
At some time, all the host countries have had to confront the existence on their territory of important minorities with languages and cultures different from their own. Depending on the policy of the country, linguistic recognition has varied. Germany, for example, has provided mother-tongue instruction for Turks from the outset, because the idea was these workers would stay in Germany for a very limited time and that their children should not be disadvantaged when they went back to their native country. German multicultural policy had, in fact, segregationist motives. Sweden has probably the most progressive policy. It offers mother-tongue and second-language instruction in order to give immigrants maximum freedom of choice.

Churchill (1986) offers an exhaustive case-by-case analysis of the educational policies of the OECD countries on linguistic minorities (in most cases immigrant minorities). The study shows the importance and universality of the problem. Although all countries involved have now recognized the necessity of responding to the needs of their minorities, the results of all the case studies lead to the conclusion that "linguistic and cultural minorities still have major, unsolved educational problems that will make this issue a continuing concern of policy making for many years to come" (Churchill, 1986:162).

vii. Language, culture and nation

The relation between language and nation is often presented as self-evident. Fishman notes that being "one ingredient of the holy Trinity (holy people, holy land, holy language), language has been regarded as a defining characteristic of nationality" (Fishman, 1989:274). Although it is an important cultural element, a language is not always a necessary characteristic of a nation. For example, one may speak of a Swiss culture and nation, although the Swiss speak one or more of French, German, Italian and Rheto-Romansh. At the same time, the French language community is spread over several countries and continents. Although Canadians, French and Senegalese speak the same language, nobody will seriously claim they are part of the same nation, or even the same culture.

8. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, Yugoslavia.
Although language has early been used as a sign of community and identity, it became a symbol of the nation only during the last two centuries, when the concept of nation itself developed. Before that, language had a more instrumental function, and changes and shifts were not considered as endangering the national identity but rather seen as a natural process. This is still so in various degrees in many societies, for example in Africa. The French revolution particularly tightened the relationship between language and nation and almost equated the two concepts. Indeed, language, as a central part of daily life, was easier to convey to the people as a manifestation of the 'national spirit' than the abstract notions of 'nation' and 'state'.

Thus the French language became associated with the nation in the people's historical subconsciousness (see Fishman, 1989). In this association, ethnic identity became national identity through the "substitution for all the cultural attributes or features of that ethnic identity, both at the level of belief (primordial) and use (behavioural)" (Eastman, 1984:263). The social changes of the 19th century, especially those brought about by the industrial revolution, led to behavioural changes; also, the changes at the level of belief that had been incited by the revolution and its host of new ideals, were then consolidated by obligatory schooling, which spread a single linguistic and historical knowledge. A change of ethnic identity rarely takes place within a person's life as it involves changes in beliefs. The history of France shows that it is slow to take place for groups (Eastman, 1984:267).

The association of language and culture is seen as particularly important for the formation (or maintenance) of an ethnic identity. But it has been argued (for example, Eastman, 1984; Kalantzis, 1989) that language may not be the "proper vehicle for preserving ethnic identity" (Eastman, 1984:259). As language is much more versatile, it can change without interference with the much deeper individual feeling of identity. Eastman argues that

languages function communicatively in society - the structure of society determines the particular behavioural form of our language in that society. The form our linguistic knowledge takes in a speech community does not change what we believe about 'our' people. That is, language knowledge and use do not affect our underlying or primordial ethnic identity. As society changes, language use does as well. As society changes, group belief (primordial ethnicity) [...] only does so over long periods of time, although aspects of group cultural behaviour
(behavioural ethnicity including language use, dress, food, etc.) may alter greatly. (Eastman, 1984:274)

If an individual experiences a new context, either because of moving to another country, or because of changes in the society around it, its language may have to change profoundly to become adequate, along with behavioural aspects such as dress or food, but this does not have to alter the ethnicity of this individual. Therefore, "some people call the unifying process [that takes place as individuals or groups are integrated into society] assimilation" (Kalantzis, 1989:12) although it is only adaptation to "linguistic-cultural circumstances" (Kalantzis, 1989:18). For example, it is known that bilingualism does not survive without diglossia (Fishman, 1980:8). In the case of monolingual France, the bilingualism of immigrants has been shown to disappear within two to three generations. The bilingualism in the regions was able to survive longer because in some rural parts there was a situation of diglossia, where French was used for official communication and the regional language in informal speech. But such cases have more or less disappeared.

Bi- or multiculturalism undergoes the same processes unless the two sets of cultural behaviours are strongly compartmentalized (Fishman, 1980:11), as for example in an apartheid society. In most other cases, bi- or multiculturalism is "transitioned into transethnification" (Fishman, 1980:11). Such mechanisms should be understood and acknowledged in the discussion about the 'preservation' of culture, language or ethnicity.

One may argue that multilingualism is sustainable in Europe as each country represents a specific language use. But the bi- and multilingualism of the individuals can only be maintained (or created) in this context if their mobility is great, so that it can lead to the regular use of the different languages.

Although school cannot maintain bilingualism when a compartmentalization of the two languages is not given in society, it may transmit linguistic knowledge on which the individual can build to become bilingual in a sociolinguistic sense.
1. THE LANGUAGES OF FRANCE

1.1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH - HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

France's linguistic identity is based on the historical development of the languages on its territory. One cannot really grasp the problems of language teaching in France without a deeper understanding of this development. For this reason, and also to make the presentation more self-contained, I will review it in this chapter. In the limited space available, I can give only a brief overview which may not satisfy historians. The interested reader should consult the references (e.g. Brunot, 1906-1927) for a more exhaustive treatment. The reader who is familiar with all this and also the more recent developments in immigration policy can start reading in Chapter 2, looking back occasionally to refresh his memory.

1.1.1. The spread of French

All languages in France, except for Basque, have been strongly influenced by Latin. It mixed with the Celtic languages that had been spoken on this territory. Three main groups emerged: the languages of Oc, spoken in the south; the Franco-Provençal, spoken in the French Alps and north thereof; and the languages of Oil (Caput, 1972:39). Modern French descends from one of the languages of Oil, the Francien, which originally was a dialect of the region around Paris. This fact is due to political circumstances. Indeed, other dialects, like Picard or Normand, had a more elaborate literature and culture than Francien, but Francien was the dialect of the most powerful ruler. For some time, official communications were still in Latin, so that each region kept its own language. This started to change in the 16th century, due to a literary movement, la Pléiade, and an official document, l'Edit de Villers-Cotterets.
The Edict of Villers-Cotterets (August 15, 1539) was the first linguistic regulation imposed by the royalty. It ruled that all official documents, especially juridical ones, had to be written in French instead of Latin in the future. The intention behind this edict was to facilitate communication and understanding, as the majority of the French people did not understand Latin. But effectively it attacked the regional languages.

The *Pleïade* movement, especially represented by Ronsard, culminated in Du Bellay's *Défense et Illustration de la Langue Française* (1549) and led to the recognition of French as a literary language, in other words, a language of culture (Gordon, 1978:23).

Although the Ancien Régime made little effort to unify its territory, rather leaving to each province its own rights and privileges, France became politically and economically increasingly integrated. Once the provincial elites had been "won over to loyalty to Paris" (Gordon, 1978:97), they adopted the French language, and consequently the regional languages lost their former role as transmitters of cultural ideas. Those who could read, read French; thus, the person who wanted to be read had to write in French. Those who spoke only a regional language in their great majority could not read, let alone write. Those languages became more and more limited to the very concrete affairs of everyday life.

**1.1.2. The 'universality' of French**

In the 18th century, French became the 'universal' language of Europe, in the sense that it spread throughout Europe and served as the intellectual link of cosmopolitan European society, and that it established itself firmly in fields that had been dominated by Latin before (sciences, literature, philosophy, etc.), and in social classes it had up to then touched only slightly (rural nobility, bourgeoisie, traders) (Caput, 1972:60). A key reason for this was the clarity of the French language. The French policy of the 17th century, especially under the influence of Malherbe, had been to develop two qualities of

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9. The term *regional languages* will be used for the languages other than French that were used on the French territory. They encompass the different varieties we will call *dialects*. Thus regional languages are: Breton, Basque, Flemish, Alsatian-German, Corse, Occitan, Catalan. Dialects are, for example, the different variations of Occitan (Provençal, Gascon, Béarnais, etc.) or of Corse (Cismonte, Pumonte).

10. Ancien Régime: the monarchist system that ruled France until the Revolution.
the language: *clarity* and *precision*. The archaisms of the 16th century had then been expurgated from the language and the grammar had been standardized. The Académie Française had been created as "a piece of governmental machinery to legislate for language as other bodies legislated on matters economic or juridical" (Holmes, 1967:86). Indeed, many countries envied the norm French had been able to attain in its language and many philosophers, scientists and authors wrote in French. This evolution of course reassured the French-speaking elite of the special worth and superiority of their language - in the words of Rivarol: "ce qui n'est pas clair n'est pas français" (Holmes, 1967:108). Not only did the regional languages lose their last cultural significance against the strongly normed French, but the other European languages, which the French elite had used relatively often until then, also lost their utility: everybody of some culture spoke French.

But still, French was the language only of the elite; the masses spoke their own languages. It is estimated that, under the reign of Louis XIV, only 2 million of France's 20 million inhabitants were literate and only 200,000 participated in the cultural life of France (Gordon, 1978:27). As the masses did not have a role in the cultural and political life of the country, their education was of no interest to the leading classes. "Political unification satisfied the monarchy. Linguistic unity was a matter of little or no concern" (Holmes, 1967:110).

### 1.1.3. The changes of the Revolution

This opinion was to change with the Revolution. In the new ideology, language was an integral part of nationality. Language questions were not side-issues any more, but became a state affair (Brunot, 1927:2). They were linked to the concept of nation which was created to replace, on the one side, the figure of the king, and, on the other side, the structure of the church (Lefebvre, 1988). The idea of a nation was capable of stabilizing the state only if it was regarded as an entity and if differences were denied. A French citizen was from then on only French, and he spoke French. The *République une et indivisible* was born (Loughlin, 1985). As the French language was one of the most important symbols of the nation, the speakers of other languages became suspects. This change of attitude is particularly strongly visible in the infamous speech of Barère, from January 27, 1794 (8 Pluviose, An II) in front of the Comité de Salut Public:
He was referring to the priests, who in Brittany used Breton to teach against the Revolution; to the linguistic affinity of Alsace for Prussia and Austria, which was seen as a possible political affinity; to Corsica, where the counter-revolutionary Paoli rallied autonomists against the Parisian government; and to the courage, fierce pride and spirit of independence of the Basque people, which was well-known.

It was then decided that within ten days, teachers should be sent to all the départements¹¹ the languages of which had been listed by Barère. Of course, there were neither enough teachers to be sent, nor was there enough money to pay them. A law from 1792 about the state schools, where children should learn how to speak, read and write the French language, had failed for the same reasons. Because the dismantling of the church had also ruined the school system it had established, the school situation was worse than ever at the end of the Revolution. But French continued to spread, being at that time the only means of communication between people of different regions. Also, the state was much more present in the daily matters of its citizens than it had been before, and they had to speak French when dealing with the state.

1.1.4. The Ferry laws

The Third Republic was able to harvest the fruits of the Revolution: the territorial unity was then well established, as was the administrative and the juridical one.

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¹¹ The département is the administrative unit of the territory that had been created by the Revolution to replace the old historic provinces.
The idea of nationhood was also not questioned any more, so the government was able to put its efforts towards the cultural and linguistic unity (Burguière, 1989), which had not been achieved. In 1863, 8,381 of 37,510 communes\textsuperscript{12} were not French-speaking; as well, more than half of the communes in 24 of the 89 départements were not, and in six others, a significant proportion of the communes were in the same position (Weber, 1976:67). The actual numbers may well have been higher than these official ones as the government was rather inclined to embellish the situation.

Another government report from 1864 says that at that time there were around a thousand communes without an elementary school, that 3/5 of the children between 8 and 11 did not go to any school, that 28% of the male population and 44% of the female was illiterate (Lawton, 1909). Here as well, the numbers may actually have been worse. Even the existence of an elementary school did not imply ‘instruction’ in the sense we usually mean now. Many schools were again managed by the church which "put first things first" (Weber, 1976:304) and, at least at the primary level, taught almost exclusively catechism and parts of the Latin service. Also, no proof of competence was required for a teacher, who therefore - especially in the country - could be "a retired soldier, a rural constable, the local barber, innkeeper, or grocer, or simply a half-educated peasant's son" (Weber, 1976:305). Furthermore, the teacher was poorly paid, and often had another job, which would be his priority. Finally, country children who went to school mostly did this only during spring and autumn. During summer they had to do farm work, and during winter the poor condition of the roads prevented the ones who lived farther away from coming to school.

Prime Minister Jules Ferry (1880-81 and 1883-85) not only recognized the urgency of the problem, but was able to impose laws for a free (1881), obligatory (1882) and secular (1886) school, a project that had until then been blocked by the mighty influence of the clergy and the conservatives. And indeed, the secularized state school put an end to the local domination of church and notables, and thus strengthened the position of the Third Republic.

School became compulsory for children from the age of 7 until 12, and every village with more than 20 schoolchildren was required to maintain an elementary school. The basic laws were further completed in 1885 with a budget for school buildings and

\textsuperscript{12} The commune in France is the smallest territorial division, roughly equivalent to a parish.
teachers' pay, and in 1886 by an elementary teaching programme including inspection and control (Weber, 1976:309). An army of teachers, schooled in the best republican ideals, was sent all over the country. The programmes were created in Paris, as were the books and the tests. Besides reading, writing and arithmetic, the children were taught French literature, geography and history (especially French), moral and civic duty (which replaced religious instruction), common notions of law and political economy, elements of natural sciences, physics, drawing, music and gymnastics (Lawton, 1909).

The results came fast and were very impressive: in 1898, only 4.7% of the men and 7.2% of the women were still illiterate. While those statistics are difficult to verify, it is impossible to deny that the schools had brought a change. But Ferry's laws not only reduced illiteracy, they also further weakened the other languages. The teaching of French was regarded as a moral obligation towards every French citizen. Those who had learned to read and write had done so in French and had learned French history and geography. The children were not allowed to speak their native tongue at school. Various kinds of punishments were invented to humiliate the speaker of patois, and to persuade the pupils - and their parents - of the worthlessness of their language (Gendre, 1978).

Within some two generations, most cultural and linguistic particularities were erased (Charlot, 1987). School was only one factor in this; others were conscription, the generalization of books and of newspapers, the emigration of peasants to cities, the growth of the railway traffic and the development of roads, regional industry and tourism (Dauzat, 1939:264). Finally, French represented social prestige, refinement, and independence of the Church. By the end of the 19th century, the conditions for the 'victory' of French over the other languages in the territory of the Republic were ideal (Weber, 1976:89). Official campaigns only would not have been able to override the patois, as they had not done it in the past centuries.

13. As most of those statistics were compiled from the examination of the conscripts, caution is important. The percentage does not represent the population as a whole. Further, many recruits who could only sign their name and very hesitantly read would not appear as 'illiterate' in the statistics. Finally, as women did not go into the army, had little contact with the administration, and for a long time had not been sent to school at all, it is very difficult to estimate their literacy rate.

14. Especially since the Revolution, all regional languages and dialects had been called patois. This expression was meant to underline their worthlessness; it refused to accord them the (more prestigious) status of a language.
1.2. THE REGIONS OF FRANCE AND THEIR LANGUAGES

In this section, the regional languages of France will be reviewed. All of them suffered under the French language policy described above, but the particular situation of each of them led to a different development in different regions. Not only is a comparison of the regions interesting in its own right, but it is important to understand the development of the regional languages and the attitude of the inhabitants towards their region and language in order to understand the demands which have been put towards the government and the role of the regional languages in the French school system and to explain the success or the failure of their instruction in state schools.

1.2.1. Brittany

The Bretons settled in Armorique (Brittany) around the 5th and 6th centuries (or earlier, in the 3rd or 4th century, as some argue [Le Menn, 1975:71]). Their language belongs to the Celtic family. Breton is a very flexible language, rich in prefixes and suffixes, and thus allows easily the creation of neologisms. There are four major dialects (Léon, Tréguié, Cornouaille and Vannes); they do not have a standardized orthography. In 1941, a standard Breton, Peurunvan, was created and widely accepted. This facilitated a literary renewal: many foreign authors like Shakespeare, Goethe, Descartes and Nietzsche have been translated into Breton.

The industrial revolution caused an economic crisis in this agricultural region which led to a wave of emigration, which, together with the opening up of Brittany by new roads and railways which linked it to Paris brought a crisis of the Breton language. Breton movements date back to the 19th century, but they were more or less elitist and lacked a popular basis. Later autonomist movements were discredited because of their cooperation with the Vichy regime. However, after World War II Brittany did not share the economic boom of the 1950s and the economic situation led to a revival of these movements as a protest against the central government's exploitation of the region. The notion of 'internal colonies' was created. In the 1960s, a part of the movement even became violent (Loughlin, 1985).
The younger generation became aware of the distinctiveness of the culture and was eager to find again what was already almost lost. Their parents, who had been educated in the schools of Jules Ferry, had not talked to them in Breton, and even the few who still used the language did not have the same mastery of it as their grandparents; within three generations, the vocabulary, even that of everyday conversations, had been considerably reduced (Piriou, 1973:197). Thus, when younger people recommenced to learn Breton, most of them had to learn it like a foreign language. It is very interesting that people who did not have a Breton background but wanted to experience a cultural identity started learning Breton. The language stood as a central marker for the culture and the ethnicity; those who spoke it could participate in the community and thus 'belong' to it (Kuter, 1989). The great weakness of this language revival was that with few exceptions it touched only the intellectuals, hence the vitality of Breton can be questioned at present.

1.2.2. Occitania

Occitania has never been a united nation or a state (except maybe under the Roman empire as the Provincia Romana of Gaul), but it is undeniable that its community of language, culture and history have woven ties strong enough to give this region, which covers about half of present France south of the Loire, a feeling of identity and uniqueness (Institut d'Etudes Occitanes, 1979). Today, this feeling of identity mainly concentrates on the historical past and does not really build the sense of a speech community (Bratt Paulston, 1987).

The region had its days of glory during the Middle Ages, especially in the 12th century, when its refined culture was represented by the Troubadours. Their brilliant poetry reflected the social situation of the region in this age of feudalism and their description of 'courtly' love greatly influenced European literature. After the Troubadour era Occitan gradually lost its role as a literary language, and the Edict of Villers-Cotterets left almost only the spoken language alive. Further, many mothers did not teach their language to their children because it was often their only possibility to express their disapproval of the very patriarchal system that Occitan represented (Sauzet, 1988).

In the 19th century, a literary movement, the Félibrige, founded by Frédéric Mistral, the great Occitan author of the 19th century, tried to revive Occitan as a cultural
language (Martel, 1991:263), but several unfortunate key decisions, such as the choice of a graphemic system based on the French system, prevented its success. In spite of its literary value and federalist visions, the *Félibrige* stayed an intellectual movement that did not reach the 'typical' Occitan speaker in the rural parts of the region.

Another orthography, which was created later by the Institut d'Etudes Occitanes (I.E.O.), makes it possible to take the dialectal varieties into account (Giordan, 1975:98). But this norm is "so divergent from its spoken dialects that its speakers feel as alienated from the movement's Occitan as they do from French" (Bratt Paulston, 1987:46) and hence the Occitan writers lack a 'natural reader' and find themselves in the frustrating position of writing mainly for a hypothetical future reader (Balzagues, 1973:146).

The Occitan movement of the 1960s and '70s also appealed to historical glory. It evolved from a cultural movement to a political one, but apparently lacked broader popular backing, and eventually retreated towards the intellectual orientation of its origins. This evolution is quite typical of the regional movements of this period. In a study of Occitan and Catalan, Bratt Paulston comes to the conclusion that "in the absence of any national movement, a weak ethnicity and a mainly historical sense of identity are not sufficient to halt the shift to French" (1987:54). Occitan thus occupies two extremes: on the one hand, it is a language spoken mainly by a rural population that rapidly dwindles; on the other hand, it is a language read and studied by an intellectual minority (Sauvaigo, 1973:135).

1.2.3. North Catalonia

Catalonia, contrary to Occitania, has been a united and wealthy nation. It came into being in the 11th century and was a major mercantile Mediterranean nation during the 13th and 14th centuries. During the Thirty Years' War, France occupied Spanish lands north of the Pyrénées, and later the Traité des Pyrénées officially gave North Catalonia to France. Those who were anti-French emigrated to Barcelona, leaving the region with a pro-French elite. The Frenchification progressed rapidly, although it only touched the higher classes (Bernardo & Rieu, 1973:305).
The Spanish part of Catalonia has long known nationalistic movements, which culminated in 1932 in the creation of an autonomous province. Franco abolished it in 1939, repressed any separatist movements violently and forbade the use of the Catalan language. But the population of Catalonia always maintained it, as it was perceived as a symbol of its identity which was backed by a powerful self-confidence. A study done in 1979 shows "that 97% of native Catalans spoke the language and that 78% of all residents did so regardless of place of birth" (Bratt Paulston, 1987:49). Since Catalan became the official language of the Spanish independent province of Catalonia in 1979, its vitality has greatly increased.

The language Catalan is remarkably uniform. The two main dialect groups differ only slightly and are therefore easily mutually intelligible. Catalan possesses a long literary tradition, which flourished during the 13th to 15th centuries, but has also been used both for administration and law and for science and philosophy (Bratt Paulston, 1987). After intensive work which had started at the beginning of the 20th century, Catalan was completely normed in the 1930s, and those were norms accepted in all Catalan-speaking communities (Bernardo, 1975:42).

Although Catalan suffered from the French monolingual school policy as much as the other regional languages, the presence of a strong community across the border gave the language a very practical value. The French Catalanians were able to maintain both their regional identity and a positive relationship with the French state:

Les Catalans espagnols ont eu une marrête: l'Espagne. Nous, nous avons fait un mariage d'amour avec la France. (Bernardo & Rieu, 1973:323)

The Catalan courses offered in elementary schools were at first very popular, even with non-native Catalans, but the latest statistics (1991-1992) show a strong diminution in the interest (see part 2.4.2.). It is not clear why this happened.

1.2.4. French Basque country

The territories of the Basque people, whose language is the only remnant of the languages spoken in southwestern Europe before the region was romanized, were also divided up between France and Spain in the 16th century. Basque nationalism was very
active in Spain until the Franco dictatorship. The E.T.A. (Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna: Basque Homeland and Freedom), a militant movement for autonomy, was created in 1959, when peaceful resistance against Franco had been shown to bring no results (Davant, 1973). In contrast, the unification with France was relatively peaceful and well accepted by the population, because the region maintained many rights and privileges. This may be one reason for the different attitudes of the Basques towards the French and the Spanish government (Burguière, 1989).

The very traditionalist and church-dominated Basque region, rural and with many of its communities isolated in the Pyrénées mountains, has long been able to maintain its culture and language, and Basque survived as a vernacular, even though all the younger people became bilingual. Even today, for example, mass is sometimes said in Basque and in rural regions, Basque is often the language of communication within family and community.

Basque, or Euskara is a non-Indo-European language. It has several dialects, but the Académie de la Langue Basque has worked on a standard Basque (Euskara batua), and the standardized orthography has already been widely accepted. The historical literature goes back to 1545, when the first Basque book was printed.

The image and popularity of the language has strongly profited from the official status of Basque in Spain, in the autonomous province of Euskadi that was created in 1979. On the other hand, being a non-Indo-European language, Basque is difficult to learn and has only limited applicability. Also, the Basque country is geographically off-centre in Europe and is economically not very prosperous, and therefore does not have the attraction of, for example, Catalonia or Alsace.

1.2.5. Alsace

The Germanic region in the eastern parts of France covers approximately the historical region of Alsace (départements Haut-Rhin and Bas-Rhin) and parts of Lorraine (northeast of the département Moselle). One can find two main dialects: Franconian (which is also found in Saarland and Pfalz) and Alemannic (also found in Baden and Switzerland). Although those dialects and their local variations differ, they all have
German as a written language (Hug, 1975:112). Indeed, German - in its various forms of evolution - has been spoken in this region since the first century. But after Alsace first became French in 1648, French and German were alternately imposed on its population, depending on which government and nation just happened to be in charge. The population, however, has since then fought for the respect of its particular culture, which regards both its links to France and those to Germany as important. Alsatian, a German dialect without a standardized form, has never been taught at school; instead the schools use German itself.

There is a notable difference between the history of Alsatian and the other regional languages of France. After the Franco-German War (1870-1871), the province was annexed by the German empire, and it went back to France only in 1918, at the end of World War I. It therefore had not been subject to the Ferry laws like the other linguistic minority regions.

During World War II, Germany was very eager to 're-Germanize' Alsace and the use of French was forbidden on pain of imprisonment (Loughlin, 1985). After the war, the Fourth Republic suppressed the teaching of German in elementary school to help French "regain lost terrain" (Rector of Strasbourg, in Hug, 1975:116), but had to reintroduce it in 1952 under pressure from the public (Falsch, 1973). Because of the events during the German occupation (1940-1945), Alsace never developed an autonomist movement as other regions did. The demands of the regionalists were only cultural and aimed at the defense of the language.

In a 1985 study of high school pupils (Veltman, 1988), only 16.3% of the children interviewed did not at all understand Alsatian and 41.1% used it regularly (although almost exclusively boys; girls expressed a much greater preference for French). One of the most interesting conclusions of the study is that apparently the French school did not have the main influence in the language loss: the statistics show that a relatively large number of children from non-Alsatian families learned Alsatian at school (6.6%), whereas some children from Alsatian families did not speak it although they had it in school. This leads the authors to the conclusion that [le] système scolaire n'est donc pas responsable de la baisse de pratique du dialecte. Seule la volonté des parents d'en assurer ou non la transition doit être mise en cause. (Veltman, 1988:79)
Although the role of Alsatian is decreasing, that of German is ever increasing, especially because of its widespread representation in the schools and the close contacts to the neighbours across the border. It seems that a German-French bilingualism is possible in this region which has such a long tradition of bilingualism and which has become very important in Europe economically, politically and culturally.

1.2.6. Corsica

The history of Corsica is one of colonization: because of its strategic importance, it was occupied very early by Genoa, until 1768, when it was sold to France. The nationalist movements had always been very strong and the acquisition of the island by France was in fact a military occupation. Although Corsica first welcomed the Revolution, it soon rebelled against the centralist authority. The day after Napoléon took over, he put Corsica "hors de la Constitution", declared a state of siege and abolished all personal rights. This situation lasted until 1830 (Santoni, 1973). The poor economical situation of Corsica and the lack of support from the central government activated the autonomist movements of the 1960s, which became more and more violent and until now use terrorist methods to claim their independence. A poll in 1975 showed that 61% of the Corsican population approved of the actions (Loughlin, 1985). The autonomists involve themselves more in political actions than in cultural or educational activities.

Corsican is an Italian dialect, closely related to Tuscan. It was partly standardized during the 19th century. New efforts in that direction have been made since the 1970s and the creation of the University of Corte. Nevertheless, there exist numerous dialects, belonging to three main variations (south, west and north, and east), although a standard orthography has been agreed upon (Thiers, 1988). Surveys claim that many Corsicans speak Corsican, but as it is often seen as traitorous not to speak it, one does not really know how accurately these surveys reflect reality (Thiers, 1988). Indeed, the French school has brought about much more changes than the military oppression. In a series of interviews with Corsicans, Dalbera-Stefanaggi (1991:170) has found that most of those who have attended the first 'French only'-schools have a very positive picture of them.
It seems that Corsica's violent struggle for autonomy has not had a positive influence on the spreading of its language: on the one hand, detractors of this movement associate the language with the violence, and on the other hand, even politically active Corsicans use French to communicate with the French government. Since most of the efforts are put into political activism, little is done on the cultural level. The ‘reactivation’ of the language is mainly led by intellectuals and does not seem to have found a balance with the older, mother-tongue speakers yet.

1.2.7. French Flanders

Between the wars, a right-wing autonomist movement sought the unification of Flanders. This Flemish-speaking region, now divided between France, Belgium and the Netherlands, never constituted a homogeneous society, least of all the French part. The autonomist movement collaborated with the Nazis during the German occupation and was therefore greatly discredited in the population after the war (Loughlin, 1985).

French Flanders occupies a small portion of the département Nord. Linguistically, it is divided into small, mainly rural, islands isolated by French-speaking districts, but the language is closely related to the Flemish spoken in Belgium.

A study made between 1970 and 1975 (Sansen, 1988) shows that only 11% of the entire population of French Flanders is bilingual French-Flemish, and that the percentage drops to 3.9% in the population between 20 and 40 years of age, and even to zero for the part of the population aged under 20.

It therefore seems that Flemish plays a marginal role in the French territory and that the speakers are not numerous enough to assure the survival of the language, even though the presence of a Flemish-speaking community on the other side of the border might be an incentive to learn it.
1.2.8. French and the regional languages: an unequal relationship

We have seen that the initial linguistic situation in France was heterogeneous and that French developed from a dialect that was originally confined to the region of Paris. The more or less uniform dominance of French in all parts of France which we see today is not the result of a natural or inevitable development but rather of a political process. At first, French spread because it was the language of the ruler, then because it ensured social mobility and influence. Finally, French was imposed by the state through the school system, in the spirit of a battle of the Republic against ignorance, unpatriotic ideas and religious backwardness, of the clarity of French against the vagueness and diversity of the regional languages. The intervention of the state was therefore regarded as justified (Calvet, 1973). This ideology was still prevalent only some years ago and is still there today among politicians. The regional languages only gained a more positive image as an emotional reference (in opposition to French as a rational and abstract tool) and essential constitutive element of a culture when the general knowledge of French was assured and the regional languages were no more seen as an impediment to its learning or to social promotion (Martel, 1991:130). But they are considered of little practical importance.

Up to now, and notwithstanding the differences between the regional movements, regional languages still suffer from this image. If they do not have a strong, active linguistic community with an official status in another state, all measures taken to actualize them seem artificial and are not readily accepted by the population (see for example Breton and Corsican). Indeed, speakers saw all efforts made to standardize the dialects as unneeded novelties. The fact that most regional movements were, or at least originated as, literary or cultural movements, tended to cut them off from the rural speakers. All those movements show that a linguistic movement is not enough to influence the actual use of the language involved, but also the weakness of non-standardized languages. On the other hand, the languages which have the support of an external community can hardly survive with their particularities and have to adapt to the normed version (Flemish/Dutch, Alsatian/German). Further, the example of Flemish shows that an external minority alone is not enough if the number of speakers within the border is too small to assure a transmission of both language and identity.

The example of Occitan shows that a cultural identity alone cannot save a language in the context of greater economical and political pressure, and that of Catalan
shows further that a strong external linguistic community, which is also economically dynamic, is also not enough to encourage the preservation of the regional language (it would be interesting to learn more about the reasons for this). Only Alsace, which has been withdrawn from the centralist influence of France for several periods of time and which has a long-standing tradition of bilingualism, has been able to maintain a relatively high level of regional language use.

The role of the school should not be overestimated. It was an important factor in linguistic uniformization, but only at a late stage, and it alone would probably not have led to it. Conversely, school cannot revive a language that is not used any more in social communication. On the other hand, a language that is not taught or used in the educational system cannot survive very long. Therefore, the teaching of regional languages at school is an important element in the protection of the heritage, but it should not be seen as the ultimate solution for minority languages.

It does not seem that the regional languages in France have a future as communication languages (except those which can be considered modern languages, like German and maybe Catalan and Basque). Nevertheless, it is very important to offer them at school as part of the cultural heritage; although some criticize such a policy as 'cultural elitism', everyone should have the opportunity to study a language which does not necessarily have an immediate practical (mostly understood as economical) use. At the same time, a language should not and in fact cannot be kept alive by force or decree.

1.3. IMMIGRANT LANGUAGES IN FRANCE

1.3.1. Immigrants and the nation

France itself and its population are the results of a series of territorial unifications and a cultural mixture that has borrowed much from 'foreigners'. Under the Ancien Régime, foreigners were welcome for several reasons: economical ones (they increased trade and brought capital), military ones (the army always welcomed new
soldiers), and political ones (foreigners increased the population and a large population was seen as a source of power), as well as out of an interest in new knowledge and scientific curiosity (Lequin, 1988: 25). At first the Revolution welcomed enthusiastically those who supported the revolutionary ideas, but the subsequent wars and difficulties created an atmosphere of suspicion (Lequin, 1988:300).

The decline of the French birth rate, together with an increased need for workers brought about by the Industrial Revolution, led to a considerable rise in immigration in the last decades of the 19th century. Due to three immigration waves (1880-1914, 1920-1931 and the period after World War II), France became for a time the first immigration country in the world: the number of foreigners in France increased from 380 000 in 1851 to 2.7 million in 1931 (Mestiri, 1990:14). In the census of 1982, immigrants represented 6.8% of the population, the same percentage as in 1931 (Le Moigne, 1986).

The first immigration wave came from neighbouring countries: Belgium and Italy, but also Germany, Switzerland and Spain. Between 1914 and 1918, the government massively recruited workers in Italy, and after the war in Poland as well (Mestiri, 1990:11). At the beginning of the 1960s, the Italian immigration was slowly replaced by one from Spain, Algeria and Portugal; later, immigration from North Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), West Africa and Asia became dominant. The migration from North Africa had been particularly strong at the end of the Algerian war (1954-1962) when many North Africans with French citizenship came to France with their families (Wormser, 1984) and an agreement that allowed free circulation between the two countries was signed. Similar agreements were made with other countries, and in the 1960s, about 100,000 people entered France every year (Silverman, 1992:42). In 1974, the immigration was officially stopped, and since then, foreigners can only immigrate to France within the context of family reunification, authorized from 1975-1976 on and reaffirmed in 1984 (Le Moigne, 1986:63-68), or if they have refugee status. This led to a change in the repartition of the nationalities, because many of the South Europeans went back home and there was only a small demand on their part for family reunification, as most had already come with their families. On the other hand, most North Africans had come alone and were now joined by their families in their new country. In 1975, 28% of the foreign population of France consisted of Italians and Spaniards. In 1982, their number was down
to 18%; Africans (North and Black) represented 35% of the foreigners in 1975, and 43% in 1982 (Lequin, 1988:438)\(^{15}\).

The earlier immigrants in France have not been as widely accepted and readily integrated as many would like to see it today; recent work on immigration has shown that the 'easy' integration of the past waves of immigration is a myth (Silverman, 1992:81). There have always been periods of strong hostility and rejection (Mestiri, 1990:16). At the turn of the century, xenophobic reactions especially afflicted Belgians and Italians\(^{16}\); in 1925, the préfets declared after an investigation that 'Poles are not assimilable'; in the 1930s, at the height of the economic crisis, violent actions took place and the government decided on anti-foreigners measures (Mestiri, 1990:13); shortly before the Second World War, the newspapers were worried about the Armenian 'ghetto' in Marseille, arguing that those 'Orientals' could not really be integrated (Noiriel, 1991:7). Today, the North African community is often seen as 'those who will never adapt', but this image seems to shift again as the 'new strangeness' of the Black Africans becomes more visible due to the increased presence of families. An article from September 1992 in *Le Monde* declared: "The integration of the immigrants from Black Africa comes up against serious hurdles" (*Le Monde*, September 13, 1992:13).

Most of those immigrants, who were seeking financial security, social advancement, or political freedom through their emigration, were eager to integrate into the French society. Such an integration meant social mobility, often financial advantages (French speakers were given better jobs) and fewer conflicts. Indeed, the situation of those immigrants can be compared with that of the provinciaux who came to the cities in the 19th century. Each wave of new immigrants enabled the integration and social elevation of the preceding one (Lequin, 1988:372). It has been shown that the integration of national groups in the French society normally needed two to three generations (Mestiri, 1990:14-16; see also Fishman, 1984).

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15. Here it is important to note that the numbers given are only the numbers of foreigners; since the French census does not register the origin and only makes a difference between French and foreigner, it is almost impossible to count the communities of foreign origin. Many immigrants apply for and get French nationality; children born in France are automatically French. Although the number of foreigners of a certain nationality may decrease, this does not necessarily mean that this particular community is getting smaller.

16. As a particularly brutal example: in 1893, a real 'pogrom' killed several tens of Italians in Aigues-Mortes in the south of France (Noiriel, 1991:6).
Presently, the discussion around the 'problem' of immigrants and the rise of racist and xenophobic movements concentrates on the last wave of immigrants, especially those from North Africa. This racism does not dominantly emphasize biological heredity, but the insurmountability of cultural differences (Balibar, 1991a:21), especially the incompatibility of the European conception of the world and that of Islam. This view, of course, thrives on the confusion between 'Arabness' and 'Islamicism' (Balibar, 1991a:24). Although the Arab community, which consists of all the individuals whose origin goes back to any of the 22 Arab countries (Jerab, 1988:34), is the largest foreign community in France, and Islam has become the second-largest religion (three million Muslims in 1990) after Roman Catholicism, most Muslims do not see their religion the way a minority of fanatical fundamentalists may let it appear; for the younger people, Islam has become a personal and modern religion, strongly influenced by the way the French culture considers the relations between State and Church (Dagouat, 1991).

In this discussion, the opinion has been voiced that the French society has lost its past ability to assimilate foreigners. The evidence presented above does not substantiate this view: every new immigrant group initially faced rejection and could integrate with the French society only after two or more generations. Further, xenophobic reactions were particularly strong during economic crises (for example, during the 1930s). France is currently experiencing such a crisis. The demagogic strategy of some political groups is to blame a visible minority, which is not yet completely integrated into the society, for the problems. Also, most immigrants of this last wave come from ex-colonies of France, which seems to strain the relationship between them and the French (Silverman, 1992:81). For example, in the wake of the Algerian war, Algerians were often seen as betrayers; they were "ingratitude incarnate" (Lloyd, 1991:54); they were seen as a threat as the colonial war had indicated that French culture could be decisively rejected (Lloyd, 1991:55). Experiences like that seriously undermined the image the French society had of its culture and created a feeling of uncertainty that is characteristic of today's identity crisis which accompanies the economical one. A large part of French society has difficulties adapting to the changes ensuing from the immigration of culturally extremely different groups and from those of the technological revolution and the increased influence of global events. Balibar sees an explanation of this malaise in "that the obsessive fear of interbreeding, of the pluriethnic or multicultural nation, is merely a special case of the resistance of a part of French society to its own transformations, and
even a case of the disavowal of the transformations that have already been accomplished - a disavowal of its own history, that is" (Balibar, 1991b:223). Indeed, French society has integrated the influences of the foreigners who settled on its territories over the centuries, and the French language has been influenced by their languages as well.\(^{17}\)

In this discussion about the immigrants, the term *immigré* is very often used for individuals who are of non-European (mostly Arabian) origin, but who were never foreigners and hence not immigrants, such as people born in Algeria before 1962 or coming from an overseas *département* or territory, or even people who have lived in France all their life (after the *ius soli*, foreigners' children born in France automatically have the French nationality when they come of age; if one of their parents has French nationality, they are automatically French after the *ius sanguinis* [Lequin, 1988:42]).

In the 1970s, in the wake of the regional demands, there was a demand for the recognition of the immigrant minorities, and the government chose to lead an unspoken policy of multiculturalism. One of the main motivations of the then-Conservative government was the idea that many of those immigrants groups would someday return to their country of origin and should be given the opportunity to do so; the left opposition supported the multicultural philosophy out of an equal respect for all traditions (Conan, 1991). In this context the immigrant languages were introduced into elementary schools. But the repatriations did not occur at the scale that had been hoped for (only 94,000 left between 1977 and 1981, and 50,000 between 1981 and 1985 [Varro, 1992:141]), which left France with groups that were not fully integrated into a society based on unity. Obviously, the multicultural politics had not been a success.

On March 9, 1990, the government created the *Haut Conseil à l'Intégration*, as a response to the growing crisis. Its role was to coordinate the different actions taken in this domain by the Ministries and the diverse committees. This *Conseil* was a clear manifestation of the government's intention to adopt a policy which conformed more to the French tradition: an integration policy. It affirmed in its first report in 1991: "The French conception of integration must obey a logic of equality and not a logic of minorities" (cited in Schnapper, 1992:118-119) and further analyzed the problem of integration as follows:

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17. Some authors argue that the regional languages have incorporated foreign elements too. For example, the Italian immigration in the rural south of France modified some local forms of Provençal (Noiriel, 1988:323).
D'une part, de nombreux étrangers et immigrés ne souffrent d'aucun problème d'intégration. D'autre part, il existe des populations juridiquement françaises dès l'origine qui rencontrent souvent des problèmes d'intégration très importants : par exemple, nos compatriotes des départements et territoires d'outre-mer résidant en France ; ou encore nos compatriotes d'Algérie d'origine nord-africaine et leurs enfants ; ou encore les "gens du voyage" : français et de longue date dans leur grande majorité, ils se heurtent eux aussi à des difficultés d'intégration, dont toutes ne résultent pas de leur propre volonté de conserver un mode de vie original. Enfin, la société française compte ses propres exclus ou, pour mieux dire, car la notion d'exclusion est ambiguë, ses membres en voie de marginalisation. Et c'est bien la cohabitation explosive en de nombreux quartiers ou cités entre des immigrés récents et des populations françaises en voie de marginalisation qui constitue actuellement l'un des problèmes les plus graves auxquels notre société est exposée. Si on n'y prend garde, l'intégration de fait dans de tels contextes risque de se faire non comme une chance de promotion ou d'ascension sociale, mais au contraire comme une "intégration-exclusion", comme un accueil au sein de cette part de notre société qui est elle-même en grave situation d'échec et qui a autant besoin que l'immigration d'une "intégration-participation". (in Noiriel, 1991:8)

The actual problems are therefore regarded as social ones rather than as ones linked to certain ethnic groups. Indeed, many researchers have confirmed that, within the same social group, immigrants normally do not differ markedly from French citizens, at school, on the job market or in front of the court (see for example, Noiriel, 1991:9; or especially for the school context, Berque et al., 1985:11, among others).

1.3.2. The languages of the immigrants

Many nationalities immigrated to France, and thus many individuals with French nationality have a foreign linguistic background (Heredia-Deprez, 1989:73). Also, the presence of one nationality does not mean the presence of only one language. Therefore I will list not the main nationalities but the main immigration languages represented in the French territory

18. Those born in Algeria before the independence in 1962 were considered as French.
19. Also called Bohemians, Gypsies, Tziganes, or Nomads.
20. There are of course many more language communities living in France than those we describe here (for example, Armenian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Greek, Turk and Serbocroat, as well as Yiddish and Gypsy), but they are so small in number that they hardly have an influence on the more general French picture.
The languages of the Maghreb: Arabic and Berber

The Arabic language of the Maghrebian immigrants suffers from its association to the negative social cliché of the immigré. Another problem is that the official literary or classical Arabic, which is common to the whole Arabian community, is never used as daily communication language. It is the language of official communication, journalism, justice and instruction. In daily communication, the so-called dialectal Arabic is used, but it differs from country to country, and sometimes so much that communication is not possible (Jerab, 1988:36). Further, many immigrants from Algeria and Morocco belong to the Berber ethnic group and speak its language. The Berberophone community in France is even more difficult to determine, as national censuses never asked for language and only the national category could appear under the section nationality (Moroccan, Algerian, etc.). But, especially the earlier immigrants from these countries were Berbers, mainly from the Kabylia region. Berber is in a weaker position than Arabic because it is not recognized as a teaching language in school.

Although the first generation of immigrants often has only a poor knowledge of French because of its social isolation, the children born in France or who came at a young age learn French rapidly and most of them do not speak Arabic at all anymore. Some of the beurs, as those young French of Arabian origin are called, have tried to rebuild a proper identity, by turning again to the language of their parents. But their communication language is still French, as it is the only language in which they can express themselves to be heard. Jerab (1988) compares this attitude to language to that of the Arabian (and African) literature of the colonial time, which used French to express their anger in order to be understood by those who were the source of it. Without being actually spoken, the Arabic and Berber languages sometimes take on a mythical dimension for young people who try to find models and ideals (Billiez, 1985:54).

Several radio stations operated by and for the beurs show a marked interest for the cultural side of the language: the language of communication is French but two-thirds of the music programme is Arabic or Berber (Jareb, 1988:47-48). It seems that this relation to the language of origin will dominate in the younger generation: language as a

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21. Often the appellation Kabyle is also used; Kabyle is one of the Berber ethnicities that lives in Algeria and probably represents the largest Berber group in France.
22. We remember the Négritude movement, which expressed its 'Blackness' in French.
cultural particularity, as a sign of particularity, but not necessarily as a means of communication, in which role French - in the context of an overwhelmingly French-speaking society - is simply more efficient.

**The languages from Black Africa**

Most Africans living now in France come from West Africa, more specifically from Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and also, in lesser numbers, from Guinea-Bissau, Niger and Cameroon. All those countries were artificial creations of the colonial times and therefore each regroups several ethnicities and languages (Platiel, 1988:10). As an example, in a survey of 61 children of Black African origin asked about the language their parents spoke at home, provided the following list: Senegalese, Congolese, Sarakole, Cameroonian, Ivorian and Bambara, with eight children naming other languages (Heredia-Deprez, in Varro, 1992:157). Traditionally, individuals speak several languages or dialects. When a woman marries, she moves to the village of her husband, where very often another language is spoken. She learns this language, which her children will speak. In many cases, another language is practiced as the language of trade or broader communication (Platiel, 1988:13-14). In this tradition, women who came to France see it as natural and necessary that they and especially their children learn French; this language is usually spoken at home with the children, although the parents usually keep their own language for communication between themselves (Platiel, 1988:28-29).

**Spanish**

The Spanish immigration to France has a long tradition: already in 1851, the Spanish community in France was the third largest one after the Belgian and the Italian ones; by the end of the 1960s, it had become the largest foreign community, and the number of Spanish residents in France diminished only in the 1970s, after Franco's death (Taboada Leonetti, 1988:196). Many returned then to a country that was now politically acceptable, and was to become economically more interesting, but many were naturalized and became French. Spanish speakers retained at home, in the family, their language of origin much longer than other groups (Taboada Leonetti, 1988:210). Even when this language was not Spanish (Catalan, Basque, Galician, etc.), parents often enrolled their children in Spanish courses as a symbol and guarantee of Spanish identity and because Spanish is a world language. The contacts with the home country provided a further
motivation for the younger generations to learn and use the language. Even those who have accepted French citizenship keep in regular contact with family and friends in the old country. So, although the Spanish community is seen as one of the ‘best integrated’, its language seems to be actively kept as well.

**Italian**

Italians came to France very early (from the middle of the 19th century) and massively over the longest period of time, until the 1960s when the immigration from Italy started to weaken. The ‘ritals’ had to confront brutal rejection and violent actions, especially at the end of the 19th century; between the two world wars, many saw in awe the Italian ‘colonies’ in the southeast of France. This image, although it disappeared many years ago in the French society, has nevertheless strongly influenced the status of the Italian language. Further, most immigrants, in particular the earlier ones, did not speak Italian, but the dialect of their region, such as Piemontan, Venician or Emilian (Véglianté, 1988:243), and most of them were illiterate. It seems that the Italian emigrants’ emotional link to the Italian nation was much weaker than the link of the Spaniards to their nation of origin. This poor relation to the country of origin of course strongly influenced the relation to the language. In the last years, Italian has become a fashionable language, but many children and young people of Italian origin show less interest for it than do their French peers.

**Portuguese**

The destination of the Portuguese emigrants had long been the former colonies in South America, but in the 1960s the movements turned to Northern-Europe, especially France. Portuguese as a language was unified very early (around the 16th century) and dialectal variations are minimal (De Villanova, 1988:285); this fact facilitates the communication of Portuguese living in foreign countries and their feeling of togetherness. Most of them emigrated with their whole family and the language is actively used in the familial context, as well as in a well-developed community structure of associations (Varro, 1992:152). The contacts with the homeland are regular and many Portuguese who came to France went back home after a number of years. It is notable that the demand for institutionalized instruction is, although present, not large (De Villanova, 1988). Children who went to school in France are in their majority bilingual, although French
tends to dominate. With the entry of Portugal into the European Community, the language has experienced a similar renewal of interest for utilitarian purposes as Spanish did. (De Villanova, 1988:336-337).

**Polish**

The hundreds of thousands Polish families who came to France after the First World War mostly came to work in the mines and were concentrated in the north and east. This great concentration, associated with a strong national feeling, the presence and vitality of Polish newspapers in France, retarded the necessity to learn French. Polish therefore stayed the language of communication at home and sometimes at the workplace and in the community relatively long. The children who went to school very rapidly learned French and grew up in a bilingual environment. But although one can today still find older people, especially women, who had less contact with French, who hardly speak the language of their country of adoption, most of their grandchildren do not even understand Polish anymore (Ponty & Masiewicz, 1988:272). Within two generations, the language of origin has almost totally disappeared; one of the most important factors in this evolution is probably the change in the work pattern: as soon as the mining industry entered the crisis it is undergoing now, the communities dissolved and the environment which had been decisive for the maintenance of the language disappeared.

1.3.3. Immigrant languages: an unclear status

In conclusion, we can say that the linguistic use of the younger generations of immigrants is definitely dominated by the French language. For most of them, the language of their parents, the langue d'origine, is certainly not their 'mother-tongue' (in the sense of first, dominant language) anymore. Indeed, as we have already seen in the discussion of the regional languages, when school became the main place of education, "school language became more important than the language of the home" (Mackey, 1984:41).

In some cases (Spanish, Portuguese), the relation to and the use of the language of origin does not create any problem. Those children and young people are often bilingual. In other cases (Polish and Black African languages), the children may
understand the language spoken at home, but they mostly do not practice it and are later unable to use their knowledge for intensive study although they may find an interest in the cultural aspect of the language. In still other cases (Arab and Italian), the relations to the language are of multiple sorts; many adopt very early a negative attitude towards the language and refuse to use it, sometimes forcing their parents to communicate with them in French; others understand their parents but refuse to speak the language; others still see the advantages of using the language, especially when visiting relatives in the country of origin, or as a cultural identification, as a mythical symbol of their belonging to a group.23

Although it is still difficult to imagine France as a multilingual country, more and more people will become bi- and multilingual. Language knowledge based on relation to an increasingly remote 'origin' will die out, but once the global significance of languages like Arabic is recognized they will become more attractive as objects of study.

1.4. CONCLUSION

We have seen that France looks back on a long tradition of linguistic unification. It does not matter so much which event one regards as the beginning of the French linguistic policy - the Edict of Villers-Cotterets in 1539, the revolution in 1789, or the Ferry laws in 1881 - it is more important that over the centuries France has developed a certain image of itself which, after the creation of the nation-state, was then closely bound to the French language. This 'image', be it a myth or a concept imposed by those in power, has been transmitted through the school system as a fact and has therefore influenced the generations who have lived in France since then. French is the dominant language, the language of prestige. Regional languages and immigrant languages still survive in small niches but have lost their importance as language of communication.

23. Interestingly enough, the Arabic language seems often to play this role even when (or maybe especially when) it is not spoken by the individual who refers to it. As an example, a teenager declared: "Ma langue, c'est l'arabe, mais je la parle pas" (Billiez, 1985:52).
In relation to other national languages, the same historical background weighs on French. A certain sense of superiority, due to the past role of French as the internationally dominating language, still weakens the motivation to learn other languages. Although bi- and multilingualism is more and more being respected and even seen as a necessity nowadays, only few are ready to make the efforts and sacrifices to bring it into existence.
2. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION IN FRANCE

2.1. LANGUAGE NEEDS

I will discuss briefly the definition of 'needs', since within a pedagogical context this term may lend itself to several interpretations. Because I discuss the language instruction issue from the perspective of language policies, I will concentrate on the societal needs. Tyler based the selection of educational goals on "studies of the student as a learner, [and] studies of contemporary life outside the school" (Walker and Soltis, 1986:86), thus differentiating between the needs of the pupils and the needs of society ('contemporary life'). This is what others call micro-level and macro-level needs (Boshier, cited in Bagnall, 1990:317). Further, it is important to determine if we can equate 'needs of the society' and 'demands of the society'.

Theo van Els and Guus Extra (1987) explain their understanding of 'need' and then use this concept as a basis for designing a language curriculum. It is therefore an interesting and representative example to analyze here.

The authors examine the importance of a needs assessment in regard to the choice of the languages that are to be taught in European schools and to the defining of objectives in language education.

"Educational programmes always find their justification in particular needs" (101). Generally speaking, they consider 'need' in foreign language education as "a lack of language proficiency". This lack, this (or those) need(s), should determine the language policy of a country or region.

They further distinguish three categories of needs related to language instruction: communicative needs, language proficiency-related needs, and needs which are hardly, if at all, related to language proficiency. The communicative needs originate mainly from
utilitarian motives (commercial relations, tourism, etc.) but also from individual interests. Language proficiency-related needs are those linked with the cultural knowledge that one acquires through another language, but this knowledge can be acquired through media other than the language. Finally, the needs that are only remotely related to language proficiency are the needs for development of social and intellectual skills - a development attributed to foreign-language learning - but which can be developed by other means as well. Nevertheless, those two last categories of needs can be used to justify language instruction in the schools. We will see below that this is exactly what the French government has done in its formulation of the objectives of the experimental programme in early foreign-language instruction.

Van Els and Extra then advocate the necessity of a national or regional needs assessment to establish a language policy for the particular country or region one considers. But, although they have categorized the different needs, the assessments concern only the utilitarian needs for languages. They report two kinds of needs assessment.

The first one is an empirical assessment of existing language behaviours and needs. Needs should be assessed by direct inquiry of users (persons who want to use or have to use a foreign language) and 'user users' (for example, companies who would employ or need people speaking a foreign language).

The second one is an assessment through intuition, introspection, reflection and the good common sense of those who have to decide about the policy. The Policy Delphi Method is also used very often. In this method, "a panel of experts [...] is led to agree upon a collective assessment of future developments concerning FL/SL needs" (p.105).

The authors obviously concentrate on utilitarian needs in this article, although they list other needs related to language proficiency. Indeed, those utilitarian needs are a crucial question in Europe where multilingual abilities are essential for communication. They show further that an empirical approach to those utilitarian needs can be helpful and necessary. It seems that needs assessment can determine not only the choice of languages taught, but the objectives as well, because communicative needs can be quite clearly formulated for a specific purpose (commerce, travel, etc.).

France did not proceed to an empirical needs assessment before it implemented its programme, and seemingly only relied on the Policy Delphi Method and on demands from different groups. If we choose the definition of needs of van Els and Extra, then obviously 'needs' does not mean the same as 'demands.' But we can understand the demands of the society as a 'wish to compensate for the needs.' Indeed, the motives to which the different needs are linked correspond to the motives in which the demands originated, especially the utilitarian motives and the individual interests. There are in France communicative 'needs' as well as a demand for a better foreign language proficiency of young people. There also exists further a demand for regional languages instruction although it is difficult to estimate the 'need' for it. The demand for immigrant language instruction partly overlaps the one for foreign language instruction, as some immigrant languages are European languages; still other languages, like Arabic, also fall in the category of foreign languages. Because of the international development of commerce, the utilitarian needs for theses languages are definitely present.

Bagnall states that 'the so-called 'needs' are [...] highly dependent upon the socio-cultural situations in which they are judged to exist, and selected through the particular value framework of those situations from among an infinity of possible alternative goals' (Bagnall, 1990:321). Indeed, the dominant values of the French society, those which have evolved during its history, and especially those linked to language, dictated the response of the government: little emphasis on regional and immigrant languages, relatively strong involvement for European language instruction, and only a very slow implementation of changes.

The extension of foreign language instruction time in school, that is, the introduction of language instruction in elementary school, is definitely a response to the demands of the European Community, and of the French majority. It is as well a step towards the meeting of language needs. We will see later what effects it may have on the minorities' demands.

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25. This demand is strong from the side of parents' associations (see for example the publications of the 'Fédération des Parents d'Elèves de l'Enseignement public', of the 'Fédération des Conseils de Parents d'Elèves', or of the 'Union Nationale des Associations Autonomes de Parents d'Elèves'); the Elementary Teachers' Union (Syndicat National des Ecoles) also supports this demand and criticizes the weakness of the government's decisions in this domain (S.N.E., 1993, personal communication).
2.2. LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION - THE AGE FACTOR

Although there is no longer broad acceptance of the thesis that an early encounter with a second language is positive, there still are several arguments for it.

Singleton (1989) offers an exhaustive review of the literature about language acquisition and the age factor. The argument that seems strongest in favour of early second language instruction is that if the child starts a second language earlier in its school life, it will simply have more time to learn it. Further arguments, although not yet verified empirically beyond doubt, but plausible and brought forwards by several researchers, are: "the desirability of early stimulation generally; the advantage of starting some subjects early in the context of the modern crowded curriculum; the educational merits of early contact with another culture" (Singleton, 1989:262-263; see also Carey, 1984). Roulet (1980), for example, emphasizes the advantages of integrated first and second language instruction, because each facilitates the learning of the other. His thesis is that besides the cognitive advantage of a structural approach to languages, there is a positive effect on the organization of curricula, and that the current successive introduction to language rules (first for the mother-tongue, then for the second language) is a waste of energy, and it sometimes even confuses the learner. A coordination of both may help the learner, as has also been suggested by theoretical analyses as well as by different projects in France, Québec and Switzerland, which Roulet examines for their practicability and success.

Preceding Singleton, McLaughlin (1984) gives a comprehensive overview of the literature on a more restricted area of the field of research: the critical period hypothesis. This theory has been widely discussed and is actually not accepted any more in the way it was first formulated (as a critical period for language learning ranging from age two to puberty). But the author stresses the advantages of the longer language exposure. Not only does the child have more time to acquire its first foreign language, but it then may have the opportunity to add one or two more during its schooling.

In the French context, foreign languages were officially first taught in the sixth year of school, which meant (for those who graduated with the baccalauréat) seven years of exposure for the first foreign language and five for the second one. It was estimated that with an average of thirty pupils in a class and at the actual rhythm of three hours
weekly, those seven years of language exposure could mean around ten hours of active participation in each (Vendeuil, 1993:48)! This leaves no doubt that a longer exposure, as well as methodical changes, could only be profitable. Therefore, the supporters of early exposure (enseignement précoce) have always tried to change this situation.

2.3. ENSEIGNEMENT PRECOCE DES LANGUES VIVANTES (EPLV)

2.3.1. Enseignement précoce in France: The earlier history

In this chapter, we will concentrate on the most recent history (second half of the 20th century), as the enseignement précoce in its present form, that is, in state schools and on a representative scale, did not occur before this time.

The tradition of educating children bi- or multi-lingually is centuries old and goes back to antiquity; this practice was during the Middle-Ages, when Latin was the language of instruction, automatic. Throughout history, wealthy families have encouraged their children to learn other languages early, either with the help of foreign nurses or through education in private schools. But it was only in 1829 that foreign (modern) languages were introduced in French public secondary schools and in the universities; still, they were considered as 'Plebeian' and their study of less worth than that of the classical languages until at least the turn of the century (Giordani, 1982:113).

After the Second World War, in the 1950s and even more in the 1960s, public education witnessed a massive development of early foreign language instruction. J. Giordani (1982) argues that this development resulted from the changing role of the school. When in the 1960s the obligatory education age was extended to sixteen, society started to view school "not any more as a neutral place which took time from the work life on the fields and in the factory, but as a place of expectations [...] where the choices and the actions for a future occupation were to be decided, an occupation which was from now on only determined by educational criteria" (Giordani, 1982:114). In this context, foreign languages were seen as a necessity in an internationally growing range of
possibilities. At this time the methods of language instruction changed as well, from the reading-translating approach, which had been used for classical languages, to a more communication-oriented approach.

In Paris (with English) and Nancy (with German), kindergarten classes started an experiment in language instruction in 1953 (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, September 3, 1971). The first experiment on elementary school level started in 1954 in Arles, where English was taught in several elementary schools by British and American assistants. In 1957, another one was started in the département Seine, also with British assistants; this experiment could not be carried on after 1963 because it was organizationally impossible to group initiated children in the same 6th grade classes (Girard, 1974).

Starting from those pioneer experiments, the movement spread and affected around 25 500 kindergarten and primary school pupils in the first half of the 1960s, 20,000 of them learning German and 5,500 learning English (Girard, 1974). The prevalence of German instruction can be explained by the fact that since 1952 the Alsace had a special status allowing German classes in elementary schools (see part 1.2.5.). Another factor was the popularity of the Franco-German city jumelages, which encouraged exchanges and motivated language experiments. For example, Bordeaux and Munich signed a agreement on jumelage in 1965, and in the same year, an exchange programme with kindergarten teachers was started which resulted in bilingual kindergarten classes; this popular action, which was then extended to elementary classes, was soon imitated in other cities (Giordani, 1982).

In September 1965, English was officially introduced in the Cours Elementaire 2 (CE2)\textsuperscript{26} in the départements Nord, Pas-de-Calais (closest to Great Britain), Seine (where many experiments were already running) and Allier (where a teachers’ education centre specializing in languages was located in Vichy). Although the government made some efforts towards the definition of priorities and the choice of specific geographical experiment zones, it left open all the questions concerning the didactical resources, the problem of continuation and the organization of special classes in the first year of secondary school (Girard, 1974).

\textsuperscript{26} This is the third year of elementary school which is organized as follows: first year - cours préparatoire (CP), second year - cours élémentaire 1 (CE1), third year - cours élémentaire 2 (CE2), fourth year - cours moyen 1 (CM1), fifth year - cours moyen 2 (CM2).
In 1970, a provisional evaluation was done, which led the Ministry to the following decisions:

- not to extend the range of the experiment.
- to put the emphasis on the basic and continuous education of primary school teachers.
- to restrict [the teaching of foreign languages] to primary schools in the district of a secondary school where initiated children could get further specific instruction.
- to slow down unorganized experiments, especially at kindergarten level.
- not to approve any project that did not fit into a bigger organizational concept for which all resources had to be available beforehand, and that did not have special ministerial approval. (Girard, 1974)

Indeed, the movement had rapidly increased in numbers: in the school year 1970-1971, 35,986 (i.e., around 1%) of primary school children learned a foreign language, 26,910 of them English and 7,827 German. Also, around 2% of all kindergartens offered a language initiation (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, September 3, 1971). This shift in favour of English was due to the official experiments in départements other than Alsace, the organizational difficulties of the Franco-German teachers' exchange programme, and an increased interest in English. In only very few instances were some other languages, mainly Spanish and Italian, taught.

In 1972, trying to control the almost anarchistic development of the experiments, the Ministry published several recommendations and regulations in a circulaire: ministerial financial support would be restricted to programmes that had already been started; communities and parents' organizations were allowed to install programmes if they took the financial responsibility for them; and a verification of the linguistic competence of teachers was necessary, as was continuity in foreign language instruction until the 6th grade.

The Ministry also proposed a pedagogical framework for the different grades:

- kindergarten: familiarization with the so-called 'natural' method;
- first and second grades (cours préparatoire and cours élémentaire 1): deepening the acquired knowledge;
- third, fourth and fifth grades (cours élémentaire 2, cours moyen 1 and cours moyen 2): structuring of the knowledge.

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But the Ministry never formulated any linguistic or pedagogical objectives for the experiments, nor did it recommend any specific contents or pedagogical methods or activities, which could have led to standardized, or at least comparable, results, a better organization of the 6th-grade contents, and the pedagogical continuity of the project (INRP, 1980:59).

In 1973, when the experiments were still multiplying under pressure from parents and enthusiastic teachers, the Ministry, facing financial and administrative difficulties, decided officially to limit the project: *Circulaire 73-228* from May 11, 1973 states that:

There can be no horizontal enlargement of the project. I confirm that no experiment can be started outside of schools where a foreign language is taught now, and that only the vertical development (from kindergarten to Grade 6) of the current experiments can be authorized within the limit of your resources.

A report made by D. Girard for the Ministry of Education in 1974 contained several proposals. It called for

- extension to a very limited number of schools of foreign language instruction throughout primary school. Excessive costs, difficulties in finding qualified teachers and the lack of pedagogical evidence for the benefits of language instruction starting early and stretching over eight years (elementary and intermediate school), led to this recommendation.

- An extension of foreign language instruction during the last three years to all elementary schools was not recommended for the same reasons.

- A gradual extension based on the current experiments and on the availability of qualified teachers should be considered as a controlled pedagogical experiment. This would allow for an intensive evaluation and the creation of favourable conditions for a possible extension.

- Experiments which do not assure continuity should be forbidden; the continuity should be guaranteed from the first year of language instruction to the beginning of the secondary level. Teachers with language knowledge should be used intelligently, that is, posted in schools where their knowledge could be used! The geographic proximity of a foreign country should be taken into account in the choice of the language(s) offered, and
the initial and continuous education of teachers should be intensified to match the needs of an eventual extension of the project.

The report concluded that:

Several prejudices linked with early language instruction must be overthrown.
There is no necessary benefit from an early instruction, but a close relation has been made between the observed results and the length of contact with the foreign language.
This initiation is strongly motivating and fulfils an important educational role without impeding the other subjects.
From the proposed experimentation project, it is possible to formulate a French answer to the international problem linked to the early instruction of a foreign language and to knowingly adopt the necessary long-term measures. (Girard, 1974)

In short, the report claimed that a generalization could not take place, and that the present situation could be kept as a 'controlled pedagogical experiment' further to explore the possibilities and advantages of early language instruction. The report advises against any further development.

Giordani noted that "through a curious ironical twist, France, which had been at the origin of the development of bilingual education, was going to become the most eager supporter of its progressive elimination"; he saw the explanation of this in the education policy of the country (Giordani, 1982:7). This education policy favoured a later introduction of foreign language, more for economic than for pedagogical reasons; furthermore, the movement, having started from the base (parents and communities) did not fit into the centralist organization of French institutions (Giordani, 1982:10).

Progressively, this language instruction disappeared in kindergarten and the first classes of primary school, and was only maintained, although weakly, in the cours moyen. The circulaire from June 6, 1977 declared that: "From the beginning of the school year 1977, there will be no new language instruction project with children who have not yet started such an instruction" (this did not apply to the cours moyen level). Although most départements followed this order, others, where teachers were present and willing, continued their language classes.
In 1980, the Ministry established in an evaluation that 99,300 pupils (2%) were learning a language in elementary school; 75% of them were in Cours Moyen.

In the region Nord-Pas-de-Calais, a project ‘enseignement international et bilingue’ has been running since 1983 (remember that the département Nord was one of those which took part officially in the earlier experimentations on early language teaching). In this project, English, German, Italian, Dutch or Portuguese are taught six hours a week in elementary school; from the first year of secondary school on, other school subjects (especially history and geography) are taught in the foreign language, and there is a deepening of the linguistic and cultural knowledge in language classes. This kind of language instruction concerned only around 3,500 pupils in 1992 (Inspection Académique du Nord, 1992).

It may be noted that many private schools which operate under state contract (among other regulations, this means that their curriculum is recognized as leading to the national baccalauréat) offer a bilingual education from elementary school on. Furthermore, at the secondary level, sections called 'bilingual', 'European' and 'international' exist; they offer intensified language instruction and teaching of several subjects in the foreign language. 'Bilingual' high schools (around 300 in 1992) lead to the normal French baccalauréat and offer German, English, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, Italian and Arabic (CIDJ, April 1992); 'European' high schools (of which there were 104 in 1993) lead to the French baccalauréat with European distinction, and offer only English and German as intensified foreign languages (Béhar, 1993); 'international' high-schools (7 in 1992) prepare for the international baccalauréat (CIDJ, April 1992). As admission to most of these high schools demands a good to high level of knowledge in the foreign language, almost only children who have had foreign language instruction at elementary level can benefit from them.

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2.3.2. Enseignement précoce in France since 1989

In 1989, the French government decided to start an experimental programme of foreign language instruction in elementary school, called *experimention controlée de l'enseignement d'une langue vivante étrangère à l'école élémentaire*. As we have seen earlier, foreign languages had already been taught at that level previously, but in a very unorganized way: those courses were mostly the result of initiative of the parents, and their main problem was the lack of continuity throughout the curriculum. It seems that after having failed to stop these initiatives altogether, the government finally decided to control and properly organize them. The idea of the experiment was to try several methods, in various settings, in order to establish the feasibility and effectiveness of such instruction. Although the aims were supposedly clear, the misunderstanding resulting from the formulation (which itself seemed to reflect the vagueness of the government's intentions) led to different views about those aims and therefore to different methods and results.

2.3.2.1. The first texts

The very first text\(^{29}\) was a communication from the Minister of Education about his decision to start an experimental programme of language instruction in the elementary schools. The aim of this programme was to prepare the children on a linguistic, psychological, and cultural level, such that they could better profit from the language instruction starting at the intermediate level, and also improve their overall school achievements. The idea of continuity was central and directed the geographical organization: schools for the experimentation were chosen representatively from an area covered by a secondary school, in order to create classes of ‘initiated’ children by the time of their entry into the 6th grade\(^{30}\). The representativeness of the different chosen elementary schools had to match urban, suburban and rural characteristics, socio-professional distribution and school structures. The importance of qualified teachers was emphasized and formation for teachers was planned. As it was recognized that too few elementary teachers had the necessary linguistic background, it was planned from the

\(^{29}\) *Circulaire 89-065*, March 6, 1989.
\(^{30}\) Elementary school in France lasts 5 years, junior high school (*collège*) lasts 4 years (*6ème*, *5ème*, *4ème* and *3ème*), high school (*lycée*) 3 years (*seconde, première, terminale*).
beginning to use secondary teachers and external intervenants (mostly native speakers). The choice of the schools, the training of the teachers and the evaluation of the different projects were to be done by a special controlling committee installed by the académie\textsuperscript{31}.

2.3.2.1.1. The objectives\textsuperscript{32}

The text is relatively precise in the formulation of the objectives to be attained:

An early foreign language education cannot have the main objective of producing early bilingual children. An instruction over two school years (CM1 and CM2)) with a maximum of three weekly hours, must have other aims. It should prepare children linguistically, psychologically and culturally for language learning. This initiation-teaching (enseignement d'initiation) has to prepare pupils for the later learning of a foreign language. At the same time, it should consolidate the fundamental acquisitions of elementary school and thus improve the overall school achievement.

This teaching should enable the children to:
- widen their hearing and speaking abilities;
- become conscious of the differences between their mother-tongue and the foreign language.

It will lead to the use of the basic structures and of a simple vocabulary.

Its objective is also:
- to create and develop an appreciation for the foreign language, which should be seen as another way to communicate and express oneself;
- to open the mind to the reality of a foreign world, which the child learns to like and to know better."

In addition to these objectives, the text contains a list of pedagogical priorities the programme should consider:

The primary importance of oral communication is stressed. Therefore, oral comprehension and expression are regarded as central, especially in the beginning phase of the course. Children shall learn to distinguish the different foreign sounds and to pronounce them correctly.

\textsuperscript{31} An administrative unit of the state responsible for education.  
\textsuperscript{32} As stated in the Circulaire from March 6, 1989.
The importance of the written form of the language is acknowledged, but the comprehension (reading and understanding) of a written text is regarded as more important at this level than the production (writing of a text). Written expression shall mainly be introduced to enhance the comprehension of the linguistic system itself, especially in opposition (or comparison) to that of the mother-tongue.

Basic grammatical structures shall also be taught in comparison to those of French, to awaken the children's linguistic awareness. An important point is that the foreign language course should also shed a new light on the fundamental principles of the mother-tongue.

Finally, language instruction should be an opening to the world, to another country with a history, a geography and a culture. Those aspects are to be touched also in other school subjects such as geography, history, arts and civil education.

2.3.2.1.2. The practical aspects

As a complement to the text from March 1989, the Ministry of Education released a curriculum outline a few months later. It concerns some practical issues of the programme, in particular the problem of motivation. It is recognized that, in opposition to natural second language acquisition in the foreign country, language instruction in school has to fight "feelings of indifference, mistrust and frustration", and that motivating the pupils is therefore crucial.

This programme is stated as a list of different items that should be part of the instruction, such as:

- Communication functions; i.e., respect of social usage, invitation or command, exchange of information, judgement, expressing a personal opinion or feeling.

- Contexts; i.e., geography of the country, street scenes, family life, school life in the foreign country, stories and tales, sports, travels, television, and so on.

Several examples of language activities related to different situations are then given:

- In the situation 'greeting of a person whose language one is studying', different language activities can be introduced: greeting somebody, presenting oneself, exchanging information, etc.

- To the situation 'preparation for a trip in the country the language of which one is studying' there corresponds language activities: orientation on a map, a plan, a photograph; choosing a type of transportation, etc.

A few other examples are given which "intend to give the teacher objective criteria of choice for the pedagogical material".

2.3.2.2. The debate enseignement vs. initiation to language(s)

The two texts viewed above built the foundations on which the experimentation was to grow. While quite precise in some respects, they left some important concepts ill-defined and this vagueness led to problems. One of the main problems which still hampers the entire programme is caused by the term 'enseignement d'initiation', which we translate as 'initiation-teaching'.

Indeed, here two words that mean quite different things are put together. The pedagogical approach to 'teaching' a subject, on the one hand, and to 'initiating' someone into a subject, on the other, is rather different. The problem is especially difficult as those two approaches are on opposite sides of a division between two philosophies of early language instruction.

The Ministry recognized this problem of interpretation, and reformulated its instructions in another circulaire in September 1991. One of the main parts of this circulaire is about the 'Nature and specificity of a foreign language initiation-teaching in elementary school'.

It states that the initiation-teaching cannot be understood merely as a familiarization to language.

"Although the initiation to a foreign language at school necessarily includes objectives of language familiarization, it cannot be entirely defined by them. It is therefore necessary to conceive the initiation-teaching as real instruction and not as a mere familiarization."

This was meant as a judgement in the hot discussion between supporters of a language instruction and those of language familiarization. The choice is explained in the text of the Ministry as a necessity to evaluate the progress, which is almost impossible in the case of a familiarization to language. Interestingly enough, in Le Monde of February 13, 1992, the then-Minister of Education, Lionel Jospin, declared he wanted to progressively generalize a sensibilisation (familiarization) to foreign languages; a publication of the Ministry from the same month (some five months after the circulaire on the question of familiarization vs. teaching) speaks also of 'sensibilisation aux langues vivantes' in the cours moyen! In June 1991, the Inspecteur Général de l'Education nationale talked about a 'préapprentissage' (pre-learning) stressing thus on the one hand the learning/teaching side of the instruction, but on the other the preliminary character of it. Some time earlier, in September 1990, in its report to the 42nd International Conference on Education in Geneva, the Ministry had seen the introduction of languages in elementary school as a means "to familiarize the pupils for the later learning of a foreign language, [and] to create and develop a taste for their study". As we can see, from the beginning and up to now, the Ministry has been quite unclear about the intended objectives of the foreign language instruction in elementary school.

The partisans of the kind of language instruction the Ministry calls a "real instruction" argue that such a method is the only defensible one in a system whose results have to be evaluated. They understand language teaching as an organized approach to the structure of a language, leading to a series of concrete objectives. Those objectives are usually language units, the knowledge of which can be tested. The supporters of the familiarization (which can be called, as is a British programme, 'language awareness') think that the most important thing is that the child becomes aware both of other languages and cultures and of its own language, and that the cognitive and affective development is supported by contact with another language. The primary aim of this

35. TGV (published by the Direction de l'information et de la communication, Ministère de l'Education Nationale), no. 89, February 24, 1992.
approach is not the learning of the language itself, although it is of course not excluded as a result of the contact with the language. This more holistic attitude to language instruction is more difficult to evaluate as its objectives are not as concrete (in terms of test items) as those of a more traditional approach. The original idea of the Ministry was to combine the best of both approaches in initiation-teaching, as the name suggests, whereby 'initiation' was meant to bring the holistic element into language 'teaching'. The first circulaire stated that the main objective of initiation-teaching was to "prepare the children on a linguistic, psychological and cultural level to make better use of the language instruction in high school [...]. [It] should support the real, subsequent learning of a foreign language" (italics added).

Clearly, this idea of a pedagogical 'middle way' was hard to put into practice because two opposite strategies are not easy to reconcile. Apart from pedagogical difficulties, each of these language teaching philosophies also leads to a different important organizational decision: the choice of the language (or languages) taught at the elementary level. The reason for this is as follows.

Although the French school system theoretically offers a great diversity of foreign language choices (English, German, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Japanese, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, etc.), English is the language chosen by the great majority of children as the first foreign language in 6th grade. German is the second choice, but comes far behind. All the other languages, although present, play an irrelevant role. In the experimentation, although a diversity had been sought, English overwhelmingly dominated.

If the approach is that of a language-awareness pedagogy, one can argue that it is even more important to acquaint the child with a language other than English or German, or even with several languages, to show the diversity and the cultural variety of languages. The cognitive profits will serve the learning of any language, that is, English or German, in the 6th grade; the linguistic knowledge acquired earlier can be revived with the choice

38. French schoolchildren usually begin with a first foreign language in the 6th year. One foreign language is compulsory. In the 8th year, they may start the study of a second foreign language, which is optional.
39. Almost 93% of secondary schoolchildren learn English as a first or second foreign language. Almost 25% learn German. Spanish comes third, being chosen by 5% of all as a second foreign language, but by only 1% as a first. Only 0.4% choose another language as a first foreign language and 0.9% as a second (Le Figaro, January 20, 1993).
of the second foreign language. This means that the language choice in elementary school should be as wide as possible.

The position taken by the Ministry is clearly the opposite, that is, to reduce the number of languages available. This has not been said explicitly, but is simply the result of the decision to emphasize the 'teaching' side of initiation-teaching. As with the implementation of the programme itself, one cannot fail to notice that in doing so, it in fact makes official the parents' choice. Since the beginning, the demand for English has been strongest. On the one hand, this means the elementary school reinforces the monopolistic role of English as a foreign language. On the other hand, this does not have to be negative (if any language is opportune for language awareness, why not English?) as long as the wide choice for the second language is maintained.

2.3.2.3. Experimentation extended, 1990

About one year after the first text, the Ministry published another one, which explained how the experimentation had to be continued, and reaffirmed some objectives. This text, addressed to the rectors and inspectors of the académies, states that the experimentation has not only to be continued, but expanded, the objective being to reach 25% of all cours moyen pupils in the academic year 1991-1992. (In 1989-1990, 10% were affected.) The experimental character has to be maintained, which means that the diversity should be intensified. The diversity has to be on different levels: methodological, personal and organizational. The methodological diversity is seen as particularly important to motivate the children; the audio-visual method is recommended, and the importance of the cultural element is emphasized. The personal diversity can multiply the different experiences so that every teacher (elementary or secondary teacher, 'external' native speaker) can contribute to the richness of the teachers' further education. The organizational diversity could take the form of immersion experiments and of intensified exchanges with foreign teachers and pupils.

The importance that has to be given to teachers' education is stressed again, as the experimentation cannot be continued - and expanded - with a deficiency of well-trained teachers.

Finally, the framework for the evaluation is given. This evaluation will be on two levels: the national level (the Ministry), which will be responsible for the global evaluation; and the local level, which will be more responsible for the organizational side of the experimentation.

A year later yet, another text\textsuperscript{41} was issued to clarify the discussion about the term initiation-teaching (see above) and further specify the objectives. After explaining its position in favour of 'real' language instruction, the Ministry specifically defined initiation-teaching.

The main characteristic of initiation-teaching is its motivational aspect. Although the acquired knowledge is evaluated and should be taken into account for in teaching at the secondary level, the linguistic results should in no way be prejudicial for the evaluation of the individual pupil. The language experience should be an integrating factor in school and an element of personal enrichment.

A further specificity of initiation-teaching is the constant association between speaking and doing, between language and action. This association shall take place in a broad variety of activities. Those activities shall alternate in a fast rhythm (every six to ten minutes) and may be oral, manual, corporal or written activities, with different means of information (auditory, visual, manual, aesthetic), different types of concretization of the information (recognition, repetition/reproduction, handling), aiming at the development of different domains (cognition, sensomotoric, sensitiveness, imagination), and using different attitudes (attention, relaxation) and rhythms (movement, rest).

This great diversity should not challenge the priority of "oral activities, which are essential in order to give the children the desire, the habit and the capacity to communicate in a foreign language". It is therefore seen as necessary to postpone the introduction of the written medium.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Circulaire} 91-246, September 6, 1991.
A structuration of the linguistic input and therefore of the teaching is essential. But "a balance is to be found between the need for a structured instruction, which is a condition for its efficacy, and the need for communication, without which the motivation of the children could not be kept very long".

Finally, the pedagogical elements dictate the organizational structure: a foreign language course should be forty to forty-five minutes in length, with a frequency of at least two classes a week.

The last part of the circulaire is a list of skills that should be mastered at the elementary level and which have to be considered for the continuation in secondary school.

1. Interdisciplinary skills. The results of the teaching cannot be measured only by the linguistic production of the pupils. Its influence has to be determined on the totality of the school achievements [...] The strengthening of interdisciplinary skills can be noticed in following areas:
   - Listening skills (listening to a sound model, listening to others);
   - Memory skills (auditory and visual memory);
   - Capacity to infer the meaning of unknown elements from an identified global meaning;
   - Strengthening of the oral expression skills, due to the intensification of active behaviour and confidence towards language, due also to the possibility that is given to the child to play with a language other than its own and thus to discover its poetic and musical beauty.

2. In the cultural domain, children should be able to show general knowledge about:
   - the geography of the country or countries whose language they are studying;
   - the everyday life in this or those country(ies) (currency, national symbols, meals and drinks, school life of pupils, holidays, a few examples of typical production, a few examples of traditional public manifestations).

3. Linguistic knowledge can be evaluated:
   - according to the domains of linguistic competencies;
   - in reference to linguistic notions and functions.
   - The evaluable knowledge listed below cannot be seen as a curriculum [...]. It is proposed as a frame of reference, an evaluation aid at the end of the cours moyen and for the organization of the continuation at the intermediate level [...].

Then there follows an extensive list of the different skills that should be mastered by a child having attended the language initiation-teaching. Those skills include oral skills...
(expression and comprehension) and basic writing skills, followed by an extensive list of different skills, which are communication skills (being able to talk about oneself, to express one's agreement or disagreement, to tell the time, etc.) as well as clearly structural skills (being able to link elements with 'and', 'but' and 'or', being able to express a quantity, etc.).

Indeed, one cannot help having a feeling of 'déjà vu' while reading this exhaustive list, where all the skills are of the type 'being able to' or 'knowing how to'. The shift to the well-known, more classical instrumental teaching methods seems to have been accomplished. Dabène (1991) asks how those 'how tos' are supposed to be related to other school subjects, and to the consciousness of language and of the problems linked to language acquisition as such.

On enseigne à l'élève à communiquer, certes, mais quand incite-t-on l'élève à se demander ce que c'est que communiquer et en quoi il est difficile de passer d'une langue à l'autre? (Dabène, 1991:60)

As we have seen earlier, the first formulation of the project indicated a conception of language teaching that would, on the one hand, pursue concrete, assessable, linguistic aims (teaching), and on the other hand, give great importance to the cultural aspect of the language, the cognitive advantages of language contact, the awareness of linguistic systems, and the interdisciplinary integration of language teaching (initiation).

The Ministry's decision to change its approach may have had two main reasons: the massive presence of secondary teachers in the elementary classes, and the demands of the parents. The secondary teachers of course favour a method they know, and which produces secondary school pupils with skills that are readily testable and form the basis for further structural teaching. Even though many secondary teachers try to innovate and adapt to the elementary children, they often do not have adequate pedagogical training.

The parents, on the other hand, demand concrete results from the experiment. Concrete results mean a child that can speak and understand the foreign language. The ideal of bilingualism and the great expectations put into the school system still dominate in the public opinion. In times of economic hardship, skills immediately fit for use are often seen as the individual solution to an extremely tight job market. The expectations of the parents are therefore understandable, even if the Ministry was careful enough to say
that this early teaching "cannot have the primary objective to create early bilingual children" (*Circulaire* 89-065, March 6, 1989).

2.3.2.4. A 'new' language policy, 1993

The *circulaire* from March 1990 stated that the experimentation was to run for three consecutive years and that its evaluation would provide information that would enable the Ministry to take a decision about the possibilities of a generalization of language instruction at the elementary level and eventually to formulate a curriculum. Already after the evaluation of the second year of experimentation (1990-1991), the Minister announced a progressive generalization in February 1992, although the report of the *Inspection Générale* was far from being overwhelmingly positive\(^\text{42}\). Nevertheless, the objective of having 25% of all *cours moyen* children attend language classes had almost been attained, with 23% in 1991-1992, and 27% learning a foreign language in the school year 1992-1993. The decision was undoubtedly influenced more by political than by pedagogical reflections: only a few days after the Treaty on European Union\(^\text{43}\) had been signed, the 'European idea' was dominating the agenda. Citing the Minister:

> Le nouveau contexte européen suscite une demande très importante des jeunes et de leurs parents en ce qui concerne la pratique d'une ou de plusieurs langues étrangères européennes. Le système éducatif doit la prendre en compte et en faire une de ses priorités.\(^\text{44}\)

This generalization was planned to occur within the following three years, beginning with the school year 1992-1993 for the second year of the *cours moyen* (CM2) and then subsequently for the first year (CM1), as part of a new language programme called 'Langues Plus', which had three main objectives:

1) the acquisition of knowledge of a foreign language as means of communication in everyday life and later in professional life,

\(^{42}\) See Chapter 2.3.2.5. on the evaluation.

\(^{43}\) The so-called Maastricht Treaty, signed in Maastricht on February 7, 1992.

\(^{44}\) TGV (published by the Direction de l'information et de la communication, Ministère de l'Education Nationale) no. 89, February 24, 1992, p. 1.
2) the study of the culture of the countries whose language is taught, and the learning of some elements of it, and

3) the specialization of language knowledge for the professional domain.45

In January 1993, the new Minister of Education, Jack Lang, announced in a document called Une politique pour les langues vivantes ("A foreign language policy") that he had decided to give France a "strong and coherent language policy"46. Its objective is "to improve the efficacy of language education from elementary school to university level and, in a time of great European cohesion, to give our citizens real linguistic abilities". This objective has to be attained through efforts in three main domains: to better, develop and intensify 1) language education and 2) teachers' education; and 3) to provide an opening to Europe and the world.

The first domain of efforts contains the "progressive generalization of a foreign modern language in elementary school, with a priority given to CM2 which should guarantee a homogeneity in the 6th grade" (Ministère de l'Education, January 1993). There, the two necessary conditions for a success of this instruction are defined: 1) continuity between the elementary and intermediate levels, and 2) the setting up of priorities and the choice of reasonable objectives.

The continuity should be guaranteed by "the abilities that have to be acquired, the conception of a certain pedagogical approach and an intensification of contacts between elementary and intermediate teachers". The contents are still those formulated in the circulaire from September 1991. It is stressed that if there is too big a difference between the approach in the elementary and the intermediate levels, the children will be confused and discouraged. It is therefore regarded as important to adopt a language teaching philosophy which sees the language "not as an object of study, not only as a school subject, but as a means of expression in which doing and speaking cannot be separated".

The highest priority shall be given to the development of oral comprehension. The document notes that while oral comprehension is particularly important, the development of oral expression should not be neglected, and that there should be a hierarchy of

45. Ibid.
46. Une politique pour les langues vivantes (published by the Direction de l'information et de la communication, Ministère de l'Education Nationale), January 20, 1993.
priorities. The Ministry argues that if all European countries were to choose oral comprehension as the most important aim of language education, communication would be greatly facilitated, as each would speak its own language but understand several others.

The children should acquire abilities in domains classified as oral comprehension, oral expression, written language, culture, and cognitive domain. Further documents that are to specify the contents of each domain of competency have been announced but not been made available yet.

As we see, this latest document is less concrete as regards the procedures, and more precise about the objectives. In particular, the language philosophy chosen has now been expressed: absolute priority is given to comprehension, first of all of the spoken language, but also of the written language. This philosophy is gaining popularity in Europe and is more and more influencing the language pedagogies. Further, elementary level language education is not seen as preparation for intermediate level language education any more, but the continuity of the development from *cours moyen* to the end of the observatory cycle (the second year of intermediate school) has to be developed. The documents and ideas of the Ministry have become more concrete and more realistic.

A new government has been built after the elections of March 1993, but it is not likely that it will completely change the course of development of language politics its predecessor installed. Nevertheless, the commotion caused by this change could slow down the work on publications. Furthermore, the new attitude towards budgetary priorities may shrink the education budget and thereby impede the generalization that had been planned.

As I have said, the generalization had been decided upon after the evaluation of the experimentation. I thus turn to see the conclusions to which this evaluation has come, and how they are linked to the new direction of the Ministry's policy.

2.3.2.5. The evaluation

As the experimentation ‘language instruction in elementary schools’ was started in 1989, an evaluation was planned which would decide about the possibilities and the modes of generalization of such a language instruction. This evaluation took place during the
second year (1990-1991) and was controlled by the *Inspection Générale de l'Éducation Nationale*. The document (*Evaluation de l'extension de l'enseignement des langues vivantes, 1990-1991*) contains two parts: 1) the extension of language instruction in the elementary school, and 2) the continuation in the intermediate school.

2.3.2.5.1. The extension of language instruction in elementary school

The evaluation of the extension of language instruction in elementary schools is first a quantitative evaluation based on the changes between the first and the second years of the experimentation. A *note d'information* published in September 1992, and the document *Une politique pour les langues*, from January 1993, followed the further development. From those sources we can summarize the development as follows:

The number of pupils who had foreign language instruction in elementary school was:

- in 1989-1990: 132,476 *cours moyen* pupils, or approximately 10% of this level (3.3% of all elementary school children), in 3,813 schools;

- in 1990-1991: 271,704, or approximately 20% (4.7%), in 6,635 schools;

- in 1991-1992: 328,512, or approximately 23% (5.7%), in 8,145 schools;

- in 1992-1993, it is estimated that 27% of *cours moyen* children are learning a foreign language (AFP, 1992).

The priority given to CM2 can be seen in the increasing numbers: in 1989-1990, 7.5% of CM1 and 12.5% of CM2 children were involved in the project; in 1990-1991, it was, respectively, 13.1% and 25.9%; in 1991-1992, 14.9% and 31.8%; in 1992-1993, there were around 38% CM2 pupils (AFP, 1992).

47. The numbers given in the different sources vary somewhat, although they all have been published by the Ministry of Education. I have chosen the most recent figures, as they may be the most accurate. Some newer information about the situation for the school years 1991-1992 and 1992-1993 come from the press.
- Need for teachers' education

Although there is an increase, it has slowed down. This is mainly due to a lack of qualified teachers. The evaluation for 1990-1991 shows that the number of teachers involved has not increased as quickly as the number of children, and that therefore a teacher now has an average class of 36 pupils, whereas he had only 30 pupils in 1989-1990. Also, most teachers are intermediate teachers who, more or less voluntarily, teach elementary classes. Because it is important that elementary teachers do most of this instruction in order to embed it fully in the programme, the Ministry is emphasizing the importance of teachers' education: "it is in concentrating our attention and financial efforts on teachers' education that middle-term progress can be made" (Evaluation, p. 14).

Indeed, the number of elementary teachers involved has steadily - although slowly - risen (20.46% in 1989-1990, 22.5% in 1990-1991 and 25% in 1991-1992) and the number of intermediate teachers has decreased (62.15% in 1989-1990, 60.3% in 1991-1992), as has the number of external instructors (17.4% in 1989-1990, 14.69% in 1991-1992). Nevertheless, an immense effort is still required if, in a more or less distant future, all 66,000 now existing cours moyen classes (representing about 1.5 million children) are to have foreign language instruction (in 1992-1993, 15,400 classes - 4,600 CM1 and 10,800 CM2 - were learning a foreign language).

Presently, elementary teachers' education is provided mainly in the Ecoles normales d'instituteurs, where student-teachers enter directly after graduating from high school. In 1990, the first Instituts universitaires de formation des maîtres (IUFM) were opened; these are meant to replace the Ecoles normales and to integrate teachers' education into the universities. In the Ecoles normales, language instruction is supplied very unevenly, being compulsory only in a part of them. The schools that offer this instruction rarely have more than two hours of it per week. The programme of the IUFM is still in an experimentation phase and the language instruction is similar to that of the Ecoles normales (optional, two hours a week); its advantage is that the student-teachers enter the IUFM after having graduated from university at the licence level (three years of studies) and some of them may come from language sections. The report states: "in its present state, the teachers' initial education in a foreign language is not matching the needs" (43).

Another form of teachers' education is the training of teachers who are already teaching. Intermediate teachers of a foreign language who teach in elementary schools are
to be taught the pedagogical peculiarities of elementary schools, while elementary teachers have to improve their linguistic knowledge.

- Language choice

A further quantitative aspect of the evaluation is the language choice. Although English has slightly regressed, it still dominates the experimentation, with 78.34% of the children choosing English in 1991-1992 (76.3% in 1990-1991 and 80.7% in 1989-1990). German, with a 16.7% share in 1991-1992, comes second, in a slight increase from 15.2% in the first year. Spanish has also increased, from 3.09% in 1989-1990 to 4.09% last year. Then come Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Arabic and some other languages such as Chinese and Polish, none of them passing the 1% mark. The distribution of languages other than English is very often determined geographically: for example, Spanish is stronger in the southwest and Italian in the southeast of France. Interestingly, the many projects of German instruction in Alsatian elementary schools are not listed as part of the experimentation. Had those classes counted, the percentage of German learning pupils would be higher; not only has the Alsace a tradition in bilingual education, but the organization of this education follows rules which are denied to all the other regions and languages (see part 2.4.2.).

In this context, it is to be noted that the evaluation mentions the possible conflicts which can arise between the instruction of foreign languages and that of immigrant languages. Indeed, in schools where, for example, Italian or Spanish are offered as immigrant languages, the demand for enseignement précoce in these languages may be too small to create a class, and up to now, no official regulation has recognized the possibility of combining the two kinds of instruction, although some schools have experimented with it. Although the evaluation recognizes the problem, no inquiry has been made and it is difficult to estimate the real dimension of the problem.

In the context of the language choice and of the dominance of English, the evaluation raises further questions:

Should the accomplished fact be accepted and English be chosen as the sole foreign language in elementary schools? Or should we, without theoretically accepting it, tolerate in fact the regression of the other languages and undergo the consequences this would have for the 6th grade classes? Should we further analyze the consequences of the teaching of a language in elementary school, which is then interrupted during the 6th and 7th grades
and taken anew in the 8th grade? Should we consider heavy modifications which, although requiring important political decisions, would be worthy of consideration and would lead to the teaching of two foreign languages in the 6th grade? (12)

The authors conclude this paragraph with the acknowledgement that those questions follow from the "central definition problem of a general language instruction policy in the school system" (12). Without doubt, this 'central definition problem' means a lack of definition.

- Pedagogical and didactic aspects

The evaluation gives a more qualitative view on the question of the pedagogical and didactic aspects of the experimentation. Again, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, the term 'initiation-teaching' has produced two different interpretations, depending on whether the main accent is put on teaching or on initiation: one strategy favouring teaching has a linguistic and didactic dominance, the other favouring initiation is a cognitive strategy which emphasizes familiarization and opening to the world. Those two different interpretations are only another aspect of the fundamental tension in the experimentation which has arisen between the two main objectives: the objective of efficacy and the objective of diversification.

The authors of the evaluation see the present (1990-1991) situation as a paradox: on the one hand, those who believe familiarization to be preferable in an ideal situation seem a minority, but on the other hand, given the lack of competent teachers, this method has to be considered if everybody agrees on the importance of the secondary skills in language instruction.

In the classrooms, the teachers seem to lack a certain long-range perspective. For example, in schools where foreign language instruction is offered in both CM1 and CM2, there is little progression and difference between the two levels. The list of communication situations given by the Ministry (circulaire from June 1989) does not provide a methodical progression because it does not take into account the complexity of the required linguistic structures. Further, if a textbook is chosen as a method of progression, it cannot reflect the lived context of the classroom, which is so important to incorporate in child-centred teaching. Nevertheless, many teachers - probably for lack of

48. Recall that the second foreign language is usually started in the 8th grade.
better guidance - are found to rely heavily on textbooks. But the evaluation observes that, between the cases of servile dependency on a textbook and those of absolute autonomy from any given outside structure, most teachers use textbooks intelligently, incorporating classroom situations or leaving out some elements which are seen to be unnecessary. The reasons given for using a textbook are mainly: 1) a wish for clarity, 2) the necessity to simplify the evaluation and the comparison to other classes and schools, and 3) the lack of time, especially of the itinerant language teachers who can teach in up to eight different schools (33).

Methodologically seen, the teachers all make use of diverse activities within a class. Although this diversity is important to motivate young children and keep their attention, it can often lead to two main difficulties: 1) a series of activities that are not integrated in a organizational scheme and do not lead to a precise objective, and 2) a lack of balance between the different activities. In the first case, although the children may enjoy the diversity and the changes, the authors of the evaluation had an impression of 'dispersion and open-endedness' (35), which cannot lead to adequate language acquisition. In the second case, the lack of balance seems mainly influenced by the 'first generation of audio-visual methods', leading to an overemphasis on repetition and to a lack of transfer activities.

Beside those difficulties, the authors could envision a better use and organization of objectives. Further, they noticed that teachers had a greater understanding of the importance of comprehension. It is not yet acknowledged by all, but teachers increasingly see "the development of the understanding abilities [...] as a priority" (36). This recognition leads to a greater use of narratives, which in turn efficiently trains the children to develop understanding strategies, as they do not have to focus on language production.

- Motivation and skills other than linguistic ones

In the eyes of the pupils, the experimentation is a success. They show great motivation and evident joy while working. It seems that this is mostly due to the methods used in the language class: new, attractive methods, using a great diversity of activities, most of them of a game type, appealing to the children. Furthermore, the language class has no tests, evaluations or homework. Consequently, a school director notes that "the children are becoming more demanding in the other school subjects" (37). The evaluation
concludes from the observation of the pupils that the psychological and behavioural objectives of the enseignement précoce are met; furthermore, they observed a greater self-confidence, an increased curiosity, a habit of concentrated listening, and widespread cooperative work strategies. In this context, the authors regret that in too many schools, the language instruction stays a separate subject that is not integrated with the rest of the school subjects and activities. There are several reasons for this, such as indifference or even hostility of the other teachers towards the language teacher, language teachers who are exclusively concerned with a linguistic progression, too little consultation between the language teachers of a region, and too little time for itinerant teachers to contact and work with the other teachers of a school.

- Linguistic results

Finally, the evaluation touches on the linguistic results of the experimentation and there expresses the greatest doubts. It seems that positive results are only registered in extremely positive situations: a highly qualified teacher teaches under highly favourable conditions (four weekly classes of thirty minutes, efficient collaboration with the school director, teamwork with the teachers at the intermediate level, exchange with a foreign school). No positive results were shown in situations where one or more of the conditions cited above was missing (40). However, the evaluation itself notes that the children were measured only by their production, which indeed demands optimal conditions; understanding capacity was not tested. Although they remark on this failure of the evaluation, the authors cite evaluators who said that "the children learn slowly, reproduce only with difficulties the foreign sounds and cannot understand or memorize without cognitive help" (41). They go on to say that "it is with the capacity to build sentences that linguistic autonomy starts [... and] only exceptional cours moyen children attain a spurt of autonomy [... Finally] the most clear and durable achievement of the initiation is more of a psychological than of a linguistic nature" (41).

We can be somewhat surprised about this conclusion, as the authors themselves recognized the deficiency of the evaluation. If the experimentation is to concentrate on developing the perception and understanding capacities of the children, why has only the production been tested? Moreover, why is the conclusion so negative in the linguistic aspect? This is clearly an inconsistency in this evaluation, and thus one of its major flaws. The development of comprehension has been stressed and recognized as the most
important objective, but comprehension has not been tested and the conclusions of the linguistic achievements of the experimentation are based only on the productive capacities of the children. Although based on such shaky ground, these conclusions have of course been broadly discussed in the press, and are presented by the opponents of the project as the proof of its unnecessary character.

Of course, the evaluation does not proclaim any verdicts on the project as a whole, nor does it directly question the decision to generalize it; the Ministry has already decided that the project will be continued and only wants an opinion about how to continue it. Indeed, this point is evoked in the introduction, as it is said that the Ministry was involved in the evaluation; the authors see their role as to "prepare the development" (4) of the project, which is still in its experimental phase, and not to impartially judge a pedagogical programme.

- Conclusion of the evaluation

The final conclusion of the document is a list of priorities that have to be set in order to be able to continue the experimentation. Those are: 1) educate language teachers better and in a greater numbers; 2) improve the integration of the language instruction in all the activities of the cours moyen; and 3) organize the transition between elementary and intermediate school. It is stressed that qualitative progress must be made, and that the greatest problem lies in the lack of qualified teachers.

The last paragraph of the conclusion seems contradictory:

The responsible administration has to make a choice between the cost of an elementary school teachers' education programme that could satisfy the demand that would arise from a generalization of the project and the cost of additional posts implied by the systematic use of secondary teachers.

This choice is not only a question of budget, it would mean a choice of the pedagogical and didactic orientation of the project. Although elementary school teachers are better prepared to integrate language instruction with the other objectives of the elementary school, the secondary teachers can better guarantee the continuity between the two levels. The main objective of the experimentation is a linguistic objective; it is an objective of efficacy that responds to a social demand. It would be a mistake to set the objectives of this teaching only at the level of primary school, because the public opinion will judge the project to be a success or a failure by the ability the pupils will show when they leave school, at whatever level that may be, to communicate in a foreign language. (45; italics in the original)
I find this conclusion contradictory because after the authors of the evaluation have acknowledged in the document that the most important objective of the project is to develop the understanding abilities in the foreign language, they now base their conclusion on the ‘social demand’ and redefine the objective of the project as ‘an objective of efficacy’ whereby ‘efficacy’ is measured by the level of communication abilities attained. Clearly, ‘communication’ is here used to mean the ability to speak and understand.

How can we explain this evident contradiction? It is again due to the gradual changes of the objectives of the programme. The Ministry had started, in response to public demand, with the aim that the children should be able to communicate, as the first circulaires have shown. The reality of the experimentation then showed that a lack of qualified teachers and an insufficiently defined set of concrete objectives made this aim unreachable, especially in elementary school. A review of pedagogical priorities led to the conclusion that a development of the comprehension abilities is a pedagogically sound objective, which may actually be attained in elementary school, and so this was adopted as a new goal. The evaluation, however, judged the progress in language production by the end of elementary school, and might have come to a different conclusion had it really examined comprehension skills.

Apart from this, the conclusion of the evaluation is that a well-organized continuation of the programme in secondary school could lead to better overall linguistic abilities. But, although many secondary teachers teach in those elementary language classes, the acquired knowledge of the pupils is seldom taken into account when they come into secondary school.

The contribution of the language classes to the general cognitive development of the children is still not recognized and the language classes are not integrated into the curriculum.

The evaluators had to - and did - recognize those problems, as shown by the three priorities formulated (see above); but it seems that they were too much restricted by the general weakness of the project - by its unclear objectives. Because this project has been conceived as a reaction to public opinion, it constantly balances between the expectations of this opinion and the judgements of experts. The experts tend to offer solutions which do not match the public demand; but instead of constructing a programme that
realistically takes those solutions into account and telling the public what can be realized and what is Utopian, the Ministry cannot decide which side to choose. This leads to the kind of 'conclusion' formulated in the evaluation.

It seems that the government intends to define more clearly the objectives of a new language policy (see chapter 2.3.2.4.) and also to defend them. Indeed, the value of the project can only be judged by the way it integrates itself in the whole school curriculum, as well in the elementary and secondary levels. The importance of the continuity between the two levels has been recognized in the evaluation, which devoted a whole special unit to the question.

2.3.2.5.2. The lack of continuity in intermediate school

As I concentrate in this thesis on elementary school, I will not discuss the details of the evaluation of the continuity in the intermediate school, except to present the main conclusions, which are important for the project as a whole.

The conclusion of this part of the evaluation is clear: the continuity of the language teaching between CM2 and the 6th grade is poor. Only 21% of all children who had language classes were assigned to initiated classes; the remaining 79% were mixed with beginners. Further, the teachers who had to teach those classes (mixed or not) were not prepared to do so. They did not know the knowledge the initiated children were supposed to have, and had not been pedagogically trained to teach mixed classes. Not only were most of them unprepared, but many did not accept the situation: they did not really want to know what the children had already learned, and did not want to change their habits and practice. Very few schools were flexible enough to offer special classes or to change their timetables in order to accommodate the linguistically initiated children.

Here, the authors take a clearer position than in the general evaluation of the project and formulate a warning: the past has shown that the lack of continuity between elementary and secondary level has always been the reason for the failure of new programmes, especially language programmes; and the organization of this continuity has

to become a priority for the secondary schools. They support their conclusion in the concrete situation as follows: "Specialists' reports on the experiments that have been done in France and abroad since 1954 show that the mixing in the same class of children with preliminary [language] knowledge and beginners always leads within a short period of time to the disappearance of the linguistic knowledge acquired during an early initiation" (6), and that "the establishing of groups that consist entirely of children who have had foreign language instruction in the elementary school [...] is one of the key elements for the success of the project, if its objective is linguistic efficacy" (6).

Several reasons for the fracture between the two levels are given:

1) many educators fear that a regrouping, and thus a different treatment, of the children who had language instruction in elementary school could lead to a selective stream within the secondary school;

2) many (especially secondary school directors) do not trust the instruction given in elementary school;

3) teachers have not been prepared to receive children with preliminary knowledge;

4) the organization has failed, which means that most children who came into secondary school with preliminary knowledge could not be grouped into same-level classes.

The first two items are based on subjective opinions loaded with prejudices and ideology. The fear of selection originates in the ideal of the equality of chances and treatment for all in state schools. This is the philosophy that motivated the teachers in the time of Jules Ferry, and which is of course still important in a democratic society. While providing equal chances for all is indisputably the only just procedure, equality of treatment seems to be an ideological by-product. There is enough pedagogical evidence confirming the opinion that the different talents and personalities of different children require a more flexible, individual treatment. Not everyone learns in the same way, and a different treatment of different learners may be more just than a uniform one, as long as different treatment is not preferred treatment for some. For the selection of initiated children into separate groups, however, the whole question of equal treatment seems a little beside the point, as this selection has the merely experimental purpose to see
whether a continuous foreign language education that starts earlier can improve pupil achievement, and there is no doubt that all children will benefit from the *enseignement précoce* if the experiment yields satisfactory results. Although the evaluation has made clear that a discontinuity resulting from ‘non-selection’ makes the entire experimentation pointless, this problem is political and may be difficult to solve.

The two other points refer to organizational problems, which should be easier to overcome. One has to remember that since the evaluation has been done in the second year of the experimentation, it was only the first year that the secondary school had been faced with it. The failure to regroup the children properly is only one item on a whole list of organizational deficiencies that impeded a smooth transition between elementary and secondary school.

2.3.2.6. Generalization of the project - Present discussion

The Ministry seems to have opted for a generalization of early language instruction and its objectives are clearly to produce citizens who are able to communicate at least in one foreign language. This objective is, on the one hand, more restricted than the ones formulated by earlier Ministers, but on the other hand, more precise, especially as it stresses the importance of the development of the listening comprehension in order to attain rapidly a functional communicative ability. In doing so, the government follows the European idea and wants to prepare the French population for the new Europe. At the same time, it has become more realistic and does not give in to public pressure to produce absolutely bilingual individuals through school instruction.

The evaluation has shown that the project *enseignement d'une langue vivante étrangère à l'école élémentaire* still faces many problems. Most of them are organizational, some lie in individual prejudices and reticences. It is difficult to say how the individual opinions are going to change, although positive results could possibly convince many.

Those results are still being discussed. The authors of the evaluation have classified them under listening comprehension, reading comprehension and oral expression. They say:
There is almost a unanimous opinion about the advantages of initiated children in the domain of listening comprehension. The pupil who has received a language initiation [in elementary school] understands an oral message faster and better; his immediate memory capacities are better, as is his ability to reproduce sounds. He does not seem to be disoriented - at least less than his beginner schoolmate - by the confrontation with the unknown. His listening concentration is greater, when listening both to the tape, and to the teacher or other pupils.

In the domain of reading comprehension, the advantages are not so clear. Although the initiated pupils can recognize correspondences between picture and text better, the advantage of the initiated pupils tends to disappear when comprehension is linked with inference or the ability to recognize implicit information.

In oral expression, the 'will to say' has to be distinguished from the 'ability to say'. The first is without doubt very strong in [initiated] pupils. They try to communicate [...]. They do not hesitate, they take risks, they are not inhibited by the fear of mistakes. They learn the minimum linguistic elements which enables them to ask questions and obtain informations faster than the others. [...] They easily speak out, they can concentrate well and be attentive, they are conscious of the functioning of the language, especially of their first language, they have a sense for relativity, recognize the right to difference, they are curious about other countries [...]. (25-26)

At the same time, they point out one controversial aspect of the project:

The emphasis put on the playful side [of learning] tends to give the children a false idea about language learning. To learn a foreign language in a country where it is not spoken calls for effort, the acceptance of constraints, sometimes fastidious repetitions and revisions, [and] regular evaluations which are not always valorizing.[...] The young and enthusiastic learners are not aware of this. [Secondary] teachers deplore the restive behaviour towards continuous effort. It is reasonable to fear that to a joyous present there will follow a less enchanting future. (26)

It seems quite obvious that the main difficulties come from teachers who do not accept the more lenient ways of the communicative method, which incorporate the playful elements in more structured learning. Nevertheless, many are overwhelmed by the motivation of the children and the problem is now more how to keep this motivation alive. This is a question more of the teachers than of the methods; to this, the authors of the evaluation cite pupils: "What we would like to have is teachers who motivate us" (24). But this is a problem that goes beyond language education itself and touches the whole school system.
Most organizational problems linked to the extension of the *enseignement précoce* will probably be resolved as the project develops, but the lack of qualified teachers is not likely to be resolved quickly. As France is presently lacking teachers in general, it is difficult to see how elementary teachers with sufficient language knowledge could be trained in a short period of time. Pupils who graduate now have a relatively low foreign language proficiency, which has to be improved before they can themselves be trained to teach others. As the authors of the evaluation pointed out, only the continuous involvement of secondary school teachers at the elementary level can assure the continuity, although this should be seen as an emergency solution. The government has recognized the priority of teachers' education; the future will show if actions will follow.

2.3.3. Conclusion

The numerous evaluations made on behalf of the Ministry of the experimentations which started in the 1950s all point to the necessity of an improvement in teachers' education, the importance of pedagogical continuity and coherence and of guaranteed continuity in secondary school for linguistically initiated children, and of enough time and good integration into the regular curriculum (i.e., efficient collaboration with the teachers of other subjects). But the government seemed to see the necessity of starting a whole new experiment, then to evaluate it and decide about the feasibility of a generalization. The reasons for such seemingly irrational behaviour are without doubt largely political; further, the concept of a centrally organized experimentation fitted the French institutional system better than the 'anarchistic' development of the earlier projects. But couldn't the decisions have been made on the basis of analysis of earlier evaluations and of currently running projects? Without doubt, this would have saved much time. As teachers' education has always been seen as the most urgent problem, efforts made earlier in this direction would have been much more effective.

Nevertheless, the Ministry showed a clear willingness to lower the age of first foreign language contact in the schools, to formulate objectives and to organize a new teachers' education system. Although the results of the last evaluation were not as positive as some would have liked them to be, one may expect that, once the organizational conditions and didactic methods improve due to the longer duration of the project, the
two more years of language instruction will have positive effects on the language level of the children.

2.4. REGIONAL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

2.4.1. The laws regulating the instruction of regional languages

We remember that the Revolution had made French the only official language in the French territory and that the development of the elementary school in the 19th century made it possible to implement this policy. It was only in 1951 that languages other than French were officially recognized as existing in the French territory: the Deixonne law (law no. 51-46), passed on January 11, 1951 and named after the member of parliament who proposed it, made it possible to teach regional languages in the elementary schools (Grau, 1987:149). But the teaching was on a voluntary basis (for the parents and pupils as well as for the teachers⁵⁰) and was restricted to Breton, Basque, Catalan and Occitan. The other languages were considered to be official languages of foreign countries (or dialects of those) and thus not specifically French (Falsch, 1973). Only in 1966 did the law come into effect (Boulot & Boizon-Fradet, 1987:166). The Deixonne law was extended to Corsican in 1974 and to Flemish in 1981. German obtained a special status in Alsatian schools in 1952⁵¹. Through the laws from March 2, 1982 and from July 30, 1982, Corsican was further accepted not only as a teaching language but as a “determinant element of the local and regional life of the region of Corsica” (Grau, 1987:149).

The implementation of the Deixonne law was not particularly warmly encouraged by the nationalist government under De Gaulle. Only Giscard d'Estaing (president from 1974 to 1981) introduced the notion of cultural decentralization and signed a series of

⁵⁰. Art. 3: Tout instituteur qui en fera la demande pourra être autorisé à consacrer, chaque semaine, une heure d'activités dirigées à l'enseignement de notions élémentaires de lecture et d'écriture du parler local [...]. Cet enseignement est facultatif pour les élèves.

⁵¹. Through the décret 52-1347 from December 18, 1952 (Enseignement de la langue allemande dans les classes terminales des écoles primaires des communes dont la langue usuelle est le dialecte alsacien) and the arrêté from December 19, 1952 (Enseignement de l'allemand dans les Ecoles primaires d'Alsace).
chartes culturelles (the first one, concerning Alsace, was signed in June 1976) which recognized the cultural identity of the regions and the role of their languages as its central element (Lapierre, 1988).

On July 11, 1975, a new law on education (Law no. 75.620, called ‘loi Haby’, after the Minister of Education at this time) confirmed in its article 12 the Deixonne law and permitted the teaching of the regional languages and cultures from kindergarten up to the baccalauréat\textsuperscript{52}. But until June 21, 1982, and the circulaire of the Minister Savary\textsuperscript{53}, the teaching of the regional language was not so much a teaching as an introduction to language and culture; Savary recognized in this document the status of the regional languages as subjects of instruction in school and university (Lapierre, 1988), and furthermore their importance at the pre-school and kindergarten levels, where they should help in the first contact with French (Hartweg, 1988).

2.4.2. Current situation in the regions

Britanny

As we have seen earlier (part 1.2.1.), like all other regional languages, Breton has suffered much by being banned from public schools. The effects of the Deixonne law were not very convincing because it came too late, and further because the government did not support the initiative strongly enough and the teachers themselves were not necessarily capable of teaching Breton. The Inspection Départementale 1971 described the aim of this ‘language education’ rather soberly:

Nous ne prétendons pas enseigner véritablement le breton mais seulement essayer de sensibiliser les enfants et aussi leurs familles à cette langue. Peut-être alors que, s’apercevant que l’école ne méprise pas le breton, qu’au contraire elle reconnaît ses titres de noblesse, les parents feront en sorte que leurs enfants n’ignorent plus cette culture qui est la leur ou au moins, celle du pays où ils vivent. (Piriou, 1973:20)

However, a private initiative that profited from the experiences of Welsh and Basque schools had a better concept: the Diwan schools, which are now recognized by the

\textsuperscript{52} Article 12: Un enseignement de langues et cultures régionales peut être dispensé tout au long de la scolarité.

\textsuperscript{53} Circulaire 82–261, June 21, 1982.
Ministry of Education. These schools started a Breton immersion programme in kindergarten and had 400 pupils in 1988 (Denez, 1988). They now offer a bilingual elementary programme, but are attended only by about 1,000 children (Dumay, 1993). The implementation of Breton courses at elementary and secondary levels of state schools as well as in the universities assures a continuity. However, both the reticence of the French government and the lack of demand from parents keep Breton in its present state of a language that is not fully recognized as language of instruction. During the school year 1992-1993, 7,343 children (less than 3% of all elementary school children) had Breton classes, and only 4,000 (1%) of them were in secondary school (Dumay, 1993).

The strong voices of some of the supporters of Breton in schools may lead to the wrong impression that this instruction is particularly successful. But the very small number of children affected by it just cannot compare to the majority of those who are not, either by choice or by lack of possibilities.

Occitania

The intellectual movement that had promoted the revival of Occitan and had become politically active in the 1960s was able to introduce the language into schools and universities, even with some success, although it is difficult to really assess the achievements of the pupils, because they are very unevenly exposed to the language, as the continuity of the teaching is not yet assured everywhere.

The number of pupils that attend Occitan classes may seem impressive (62,597 for elementary schools, 9,270 for secondary [Dumay, 1993]), but Occitania is the largest region in France, covering 33 départements (in comparison, Corsica represents two départements, the French Basque country not even one, and Brittany four). Further, only 15% of the children who had Occitan at the elementary level kept the subject during their secondary years, and many of those who did, did it mainly to get better chances at the baccalauréat! (Molinier, 1985). Those pupils also evoked the affective link to the language (to better know the region where one lives, one likes the language, etc.) as a motivation to keep it in school, but were not able to clearly define this aspect (Molinier, 1985).

Furthermore, even though there exists an orthography that can cover all the dialects, none has officially been chosen for the education. The official programme of the Ministry of Education says:
En ce qui concerne les graphies, on s’efforcera d’adopter des attitudes ouvertes. Pour amener ses élèves à une pratique parlée et écrite de la langue dans sa variété locale, l’enseignant sera évidemment conduit à privilégier une base graphique qu’il déterminera librement en fonction de l’efficacité pédagogique et de l’environnement littéraire et culturel. (Ministère de l’Education Nationale, 1988)

For the baccalauréat test in Occitan, the candidates can choose from Auvergnat, Gascon, Languedocien, Limousin, Nissart, Provençal and Vivaro-alpin. The question is if this diversity is an advantage or an inconvenience for the teaching of the language.

North Catalonia

We have seen that Catalan, unlike Breton and Occitan, benefitted from the support of a strong language community across its border. The Deixonne law nevertheless applied to Catalan too, because at this time the language was forbidden in Franco’s Spain and was therefore seen as ‘purely’ belonging to France. Through the vitality of the language and the relatively large number of its speakers, its instruction was readily and widely introduced in the elementary schools.

A study in 1988 showed that the Catalan programmes were very popular (40% of elementary school children) and the pedagogical coverage almost complete (Bernardo, 1988). Nevertheless, Catalan is not the mother-tongue of the post-war generations anymore. If present at all, there is only a passive knowledge of the language. (Bernardo & Rieu, 1973). But it is interesting that many ‘Neo-Catalans’, that is, people from other regions or even other countries, expressed an interest in learning Catalan.

Nevertheless, the latest official numbers (for the school year 1992-1993) show that only around 25% of school children now take Catalan at the elementary level, and a mere 5% at the secondary level (Dumay, 1993). The teaching has evidently benefitted from the official recognition of Catalan in Spanish Catalonia and the subsequent intensive production of teaching material and books, and so we must ask ourselves why there has been such a drop in attendance over a period of only a few years. Unfortunately, we do not have any further information to explain this change.
French Basque country

Following the introduction of Basque in elementary schools allowed by the Deixonne law, and its extension to the higher level specified in the Haby law, this language is offered in state schools from the first elementary year up to high school graduation, as well as at university. The private school system, which is very important in this religious region, offers Basque as well.

Further, a third school system that originated in the Spanish part of the region, the Iskatola, offers a bilingual education: pre-school and kindergarten are almost exclusively in Basque, then French is introduced. In the sixth year, Spanish is taught, and in the eighth year, English. The greatest difference between the Iskatola and other private regional language schools, like the Diwan schools in Brittany, is that the Iskatola is able to cover almost the complete school duration (up to the tenth year) and offers foreign language instruction besides French and the regional language (Haritschelhar, 1988). Another private bilingual school, Seaska, which covers elementary level, has further been recognized by the Ministry of National Education, and the teachers are subsidized by the state. The only condition the government required was that the children should know French as well as Basque when they finish elementary school (Dumay, 1993).

Basque is studied by 5,563 children at the elementary level, of which 2,479 are in bilingual schools; this is about one-third of the total number of elementary school children. 2,193 students in secondary level learn Basque at school (Dumay, 1993). These numbers show that many children abandon Basque at secondary level, perhaps because that language is not obligatory anymore at this level and the children therefore choose other options which seem more useful to them.

Corsica

Corsican benefitted from the Deixonne law only after 1974, as it was first considered an Italian dialect; this means that it was kept out of the official education system one generation longer than the other regional languages we have just treated.

The language is now taught from elementary school to university, although the situation is far from satisfactory to the advocates of Corsican. In consideration of the still strong autonomist movement, and probably in an attempt to compensate the late
recognition of the language, the government announced that Corsican should officially be taught in all elementary and secondary schools from the year 1993 on, giving it thus a special status in comparison to the other regional languages.

In the school year 1992-1993, around 50% of elementary school children have at least one hour of Corsican per week, but only 14% have the mandatory 3 hours per week (Dumay, 1993). Although many keep Corsican in the first years of secondary school (50%), only 17% still have it in the last year (although 30% choose it as optional subject for the baccalauréat [Dumay, 1992]). It is therefore questionable if enough teachers will be available to carry out the government's decision, and further, if enough interest will be shown in order to constitute classes in all schools.

French Flanders

Flemish, considered a part of the linguistic community of Flemish-Belgium, was not affected by the Deixonne law. It was only in 1982 that the language was introduced in high school. The language that is taught in school, however, is the normed version of Flemish, the algemeen besehaafd nederlands (ABN, common cultured Dutch)(Dupas, 1975:122). But as Flemish (or ABN) is not a university subject, the training of the teachers is very difficult. In the project 'enseignement international et bilingue' started in 1983 in the region Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Dutch is offered with the help of Belgian teachers, but the demand is relatively small (Inspection Académique du Nord, 1992a). In the frame of the enseignement précoce project, Flemish does not appear in the list of the languages represented in the département Nord (Inspection Académique du Nord, 1992b), although a teachers' conference cited some experiences with this language in the project (Raffi Béroud, 1990:27-28).

Alsace

After the Second World War, the teaching of German was at first forbidden in all elementary schools. As Alsatian is a dialect of German, which was itself the official language of a foreign country, it was not affected by the Deixonne law, and the demands of the parents for its reintroduction were successful only in 1952, when a decree reintroduced the teaching of German in the regions where Alsatian was spoken (départements of Haut-Rhin, Bas-Rhin and Moselle)(Falsch, 1973).
Although Alsatian is used to facilitate the passage from family to school in preschool and kindergarten, elementary education is in French. German is then introduced in the third year, with a method based on Alsatian to give the children the opportunity to use their linguistic knowledge. It has been shown statistically that the level of achievement in German for high school students is much higher here than on average in France, although until now no method has been offered at secondary level that really takes into account the linguistic background of the children, or even their elementary instruction (Hartweg, 1988). However, much has been done in the parallel vocational teaching, where the knowledge of Alsatian has been concretely used to improve the knowledge of German and thus enable the youth to take advantage of the German employment market.

German is learned by 44% of all schoolchildren (82,432 children in elementary schools and 66,826 in secondary schools). At elementary level, the courses usually start with Alsatian and later change to German, but often only German is taught. It is worth noting that the experimentation *enseignement précoce* did not concern Alsace, as its special status already had permitted the quasi-generalization of language instruction in the *cours moyen*.

Since 1991, several kindergarten and elementary schools have offered an intensified German instruction. Those courses start in kindergarten with three half-hours per week given by a German teacher. This frequency is continued in the first year of elementary school; in the second year, the children have two and a half hours of German per week, and in the third year 6 hours, of which 2 hours are subjects taught in German (Ecoles Maternelle et Elementaire de Jebsheim, 1992). It is planned that this frequency will be kept in *cours moyen* and lead to the establishment of a bilingual section of secondary school.

As well, 1,800 children are enrolled in a bilingual elementary programme with 13 hours in French and 13 hours in German (Dumay, 1993). This programme, which was an experimentation until this school year, will be generalized from the school year 1993-1994 on (Charte de l'enseignement bilingue dans les écoles maternelles du département du Haut-Rhin, January 7, 1993). This decision is quite remarkable for France and is highly promising.
2.5. IMMIGRANT LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

A *circulaire* from December 21, 1925, authorized the teaching of foreign languages by foreign teachers in public schools after school hours (Ponty & Masiewisz, 1988:269-270). This regulation was directed towards the teaching of Polish in the mining towns of the north and east of France, where Poles had massively immigrated after World War I, and was the first mention of foreign languages in elementary school after French had been declared the sole language of instruction in the 19th century.

It was only in 1973 that a further agreement was made with the Portuguese government concerning the teaching of Portuguese. Agreements were subsequently made with the Italian and Tunisian (1974), Spanish and Moroccan (1975), Yugoslavian (1977), Turkish (1978) and Algerian (1982) governments concerning their official languages. The *circulaires* from April 9, 1975 and March 30, 1976, were then to regulate all such language instruction (Costa-Lacoux, 1989:88), called *enseignement des langues et cultures d'origine*, or ELCO. Those classes, which run three hours per week and are optional (classes are created when the demand of parents is high enough to constitute a class and a teacher is made available by the country of origin), have four main objectives: 1) maintain the links with the family and social environment, both in France and in the country of origin; 2) get a more objective and precise knowledge about the culture of origin, to avoid stereotypes and often negative images; 3) promote a better affective and psychological balance, which is necessary for education in general and for school success; 4) reach a better knowledge of the language of origin, and thus encourage the learning of French (Costa-Lacoux, 1989:88).

Although the demand was big at first, the classes offered are not attended as much as one may have thought: only around 30% of the children who might potentially be affected by them (about 2.5% of all schoolchildren in France) actually attend them: in 1989-1990, 17.26% took part in integrated classes and an estimated 14.5% in classes offered outside of the regular school time (Boulot & Boyzon-Fradet, 1991c:11). There are several reasons for this. Beside motivations peculiar to nationalities is the difficulty in the choice of the language(s) to be taught in a specific school (in certain schools, there may be so many that a clear majority cannot be found). Further, those programmes have been

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54. "Enseignements de langues nationales à l'intention d'élèves immigrés dans le cadre du tiers-temps des écoles élémentaires".
criticized as regards pedagogical concerns. Varro has summarized the main critiques as follows:

1. when ELCO is integrated in the school time, it cuts across other subjects (physical education, arts, computer knowledge, French, etc.) and the children miss them;

2. at the same time, when ELCO is given outside of the school time, its facultative and marginal character is emphasized [...], a factor that turns many away from enrollment;

3. sent and paid by their state, the teachers teach the official languages of the country of origin, which often are not those spoken in the immigrant family (Neapolitan, Catalan, Kurdish, dialectal Arabic, Kabyle, etc.);

4. the foreign teachers have little contact with the French teaching team and their methods are considerably different, especially in questions of discipline. Generally it is unknown if they have any qualification at all to teach their language;

5. among them, Muslim teachers have been suspected to use ELCO to proselytize [...] although the contents proposed by certain countries like Turkey and Morocco are explicit [...]. It is, for example, planned to offer:
   - by Turkey: a chapter called religious knowledge, with the objective that the children "accept the moral principles of Islam";
   - by Morocco: twenty minutes of each class for the study of the Koran and twenty more for Islamic teaching, in order to "give emigrant children, through the study of the Arabic language, the Islamic and patriotic teaching, the possibility to read and write the Arabic language [...], as well as to bring them closer to the religious and cultural heritage of their country";

6. The most serious critique is without doubt the fact that there exists no continuity for the 'rare' languages (like Arabic) in the school system, so that children have difficulties continuing their language study in secondary school. Some of them continue at university, but only a small number succeed. The Minister of Education has shown his concern for the sinking level of Arabic ELCO in the face of France's lack of Arabic specialists [...]. (Varro, 1992:146-147)

Another important aspect in this discussion is the one of the 'status' of the different languages. The so-called immigrant languages are associated with their speakers and therefore socially stigmatized. An Arabian professor of a grande école summarizes the situation as follows: 'There exists in France a problem linked to the status of the Arabic
language. It is the language of the immigrants. Young people would rather learn English, the language of success" (Bassam-Tahhan, in Varro, 1992:140).

As we have seen in chapter 1.3., the variety of languages ‘imported’ by immigration is large. However, although small communities can make use of their language in the private domain, only the larger communities can influence the school system by the number of their demands.

**Polish**

Due to the special situation of the Polish community between the two world wars (important concentration of families in relatively few places), Polish was allowed in the elementary schools from 1924 on - the first of any language other than French. In the evening, Polish teachers could teach the children their language. Further, in the private schools of the mining societies, which had more freedom in the organization of their curriculum, Polish courses were integrated in the normal school time. The *circulaire* from December 1925 on the teaching of immigrant languages in state schools concerned of course only Polish children, but set a framework for the later development of immigrant language instruction: an agreement had been made with the Polish government, which sent and paid Polish teachers; the classes could be held in the schools but only after regular classes (Ponty & Masiewisz, 1988:269-270). Polish is not taught in the scope of ELCO anymore as the number of new Polish immigrants is much too small to produce enough children to form language classes.

**Arabic**

Arabic on the one hand benefits from its status as a foreign language in the school system, but is on the other hand disadvantaged by its association with the immigrant community. But the most difficult aspect of its instruction in the framework of ELCO is that the language taught is the official language: classical Arabic, because the language teachers are directly sent by the countries of origin and the content of the teaching defined by those governments. The children who attend those classes come from families where dialectal Arabic is spoken. Many of them already have difficulty with French and find themselves in a situation where they have the impression that they know neither their own language nor French properly. Needless to say, the motivation of those
children who have been enrolled on the demand of their parents is very low and the results of such courses pedagogically not particularly positive.

*Spanish*

Even before the government offered Spanish in elementary schools, the Spanish community had been active and organized language courses for its children, either in community associations, or through private Spanish schools. In 1971, the Spanish government organized courses for children attending French schools. In 1975, Spanish was then offered in the framework of the ELCO (Taboada Leonetti, 1988:214). The linguistic level of the children is usually high, as their relation to Spanish is normally positive (language of communication at home, frequent visits to Spain, high status of the Spanish language) and the teachers are well trained.

*Italian*

We have seen in Chapter 1.3.2. that the Italians did not seem to be particularly interested in keeping their language of origin. Although Italian, as a European language, has been officially taught in schools at the secondary level for many years, and there are an estimated 3 million French citizens of Italian origin and 500,000 Italians living in France, only 2% of all schoolchildren learn it (Véglianté, 1988:239). In ELCO, Italian children partly face the same problem as the North African children: because of the widespread presence of dialects, the language they are confronted with in school (the official 'high' Italian) is not the language they hear at home.

*Portuguese*

Although Portuguese was the first language (except for Polish) to be taught in elementary schools for Portuguese children (*circulaire* from February 2, 1973), and although it is a world language, has an official place as a foreign language in the education system, and is still widely used in the Portuguese community, it is not particularly strongly represented in the schools. We have seen some reasons for this in chapter 1.3.2. Further, as the situation of ELCO marginalizes the children who take part, and is often offered only after regular school hours, parents may think that children who have other school problems should not bear another burden. At secondary level, the choice has to be made between the mother-tongue and a language of international communication
like English; further, a secondary school will offer Portuguese only if the demand is high enough. As very few non-Portuguese speakers choose it and the Portuguese community is not necessarily concentrated in particular districts, the demand is mostly insufficient.

Outlook

When ELCO was created, the policy of the government was to 'positively distinguish' minorities in order to secure their identity and compensate for socially negative discrimination. We have seen that this policy has been refuted by the present government, which regards integration and a 'right to indifference' as the only solutions to the social crisis. In January 1991, the interministerial committee on integration judged ELCO:

Those classes, intended only for children of immigrant families, are, in the reality, a factor of discrimination, and not of integration. (Le Monde de l'Education, December 1991:34)

Indeed, the demand for ELCO has been decreasing regularly in the last years. The government diplomatically defers to the parents and takes no decision, neither towards a support nor a possible suppression of this kind of teaching. Furthermore, the idea that a special treatment of immigrants, if effective in other countries, is probably not advisable in France, has been uttered more often since the enthusiasm of the 1970s has diminished. For example:

The evaluation of the effects of bilingual education [for immigrants] has led to passionate debates. But advocates and opponents both conclude that the results are ambiguous and cannot be interpreted outside of the political dimensions of the interethnic relations of each country. This explains the school failure of Finnish children in Sweden and their success in Australia, the successful results of Indian children in Great Britain and the poor results of the children from the West Indies, although they have already passed the level of the Afro-Americans in the United States. Bilingual education does not have the same significance in Great Britain and in the United States. This leads me to the conclusion that in the French system, which is based on the formal equality of the children and the non-recognition of their specificities, an introduction of particular treatments for certain categories of children can only be felt and lived by them as a stigmatization. (Schnapper, 1992:154)

In its current form, the future of ELCO seems to be bleak. Considering the difficulties and especially the unsolved pedagogical questions of this kind of instruction, it
seems obvious that a new solution has to be found: it is not the teaching of immigrant languages that should be challenged, but the way it is done.

2.6. FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

The government created a system of classes for French as a foreign language for non-Francophone children in elementary schools in cities where the concentration of immigrants was particularly high (circulaire IX-70-37 from January 13, 1970). These classes d'initiation (CLIN) are limited to children aged between 7 and 13 years. Parents are encouraged to enroll younger children in regular kindergarten or in the first year of elementary school. The objective of the special classes is to enable non-Francophone children an integration into the normal school system as quickly as possible.

The classes have three different kind of organization:

- the classe d'initiation running over a whole school year;

- CLIN running over a trimester or a semester. This structure was seen as better adapted to the irregular arrival of immigrants and as speeding up their integration into the regular system, although it was recognized that it could be insufficient in some cases;

- the cours de rattrapage intégré (CRI) especially conceived for younger children who are integrated in regular classes and are having 7 to 8 hours of separate French language classes. (Ministère de l'Education Nationale, 1970)

Through the circulaire from September 25, 1973, similar classes were created in secondary schools under the name classes d'adaptation (CLAD) for children aged 13 to 16 (Aissou, 1990:9).

The circulaire 86-119 from March 13, 1986 emphasizes again that the linguistic difficulties of foreign children that were born in France or arrived at a very young age should not be treated differently than those of other French children with language problems, and that the structures established for French as a foreign language should only
concern non-francophone children recently arrived in the country. It also underlines the necessity of integrating the children as soon as possible in the normal classes; therefore, CLIN should be open and each child should have the individual possibility to join a regular class as soon as his linguistic level permits this. At the secondary level, similar structures are in place.

After the official end of immigration in 1974, the number of children in this kind of language classes has progressively diminished (from 12,000 in 1974 to 2,667 in 1984 [Varro, 1992:145]).

Several critiques have been made of those courses; essentially:

- they use methods conceived for the teaching of French as a foreign language, which are not appropriate for the teaching of French as a school language, and not in a Francophone environment;

- there are no evaluation methods, neither for the entry into nor for the end of those classes; therefore, it is difficult to take into account the previous knowledge of children entering the class, and difficult to evaluate which grade they fit, once the class is completed.

As a result of those difficulties, less than 42% of children who were in CLIN for the school year 1988-1989 were able to integrate into normal classes the following year (Boulot & Boyzon-Fradet, 1991b:17) and less than 20% of children who have been in CLIN manage a normal transition to secondary school (Boulot & Boyzon-Fradet, 1991c:10).

2.7. CONFLICTS OF POLICIES

In 1977, the European Community formulated a 'European convention on the judicial status of migrant workers' (directive 77/486). Article 14 of it stipulated that migrant workers and their families should have the same educational opportunities as national citizens and that the guest country should facilitate the teaching of its own
language to migrant workers and their families (Varro, 1992:145). With its CLIN, CLAD and ELCO programmes, France can claim to satisfy those demands. But we may ask with Varro (1992) if the government would have maintained ELCO until now if it did not amount to an estimated financial saving of 1,400 teacher jobs a year, as those are paid by the countries of origin. Especially in the context of the new integration efforts of the government and its indirect disapproval of ELCO as a discriminatory measure, it is questionable that it will still be offered in the same context in the future.

We have seen that some of the languages taught in the scope of ELCO are also present in the enseignement précoce (for example, Spanish and Italian). This could actually be an advantage. But teachers and school directors complain about the organizational difficulties and the lack of guidance from the Ministry. Indeed, the enseignement précoce was meant not to interfere with the teaching of regional languages nor with ELCO. But practically seen, where enseignement précoce is offered, both ELCO and the teaching of the regional languages tend to recede. A recognition of all the languages in the context of the enseignement précoce could actually be a solution. Indeed, a report to the Ministry of Education from January 1990\(^5\) states:

A greater effort should be made towards a greater diversification of the languages taught in the teaching of foreign languages in elementary schools, the project introduced in 1989 as a controlled experiment. This would enable us to satisfy the demand of certain families, especially those of immigrant origin, to see that at school their children learn a language they are attached to and the knowledge of which can in the future enhance the value of their education. (Hussenet, 1991:55)

An integration of ELCO and enseignement précoce would indeed, on the one hand, enhance the image of the immigrant languages which would be recognized as official teaching languages, and on the other hand, facilitate the organization of language courses (the coordination of different pedagogical structures within one class has always been a great problem, especially with teachers coming from outside). A project in Strasbourg proposes such an integration: all languages should be taught from the CE2 on (and not from the first class, as with ELCO); the classes in all the different languages offered should be planned during the same time schedule, so that the usual class programme is not disturbed and no child misses anything (in ELCO, children may be

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55. 'Rapport Hussenet', given to the Minister of Education in January 1990 by André Hussenet, inspecteur général de l'Education Nationale.
pulled out of the class which then goes on with its usual programme); the languages
should be taught at a frequency of two hours a week (ELCO is now three hours a week),
and for a further one hour the whole class should consider specific cultural aspects of all
the different cultures involved, so that all the children benefit and learn to know other
cultures; further cultural aspects are to be treated in the history, geography and art classes
(Jaco, 1990). Such an organization could indeed resolve many of the problems faced by
school directors in the organization of the different structures.

Similarly, the place of the regional languages will still represent an organizational
problem as long as they are not fully integrated in the curriculum. If they are not, they
may be pushed aside by the demand for foreign languages and the concrete limitation of
school hours. In some regions, this teaching may be incorporated in the foreign language
teaching, as German has been in Alsace, where the classes contain elements of the specific
Alsatian culture. A similar organization could be possible with Catalan, Basque, Corsican,
and Dutch. The status and teaching of languages specific to the French territory (Occitan,
Breton) has to be reexamined.
3. POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES

We have seen that the French government, under the pressure of the necessities of the international situation as well as of internal demands, has redefined a language policy which recognizes the importance of language knowledge. The decision to introduce language instruction in elementary school is one of the most important elements of this policy. Nevertheless, the evaluations do not seem to promise results that could satisfy both the expectations of the society and the necessity of the new international relations, especially of the European unity. Many other countries face the same problems and have tried to resolve them, some of them with original methods.

Traditionally, foreign languages have been taught in the same way as classical languages, by the so-called grammar-translation method. This method, still more or less in use today, had as its main objective the knowledge of grammatical rules and an understanding (that is, in this case, the ability to translate) of the written language. Besides the fact that the method is not particularly motivating - some say that it is boring - it was usually able, given an adequate number of years, to lead to the given objectives. The problem was, and is, that the students of this method could not speak, and seldom understood the spoken foreign language they had been studying; in short, they were unable to communicate effectively in this language.

Over the years, different new methods have been tried to compensate for this deficiency. The most influential one, especially in the school system, was the audiolingual approach that came up in the 1960s. This method is based both on the structural and on the direct - or natural - method. Students learn through repetitions of sentences and dialogues, and structural oral drills. The first language is not used, and written materials only as little as possible and only in later phases; in the beginning, all new words and grammatical structures are introduced in the foreign language and repeated until
memorized. The students were now able to speak, but this ability was often linked to particular stimuli and they had difficulties in transferring this knowledge to real life communication. Further, their knowledge of the written language was poor and they had little understanding of the functioning of the language as such. The communicative approach is a modification of this audiolingual approach: primary importance is still given to the spoken language, but the communication situations are more realistic and drills are normally not used. As in the audiolingual approach, the students are given dialogues as communication examples, but they are not asked to memorize them; instead, they learn how to react and to express themselves in particular situations from a variety of different dialogues and linguistic stimuli given by the teacher. The communicative approach "encourages not only the sanctioning but also the positive approval of any deviation from the norm, provided the ‘message’ has been successfully transmitted" (Batley, 1991:152).

The main idea is to place the student in a ‘natural’ situation of communication; but in a classroom environment, the situations are mostly artificial ("let's imagine we are in a restaurant/ on a bus/ in Tokyo/ Paris/ Berlin...") and not very motivating, the relevance of the situations being less than clear for the language student, especially the school pupil. Applied exclusively, it rarely brought about a sufficient level of language knowledge in the classroom: neither the norm, nor the communication skills were mastered, due to the lack of real communicative situations; only in exceptional contexts, with a very competent, motivated and motivating teacher, could acceptable communicative abilities be attained.

Both the grammar-translation method and the communicative approach are widely used in the schools today - and very often a combination of both.

The question still is: how is it possible, in a classroom context, at the same time to transmit a correct form of the foreign language, to enable learners to express themselves in a concrete, realistic situation, and to motivate them. In this chapter, I will discuss three methods which try to attain those objectives: the Immersion method, as it is practiced in Canada for French Immersion; the European School concept, which can be found in some European countries in different variations; and the Self-learning method, which has been introduced experimentally in New Brunswick.
3.1. IMMERSION

Already in the first half of the 17th century, a Czech, Jan Amos Komensky (or Comenius) proposed what was for the time a revolutionary language learning method for Latin: in order to learn a language rapidly, pleasantly and thoroughly, one should learn in 'nature's way', that is, learning about things in this language, and not about grammar (Sadler, 1991). The idea found a few supporters, but the method was not able to break through and the following centuries made further use of the grammar-translation method, not only for Latin but for the other 'modern' foreign languages, the teaching of which was introduced into state schools in the 19th century.

In the Immersion method - which, when it was introduced in Canada in the early 1960s was seen as revolutionary for language teaching - the foreign language, here French, is used as a medium for teaching other school subjects rather than being taught as a subject itself. French Immersion started in Canada in September 1965 when a group of Anglophone parents of St-Lambert, a suburb of Montreal, succeeded in convincing their school board to have their children educated in French. Their idea was to provide the children with a thorough mastery of the language they would need as residents of Quebec, and further to develop "mutual understanding and respect" for the Francophone culture, for which those parents "believed that learning the other group's language fully was an essential first step" (Lambert & Tucker, 1972:3).

In the early French Immersion programme, the children, who usually do not speak French when they start school, are 'immersed' in this language during the first two or three years: the teacher, in most cases a native speaker of French, does not use English with the children and the whole school programme is taught in French. Usually in grade 3, English is introduced and the proportion of school time in each language slowly shifts, until by the end of elementary school around half of the teaching time is in English. In secondary school, the time allotted to English increases, sometimes up to more than 80% of overall school time. Other forms of immersion are Late French Immersion, which starts in grade 6 or 7 and uses exclusively French for one or two years and is followed by partial immersion (up to 50% of the school time in French), and Middle French Immersion, starting in grade 4 or 5.
French Immersion is based on a series of theoretical findings about language learning:

- Unconscious learning of a language allows for greater communicative competencies; "unconscious learning (acquisition) takes place in first language development and [...] given appropriate conditions, a similar process can be replicated to facilitate the unconscious learning of a second language" (Safty, 1990:182). As the children in Immersion learn contents through the foreign language, they learn the language as a byproduct of this interaction.

- Earlier foreign language learning is better. We have seen in chapter 2.2 some aspects of the discussion on early language acquisition.

- If the objective is communication, oral comprehension and expression are more important than the understanding and producing of written messages.

- Learning the language is "acquiring the ability to use that language" (Safty, 1990:194), more than learning the language itself.

- When the language is the medium of instruction rather than subject of instruction, it acquires a pertinent role which enhances the motivation to learn it.

A team of researchers from McGill University worked on the St-Lambert project and controlled and evaluated it (Lambert & Tucker, 1972; Lambert, Tucker & d'Anglejan, 1974). The results after five years of experimentation were overwhelming:

[We] are satisfied that the Experimental program has resulted in no native language or subject matter (i.e., arithmetic) deficit or retardation of any sort, nor is there any cognitive retardation attributable to participation in the program. In fact, the Experimental pupils appear to be able to read, write, speak, understand, and use English as competently as youngsters instructed in the conventional manner via English. During the same period of time and with no apparent personal or academic costs, the children have developed a competence in reading, writing, speaking, and understanding French that English pupils following a traditional French-as-a-Second-Language program for the same number of years could never match. They have acquired a thorough mastery of the basic elements of French phonology, morphology, and syntax, and can speak and communicate in French without the inhibition or hesitation that so often characterizes the typical student of a foreign or second language. (Lambert & Tucker, 1972:152)
The attitudes of the children in the Experimental Classes were much fairer and more charitable than those of the English and French Control children. On standard measures of social attitudes, they were less ethnocentric and less biased towards their own ethnic group than were the Controls. At the same time, they had healthy views of themselves. We were delighted to see that the children had broadened and liberalized their perceptions of the other ethnic group to the point that they, relative to the English Controls, thought of themselves as being both English- and French-Canadian in outlook. (Lambert & Tucker, 1972:205-206)

These results, as well as a new political effort, following the recommendations of the Report on Bilingualism and Biculturalism of 1968 to bring closer the two 'solitudes' (the English-Canadian and French-Canadian communities), contributed to the great popularity of the programme and its rapid development all over the country. There are now 17,000 schools in Canada which offer French Immersion to approximately 250,000 pupils (Safty, 1992:61). But with the development and the duration of the programme, critical voices became louder, most of them concerning the linguistic and academic achievement of Immersion pupils.

One of the critiques questions the methods of evaluation of the Immersion programmes, and therefore their results. It has been pointed out by Carey (1984, 1991, 1992) that the evaluations concerning the academic achievement of the Immersion pupils had always been made in comparison to similar students in the regular English programme, but that the comparability of those two groups is problematic.

While one may equate these two groups of French second language instructed and English first language instructed students on such variables as socioeconomic status (S.E.S.), I.Q., and age, it is almost impossible to equate groups in terms of students' motivation, teachers' training, home culture, parental attitude, ethnolinguistic vitality, amount of time studying differing curricula and a host of other variables that are believed to affect the language performance of these two groups of students. [...] because of the great difficulty of controlling these and other often unknown critical variables, between-group comparisons are fraught with the ubiquitous error of unequal group comparisons which may mask important differences [...]. (Carey, 1992:141)

For example, it has been argued that "the children who were below average in ability, social maturation, and motivation were more likely to be enrolled in the regular English program [and] thus the French Immersion program appears to be clearly composed of the most capable students" (Carey, 1984:251). Under such circumstances, it is no
surprise that the Immersion pupils fare particularly well in the academic tests. It seems obvious that the children experience increased difficulties in acquiring contents because they are working in a foreign language. If those difficulties are compensated for by elements such as high first language literacy, high motivation, favourable home environment and greater amount of time spent learning, then Immersion results in additive bilingualism. But, because of the increased popularity of the program, "many of the students now enrolling in Immersion programs may not have the same level of literacy in their home language that the initial group of Immersion students did" (Carey, 1991:969-970). The academic achievement of such pupils may then be lower than that of those following the regular English programme.

A further critique, as stated by Hammerly (1989), concerns the linguistic achievements: the linguistic level of the Immersion children may be much higher than that of regular French-as-a-Second-Language children, but, given their 12 years - or about 7,000 hours - of language instruction, it is still surprisingly low. They attain fairly high results in listening and reading comprehension, but the quality of their oral and written production is disappointing. Several studies have shown that the French of Immersion pupils "is very faulty" (Gustafson, in Hammerly, 1989:13), "do[es] not improve over time" (Spilka, in Hammerly, 1989:13-14), shows "linguistic simplification [because] in immersion settings 'the learner is under constant pressure to convey meaning in a great variety of contexts'" (Adiv, in Hammerly, 1989:15). On the other hand, Immersion pupils use their - although faulty - language knowledge very freely and efficiently in communication. One of the explanations for this poor linguistic result is the fact that, in contrast to the first experimental situation in Quebec, most of the later Immersion schools were located in exclusively Anglophone environments, so that the children had no contact with the language other than the class situation. Further, it is argued that, as the children are pressed to express themselves in French, they do it too early and before they master enough basic vocabulary and structures to be able to do it. The corrections and positive stimuli of the teacher alone are not sufficient (as they are in a natural environment where the child is constantly confronted to correct language production) to correct errors, which then fossilize, especially because the only other linguistic exchanges take place between the children, who are then regularly confronted with faulty production from their fellow pupils.
On this issue, Safty (1991, 1992) argues that this critique is an ungrounded argument in that Immersion should not be seen as a mere second language teaching methodology which gives an "exaggerated importance to the norm" but as bilingual education,

[a term that] is richer in socio-political implications and significant symbols. The term bilingual would establish a close identification between the programme and the country's officially bilingual status. (Safty, 1992:64)

Indeed, in the Canadian context, Immersion is more than a language teaching method: it represents a philosophy and a political choice. Through the Immersion programme, the school has been able to "actualize changes" (Safty, 1989:95), changes in the perception of the linguistic and cultural status of a Canada that was now bilingual and multicultural, especially by "increasing the value of French language skills" (Carey, 1991:840). It is further indeed "the best yet generally available [education] for English speakers wishing to learn French [and] it also represents an important demonstration of openness on the part of at least some segments of Canadian society" (Edwards, 1991:944). The prominent role of Immersion in those aspects cannot be denied, but faced with the question of the applicability of the Immersion principles in different contexts (for example, in our case, in a French context), the linguistic critique has to be acknowledged.

3.2. THE 'EUROPEAN SCHOOL' CONCEPT AND OTHER MULTILINGUAL SCHOOLS

European Schools have been created to satisfy the demand of employees of the European Community who, as international civil servants, had to move to international organizations, and who wanted to give their children an education that would enable them to join the school system of their home country as well as that of another country, should the necessity arise. The first European School was opened in 1958 in Luxembourg. The curriculum is based on a fusion of the different national curricula, worked out by representatives of the member states (six at that time), and leads to the European Baccalaureate, recognized by all twelve present member states and allowing entry to most higher education institutions in the world. There exist presently nine European Schools: two in Brussels and one in Mol (Belgium), one in Luxembourg, one in Bergen
(Netherlands), one in Varese (Italy), one in Culham (England), one in Munich and one in Karlsruhe (both Germany). Those nine schools contain around 15,000 pupils. Besides linguistic achievements, "one of the major aims of the European School is to break down ethnolinguistic barriers and cultivate a feeling of European awareness and identity" (Baetens Beardsmore & Kohl, 1988:246).

The European School has a Primary section, covering 5 grades, and a Secondary one, bringing the pupils in 7 years to the European Baccalaureate; there are further 9 linguistic sub-sections corresponding to the 9 languages of the Community. All teachers are native speakers of the language they teach, or in which they teach, and are at least bilingual, as are the directors, counsellors and secretarial staff.

Baetens Beardsmore and Swain (1985) have listed the basic principles of the European School as follows:

1) Children receive their total education in one of the [nine] linguistic sub sections available according to the free choice of the parents [...].
2) Most education takes place in the child’s first or dominant language, with teachers who are native speaker.
3) Each of the [nine] language sub-sections follows the same timetable and the same curriculum.
4) All children are required to receive instruction of and in a second language, known as the ‘vehicular language’ of the school. There are three vehicular languages, French, German and English, from which pupils select one which must be different from the language of the sub-section in which the pupil is enrolled. [...].
5) Communal lessons, known as ‘European hours’, are given from the third grade to mixed groups from the different linguistic sub-sections in one of the vehicular languages. These are intended to promote cross-cultural unity and exchanges within the school. (Baetens Beardsmore & Swain, 1985:5).

In the first two years of the primary programme, first language (L1) instruction is provided for one and a half hours a day and vehicular language (L2) instruction for three quarters of an hour a day; all subjects (except, of course, L2) are taught in L1. L2 instruction concentrates on the spoken language. In the last three years of the primary section, the number of hours assigned to L2 is higher: besides the three quarters of an hour a day of regular L2 teaching, the vehicular language is used for teaching physical education (three quarters of an hour) and in European hours (two and a quarter hours).

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56. When they wrote this article, there were only seven sections; then Spain and Portugal joined the EC, and those two languages were added to the schools’ programme.
European hours, a 'specialty' of the European school, are conducted in one of the vehicular languages, which may or may not be the L2 of the pupil. They bring together pupils from the different sub-sections with the aim to integrate the school population, and consist of creative tasks (sewing, cooking, construction projects, etc.) and games. Teachers, and therefore usually the vehicular language used in this class, change on a half-year basis (Baetens Beardsmore & Kohls, 1988:246-247). Those European hours are particularly important as they lead to a better integration of the school population, use the language in non-linguistic related - but highly motivating - activities, show the children the pertinence of the L2 (as they have to use it with other children in order to communicate), and encourage the children to help each other, as the L2 used by the teacher is not always one of the two languages of all the children.

In the Secondary section, an L3 is introduced as a subject in the first year, while L2, beside being further taught as a subject itself, is used as a medium of teaching for other subjects (Arts, Music, Physical Education and Complementary Activities in the first three years, History, Geography, Physical Education, and Religion or Ethics in the last two years). An L4 may be learned from the fourth year on, as well as Latin or Classical Greek. Therefore, a pupil will receive in his 12 years of schooling a total of 1,100 hours of formal L2 instruction plus the lessons taught in this language; the L3 programme consists of a minimum of 360 hours of language instruction (Housen & Baetens Beardsmore, 1987:85).

In spite of what may appear a heavy load, "this strong language commitment has no detrimental effects on academic achievement, as can be gauged from results on the final European Baccalaureate examination, on which 90% of pupils have been successful since the founding of the school under study [Brussels]" (Housen & Baetens Beardsmore, 1987:85). Their proficiency in their L2 is also tested on the final exam, with the same criteria as used for pupils who have this language as L1.

Baetens Beardsmore and Swain made a comparison between the European School and Canadian Immersion (Baetens Beardsmore & Swain, 1985). Students with French as a vehicular language from the European School in Brussels were tested in grade 8 after an equivalent of around 1,325 hours of classroom French; Canadian French Immersion students from the same grade had approximately 4,500 hours of French. Both groups were presented three tests (developed in Canada at the Ontario Institute for Studies in
Education): the 'test de mots à trouver' (an overall measure of French language proficiency), the 'test de compréhension auditive' and the 'test de compréhension de l'écrit'. With small differences among the tests and the groups of European School pupils, those fared slightly better than the Immersion group. An analysis of the school context and pupils’ backgrounds led the researchers to following conclusion:

The students in Brussels are in a context which provides an immediate stimulus for out-of-class input and use of French. The fact that French is a vehicular language of the European School gives learning the language immediate pertinence beyond the purely classroom requirement. French is vital for inter-school contacts [...]. For the Immersion students, however, [...] French is not often used in the environment outside the classroom, it is not used for inter-student contacts in playground communication [...]. To this extent, the language dose not have the same immediate pertinence beyond the classroom which will enhance its spontaneous usage. [...] the results point to the necessity of developing bilingual programmes which take into account the language environment in which they operate. The results indicate that in-school contact time with the target language can compensate to a large degree for its lack in the out-of-school context. (Baetens Beardsmore & Swain, 1985:13-14)

Besides the indisputable importance of increased pertinence and motivation for the linguistic achievements, one may further notice that L2 is first introduced as a subject which establishes firm linguistic knowledge, before it is used as a medium of teaching. This may also strongly influence the level of linguistic production attained by the European School pupils.

One has to bear in mind that the aims of the European School and those of the Immersion programme are different: Immersion aims at producing 'functional bilinguals' who are able to function bilingually in society, thus communicative abilities are most important. The European School teaches pupils who should master their L2 sufficiently to be able to follow a regular schooling in it (in the case of a move to another country), which means attaining in it an academic level comparable to their attainment in L1; the correctness of the linguistic production is therefore of crucial importance. As Baetens Beardsmore and Swain (1985) have pointed out, each bilingual programme has to take into account and adapt to the specific linguistic, political and social contexts.

The European Schools seem to fulfil their objectives most efficiently, and although there exist only nine of them at present, other schools have applied their principle. In particular, in France, where there are no European Schools, there exist
several International Schools, like the *Lycée International de Saint-Germain-en-Laye*, the programme and organization of which is very similar to that of the European Schools.

The *Lycée International de Saint-Germain-en-Laye* offers ten national subsections (German, Danish, US-American, British, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Dutch, Portuguese and Swedish) from kindergarten to the International Baccalaureate and was created in 1951 for the children of SHAPE (Supreme Headquarter of Allied Powers in Europe), a military sub-organization of NATO. As SHAPE left France in 1965, the school was able to survive by attracting other foreign children and was recognized by the government in 1967 as *Lycée d'Etat International*. It is different from the European Schools in that the children of the *Lycée International* all attend - in mixed groups of different nationalities - a common French section for the main part of their instruction time and have six hours a week of language, culture and history teaching in their national section; it is therefore appropriate to speak of a bilingual education. As well, an L3 is not usually started before the secondary level.

A critique which has often been made of the European Schools, as well as of the *Lycée International*, is that they are elite schools, and that the middle-class social background is decisive in the success of the pupils. However, this critique has been shown to be unfounded. Housen and Baetens Beardsmore (1987) and Baetens Beardsmore (1988) have pointed out that all the European Schools have an obligation to accept socially deprived children with a relevant linguistic background; for example, the school in Mol has a large number of Italian mine-workers' children, the one in Luxembourg a significant number of steel-workers' children, and Brussels has up to 52 different nationalities. Further, children of all the civil servants of the European Community (who pay no fees) attend, the children of the ministers alongside the children of the porters and cleaning personnel. The children with lower socioeconomic backgrounds have been shown to do just as well as the others. The *Foyer Model in Brussels*, which concentrates especially on the trilingual education of immigrant children, also shows that multilingual education is not reserved for any so-called 'elite'. In this school, started in 1981, Spanish, Italian, Turkish and Moroccan children from immigrants start kindergarten in their mother-tongue, but are at the same time introduced to Dutch. In elementary school, reading and writing are taught in the first language, but the use of Dutch, which is presented as a communication language, is encouraged. During the second year of elementary school, the children are immersed in Dutch, although some hours are still
reserved for the instruction of and in the first language. In the third year, French is
introduced and systematically taught, as it is to Flemish children in Belgium (most
children have had already contact with French, as it is the dominant language in Brussels).
School time in elementary school is distributed as follows:

First year: About 60% as an ethnic-cultural group, separate (own
language and culture and mathematics); about 30% in Dutch as a 'new
language', separate; about 10% in integration activities, together with
natives or other children\textsuperscript{57}.

Second year: About 50% as an ethnic-cultural group, separate (own
language and culture but no mathematics); about 20% in Dutch as a 'new
language', separate; about 30% in integration activities and mathematics;
in the course of the year, this percentage increases, depending on the
progress of the immigrant pupils, with the foreign teachers helping and
supporting the children in this transition as much as possible.

Third year on: 90% of the time all the children are taught together in
Dutch. Three to four hours per week of instruction in the mother
tongue, a few hours per week of instruction in French. (Leman,
1990:13-14)

At the end of elementary school, which lasts six years, children are usually
trilingual.

As a whole, those multilingual schools seems to function exceptionally well in the
countext they were created for. With the opening of the borders and the personal mobility
ensuing from the Schengen agreements (see introduction), the demand for such instruction
will probably grow rapidly. A "Europeanization of national schools" (Hart, 1989) is
therefore likely to happen, and the European School, with its history of more than thirty
years, or similar projects, could offer a practicable model.

\subsection*{3.3. SELF-LEARNING}

An experimental programme for teaching English as a foreign language to
Francophone pupils was introduced a few years ago in New Brunswick, Canada. Since the
middle of this century, the Francophone population of New Brunswick has had its own
French schools, covering all levels up to university. While this type of school permits an

\textsuperscript{57} The classes of the Foyer Model are integrated in regular schools.
optimal level of literacy in the mother-tongue, parents became aware that the level of bilingualism of their children, that is, the instruction they received in English, could not meet the demand of a bilingual province (Mackey, 1991).

The French Immersion programmes for Anglophones, which are very successful, were not seen as the appropriate solution for the province. Indeed, their introduction for English in New Brunswick would, on the one hand, have meant a step back to a system generations of Acadians had fought against, and on the other hand, the minority situation of French on the North American continent would make it very difficult to maintain the vitality of this language as a mere ‘home-language’. A method was sought that had to satisfy the demand for a functional level of bilingualism and take certain further special circumstances into account: a relative limited period of time devoted to English instruction (about 100 minutes a week), teachers whose knowledge of English is limited, very diverse contacts with this language outside the school - from rare to very frequent (Mackey, 1991), and thus very different levels of language knowledge and progression.

The Multimedia Self-Directed Second Language Acquisition model was elaborated by Mackey, and introduced in New-Brunswick in 1985 on an experimental basis. It maximizes the amount of time the learners are in contact with the language during school hours as they read it and listen to it - through individual earphones - or view it - via TV monitors. The quality of the language is assured through the use of original materials. The learners' motivation is enhanced by the fact that they may choose themselves, from the great amount of material, the subjects that interest them most. This and the absence of teachers' and peers' control, as well as the deliberately friendly setting of the classroom, minimize their anxiety.

For this method, it does not matter if the teacher has insufficient linguistic knowledge, as he or she has no participation whatsoever in the learning process of the pupils. The maximal flexibility of the method can, further, match each individual learner's knowledge and progress in the language.

Mackey (1991) summarizes the advantages of the methods as follows:

- emphasis on language learning and direct contact with the new language;
- elimination of such negative elements as (1) competition, (2) intimidation and authoritarianism, (3) conditioning of pupils to be dependent;
- each skill and skill combination is progressively introduced, i.e., staged;
- use of now widespread and generally available technology permits (1) individualization and (2) transmission of the most interesting recorded productions. (245-246)

Thirty minutes a day, five days a week, the pupils go to a special room where they can choose from a large selection of different books appropriate to their language level - whereby they themselves evaluate their own level and autonomously choose to go to the next level or to stay at one as long as they feel like it. The types of books are very different, from textbooks and photocopied material to illustrated children's books (fiction and non-fiction) and comics, in order to match every taste. Then each child sits at a table, isolated from the other pupils, and can listen to the cassette that accompanies the book over earphones while he or she reads it. From time to time, several children can watch a video together. The videos are always narratives that concentrate on the story and not on the language. The children themselves keep track of their activities and of their progress. The teachers intervene only to help the children with technical and/or organizational problems. There is no teaching, no testing, no probing students' comprehension. (For details on the method, see Forsyth, 1990; Lightbown, 1989; Mackey, 1991; Ministère de l'Education du Nouveau-Brunswick, 1990, 1992).

Beside Krashen's input hypothesis, this method incorporates elements from Gattegno's Silent way (Huot, 1988), who himself only reformulated the ideas originally due to Palmer, that were: "(a) introducing into beginning language classes massive amounts of spoken and written material that exploits textual and extralinguistic redundancies, and (b) giving initial priority to listening over oral production" (Blair, 1982:37). Or, as Nida, several years later, puts it: "Learning to speak a language is very largely a task of learning to hear it" (Nida, 1988:53). All these language practitioners have experienced that a long, passive (i.e. non-productive) phase at the beginning of the learning process is essential, and that the learner, like the young child who is exposed to his mother-tongue long before it starts speaking, needs this input and will automatically 'sort out' the grammar and syntax involved. This calls to mind Chomsky's innate language device that enables each individual human being to learn a language 'automatically'.

The greatest advantage of the method, finally, is its extreme flexibility. It can respond to the needs of individual learners who differ greatly in their cognitive development and learning capacities, as well as in their language experience before and during the course (Ministère de l'Éducation du Nouveau-Brunswick, 1992).

After the first three years of experimentation, an evaluation was done to test the level of English of the children who had been in the experimental classes, compared to same-grade children who had had regular English classes (Lightbown, 1989). The pupils of the experimental programme fared markedly better in tests measuring receptive vocabulary and in the test 'Picture Description'. The first result had been expected, as those children had been exposed to considerably more vocabulary than children in the regular programme (Lightbown, 1989:15); the second was more surprising, as the children had never practiced speaking English in the class. Nevertheless, they outperformed regular ESL pupils on all measures: 'the average number of words produced by each student, the percentage of students who spontaneously used the plural -s appropriately at least once, the percentage who correctly produced a verb marked with -ing at least once, and the percentage of students who produced noun phrases which included at least one modifier', and further, they used a higher average number of verbs (Lightbown, 1989:15-16). The main explanation for these results is that the pupils of the experimental classes had "considerable experience in listening to sustained text", in contrast to their peers in the regular ESL classes, where the typical classroom interaction is that the teacher asks questions and the pupils answer in a sequence of short exchanges (Lightbown, 1989:15-16). Further, the programme fosters great motivation in the students. They enjoy the experimental programme. Even [...] after three years of learning English strictly through this comprehension-based method, students express enthusiasm for their English class [...] They are not bored, nor do they appear to be frustrated by the difficulty of proceeding on their own with the challenging task of learning English. (Lightbown, 1989:17)

Finally, the positive results of the report convinced the Ministry to continue and expand the experiment, as well as to extend it to the higher grades.

It is the first time that such an experiment has been done with young children in a state school, but the idea of self-learning, especially for older learners, is not new. In Europe, for example, this concept has recently experienced a renewed interest, and in
January 1992, a congress brought researchers together in Barcelona to discuss its possibilities. One aspect which seems to be of particular interest is the development of intercomprehension: a form of communication where each participant understands the other(s) but expresses himself in his or her own language (Barbot & Sabatelli, 1992:34). A European project on the question associates the universities of Aix-en-Provence (France), Salamanque (Spain), Lisbon (Portugal) and Rome (Italy); it has elaborated a method where especially researchers can, in fifty hours, learn to read a journal and understand a professional congress (Vendeuil, 1993:50). The French minister of education also used this concept to argue in favour of his new language policy (see part 2.3.2.4.).

The method, as implemented in New Brunswick, and the new approach to languages associated with the intercomprehension concept, have clear advantages in the new European and world context. The method seems to be effective, not only in developing linguistic knowledge, but in motivating learners and, most importantly, in leading them to an independence and autonomy in learning which had seldom been reached by any other method. Such an independence may be crucial in the light of the assumed future necessity of lifelong learning. A individual may therefore learn a language with such a method at school, and later learn other languages by himself. Once a solid basis of passive knowledge is attained, in the given situation (for example, the necessity to move to another country), active competence may be added.
4. CONCLUSION

Let me first summarize the theoretical and empirical findings from which I will draw my conclusion.

- General Principles

It seems that mainly four factors influence the quality of the result of any language teaching method: the amount of time the learners are in contact with the language, the quality of language they are in contact with, the motivation of the learners and the level of anxiety they have to overcome to use the language (Blair, 1982).

The amount of time the learners are in contact with the language depends of course on their contacts with it outside of the environment of instruction, in the 'outside world'. However, the language teaching method determines the minimal amount of this time, hence the method has to increase it as much as possible if the outside environment does not offer enough opportunities to practice it.

The quality of the language with which the learners are in contact has to be high enough as well as comprehensible in order for them to learn most efficiently. The main theoretical basis for this is the aspect of Krashen's input hypothesis that states that "comprehensible input is the essential ingredient for second-language acquisition" (Krashen, 1985:4). If the learners are confronted with the right quantity and quality of language, they will absorb it much more easily. The term 'right quantity and quality' means that the input should be comprehensible (i.e., the introduction of new words and structures should be facilitated by extralinguistic elements like pictures of everyday situations, and the text should contain enough already-known vocabulary and structures), but not oversimplified, and should maintain its natural, diversified character.
The motivation of the learners depend on their natural environment, as well as on their attitude. If the learners have no real opportunities to use the language outside of the classroom, their motivation to learn it will be much lower than if they have a genuine need (Baetens Beardsmore, 1988). Further, a positive emotional attitude towards a particular foreign language or towards foreign cultures and languages in general will be very helpful.

A situation of anxiety will arise if the learners are pressed to perform with an instrument they do not feel comfortable with and if "[they] consider the language class to be a place where [their] weaknesses will be revealed [...]" (Krashen, 1985:3). It is certainly much more favourable to learn in a friendly, relaxed and interesting atmosphere and it has been proven that such an atmosphere improves the learners' results. Further, they will get tense and nervous if they know that their production will be evaluated, although in many cases this nervousness will not be as bad if they feel competent.

A language teaching policy for a school system has to take those aspects into account and has to be suited to the given situation. As we have seen in chapter 3, a method which works very well in a given environment, with a given public, is not very likely to yield the same results under different circumstances. Once the given situation, environment and circumstances have been precisely determined, the objectives of the language teaching policy must be examined and formulated. Creating functional bilinguals requires a different method than creating bilinguals who can meet academic requirements equally well in both languages; having pupils who understand a language very well demands a different method than having them express themselves in the language as soon as possible.

- Features peculiar to the French Situation:

1) Demands

The population of France predominantly speaks French, but there are several strong demands for language instruction at school, which are motivated as follows:

- Many people want their children to learn European languages such as English or German so that they will have better chances in the future and also have an enhanced feeling of belonging to the European Community. Some even regard the globalization of
politics and trade as more important than the European context, and want non-European world languages like Chinese or Arabic to be taught at school.

- Others want their children to keep regional roots through the knowledge of a regional language. There is inevitably an overlap of some regional languages and foreign European ones (German/Alsatian, Catalan, Dutch).

- Part of the immigrant population wants their children to maintain their ethnic identity and learn their language of origin, for reasons like those of the advocates of regional languages. Again, there is some overlap with demand for European languages (Italian, Spanish, Greek) or for world languages (Arabic, Chinese).

Various programmes to satisfy these demands are running with varying success (see Chapter 2).

2) Linguistic Environment

There is no doubt that France is monolingual. French dominates even in minority circles. Therefore, in daily life, one does not have to speak or understand another language, and so there are also relatively few opportunities to use other languages regularly. For example, except in bigger cities, foreign films are rarely shown in their original language but are dubbed. Furthermore, there exists a 'French mentality' that tends to consider French superior to other languages. We have seen in Chapter 1 that the way French was spread over all of France and abroad certainly encouraged such a mentality. Also, the French population is not one which is traditionally internationally mobile. Already in times of European emigration, France did not contribute much to the flows of emigrants. Today, around 2.5% of the French population lives abroad, compared with 8% of the German, 10% of the Italian and 12% of the Swiss populations (Cadorel, 1990:35).

On the other hand, there are also several factors that should motivate multilingualism. First, the geographical distance to a foreign-speaking country is never very large, and France has common borders with five of the main European linguistic communities: Dutch (in Belgium), German, Italian, Spanish and English. Exchanges are therefore common and uncomplicated. Second, foreign languages can be heard in good quality in France itself: the development of European TV channels and the availability of cable and satellite TV make it easy to watch foreign language programmes, as well as
listen to foreign radio stations. Last but not least, the availability of the foreign press is a long-standing tradition in France.

3) Organizational Aspects

Another fact that must not be neglected is the centralist organization of France, which has prevailed for centuries and is likely to continue to do so for the near future, in spite of the regionalization efforts of the 1980s. In order to even have a chance to be successful, a school system has to be centrally organized in France. On the other hand, a controlling organ independent of the bureaucracy may be necessary to speed up organizational improvements.

Furthermore, not only the curriculum, but also the examinations testing the level of knowledge at the end of school must obey national standards. This is important for the European context because the countries of the EC have agreed to a recognition of all certification within the Community, so the level of education of the member states has to be standardized. Also, such a standardization allows for higher mobility. Children must be able to continue their schooling without much disturbance in another school of the territory, eventually even of the whole Community. It is a fact that such mobility is increasing, nationally as well as internationally.

- Objectives

The long-term goal is that all French citizens should be at least bilingual. The short-term goal is to ensure that the currently tested programmes are effective. To achieve this, a language programme for the schools should start early enough and be intensive enough to compensate for the almost exclusively French environment, it should be motivating enough to prevent development of the 'French mentality' described above, and should be flexible enough to satisfy the demands of the different groups.

We can formulate the following list of (ideal) goals:

(a) all children in France should start learning a foreign language early in elementary school and arrive at a solid level of understanding by the end of elementary school,
(b) they should continue learning the same foreign language in secondary school and be able to understand and communicate in this language after secondary school,

(c) there should be a choice of languages in every school,

(d) all levels of linguistic talent should benefit, and

(e) a high quality of the language should be achieved.

I call these goals 'ideal' because the programme that is to fulfil them must also be feasible, that is, accommodate the realities of the present situation. I will now propose how this may be achieved.

- Practical Aspects

Concerning the choice of languages, a balance must be found between diversity and unification of certain standards of quality. It is clear that a small school cannot be expected to offer instruction in ten different languages at once. Every school must, however, offer at least one of the major European languages, the regional language of the region the school is in and another one, be it an immigrant or non-European world language. Since the choice ultimately has to be made by the parents, they should get detailed information material from the school emphasizing that

(1) the continuity in going from elementary to secondary school is crucial for a success of the language instruction and therefore

(2) the language should be chosen judicially (for example, the continuity of regional language instruction cannot be expected in the event that the family moves to a different region.

Remembering that the entire programme itself essentially owes its existence to parents' initiatives, it would seem best that parents be given a chance to control it. In particular, since one of the main problems at present is that continuity is lacking, parents should have the opportunity to address requests and complaints about this not only to local school authorities but also to a central agency in charge of the programme (as long as such complaints make sense; see [2] above). Although English may come to dominate, due to the greater demand and the easier organizational solutions, this is not a problem in itself
as long as other languages are learned and valued equally. Ideally, each child would learn English and another language; yet, it would be a great improvement even if everyone were only able to learn English, since it is one of the dominant languages in the world.

Three pedagogical improvements are required. First, the evaluation has revealed the lack of qualified teachers and thus of language quality. The use of native speakers would increase the quality of the language the pupils are in contact with and could ease the problem of lack of qualified teachers. The idea of teachers going abroad, teaching their own language and at the same time improving their knowledge of the foreign one, already exists in European programmes such as LINGUA, which organizes teachers' training and exchanges, and these programmes have to be taken advantage of more intensively. This will also give priority to teachers' training, as native speakers will never be able to do all the teaching. Continuous training of teachers that are already working has to be encouraged more strongly than it is now. The training at university has to recognize the importance of foreign languages. Further, intensive use should be made of technical devices such as computers, minitel, cable and satellite TV, videos and individual cassette players, to provide good quality language in as much diversity as possible.

Second, the method used in class should be as flexible as possible. This is necessary to make the language class fun for the children, which we find essential for it to work in elementary school. All learners should be given a certain freedom to do self-learning at their own pace in the spirit of the New Brunswick method. The teacher may then spend more time with individual pupils, but also see to it that a certain amount of time is devoted to activities such as games in which all the pupils participate. Particularly interested children should also have the opportunity to develop their abilities and do more, for instance, to start learning a second foreign language or to try to start communicating. For 'small' languages with little demand, and for further occupation with any other of the proposed languages, the use of technical structures comparable to the New Brunswick model are also ideal in solving the problem of diversity and in giving children more motivation and autonomy. Faster learners, those who have had initial knowledge (through the home language or other circumstances), or those who need to review more often would benefit from such an open structure. A regular amount of time of the school day should be reserved for such activities.
Some remarks may be appropriate here. It is clear that the success of a particular language class depends strongly on the abilities of the teacher. This insight seems, however, not very helpful, since the general organization of the programme has little or no influence on this. Also, some may complain that the proposed method is elitist and does not provide equal treatment for all. However, while every child must have equal chances, I think that not everyone learns in the same way and that a flexible method will be for the benefit of all. Further, there is no reason why the advancement of talents should be confined to sports or to some 'elite' schools which are indeed not accessible to everyone. Simultaneously, there must be a commitment to a SMIC culture58 for all, to use the expression of the Minister of Education René Haby in 1975 (Baudelot, 1991:181).

Third, to increase motivation, a subject similar to the European hours of European Schools should be made part of the regular school programme in order to broaden the views of the children and to put them into contact with different foreign languages. Speaking another language should be seen as something natural, not exceptional. The mixing of children of different languages should be organized wherever possible, and the languages of all children be valued by being school languages. International school exchanges should be organized as often as possible, in order to immerse the children regularly and naturally into the language and the culture they are studying.

- Long-term Objectives

Although it is true that the European Schools are a special case because there will not be children from so many different countries in all 'ordinary' schools, I think the long-term objectives should be modelled after them because of their undeniable success.

The actual enseignement précoce should be extended progressively to all the classes of elementary school; one foreign language should be compulsory from the first grade on. This instruction should be allowed a regular amount of time every day, in order to increase the amount of time the learner is in contact with the language. The foreign language should be systematically taught in language classes, but as soon as possible should

58. SMIC = salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance, created in 1945 as a legal minimum salary for employees and workers. The idea of SMIC culture is that there should be a minimum level of culture for all, without meaning equality of level.
be used as the communication language in subjects like Physical Education; later, when the child masters the language enough to express him or herself in it, other subjects like history or geography could be added. In secondary school, at least 20% of the programme should be taught in the foreign language, after the model of the International Schools.

Concerning language choice, each child would have to choose one European language as foreign language; the regional language and the other language (this could be another European language) would be optional, but the timetable would be organized in such a way that those options would not intervene with any other subject. Children (and parents) would be encouraged to 'try out' different optional languages before they decide. Ideally, all the children would learn two languages other than their first. As in the proposition from the Strasbourg school (see part 2.7.), the different languages (the European one[s] as well as the others) would be offered during the same time section, and the children could mix according to their choice without disturbing the regular school organization. An organization similar to the European Schools, with different linguistic sub-sections, is thinkable (in small schools, a section might be one teacher).

The teaching of French as a foreign language should be embedded into the regular structures as much as possible. Foreign pupils would be valued in the foreign language section, where a flexible teaching would integrate them, offering them challenging and meaningful contents. Intensive French as a foreign language classes would be coordinated with the regular teacher and the children incorporated in the regular class as early as possible; such pupils could further benefit from FFL teaching during the time reserved for the optional language.

The objective of the language teaching programme is then twofold. On the one hand, it should produce graduates who are fluent and accurate in at least one European language other than French and further, within the limits of the possibilities and abilities of each, have enough knowledge in another language (national or regional) to be able to understand it. Further, they should have acquired language learning techniques that allow them to learn a further language independently and rapidly if necessary. Also, the attitude of such pupils towards foreign languages and people would then be positive, open and interested.
5. OUTLOOK

I began with the question of how France was fulfilling the demands for language instruction from different communities on its territory. In the development of this thesis, I have shown that it attempts to fulfil all the demands, but that the results are very uneven. Nevertheless, a new programme has been started to encourage foreign language learning, and notwithstanding its difficult start, the way it shows seems to be promising. Some modifications, and a more global consideration of all languages, including regional and immigrant languages, should bring definite results.

It is deplorable that important issues like language teaching and education as a whole are to such an extent dependent on political disputes and strategies. When ideological opinions take over rational enterprises, the fate of education is at stake. Of course, especially because language issues are so heavily loaded emotionally, it will always be difficult to avoid ideological discussions. Luckily, it seems that in the recent past the influence of supranational organizations, such as the European Community and the European Council, has slowly reached national policy makers and influenced their decisions.

Internal social tensions are high in France now, but the young people have shown that they may manage to live together better if they are allowed to. School is one of the first places where they meet; it alone cannot be responsible for social changes, but can support them. Let us hope that the mixture of people of diverse origins and ethnicities that can be found in many schools become a dynamic and enriching element of the whole society.

France is opening more and more to the outside, to Europe and to the world. Traditionally, it had seen its language and culture as a vehicle to overcome national differences; it is now starting to realize that exchange is a two-way process and that a
knowledge of other languages and cultures can be beneficial, not only as an instrumental necessity in a world of international commercial relations, but as a cultural enrichment. Linguistic and cultural knowledge that go beyond what has traditionally been offered in the school system are needed. Schools, and the policies which govern them, have the tendency to be prescriptive; they have to become not only more flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances, but able to move from a prescriptive philosophy to a real educative one with the aim of leading to fundamental democratic decision-making processes. A new language teaching programme, which opens to the world and shows tolerance while stimulating thought, can be one of the most important aspects of such a transformation. A start has already been made, but it is important that it develops into a nation-wide enterprise.

Further, it is important to monitor the development of the generalization of enseignement précoce. Without doubt, the government will further evaluate the progress of the programme, its organizational coherence and the linguistic level of its pupils. This is necessary but not sufficient to understand the whole picture. Further enquiries into youth's attitudes towards languages and foreigners could show the attitudinal changes brought about by such a programme. Utilitarian needs assessments of users and user users (see part 2.1.) would draw a more precise image of language possibilities and enable the government to plan programmes which are not dependent on 'fashions' but rely on a predictable reality.

A more precise investigation of the mechanisms that control language acquisition in different organizational settings is also important. For example, why do pupils from European Schools attain such high language levels? What is the language level of pupils who graduate from International Schools? What are the effects of school exchanges on language and attitude? Such points have not yet been sufficiently researched, although they would provide important guidelines for further language teaching programmes.

Another field of research is that of regional and immigrant languages. Actual numbers on regional language speakers are needed, as is an accurate overview of the real use of language in the younger generations of immigrants. Often, a small number of politically active individuals of a minority can express demands for this minority without really representing the opinions of all its members; to respect democracy and cultural liberty, the government has a duty not only to respond to demands, but also to find out
the real wishes and needs of all its citizens. In its efforts, the government should neither succumb totally to the pressures of public opinion, nor make decisions solely based on scientific views; further, the balance between utilitarian, economic considerations and the cultural dimension should never be lost.
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