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1. Introduction

A quick look at the current situation of language education in Austria reveals that language learning is clearly not diverse. A handful of languages dominate the education system and thus the linguistic repertoire of the learners. Taking this situation as point of departure, the present thesis sets out to shed light on mechanisms and factors that influence current modern foreign language provision. Furthermore, the potential of the plurilingual approach to increase diversity in language learning will be explored. The aim of the thesis is therefore twofold. On the one hand, the existing uniformity in language education will be examined. On the other hand, the plurilingual approach to language learning and teaching as a possible way out of uniformity will be considered. Even though the plurilingual approach is advocated by the Council of Europe and a number of scholars, little has been done to determine whether it can be successfully implemented on a practical level. This thesis will therefore attempt to study if the plurilingual approach could be a way to include and foster more diversity in language education. Stakeholders will be asked to provide information about current situations and to assess chances and challenges of the approach in the education system. Underlying concepts of language and multilingualism that constitute the background of the study will be discussed in the theoretical part. The important role of supranational and national language education policies will also be addressed.

Due to the complexity and abstract nature of the issues at hand, this study can by no means considered to be exhaustive. However, some important mechanisms that are at work in schools as well as potential chances and hurdles of a more integrative approach to language education will be examined.

2. Conceptualizing language

How we define and understand language is certainly crucial when it comes to issues in language education. The common view of languages with closed and definable boundaries is firmly established in most societies. Especially the association of language with culture, identity and nation contributes to the idea of languages as discrete entities. The recognition of certain languages by

institutions in official documents and in the education system also underpins the seemingly natural conception of languages. This section will examine the widely prevailing perspective on languages that language education is based upon as well as provide an alternative view.

2.1. Closed and homogenous concepts

From a historical perspective on applied linguistics, changing views of language and its conceptualization can be observed. Researchers have debated about language as a whole and have combined the study of individual languages with comparisons across languages (see McCarthy 2001: 26). As Shohamy (2006: 31) argues, the field of linguistics has played a major role in conceptualizing languages as closed and homogenous systems. Through studies and notions that underline the autonomy, systematicity and rule-bound nature of language, the categorization into isolated languages has been enforced. The study of linguistics is mainly concerned with analyzing single languages and with the view of language contact as a secondary phenomenon which only stresses the stability of language systems and fosters the notion of self-contained languages (see Auer and Wei 2009: 1). Pennycook (2004: 7) equally claims that the classification of languages, the notion of mother-tongue and terms such as “multilingualism” or “code-switching” contribute to the view of discrete languages as closed and finite categories. Accordingly, these terms and notions often unintentionally represent languages as separate entities with boundaries. The traditional view of languages as closed and uniform systems thus seem to be very deeply-rooted not only in common views, but also in political and scientific contexts. Since the discipline of linguistics has always been linked to nation states, it is not surprising that research and conceptualizations also reflect certain ideologies.

2.1.1. Language and nation states

May (2001) sees the formation of the nation state and other political entities as the main driving force behind the closed concept of language. With the emergence of nation states, language became a symbol for power, identity and nationalism and turned into a tool for the perpetuation of unified, homogenous

ideologies (see Shohamy 2006:43). One chosen standard language was mostly used to express the symbolic unity of the nation and support monolingual standard ideologies. The idea of the nation state became intertwined with the closed concept of language and national identity. As Blackledge and Creese (2010: 27) outline, homogenous languages should express the spirit of homogenous groups. Harris (1987: 7) also argues that the traditional notion of language has its political basis in the European nation state and its intellectual roots in Western ideology. He introduces the term “language myth“ in order to describe the traditional Western concept of presenting languages as distinct from each other:

The language myth of Post-Renaissance European culture represents languages as fixed codes which enable individuals to communicate their thoughts to one another by means of words, and portrays linguistic communities as groups of individuals who use the same language. (Harris 1987: 7).

As Harris denotes, individuals who apparently use the same code are categorized into a group. Language is thus used to identify and legitimize the belonging of people to certain entities such as nation states and to underpin ideologies of uniformity. Barbour (2002: 14) argues that dominant ideologies imply a close relationship between languages, cultures, nations and states. In this nationalist conceptualization, language equals identity and belonging. As Hobsbawm (1990: 21) indicates, language is mostly seen as “the only adequate indicator of nationality”.

Not surprisingly, an increasing number of governments use language proficiency tests as gate-keeping devices to legitimize people as a part of their nation (see Shohamy 2006: 66). Blackledge and Creese (2010: 26) draw attention to the fact that “this common-sense understanding of language and nation ignores the diversity and variety of the language(s) spoken within many states.” Attempts to purify and preserve languages can also be seen as devices to reinforce uniformity and power. The pursuit of pure, standardized and correct language seems to be a way of “creating order, managing and controlling the linguistic repertoire of the nation (or other entities)” and therefore a way of maintaining power (Shohamy 2006: 78). Blackledge and Creese (2010: 27) argue that linguistic practices which conform to certain norms and standards

legitimize political arrangements. Dominant groups can use language as a powerful device to underpin their authority because dominant languages are usually codified and enforced by effective institutions. As Shohamy (2006: 34) points out: “Knowing the right language became a criterion for acceptance and rejection, inclusion and exclusion”.

Since only certain languages have the status of the “right language” and represent the ideology of uniformity in nation states, other languages are consequently marginalized. May (2001) describes how language can be used as a tool for agendas of dominant groups by marking some languages as pure and valuable while stigmatizing and devaluing others. One example is the declaration of official languages because it takes power from other languages with no recognized status. Auer and Wei (2009: 2) stress, however, that the process of homogenization and standardization took hundreds of years; hardly any area or nation state was initially completely monolingual. Particularly minority languages have often been treated as intruders in seemingly homogenous states and identities. As Barbour (2002:11) argues, the inherent classification and division of people according to their languages frequently lead to injustice and conflict. Errington (2001) describes how language difference could authorize inequality for example in the European colonialist discourse. Shohamy (2006: 1) equally outlines how the concept of language is used as a tool for manipulation in nation states and other entities and leads to the categorization of people, the creation of group membership, identity and hierarchies. The conceptualization of languages as uniform systems thus has extremely far-reaching roots and powerful backing.

Against the background of globalization and Europeanization, it has however to be noted that national boundaries and identities are becoming more fluid. According to Trim (2002) new forms of languages or hybrids are emerging because of the nearness and mobility of groups of speakers. Gubbins and Holt (2002) note as well that borders and language identities in Europe are gradually breaking up. Shohamy (2006: 38) equally claims that the borders in Europe are becoming less marked and nations are getting closer. According to Blackledge and Creese (2010: 25), the result of increased mobility also leads to an increasing plurality and denote “multiple, plural, shifting and eclectic” linguistic

practices. Since nation states are, however, interested in maintaining their ideology, culture and language, they struggle to uphold unity and uniformity (see Taylor 1998). Hybrid languages, cultures and world languages such as English are mostly regarded as threats to unified, homogenous ideologies. Shohamy (2006: 40) states that “it is expected that dominant groups are rarely inclined to give up their advantages and accept pluralist policies, especially because changes are likely to lead to a redistribution of wealth and a realignment in political power.” It is thus not very likely that nation states and other political entities want to give up on their major tool for manipulation and perpetuation of ideologies. They cling to the notion of separated standard languages and encourage clear language boundaries in institutions, school systems and other authority-related organizations.

2.2. Open and dynamic concepts

The need to escape the rather narrow approach and understanding of language underpinned by nationalist ideologies has been felt by several scholars as cited in chapter 2.1.1. Pennycook (2004: 1) therefore proposes reviewing the notion of language as commonly formulated and considering anti-foundationalist perspectives. He argues that the concept of language used in linguistics and applied linguistics might have served its time. Yet, he recognizes that not all conceptions of linguistic difference should be rejected. Pennycook (2004: 6) pleads for the “disinvention of language”, which means that languages are no longer seen as isolated from other behaviors and semiotic systems and that languages are regarded as “emergent property of social interaction and not a prior system tied to ethnicity, territory, birth or nation”. This broader view of language acknowledges its multimodality as well as its flexibility and rejects an intrinsic link between language and external factors. Most importantly, Pennycook (2004) suggests performativity as a way of rethinking the concept of language use and identity. Based on Judith Butler’s (1990) idea of performativity, Pennycook puts forward that identities are the product of circular, self-producing and not free-willed activities. Along these lines, he argues that language may also be seen as a product of performative acts. The concept of

language is thus produced by discursive power and not a pre-given, predefined notion.

Shohamy (2006) similarly advocates an open view of language which recognizes its fluidity and flexibility and proposes “expanding language”. She rejects the idea of fixed boundaries and understands languages as living and dynamic organisms which constantly evolve through language contact and interaction. Especially in spoken language, the number of varieties, hybrids, mixes and fusions seems to be endless (see Shohamy 2006: 11). A categorization of languages into closed entities thus seems to be artificial and does not seem to reflect the reality of language use. As Khubchandani (1997) notes, the Western view of languages does not consider the reality in terms of contexts and fluid multilingualism. According to Shohamy (2006: 14), the fusion of languages, which frequently occurs in colonial or post-colonial societies, mixed families or immigrant families, shows the fluid, evolving and creative nature of languages. Even though she acknowledges that it is only natural that people develop similar codes if they interact with each other and want to achieve efficient communication, she emphasizes that a number of languages can coexist harmoniously beyond fixed and marked categories. Yet, the “evolutionary process of change” and the “mixture of language” do not seem to be accepted by dominant societies (Shohamy 2006: 9). Particularly in the education system, certain varieties and hybrids seem to be suppressed and condemned, whereas other forms of languages are considered to be standard or good. Again, fixed and prescribed rules of language use support control and define boundaries.

2.2.1. Limits of open concepts

The expanded view on language suggests that there is no need for fixed rules of language use. Shohamy (2006: 20) describes language as a “free commodity” that is subject to each person’s interpretation. This implies that every language user has the freedom to use language in any way and form he or she wants. Shohamy (2006: 9) even goes so far as to say that “imposing on people certain uses of language may be viewed as a form of oppression and monopolization”. In her view, language users should be granted freedom of

expression so that they do not need to feel that mixing and crossing languages is forbidden or wrong. She rather considers it to be a personal right to use languages according to one's needs and desires.

In the educational context, this approach will naturally meet opposition as the different language subjects rather consider languages as closed, rule-bound systems. Jørgensen et al (2011: 35) argue in this context that "the European educational systems would break down overnight, if they were forced to teach language the way people really use language". Vetter (2013a: 10) also criticizes clear-cut categorizations of languages in the current education system and points out that there is only limited scope for developing existing multilingualism.

Another important feature of an expanded view on language, which will also encounter major difficulties when it comes to its feasibility in the education system, is the fact that it is not limited to words or other linguistic markers (see Shohamy 2006: 15). According to Kress (2003), there are broader options of communication than linguistic markers. Multi-modal forms of expression such as visuals, graphics, fashion, images, music or food can also be seen as codes for communication and add additional dimensions to language. Language is thus not restricted to words but also includes non-verbal features referred to as forms of "linguaging" by Shohamy (2006: 15).

This broader definition of language allows including multi-modality as a form of expression and use and implies that language can take on extremely different shapes. Since language use varies from person to person, from context to context and takes diverse forms, Shohamy (2006: 5) argues that language has to be seen as "open, dynamic, energetic, constantly evolving and personal". In this view, individuals constantly choose between the infinite varieties and versions of "personal and individual languages", which are uncontrollable, personal and unique (Shohamy 2006: 6). The broader view on language discards fixed and closed boundaries and thus implies the absence of prescribed rules of correctness. It also sees language rather as personal, evolving, dynamic and open and not restricted to words or other linguistic markers taking into account multi-modal forms of expressions. A less positivistic view also considers the discursively constructed definition and performativity of

language. Given this expanded understanding of language, it has to be highlighted at this point that a more fluid and flexible approach might be appropriate and needed, but that traditional ways of categorizing languages still dominate. Vetter (2012: 228) calls for a new perspective on languages in education that moves away from languages as “discrete isolable boxes”. It is, as Vetter (2012: 230) puts it, still easier to treat languages in their well-established categorizations, but such an approach would rarely meet the complex reality of language use. Even though there are tendencies that point towards a more open view on languages, the education system is largely determined by the constraints of the closed conceptualization of languages and the language education policy made by political entities supporting certain language ideologies. This thesis should, however, recognize anti-foundalistic approaches of language and show awareness of mechanisms that help in the perpetuation of homogenous, nationalist views.

3. Multilingualism vs plurilingualism – terminological challenges

The previously outlined conceptions of languages as closed and homogenous or as open and dynamic systems clearly also influence the conceptions of multilingualism and plurilingualism, two terms which are increasingly used in supranational and national language education policy. This section will explore the terms of multilingualism and plurilingualism, their underlying conceptualizations of language and their different meanings in different contexts.

3.1. Multilingualism

Against the background of dominant political entities which enforce discourses and ideologies of uniformity, multilingualism clearly constitutes a challenge. Auer and Wei (2009: 2) point out that multilingualism has been regarded as something that is deviating from the norm for a long time. Due to the still monolingual approaches of European thinking, multilingualism has until recently not been given much attention in research. However, current developments and influences such as globalization and Europeanization have enormously fueled the interest in the field. The advantages of multilingualism are not only

advocated by numerous scholars, but also promoted as an asset by the European Union and the Council of Europe. This paradigmatic shift and the increasing scientific interest in multilingualism have also triggered a terminological and conceptual debate. In order to grasp the complex phenomena of learning and using several languages, expressions such as “poliglottism”, “multicompetence”, “intra-languaging” or “plurilingualism” have been coined in addition to the term of multilingualism. Jessner (2008b: 20) indeed states that “finding a definition of multilingualism can be described as one of the most daunting research questions of current linguistics.”

Early research into multilingualism was relatively different from current trends. Pioneering works into multilingualism rather concentrated on second language learning and bilingualism, terms which were both synonymously used for multilingualism (e.g. Haugen 1956). Recent studies however go beyond two languages and consider bilingualism not as a part, but as a variant of multilingualism. As indicated by Jessner (2008b: 17), several scholars argue that there is a considerable difference between L2 and L3 learning and therefore prefer referring to multilingualism whenever language learning goes beyond two languages. Recent studies underline that transfer possibilities are considerably higher and more complex when more than two languages are involved (see Jessner 2008a: 27, 2006). Yet, Jessner (2008b: 18) proposes integrating both meanings and defining multilingualism as “referring to any kind of language acquisition” while also considering the complexity in language learning related to the number of languages involved.

According to Martin-Jones et al (2012), the prevalent European idea of multilingualism is an additive conception of multilingualism which considers the multilingual competence as having several separate languages at one’s disposal that do not interfere with each other. Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012: 50) also argue that the traditional construct of multilingualism keeps languages distinct. In Jessner’s (2008b: 15) argument, multilingualism is commonly often measured against monolingual standards which underpins the assumption that multilingual persons never mix languages. Languages are thus seen as separate entities that are learned and used unconnectedly. This misunderstanding of multilingualism and the implicit and explicit monolingual

bias often lead to the belief that multilinguals might not be proficient in any of the languages (see Jessner 2008b: 15). Herdina and Jessner (2002: 2) therefore oppose common interpretations of language learning and propose reviewing our understanding of “what it is to know a language”. The different beliefs and degrees of what knowing a language involves and therefore also which degrees of multilingualism there are have already preoccupied researchers. Again, the core of the problem of capturing forms and degrees of multilingualism seem to be monolingual norms and comparisons which assume that there is a standard language. The concept of plurilingualism as promoted by the Council of Europe and its Common European Framework of Reference seems to cater for the need of a rethinking of multilingualism and will be outlined in the following chapter.

Even though the term of multilingualism has been associated with an additive conception of language learning, numerous scholars still employ the term, giving it a different meaning by recognizing recent conceptualizations of language and multilingualism as fluid and integrative (e.g. de Cillia (2010), Jessner (2008a, 2008b), Rindler-Schjerve and Vetter (2012), Vetter (2013a)). In the political context, a clear common understanding of multilingualism is still missing. Even though multilingualism is considered to be a major objective in many language policies, there is no overarching conceptualization. The two major players in the field of European language policy, the European Union and the Council of Europe, provide many suggestions of how multilingualism could be achieved, but seem to lack one straightforward conception (see Vetter 2012: 234). The Council of Europe, for instance, promotes plurilingual competence, recognizing a holistic view of languages and linguistic repertoires, while some policy documents and efforts by the European Union suggest an additive conception of multilingualism (e.g. mother tongue +2 strategy). These terminological and conceptual issues pose a problem when it comes to developing and implementing unified and efficient language education policy.

3.2. Plurilingualism

The Council of Europe (hereafter CoE) provides a terminological distinction of multilingualism and plurilingualism. As to the CoE, multilingualism “refers to the

presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one 'variety of language'" (see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_en.asp, 16.04.2014). This definition of multilingualism seems to account for what has been called 'societal multilingualism' (e.g. de Cillia 1998), meaning the simple coexistence of languages in a certain territory. 'Individual multilingualism' (e.g. de Cillia 1998), on the other hand, refers to the knowledge of multiple languages of individual people. The notion of individual multilingualism rather corresponds to the term of plurilingualism as defined by the CoE. Plurilingualism refers to the "repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use" (see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_en.asp, 16.04.2014). The CoE defines the plurilingual repertoire of individuals as dynamic because it considers "different languages and language varieties at different levels of proficiency" and "different types of competences" at different stages in an individual's life. This approach does not see languages and competences in isolation. As Vetter (2012: 232) argues, the plurilingual approach is in line with recent approaches to multilingualism that consider a "holistic, multi-faceted, dynamic and individual vision that is open to partial competence and circulations, mediations and passages between languages and cultures". As Beacco et al (2010: 17) outline, every individual can build their own linguistic and cultural repertoire. Depending on the context, the development of this repertoire can take on extremely different directions. "The ability to mobilize" this repertoire of resources is designated to be the "plurilingual competence" (see Beacco et al 2010: 18). As to Beacco et al (2010: 8), "the plurilingual competence refers to the repertoire of resources which individual learners acquire in all the languages they know or have learned, and which also relate to the cultures associated with these languages [...]". Closely intertwined with the plurilingual competence is thus the intercultural repertoire and intercultural competence. The latter is defined by Beacco et al (ibid) in the following way:

Intercultural competence, for its part, makes it easier to understand otherness, to make cognitive and affective connections between past and new experiences of otherness, mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures, and question the assumptions of one's own cultural group and environment.

Beacco et al (2010: 18) further indicate that “the awareness of the value of diversity and otherness” and “the recognition of the utility of any (even partial) competence” form important aspects of the plurilingual perspective.

Canagarajah and Liyanage (2012: 50) depict several key points which generally distinguish plurilingualism from a traditional perspective on multilingualism. One central point of plurilingualism is the fact that equal or advanced proficiency is not expected in all the languages. Certain competences can thus be used for certain purposes only. All the competences are however not seen as separated competences of a language, but as belonging to the plurilingual repertoire forming one integrated competence. The language competences are not added to another, but integrated into one. It furthermore acknowledges that speakers may develop plurilingual and intercultural competence outside of school or formal means.

As Vetter (2012: 233) argues, models like the plurilingual approach, which consider the individual’s linguistic resources as a whole, suggest a strong link between the retrospective multilingualism and the prospective multilingualism of individuals. Retrospective multilingualism refers to the diversity of language competence people already have and prospective multilingualism refers to language competence that is going to be achieved in the future. The plurilingual approach is thus highly relevant for language pedagogy and language education policy. Due to the approach’s flexibility, the whole linguistic and cultural repertoire of individuals can be taken into account. As to Beacco et al (2010: 16), the plurilingual approach “reflects the current ‘Copernican revolution’ in language teaching; it centers on learners and on developing their individual plurilingual repertoire, and not on the specific languages they are supposed to acquire”.

3.3. Multilingualism and the diversity debate

When stakeholders talk about the advantages and assets of multilingualism, they often intentionally or unintentionally refer to multilingualism related to prestigious languages. Some forms of languages seem to be given more importance and value because more power and prestige adheres to them. This

factor plays a considerable role when we talk about multilingualism and diversity in the education system.

3.3.1. Existing multilingualism

Phillipson (2008: 255) identifies the diversification in foreign language education as one of the four key issues of educational language policy in Europe. Even if language learning is said to be diverse, the already existing linguistic diversity in individuals and society is often neglected. At the present state of language education in Europe, existing multilingual realities are hardly compatible with policies (see Vetter 2013b). The gap between policy and real-world language use is reflected in the conceptualization of separate languages as outlined before. The languages on offer are seen as discrete subjects that do not take into account the students' whole linguistic repertoire. Existing linguistic diversity is hardly ever valued or used in the educational context (see Berényi-Kiss 2012). Particularly varieties deviating from the norm and language mixing seem to be stigmatized (see Shohamy 2006). As de Cillia (2010) argues, some forms of multilingualism such as foreign language multilingualism are usually encouraged, whereas multilingualism related to less valued languages is mostly sanctioned. Krumm (2004: 65) therefore states that "if we neglect the languages already existing in our schools and society, we will not be very successful in convincing young people to learn other foreign languages." It already becomes clear that institutions such as schools and their underlying ideologies considerably influence the value of languages and thus of multilingualism.

3.3.2. Language choice

Not only the ignorance of existing multilingualism, but also the question of language choice is a crucial concern in the diversity debate. Some language subjects clearly dominate the linguistic market in schools and therefore exclude others. Opting for one language usually results in deciding against another. As Vetter (2013b: 357) indicates, the issue of language choice is strongly debated and connected to ideologically charged viewpoints. Krumm (2004: 62) criticizes the "linguistic hegemony" of certain languages and pleads for increased diversification in language education. Due to the fact that most schools offer the

same limited set of languages, he calls for the diversification of the language program. One solution that Krumm (2004) proposes is the introduction of other first modern foreign languages than English and the consideration of language awareness in the education system. He acknowledges however that a more diversified language education would require an attractive program and the support by policy, politicians and media.

3.3.3. Reasons for language learning

Barbour (2002: 15) indicates three main reasons why languages should be learned. Assuming that there is a close relationship between languages, cultures, nations and states, the educational reason, the utilitarian reason and the functional reason can be seen as justifiable reasons for language learning.

The educational reason is based on the value of understanding other cultures and societies. It is the educational benefit of language learning that is in focus. Barbour (2002: 15) even goes so far as to say that one needs to “free students from the prison of monolingualism”. The utilitarian reason for language learning is derived from the desire to communicate in other countries. The crossing of language boundaries can thus be a central reason for language learning. The functional reason is rather business-oriented. Languages are thus used for business purposes and are seen as a key to competitiveness. One interesting factor related to this aspect, is the economic perspective to language learning, which is often used to justify the dominance of certain languages. Corson (2012: 333) sees the tight coupling of capitalism with all aspects of social life as a reason for the rather uniform language education. The quality of a language is thus compared with its economic value and not with any intrinsic value. In this view, a certain pressure towards assimilation seems to be created by capitalism and globalization. Grin (2006: 84) states as well that there is a strong relationship between linguistic and economic variables. He explains that the market value and the benefits of languages outside of the education system play a key factor in education.

The seemingly simple equation of benefits and costs of languages should however be seen critically. It is understandable that a vast number of potential

interlocutors adds to the advantages of knowing a language. There are however also non-market benefits such as access to other cultures and people which should be considered in language education. Social and political issues further make the question of the usefulness of languages highly complex. Only considering the mere economic value of language is therefore an extremely one-sided approach.

4. Defining language policy

The field of language policy and planning is high in complexity and rich in frameworks. This section therefore attempts to explore recent language policy research, define key terms and clarify theoretical perspectives that are relevant for the thesis. It also designates language education policy as an influential field and its internationalization as a significant background of this study.

As with any academic field, various frameworks and models that define language policy have emerged over time. Nevertheless, there is no universal theory of language policy and no clear consensus about the scope of the field. As to Ricento (2006), it is however certain that language policy debates always go beyond language and involve political, economic and social factors. Moving away from more traditional, positivistic approaches (Kloss 1969, Haugen 1966, Cooper 1989), new developments in research are influenced by critical and postmodern theories. Especially in the light of globalization and spreading global languages, power relations and their discourses prove to be of particular interest in the field. The importance of economic, political, cultural and discourse factors have recently been given attention (Ricento 2006). Spolsky (2004: 6) highlights that language policy has to be seen in “highly complex, interacting and dynamic contexts”. Contextual variables and their correlated effects are clearly important aspects which need to be considered in language policy matters.

Spolsky (2004: 5) proposes three main components which should capture the complex situation of language policy in a speech community and provide a holistic approach. These components are the speech community’s actual

language practices, its language beliefs or ideology and the efforts that are made to influence its practices. The language practices of a speech community describe the common patterns of the linguistic repertoire that are actually used. As to Spolsky (2004: 217), those linguistic practices may be “the choice of a specific sound, or expression, or of a specific variety of language”. The second component, language beliefs, concerns the beliefs about and attitudes towards language and its use. Certain ideologies about language and society work as important shapers of language use. Efforts that influence the language practices and attitudes constitute the third component. The measures that are supposed to modify language use can be called language intervention, management or planning (Spolsky 2004, Hornberger 2006). These efforts are usually formulated in an explicit plan or policy. In short, Spolsky (2004: 9) states that “Language policy may refer to all the language practices, beliefs and management decisions of a community or polity”.

4.1. Types of language policy

Johnson (2013: 24) aptly summarizes different types of language policy and describes four sets of dichotomies. The creation of language policy can either be a top-down or a bottom-up process. While top-down refers to policies developed on a macro-level by some governing body, bottom-up policies are usually generated for and by a micro-level. There are however multiple levels involved in the creation of language policy which sometimes subvert these relationships. The means and goals of language policy can be overtly expressed in written or spoken texts or can intentionally be concealed or covert. As far as the documentation is concerned, language policy can be explicitly documented or occur implicitly without or in spite of official policy texts. Furthermore, a distinction between *de jure* and *de facto* language policies can be made. *De jure* policies are established by law; *de facto* policies are policies that arise in practice, they can reflect or not *de jure* policies. In summary, Johnson (2013: 24) states that language policies can be “created, interpreted, and appropriated across multiple levels or layers”. They can be written down in law but do not have to be, especially when it comes to *de facto* or unofficial

policies. Language policies may be made by agents who act intentionally but also unintentionally.

Given this definition of language policy types, it is important to note that language policy decisions are not always consciously planned and explicitly stated by a speech community. Spolsky (2004: 7) stresses that actual language practices which are used by language communities can be far more powerful than any conscious, planned, ideologically motivated policies. Broader socio-political and historical developments considerably influence the production and practice of policy (see Hogan-Brun 2008: 5). It therefore needs to be underlined that actual practices and beliefs can strongly differ from language management or planning. Actual practice can give greater indication of the real language policy of a speech community. Even though policy is mostly associated with power and authority, any individual that operates within a speech community might be an agent (Spolsky 2006: 40). The field of language policy is therefore not restricted to authorized institutions, but literally regards all individuals in a speech community. Johnson (2013: 7) consequently states that language policy exists across many different layers and levels and is not only connected to a governing entity or polity.

4.2. Language education policy

One of the most important domains of language policy is education. In very general terms, language education policy is concerned with the questions “which languages at what age for how long by whom for whom and how” should be taught (Shohamy 2006: 76). Shohamy (2006: 77) provides a definition of language education policy that highlights the involvement of educational contexts:

While language policy is concerned with decisions people make about languages and their use in society, language education policy refers to affecting these very decisions in the specific contexts of education, schools and universities, most often in relation to languages which are considered home, foreign and global.

Language education policy is thus concerned with all language decisions in educational institutions. As to Shohamy (2006: 80), a very general formula for language education can be found in Western language education policy. There usually seems to be one official, national language that is given high priority and status as it is usually connected with identity and ideology. One major foreign language that serves as the lingua franca, which is increasingly English, and thirdly other foreign languages or regional, heritage or community languages constitute the rest of the formula.

Government agencies, parliaments, Ministries of Education and regional and local educational boards usually create policies in a top-down manner. Bottom-up initiatives are rather rare but can also be effective and can provoke changes. Even though educational policies are mostly stated explicitly, they might be interpreted and implemented quite differently in de facto practices. For example language education policy documents that seem progressive and pluralistic may only pay lip service. As Shohamy (2006: 68) stresses: "declared policies might only reflect intentions and 'nice words' and not be practiced". It is therefore interesting to examine in how far the intentions of policy documents become reality. Shohamy (2006) points out that the interpretation and implementation of policies may considerably vary from group to group because of different needs in different contexts. Shohamy (2006: 143) criticizes that:

Certain languages are imposed by policy makers on schools through different mechanisms, for a variety of political and social reasons, without attention being paid to the needs and wishes of those who are affected by the policy, without including those who are expected to carry it out and without examining whether it is feasible.

Broad parts of the population and teachers are mostly excluded from the process of language policy creation. Quality, appropriateness and relevance of policies are often not questioned and accepted as taken for granted. Along these top-down lines of policy creation, teachers and educational staff are supposed to carry out policies and become agents of certain ideologies. Shohamy (2006: 78) considers language education policy as a very strong form of language manipulation. Since education is compulsory for all children, educational institutions strongly determine "ways of speaking and writing, definitions about language and priority of certain languages and how they

should be used, taught and learned” (Shohamy 2006: 77). Certain criteria of success that are mostly based on native-like proficiency thus de-legitimize the mixing of languages and again reinforce boundaries among the different languages. Especially teachers seem to become agents of specific languages who support purity within the language.

4.2.1. The power of educational institutions

As to Ricento (2006: 21), it can be said that schools strongly influence what languages we will speak. Vetter (2013a: 238) and Shohamy (2006) also point out that schools have a particular responsibility for language education. As to the Eurobarometer study 2012, 68% of the respondents in the European Union state that they learned languages primarily in school (Vetter *ibid*). The decisions made by legislators, educational leaders and other stakeholders thus shape patterns of language use, language attitudes and have an enormous impact on the linguistic landscape. Educational institutions are clearly influential agents when it comes to language policy. Shohamy (2006: 78) highlights that educational institutions strongly serve as vehicles to establish order and manage and control the linguistic repertoire of a nation or entity. The members that control and fill these social institutions hold certain power and may even influence future careers and social advancement. Schools and their different hierarchical structures have to implement policies, laws and regulations and are places where hegemony is at work (see Corson 2012: 337). Corson (*ibid*) argues that people act under the pressure of invisible cultural power which is underpinned by the dominant ideology. Teachers and staff, even though hardly involved in the policy creation, become the main agents of policy. Textbooks, materials and tests that reflect policies and ideologies underpin the seemingly natural language ideologies (see Shohamy 2006: 79). According to Corson (2012: 338), schools play a key role in social and cultural reproduction. The discourse used by educational stakeholders supports certain conventions and legitimates specific norms of knowledge. Especially language ideologies seem to be passed on through institutional relations of power. Heller (1995) argues that some forms of knowledge seem to be better for the accomplishment of institutional goals and that more value is thus accorded to them. Consequently,

some languages are privileged and legitimized whereas others are suppressed by the established norm.

4.2.2. Supranational language education policies

The globalisation of language policy is a recently observable phenomenon (Ball et al 2007, Dale 2007, Edwards and Usher 2000, Steiner-Khamsi 2004). In an increasingly closely linked world, it is not surprising that politicians and decision-makers orient themselves towards international trends. Increased mobility and communication between nations lead to international comparisons especially in terms of language education (see Byram and Parmenter 2012: 6). Measured outcomes from language teaching and learning are therefore in demand. Especially in view of Europeanization, more unified and competitive language education policies seem to arise.

The two supranational bodies, the European Union and the Council of Europe, act as major initiators when it comes to recommendations and frameworks for language education policy in Europe. The Common European Framework of References provided by the Council of Europe is adopted and used as a basis for curricula and educational standards by an increasing number of nations (see Byrnes 2007: 642). Hogan-Brun (2008: 5) cautions however that educational policy and practice cannot be uncritically transferred. Varying contexts and sensitivity to culture are aspects that need to be considered when adopting policies. Hogan-Brun (2008: 5) argues that most policies may not find appropriate application because of the tensions and conflicts that arise with local concepts in language education. As to Byram and Parmenter (2012: 73), “long-established and culturally-anchored beliefs about the purpose and aims of language education” often clash with “economically and politically established ‘social imaginaries’”. The international transfer of language education policy is thus often problematic and widens the gap between policy and practice. Even what might seem to be well-developed policies that consider economics, politics and science may not find application in real situations. This phenomenon is also highly relevant for the present thesis.

Supra-national language policy clearly influences the policy of Austria as a member of the European Union and the Council of Europe. It has however to be noted that neither the European Union nor the Council of Europe can make legally binding language policy for their member states. Due to the subsidiarity principle, national language education policy is still the responsibility of national governments. Yet, the impact of these two supranational authorities on national policies is increasingly important.

5. Policy and practice: from Europe to Austria

5.1. Language education policy in the European Union

As previously described, language policy is a complex field which involves numerous contextual factors as well as power relations and its supporting discourses. In the case of the European Union the matter becomes even more multifaceted since a number of languages, states, cultures, attitudes and ideologies are involved. The European Union faces the considerable challenge of unifying a diversity of cultures, languages and traditions. In terms of language education policy, Phillipson (2008: 255) describes four key issues in the European Union. These issues concern the vitality of national languages, the rights for minority languages, the diversification in foreign language learning and the formation of the European Higher Education Area. The following section will investigate language education policy and the issue of diversification on the European level.

5.1.1. Multilingualism and diversity in the European Union

Since the European Union's foundation, policy-makers and stakeholders have been striving to promote multilingualism as a goal that adheres to the values and principles of the EU (see Rindler-Schjerve and Vetter 2012: 10). The European Commission states that "multilingualism is a part and parcel of both European identity/citizenship and the learning society" (COM (95) 590: 47). According to Rindler-Schjerve and Vetter (ibid), the concept of European multilingualism is very ideologically driven and represents an important premise for the European integration process. European multilingualism seems to

ensure political and economic integration and is thus strongly encouraged. It is further argued that the European multilingualism debate is closely intertwined with the diversity principle of the EU (see Rindler-Schjerve and Vetter *ibid*).

The official motto 'United in diversity' and the fact that there are 24 official and working languages in the EU suggest that the Union is interested in maintaining cultural and linguistic diversity. The acknowledgment of diversity indeed constitutes one of the foundations of the EU and is codified in the Maastricht Treaty (OJ 1992 C 191). As to Rindler-Schjerve and Vetter (2012: 13), diversity, and in particular linguistic diversity, "represents the ideological basis for the project of European integration". The value of diversity is given considerable emphasis so that all member states, their languages and cultures are equally respected. The EU's integration process is strongly based on this approach and rejects viewpoints which support one common language as a means to achieve integration (see Rindler-Schjerve and Vetter 2013: 14). Using English as a lingua franca and common language of integration thus seems to be out of question as it would run counter the value of equality. Consequently, the promotion of language learning and teaching has ever since been increased to encourage economic integration and communication between nations. Various EU documents state that Europeans should become multilingual in a number of different languages.

5.1.2. Language policy efforts

Based on the considerations of integration and communication, the European Union has been striving to promote their language policies. This section will outline some important instruments, conclusions, treaties and projects which advocate multilingualism and diversity.

The European year of languages

In 2001 the 'European year of languages' organized by the European Union and the Council of Europe was used to raise awareness of the importance of language learning. The specific aims of the European year of languages were to raise awareness of the wealth of linguistic diversity, encourage multilingualism, bring to notice the advantages of proficiency in several languages, encourage

life-long learning of languages as well as collect information about language teaching and learning (see EC of the European Parliament and of the Council 2000). Several initiatives and information campaigns on a supranational, national and regional level were funded by the European Union and carried out in collaboration with the Council of Europe.

The Barcelona Conclusions

The Barcelona Conclusions in 2002 constitute a major step towards multilingualism in the EU. The so-called “mother tongue +2 strategy” sets the aim of every European citizen to have proficiency in at least three languages. Every European should preferably be able to communicate in at least two languages in addition to his or her mother tongue. The conclusions specify that foreign languages should be taught from a very early age (Presidency Conclusion - Barcelona European Council 2002: 19). While it is not defined which languages should be taught, the Commission repeatedly states that “English is not enough” (COM (2003) 449: 4) (COM (2005) 596: 4). In line with the diversity principle, the learning of a wider range of languages, not only of English, should be encouraged.

The action plan ‘Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity’

The commitment to multilingualism and diversity is further demonstrated by the European action plan ‘Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity’ of 2003. This plan proposed numerous actions to be carried out between 2004 and 2006 that should encourage language learning. The main aims were to encourage the extensions of benefits of language learning, the improvement of language teaching and the building of a language-friendly environment. The European Commission states in this document that “the range of foreign languages spoken by Europeans is narrow, being limited mainly to English, French, German and Spanish” (European Commission 2003: 4). The Commission further urges that “learning one *lingua franca* alone is not enough” (ibid). It is argued that “lessons should be made available in a wide variety of languages” (ibid). The Commission advocates the desirability of multilingualism through lifelong learning starting at a very early age. As to the range of languages, it is stated that “promoting linguistic diversity means actively

encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest possible range of languages in our schools, universities, adult education centers and enterprises” (European Commission 2003: 6). The Commission mainly charges the member states with the task of diversifying language learning: “Member states have considerable scope to take a lead in promoting the teaching and learning of a wider range of languages than at present” (ibid). As to the Commission, there is “broad consensus that further action is to be taken now to improve language learning and to promote linguistic diversity in Europe” (European Commission 2003: 5). The role of the Council of Europe which encourages member states in developing language education policies is also highlighted in this document.

The Lisbon Treaty

The Lisbon Treaty (2007) again promotes cultural and linguistic pluralism and assigns cultural and linguistic diversity an important place. It is stated that the European Union shall “respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity” (Art 2.3. OJ 2007 306/11). As has been argued before, the values of multilingualism and diversity take a considerable place in the European Union’s language education policy.

The ‘Europe 2020 strategy’

The relevance of language learning is further underlined in the ‘Europe 2020 strategy’ where multilingualism is described as the “key to competitiveness of the EU economy” (European Commission 2012b: 2).

5.1.3. De facto practice

In order to measure the success of policy efforts, the European Union has been using different devices to analyze its multilingual landscape. The Eurydice Network monitors language education systems and policies in Europe. Language teaching and learning as well as diversity and the range of languages learned are in focus of the network. The Eurobarometer study evaluates the Europeans’ language use and attitudes. The European Survey on Language Competences investigates language proficiency in Europe and measures the progress towards the objectives of improving foreign language learning.

Even though European language education policy efforts strive for multilingualism and diversity in foreign language learning, reality seems to differ considerably. According to the report 'The Diversity of Language Teaching in the European Union' (European Commission 2007:29), English, French, German, Spanish and Russian are the *linguae francae* which dominate language education. This range of languages accounts for 95% of foreign language teaching at the secondary level. English is taught in 90% of general secondary schools in the European Union and is by far the most taught foreign language at all educational levels (Eurydice Network 2012). This trend is also reflected in the opinions expressed in the Eurobarometer survey on the usefulness of languages (European Commission 2012a). 67% of EU citizens consider English to be one of the most useful languages. German (17%), French (16%) and Spanish (14%) range far behind English in this study. Apart from these *linguae francae*, other languages are only rarely taught. In 2009/10, the percentage of pupils learning other languages was below 5% in most countries and even below 1% in a number of countries (Eurydice Network 2012). In Austria the percentage of other languages than German, English, Spanish, French and Russian ranges from 3,1% on the general lower secondary level to 10,3% on the general upper secondary level.

In terms of multilingualism and the achievement of the mother tongue +2 strategy, the numbers also reveal a rather unsatisfactory situation. Generally, only 54% of Europeans are able to hold a conversation in at least one additional language to their mother tongue, a quarter (25%) are able to speak at least two additional languages and one in ten (10%) are conversant in at least three languages (Eurydice Network 2012). From the Eurydice network data (2012) on language teaching at schools in Europe, we learn that only around 10% of the time is allocated to the teaching of foreign languages. 60,8% of the students enrolled in lower secondary education learn at least one or two modern foreign languages. Since the second modern foreign language is usually introduced at a later level, the time spent with learning the second language is all in all significantly shorter. As a result, the actual language competence also varies. The latest European Survey on Language Competences (2011) carried out by the European Commission revealed that only 42% of tested pupils in the EU

were actually competent in the first foreign language and 25% in the second (European Commission 2012c). The data relied on the students' abilities to understand spoken or written texts and express themselves in writing and were assessed according to the levels of the CEFR.

In order to increase language learning and the range of languages offered, it is stated that school autonomy and optional subjects may boost the provision of modern foreign language teaching considerably (see Eurydice Network 2012). A number of countries such as Austria can thus provide up to three languages in some educational pathways. In Luxembourg, Iceland and Liechtenstein students must sometimes even take up to four foreign languages.

5.2. Language education policy by the Council of Europe

Another major player in European language education policy is the Council of Europe, a body entirely separate from the European Union. While the EU's language policies rather seem to strive for economic integration, the CoE provides tools and scaffoldings to help member states elaborate policies. It is extremely active in the promotion of language learning and teaching. The development of the European Language Portfolio (hereafter ELP) and of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (hereafter CEFR) and the establishment of the European Centre for Modern Languages (hereafter ECML) are some of its most noteworthy contributions to the promotion of language education.

5.2.1. Plurilingualism and diversity

According to the CoE, its language education policies should promote plurilingualism, linguistic diversity, mutual understanding, democratic citizenship and social cohesion (see http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_en.asp, 16.04.2014). The CoE attaches particular importance to the development of plurilingualism as defined in section 3.2.. One of its major goals in language education policy is to promote the reciprocal language learning of the member states' languages. In 1998, the Committee of Ministers encouraged all member

countries to “achieve a degree of communicative ability in a number of languages” (Committee of Ministers 1998). Promoting plurilingualism for the CoE signifies promoting a “global integrated approach to language education” (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Division_en.asp, 16.04.2014).

One major value advocated by the CoE is linguistic and cultural diversity. Similar to the European Union, the CoE places importance on the fact that all member states are equally valued. Recommendation R (82) 18 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe specifies that the diverse languages and cultures in Europe are a valuable resource. Educational efforts would however be necessary to “convert diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding” (CEFR :2). It is further stated that modern language learning will facilitate communication and mutual understanding.

When it comes to the range of languages that should be learned, the CoE pleads for the diversification of language education:

Multilingualism may be attained by simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language, or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication. (CEFR: 4)

Clearly, the dominant position of English in the education system runs counter the principles of diversity. Yet, it is a reality as has been outlined in chapter 5.1.3.. Very similarly to the EU, the CoE encourages students to learn more than one lingua franca. Nevertheless, the CoE puts considerable emphasis on the plurilingual approach, highlighting the individual’s unique linguistic and cultural repertoire that is open for change and partial competence. Beacco et al (2010: 19) argue that following the plurilingual approach, the learners “must not be confined to learning just one foreign language or only those discourse genres valued for their presumed social and occupational utility”. The approach is open for any kind of linguistic competence and not restricted to standardized norms. Compliant with open conceptualizations of language, this view allows for different levels of proficiency in different language varieties.

5.2.2. Language policy efforts

In order to promote its language policies, the CoE has developed and established several instruments. Some of its most important language policy efforts will be outlined in this section.

The CEFR

An influential product of the CoE's policy efforts is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages developed by the Language Policy Division of the CoE. The CEFR serves as a key document for the development of national language education profiles and is increasingly considered to be a rather neutral frame of reference. As to Byram and Parmenter (2012: 114), the appearance of the CEFR coincided with a period of comparison to other countries. Since the framework catered for the need of a legitimate extranational frame of reference for language education policy, it has been adopted by an increasing number of governments.

The CEFR is based on the plurilingual approach to language learning and reflects the general principles of the CoE's language education policy. It is open for partial competence and knowledge which makes it compliant with open conceptualizations of language and pluralistic approaches to language learning. The CEFR is supposed to facilitate the definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods. It also provides tools for the assessment of proficiency. The competence levels are described without reference to any specific language and can be used to describe learners' competence profiles. As to Beacco et al (2010: 85), "the text is also important for the principles referred to in it". It is an extremely important instrument by the CoE to promote its language education policy.

Even though the rationale, the aims, the objectives and the content for modern foreign language curricula are provided by the CEFR, it is clarified in the document that the major decisions are left up to the macro- meso- and micro-levels. The interpretation of the framework and the organization of courses and subjects are accordingly still the responsibility of national, regional and local authorities. The use of certain learning activities, the teacher role and materials

and resources are also on the hands of schools and teachers. The CEFR and its principle of plurilingualism can thus be implemented to extremely differing extents as will be outlined in chapter 6.

The ELP

In order to record the plurilingual education of students, the European Language Portfolio was developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. It should support the development of plurilingualism and record the individual's linguistic and cultural experiences. As to Beacco et al (2010: 22), the ELP can be used to make language learners aware of the "various resources in their own repertoires". It thus supports the plurilingual approach to language learning and gives the learner the opportunity to record all individual competences.

The ECML

The establishment of the European Centre for Modern Languages is the third cornerstone of the CoE's language activities. Together with the Language Policy Unit and the secretariat of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, it constitutes one of the basic instruments for dealing with language issues. The ECML should help to reform the teaching and learning of languages and promote plurilingual and pluricultural education. It is supposed to assist stakeholders in member states in bringing language education policies and practices together.

The LEPP

The development of Language Education Policy Profiles (hereafter LEPP) is an activity of the CoE's language policy division in order to analyse current practices and policies in member states and indicate possible future developments and priorities. The LEPP process is described as a process of reflection for authorities. They are offered the opportunity to self-evaluate their language education policy and consider possible changes. Especially before curricular reforms, the LEPP process should help the member states to become aware of key factors. Clearly, these profiles help in promoting the CoE's policy intentions as they are based on the CoE's "commitment to a holistic vision of

language education” (Language Policy Division CoE 2009: 10). Among other aims, the CoE specifies that “the holistic vision of a curriculum which implements education for plurilingualism is fundamental to all Profiles and to the policy of the Council of Europe” (Language Policy Division CoE 2009: 16). The LEPP can thus be seen as an instrument to promote plurilingualism.

5.3. Language education policy in Austria

According to de Cillia and Haller (2003), language education policy is one of the few domains where targeted language policy can be detected in Austria. This section will describe language education policy efforts in Austria and thus complete the policy background of the study.

Austria’s commitment to language teaching and learning is said to be shown by the participation in the Language Education Policy Profile– process, an initiative launched by the Council of Europe that should sketch the situation of language learning in Austria. Even though Austria’s efforts were praised in the profile, it was stated that “more could be done to promote the growth of plurilingualism” (BM:UKK 2008: 89). According to the Austrian Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (BM:UKK 2008), interest in language matters is further demonstrated by the establishment of the Austrian Language Committee (ÖSKO) in 2003 after the participation in the European year of languages in 2001. The ÖSKO includes representatives of all stakeholders and deals with language issues. The existence of the Austrian Centre for Language Competence (ÖSZ) is seen as another proof of Austria’s interest in language education. It is supposed to support the development of language learning and teaching especially in the light of European language policy. Austria is also praised by the CoE to have been one of the first Council of Europe member states to pay serious attention to the CEFR and the ELP. Moreover, it is underlined by the Ministry that Austria has participated in a number of language teaching and exchange projects by the European Union (BM:UKK 2008: 87).

As to the BM:UKK (2008: 121), the present priority areas in language education policy are diversification, continuity, early language learning, the further development of language teacher education training, the promotion of German

as language of instruction and its role as first, second or foreign language, the promotion of bilingual education and the promotion of mother-tongue instruction.

5.3.1. The education system

Generally, the Austrian education system is regulated by the federal law of school organization of 1962 (SchOG, BGBl 1962/242) which has been changed and adapted by numerous amendments over the years. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education is the highest supervisory authority for all primary and secondary schools. The Federal Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture oversees the education authorities on the level of the Austrian 'Länder' (federal states) and the education authorities on the level of political districts. Certain responsibilities with regard to law and the execution of laws are distributed between the federal authorities and the Austrian federal states. Whereas some laws are based on a national legislation, other matters can be decided on the level of the federal states. The legislation for school organisation (§ 6, para. 1 SchOG) lays down different frameworks for each type of school. Some curricula regulations can be adapted to the individual needs of schools on the basis of school autonomy. A school may thus define its area of emphasis and adapt or extend its contingent of lessons and subjects within a certain framework. With regard to the official language, German is laid down to be the language of school instruction, except for certain schools where other provisions such as CLIL are envisaged or have been made. Minorities, especially in the border regions, are however entitled to benefit from an education in their minority language. Yet, this only concerns a relatively small number of the population.

5.3.2. Foreign language education in Austria

Since the educational reform in the 1960ies, foreign language education and language pilot projects have continually increased in Austria (see De Cillia and Haller 2003: 114). The new curricula for foreign language education, designed by working teams commissioned by the Federal Ministry, became effective in 2006 in the course of an educational reform. Regarding the modern foreign language curricula, all foreign language subjects are grouped under the heading

'Modern foreign languages (First, Second)'. The Austrian curriculum is thus valid for all modern foreign languages, whether they are first or second. The languages English, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Czech, Slovene, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Hungarian, Croatian, Slovak and Polish are indicated as possible first and second modern foreign languages.

Since 2002, one foreign language is compulsory from the first grade of primary school onwards. Even though it is a compulsory subject, it is not assessed. Apart from English and French, the Austrian neighbour languages Italian, Slovak, Slovenian, Czech and Hungarian could be chosen as a foreign language. In lower secondary education, where the curricula of the school types 'Hauptschule' and 'Gymnasium' are largely identical, at least one foreign language is compulsory. The languages which are available are English, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Czech, Slovene, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Hungarian and Croatian. The languages Slovak and Polish are only available for Gymnasium (BM:UKK 2008). In accordance with the school autonomy regulations, a second foreign language may also be added. It might be introduced as an optional subject or as an optional subject with no assessment. Since 2006/07 students in Gymnasium with a focus on arts subjects can choose between the previously compulsory Latin and a second modern foreign language. However, Latin then is a compulsory subject on the upper secondary level.

On the upper secondary level, a first foreign language is compulsory in Gymnasium. With regard to the second foreign languages, there are two different types of choices depending on the focus of the school. These options are the continued second modern foreign language from the lower secondary on the one hand (6 years of SFL) or the introduction of a second foreign language in the fifth form (4 years of SFL). Both forms lead to the leaving exam Matura. A third foreign language is not envisaged in the curricula, but could autonomously be provided by schools. The school type BMS (vocational middle schools) offers one or two modern foreign languages, English being the compulsory first modern foreign language. Vocational upper secondary schools (BHS) provide one to three foreign languages since their vocational foci are

very diverse. Whereas the types HAK (upper secondary commercial and business schools) and HLW (upper secondary schools for some trades and some commercial occupations) require English as the first modern foreign language and another compulsory second foreign language, HTL (upper secondary schools for technology and trades), HLF (upper secondary schools for agriculture and forestry) and BAKIP (vocational upper secondary schools for kindergarten pedagogy) only require one compulsory foreign language which is not necessarily English. All the types could optionally offer another modern foreign language.

The general curricula requirements, the so-called 'Studentafeln', lay down the number of lessons per week and per level for the different school types. The organisation of subjects and lessons plays a major role in general education and in the modern foreign language education of Austrian pupils. Distinct modern foreign languages are never named in the requirements for general lower and upper secondary. The document only refers to the term 'first or second modern foreign language'. Solely some upper secondary school types with a professional focus (BHS) have explicitly English as the first modern foreign language.

5.3.4. De facto practice

Theoretically speaking, the number of languages provided in the Austrian modern foreign language curricula and general curricula requirements is quite extensive. The languages are all given equal status and can be chosen either as first or second modern foreign languages, except for some school types where other requirements are valid. In actual practice, however, some languages dominate the educational system. The world-wide trend of the strong position of English and its impact on the position of other languages is also perceptible in Austrian classrooms.

The considerable majority of pupils in primary school (98,61%) learn English as their first modern foreign language (BM:UKK 2008). Similar figures appear on the lower secondary level, 99% of the pupils learn English (see Haller 2007).

There are only the tradition-rich Gymnasiums 'Stubenbastei' in Vienna which offers Russian as a first modern foreign language and the 'Akademisches Gymnasium' which offers French as a first modern foreign language. Since these schools are quite isolated exceptions, a problem of discontinuity may arise for pupils who change schools (see De Cillia and Haller 2003: 123). The discontinuity of curricular requirements is also referred to as a problem in the LEPP. The different educational sectors (e.g. primary and secondary education) are responsible for their curricula and often do not consider the pupil's previous education. It is therefore criticized that the repeated new beginnings of language learning constitute a lot of effort wasted. The whole system of language education seems to be rather uniform, impermeable and inflexible. The majority of second foreign language learners in lower secondary learn French, followed by Italian and Spanish (BM:UKK 2008). These traditional foreign languages clearly rule out the minority and neighbouring languages. Some regional differences can however be detected. Croatian and Hungarian is for example in higher demand in Burgenland, and Slovene and Italian in Carinthia. According to the LEPP, the languages of neighbouring countries play a relatively insignificant role in the Austrian language education. Even though there are projects in the border regions which encourage the learning of neighbouring languages, this trend is only just beginning to spread.

With regard to the upper secondary level, English is again the dominant foreign language; the vast majority (96,13%) of upper secondary pupils learn English. The Romance languages French, Italian and Spanish as well as Russian follow the leading language. Generally, it can be said that the widest range of minor foreign languages are taught in AHS upper secondary, followed by BHS. Some BHS and BMS schools also offer other languages such as Chinese or Japanese (see BM:UKK 2008:166).

5.3.5. Ways of diversification

As de Cillia and Haller (2003: 129) criticize, de facto language education in Austria is clearly not diverse. It is mostly limited to English and Romance languages. De Cillia and Haller (ibid) therefore suggest a change on three levels in order to reform the system and diversify language education. Firstly,

the offer of modern foreign languages on all educational levels should be diversified. Secondly, foreign language education should generally be intensified and thirdly, a reform of the general framework of language learning should be done. Some scholars such as Seidlhofer (2003, 2004) also argue that the status of English could be used to promote initiatives such as CLIL and bilingual schools in order to make room for a wider offer of other foreign languages. Seidlhofer (2003, 2004) proposes that the unique status of English could thus be used in a positive and productive way. These changes could certainly support a more holistic, fluid and flexible approach to language learning. Other innovations in the Austrian education system like the standardized school leaving exam, however, clearly run counter such wishes.

Pluralistic projects

Some pluralistic approaches which consider the relatedness of languages and cultures have already been implemented in Austria. The Frame of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures developed by the ECML Graz identifies four major pluralistic approaches which are all based on the principle of creating relationships between languages and cultures. Contrary to singular approaches which focus on one particular language or culture in isolation, all the approaches involve several varieties of languages and cultures. As to the ECML (2012: 8), pluralistic approaches play a key role in the construction of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. It is argued that knowledge, attitudes and skills that form these competences can only be developed when more than one language or culture is approached.

One of the earliest pluralistic approaches is *intercultural learning* (see Byram 2003, Byram and Tost Planet 2000). This approach works with the interaction of different cultures. It should relate people with different cultural backgrounds to each other and support their peaceful coexistence. Intercultural learning has already been included in the Austrian curricula as a general didactic principle. It is stated that intercultural learning should not only introduce learners to other cultures, but also make them understand, experience and take part in the creation of their own cultural values (see Lehrplan AHS general didactic principles). Also, interest in cultural difference and diversity should be raised.

Acceptance and respect for one another should be the desired outcomes of this principle. Furthermore, it is specified in the general didactic principles that bilingualism and multilingualism are to be valued and that pupils should be encouraged to contribute relevant knowledge in their mother tongues.

The *awakening to language approach* (Candelier 2003a, 2003b) sets the aim of raising awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and incorporates the students' mother tongues in language learning. It was principally designed to introduce pupils at the beginning of their school education to linguistic diversity. The approach especially provides activities for languages that are mostly not taught in school, but it is not limited to those. It involves the language of schooling and a number of other varieties of languages that the learners encounter in their lives. Due to the high number of languages involved, this approach may according to the ECML (2012: 7) be seen as the most extreme form of pluralistic approaches. On the European level, several projects of this kind have been used on a broader scale. The Eulang and Janua Linguarum projects are especially noteworthy. The awakening to languages project and its further development the KIESEL project has already been used in selected Austrian classrooms.

Another pluralistic approach that has received considerable attention is the approach of *intercomprehension*. It makes use of the relatedness of languages within language families. Two or more languages from one linguistic family for example Romance or Slavic languages are learned in parallel. One of these languages should be the learner's mother tongue, language of schooling or another language previously learned. In any case, a certain level of competence should already have been reached in one of the languages involved. Focusing on receptive skills, the approach uses already acquired knowledge in one language to develop comprehension in the other. Some projects focusing on intercomprehension have already been supported on the European level. The EuroCom project which also offers online courses is particularly noteworthy. Also individual projects on intercomprehension have already been implemented in Austrian classrooms (see Staar 2013).

The *integrated didactic approaches to different languages* that focus on the links of a certain number of languages beyond the level of intercomprehension constitute the fourth pluralistic approach. The aim of these approaches can be to achieve the same competences in all the languages taught, but it can also focus on partial competences for some of them. The overall principle of these approaches is to use the language of schooling as a springboard for the learning of a first foreign language. The learning of a second foreign language should then be based on the former two languages. All the languages thus support each other in the process of learning. As to the ECML (2012: 7) some approaches dealing with bilingual teaching can also be seen as belonging to this approach. The plurilingual approach which considers the whole linguistic repertoire of individuals when learning a language also seems to match this idea. These approaches are described by the ECML (2012: 7) as extremely demanding pluralistic approaches for all persons involved since a considerable number of different languages and levels of competence can be involved.

Even though some initiatives and projects involving pluralistic approaches have been carried out in Austrian classrooms, they seem to be rather isolated exceptions. Apart from the general didactic principle of intercultural learning, only few of these principles have found inclusion in Austrian education. The ECML (2012: 8) indeed recommends “a major paradigmatic change” that would lead to the “the development of a global view of language education which would include the teaching and learning of ALL languages, in order to profit from their potential for synergy”. The compartmentalized view of the individual’s linguistic and cultural resources could thus be abandoned in favour of a holistic approach. The Frame of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures provides descriptors of knowledge, skills and attitudes which could be developed by pluralistic approaches. It caters for the need of a framework on how curricula based on pluralistic approaches could be developed and on how links between pluralistic approaches, communicative language competences and non-linguistic areas could be created.

6. Plurilingual education and its implementation

The general principles of plurilingualism have been outlined in section 3.2.. However, when it comes to the actual implementation of the plurilingual approach, one encounters several obstacles. Due to the complexity of the approach, many questions may arise regarding its application. Indeed, as Beacco et al (2010: 5) note, only few language curricula are consistently geared towards the approach. Despite the fact that the CEFR has received considerable attention on the European level, its values and underlying principles are often disregarded by its users. As to Beacco et al (ibid), the current uses of the CEFR and its main emphases only tap parts of its considerable potential. The aims of plurilingual and intercultural education, although being the CEFR's main emphasis, are often ignored by the implementers. This section will therefore provide an overview of how the implementation of the approach is to be understood.

6.1. General aims

According to Beacco et al (2010: 18), two general aims of plurilingual and intercultural education can be identified. The first aim of the approach is to facilitate the acquisition of linguistic and intercultural abilities. The learners should thus be able to add to their linguistic and cultural resources and individual repertoires and to use the means available to them efficiently. However, the clear aims will vary according to the learners' needs, languages and contexts. In general, the various language courses should provide learners with "the ability to communicate in several foreign languages, at levels of proficiency which may vary with the language varieties concerned" (Beacco et al 2010: 22). "For certain types of language, partial competence (e.g. comprehension) may also be the goal" (Beacco et al ibid). The second general aim is to promote the personal development and potential of each individual. This involves encouraging the learners to respect and accept diversity of languages and cultures in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural society and also making them aware of their own competences and development potential. As to Beacco et al (ibid), the "effective learning of one or more languages", the "awareness of the value of diversity and otherness" and the "recognition of the

utility of any (even partial) competence” can be described as fundamental parts of plurilingual and pluricultural education.

Apart from these general aims, Beacco et al (2010: 8) define more precise principles of how the plurilingual and pluricultural curriculum should be developed. One should:

- make the teaching approaches of different subjects (content, methods, terminology) more consistent with one another;
- identify bridges between subjects, and pace learning to ensure such coherence; highlight language components shared by the various subjects learned;
- promote awareness of possible transfers;
- link knowledge and skills for the purpose of developing intercultural competence.

Beacco et al (ibid) further outline that all teaching of and in languages (including languages of schooling) should be treated as one process. This view should encourage teachers to work closely together and attaches importance to “openness to languages and cultures, communication and (inter)cultural competences, learner autonomy and transversal competence” (Beacco et al ibid).

6.2. The spider-web of languages

The CoE specifies that plurilingual and intercultural education should make full use of all language and cultural competences available to the learner and should develop those for their educational success (see Martyniuk 2011). A coherent approach to all languages present at school which allows learners to develop their own plurilingual profile is required. One possible idea how the plurilingual approach to language education could be implemented and adapted to local needs is provided by Van den Akker et al (2010: 10). They suggest viewing the modern foreign language curriculum as a spider web.

In view of the multiple claims for more diversity in language education, stakeholders might feel overwhelmed by the challenge to include various

languages in the curriculum. Certain languages currently occupy important places in the education system and are not expected to cede their place. Adding another language subject to the curriculum is mostly not possible because of financial and organizational constraints of different kinds. When opting for one language thus signifies deciding against another, the task of diversifying the language curriculum can indeed become extremely challenging. However, moving away from traditional conceptions of language subjects could constitute a way out of the uniform language education. The decompartmentalized view by Van den Akker et al (2010) treats the resources in an individual's repertoire as a whole and sees all the languages present in the curriculum as forming a spider web. The idea of the spider web is to expand it with an additional dimension instead of simply adding another language to the curriculum. Even though this additional dimension is based on the same rationale for language learning, it might have other aims and contents. Such a dimension can make room for partial or specific competences. According to Van den Akker et al (2010: 10), the extra perspective should also have a link and connecting activities to other languages. Similarities and differences between language structures and cultures as well as language awareness thus get a logical place in the curriculum design. Moving away from an uncoordinated way of language education, a closer cooperation of languages in the education system is encouraged by this idea.

Similarly, Beacco et al (2010: 9) describe that "crossover links between 'languages as subjects' are the central element in plurilingual and intercultural education". According to this view, the curricula should "promote exchange between teachers, teachers and learners, and learners – and encourage learners not to restrict themselves to certain languages" (Beacco et al *ibid*). In order to cover the wide range of linguistic and cultural competences required by society, subjects could thus be "'decompartmentalized' and brought together in 'subject areas'" (Beacco et al *ibid*). The competence acquisition should then be coordinated across the subject spectrum. Also, transversal competences thus find a place in the curricula. As to Beacco et al (*ibid*), those competences should be incorporated "for the purpose of linking processes, and systematically helping pupils to transfer competences usefully from one subject to another".

Links between languages as subjects and also between languages and other subjects should be established. The plurilingual approach should accordingly cover the entire language repertoire concerned. Beacco et al (2010: 22) stress that the crossover links of language subjects should aim at coherence and efficiency in language teaching.

Nevertheless, Beacco et al (2010: 9) highlight that “the importance attached to crossover links between subjects in no way implies that the place and role of specific school subjects are being challenged”. In actual practice, languages are mostly taught in a completely unrelated manner even though their relationship might be close. The organization of individual subjects could still be upheld, but more cross-over links should be found. The task of integration and transfer of language skills is mostly left up to students. Since the process of transfer and comparison happens naturally during learning, curricula and teachers should according to this approach facilitate this process and make students aware of the advantages. When talking about the concept of transfer we mean:

The process whereby experience on one task has an effect (either *positive* or *negative*) on performance on a different task subsequently undertaken. The underlying notion is that the knowledge or skill acquired in the first task either facilitates or interferes with carrying out the subsequent task. (Reber 1985: 785).

Positive transfer techniques can be provided by teachers so that students can profit from the relatedness of languages and their own individual linguistic resources. The learning of one language might not always directly facilitate the learning of another language, but acquiring techniques and strategies that help learners to transfer knowledge and skills is certainly a very central part of this approach.

6.3. The roles of the teachers and learners

Given that synergies between the various languages should be established, the teacher and learner roles also need to be reconsidered. As to Beacco et al (2010: 22), the learning aims must be co-ordinated by teachers, but not separately for each language, but “complementary of the acquired competences”. Teachers should make a joint planning of the progress and approaches in view of learner profiles. They are encouraged to explicitly use

and draw on the learners' linguistic and intercultural competences already acquired. For example competences and knowledge that learners have acquired from learning one language should be reinforced by teaching them a second. Both should in this way be strengthened and supported. Teacher contact should however not only be fostered between language teachers, but also between teachers of other subjects. As to Beacco et al (2010: 9), "points of professional interest" should be found in order to find interdisciplinary transfer possibilities. The points can be principles, teaching aids, methods and activities, approaches to evaluation or metalinguistic activities. Teachers should in any case co-operate in many different ways. "Accessible 'meeting points'" between teachers in the same field or between teachers with the same pedagogical problems should be used (Beacco et al 2010: 40).

Beacco et al (2010: 39) also indicate some points which refer to the expertise required for the implementation of plurilingual and pluricultural education. Generally, it is stated that the teachers' readiness to accept innovation as well as their willingness to cross their subject boundaries are important prerequisites. Moreover, teachers should get a basic training in some key domains and develop the following abilities:

- a detailed knowledge of the way in which bilingual/plurilingual people 'function';
- the ability to set realistic targets for acquisition of the plurilingual and intercultural competence aimed at;
- the ability to build on learners' language repertoires;
- the ability to activate strategies for transfers from one language, competence or subject to another;
- the ability to manage language alternation in the classroom judiciously and in a controlled manner;

The role of the learner also plays an important part in the redistribution of the roles. Not only teachers should focus more on individual learners and their whole repertoires, but also learners are expected to work more independently and view the broader picture of their development. The pupils' autonomous learning abilities should be encouraged in order to meet these goals. By making

pupils aware of the resources of their own repertoires and of the transfer strategies they could use, their autonomy and responsibility should be increased. The ELP could be used as a helpful tool to reach these aims.

6.4. The assessment of competences

The forms of assessment and evaluation should according to Beacco et al (2010: 10) be consistent with the aims of the approach. Obviously, the CEFR and the ELP can be used as the main assessment and self-assessment tools. Rather than being summative, the assessment should be directed to be formative and encourage self-assessment. The assessment may concern a specific language, but can also put an emphasis on transversal competence including for example metalinguistic awareness and linguistic mediation. A distinction could also be made between “aims specific to the teaching of a given language and its cultures” and “aims applying to the teaching of various subjects” (Beacco et al 2010: 16). In the former category, language competence and cultural competence could be assessed, in the latter category, plurilingual and intercultural competence could be addressed. Beacco et al (2010: 30) state that it might be useful to define some standards or expected language competences for assessment. These could be key competences, not defined in levels, or competence standards, defined as levels. However, Beacco et al (2010: 9) suggest that one should move away from levels and rather introduce competence profiles instead. Those competence profiles should provide a more accurate picture of the individual’s skills and competences. By using the descriptors of the CEFR and by defining target competences, one integrated competence profile for all languages can be established. Beacco et al (2010: 20) clarify that “the goal of acquiring certain competences in the languages taught” is in this way certainly not abandoned. On the contrary, a more precise and complete assessment of all competences should be the aim.

By using competence profiles, the question of the assessment of partial or specific competence can also be responded to. Considering that the plurilingual approach is open for partial or specific competence, some way to grade or value the competences must be found. The notion of partial competence might have bad connotations because it suggests unfinished and incomplete

competence (see Van den Akker et al 2010). In current language education, great emphasis is put on the achievement of all productive and receptive competences in a language. The assessment of specific competences can according to Van den Akker et al (2010) however be based on the criteria and scales provided by the CEFR. Since the CEFR provides scales for every competence, specific competences in different languages could be assessed and thus valued. Only the idea of native-like competence in all domains of a language would need to be reviewed. Using an integrated competence profile for the assessment of all competences could therefore cater for the need of a complete and holistic assessment.

6.5. Changing curricula

In order to develop a meaningful plurilingual curriculum, some major changes might be necessary. Beacco et al (2010: 20) claim that “attempting to give plurilingual and intercultural education its rightful place in the curriculum may mean changing it radically”. Nevertheless, they emphasize that a complete break with goals pursued by former curricula and policies might not be necessary. Rather, they state that new curricula and approaches should build on these former goals.

In view of the numerous knowledge claims in our society, Van den Akker et al (2010: 11) generally propose reducing the big number of separate subjects to a more limited number of broader learning areas. These broader areas should have very clear aims and rather focus on basic concepts and skills. Also, Van den Akker et al (2010: 11) suggest increasing the interaction between learning inside and outside the school. Plurilingual and intercultural competence can in their view hardly be achieved without real world links and experiences, a fact that should be considered in the plurilingual curriculum.

Moreover, the curricula should move away from a traditional teacher- and textbook-dominated instruction and include meaningful and action-oriented approaches that are challenging and intrinsically motivating for students. The key role of teachers as interpreters and implementers of curricula comes into

play here. Since they are fully responsible of the organization of language lessons, they should be seen as important cooperators.

6.6. Applying the approach to local needs

One major difficulty with the approach will probably be the development of a national large-scale language education which is open for flexibility and diversity and can be adapted to individual needs. Van den Akker et al (2010: 8) argue that the principles expressed by the plurilingual approach and the CEFR provide the rationale, the aims and the contents for modern foreign language education, but that they need to be related to local needs in order to arrive at acceptable, clear and practical solutions. As Beacco et al (2010: 8) argue, the given educational context determines the extent to which the approach can be applied. Approaches and methods do not have to be standardized, but can include different aims and contextual variables. Beacco et al (2010: 15) recommend analyzing the “specific societal context” in which the approach should be applied. Various aspects such as the needs of the population and of economic partners, already existing policies or the status of languages should be taken into consideration. One might thus for example consider the socio-economic backgrounds of students when developing language education curricula. All these factors will then influence the specific aims of the approach. Its implementation can therefore vary from smaller initiatives such as an increased co-ordination between language teachers to the full implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education as the explicit general aim. Beacco et al (2010: 8) underline that any initiative in the direction of such an education can be seen as a positive step. Furthermore, they emphasize that the development of curricula aiming at plurilingual and intercultural education should be seen as a step-by-step and not an all-or-nothing process.

6.7. Basic considerations for the implementation

Considering the different contexts of implementation, specific aims may be defined according to local needs (see Beacco et al 2010: 69). The competence profiles aimed at may therefore vary and be adapted to specific situations. Concerning the assessment of competences, one might choose between

various models. Privileged competences, partial ones and other dimensions may be considered. Obviously, activities and contents will depend on these aims.

With regard to temporal formats, Beacco et al (2010: 69) stress that the standard division of lessons into subjects might not be the only option. They suggest introducing flexible arrangements of phases of learning, while keeping the total hours constant. The total hours dedicated to languages in schools could be managed in a flexible way so that all learners could come together for activities of general interest and transversal scope. Also, the parallel or staggered learning of related languages might be considered. As Beacco et al (2010: 70) propose, the advantages of learning two languages which work in similar ways could be exploited. They claim that “languages studied at an interval have the potential to mobilise acquired knowledge and competences (linguistic, didactic, cultural, strategic) in a manner which enriches learning, not only of the new language, but also of the first one”.

Furthermore, the idea of modules involving specific aims, or involving one or more languages simultaneously is addressed. One example could be the introduction of a multi-language module aiming at reviewing ways and styles of learning, another module could focus on intercomprehension strategies. Again, these modules could be defined according to local needs and aims.

6.8. Plurilingual and pluricultural experiences on different levels

From the earliest stages of schooling on, learners should experience a coherent approach to language learning. Following Beacco et al's (2010: 44) suggestions, learners should begin to experience plurilingual and intercultural education on the kindergarten level. They should experience the acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity and plurality, learn to respect otherness, experience all forms of expression, be introduced to a first foreign language and learn first forms of reflexivity. Already on the preprimary level, the learners' profiles (ELP) should be developed as they serve as an important tool for the observation of the development.

The experiences in primary school should first and foremost be directed towards the development of literacy. Learning to read and write and becoming aware of the various functions of reading and writing are clearly the major goals here. Moreover, metalinguistic and metacultural reflection should start during this period. The learners should learn how to use tools such as dictionaries and atlases. Also, they should be familiarized with other semiotic resources than languages such as diagrams or tables. The learners' personal expression and imagination should be fostered by various activities. Learners should also be introduced to self- and peer-evaluation. Already at this stage, they should learn how to keep their personal portfolio. Global linguistic and intercultural education constitutes an important aspect at this stage. Language awareness, openness to languages and the ability to draw comparisons should be fostered. With regard to foreign languages, first stages of speaking and writing, of experiencing culture-specific phenomena and of establishing links between the foreign language and the language of schooling should be achieved. Primary school is generally said to be the perfect place to implement an integrative approach to language learning.

On the lower and upper secondary level, the continuity of language education must be taken into account. The experiences made in prior stages should be supplemented and elaborated. At this stage of education, subject-autonomy usually increases and specialized teachers as well as new subjects are introduced. Learners on the lower and upper secondary level should participate in activities concerning mediation, interpretation and evaluation. Linguistic and intercultural mediation such as producing a written report on an oral debate, interpretation activities, such as commenting on aspects of a literary text and evaluation activities, such as giving an opinion on a press article, should be in focus here. Also, they should experience contacts and transitions of and between languages. With regard to metalinguistic and metacultural reflection, learners should be introduced to different grammatical approaches, develop transferable competences, be encouraged to think about language forms and their functions, cultural differences and cultural relativity. Furthermore, learners should develop awareness of power relations and weights of languages. The language learning modes should in general be diversified at this stage. A whole

range of different activities should thus increase learner autonomy. Collective projects, activities and operations should complement all these points. Generally, it has to be noted that many of these experiences should involve several languages or varieties and therefore use and encourage the plurilingual and intercultural competence.

6.9. A possible scenario

Having described some principles of how plurilingual and intercultural education is to be understood, Beacco et al (2010: 43) suggest different scenarios how the approach could be realized in different settings. Considering the extremely diverse contexts in which the approach could be implemented, different degrees of implementation are possible. As Beacco et al (2010: 21) state: “any initiative – even a partial one – in one of those directions is a positive step towards plurilingual and intercultural education”. One basic scenario of implementation that might be interesting for the Austrian setting will be outlined in this section.

Assuming that the overarching aim of the curriculum is plurilingual and intercultural education, the general aims and profiles for language and intercultural competence need to be defined for the specific context. Some competences might refer to specific languages; others may refer to all languages studied. Coherence between language courses, but also between language courses and “the language in other subjects” should generally be achieved (Beacco et al 2010: 43).

According to Beacco et al (2010: 51), the most common pattern of European language education is the introduction of one foreign language at primary, and another at secondary level. On the European level, these languages are usually English, as a first foreign language and German, French, Spanish or Russian as the second. Beacco et al (ibid) argue that in many contexts which follow this pattern, a ceiling effect occurs with the first foreign language. Furthermore, the second foreign language receives less attention or is undervalued. The successive or parallel teaching of the two languages usually happens in an unrelated manner. Beacco et al (ibid) therefore suggest an adjustment of the curriculum. As to foreign language number one, Beacco et al (ibid) propose

either a diversification of teaching methods or a suspension of lessons once a certain level is reached. Resources could thus be transferred to the second or maybe third foreign language. Also, the second foreign language should receive more attention. On the whole, one coherent approach which makes use of foreign language number one while learning foreign language number two should be aimed at. The linkages between the foreign languages and the language of schooling should be exploited. As to Beacco et al (2010: 51), the expected learner profile should then cover a solid proficiency in the language of schooling and different levels of proficiency in the foreign languages. Moreover, language activities of mediation should explicitly be included. In view of the global language education, plurilingual and intercultural competence would thus be valued.

One basic scenario as described by Beacco et al (2010: 52) provides for the gradual diversification of languages and progressive introduction of their everyday use in the overall curriculum. Assuming that the first foreign language is introduced at a relatively early stage and a perhaps unrelated second foreign language at a later stage, the aims and methods may partly differ for the two languages. However, the learning of the second foreign language should build on competences already acquired and make use of crossover links between the the first foreign language and the language of schooling. A third foreign language might be introduced at a later stage. This language can be learned in new ways, already building on a broad set of competences. Foreign languages should in this scenario spread into all subjects and become normal use. The competence of mediation between languages and between languages and knowledge, but also between languages and culture should in this way be encouraged. All the experiences as outlined in section 6.8. should to a certain extent be made on the different levels.

The first level of schooling, which brings together pupils from different backgrounds, should provide the foundation of this scenario. Students should be allowed to build on their own language repertoire. Diversity should be considered as a normal feature of everyday life. The language of schooling should become the main means of communication in order to relate to others in school.

On the primary level, a first foreign language will be introduced. The approach is usually communication-focused. Especially the link between the language of schooling and the foreign language should be fostered.

At a later stage, often leading to the end of compulsory schooling, a second foreign language is introduced. The most important aims at this stage are to develop plurilingual and intercultural competence by removing barriers between languages, to achieve a diversification of learning methods and to be prepared to benefit from one's competences outside of school. One salient issue here is the time spent with the second foreign language. Beacco et al (2010: 53) outline that at least as many hours as devoted to the first should be spent on learning the second foreign language. Also the methods used for learning the second foreign language should be adapted to prior knowledge. Continuity with prior language education should be sought; however a wider range of approaches should be used. The first foreign language should at least occasionally be used in other subjects or in projects. The language of schooling should be learned in a way that could also serve the learning of the foreign languages. Using a portfolio is essential for the learner at this stage.

Depending on the further educational paths, a third foreign language may come into play on the upper secondary level. More variety in the methods used is crucial at this stage of language learning. Intercomprehension strategies or bilingual teaching sequences could for example be used. Students are able to work very independently. They might work in the classroom and under supervision, but also individually and collectively on the spot or at distance. Obviously, the learning of a third language strongly builds on already acquired resources. In avoidance of repetition and the ceiling effect, the whole resources of the learners' repertoires should be exploited.

One slightly differing scenario concerns the secondary vocational level. Curricula for these schools usually vary and concentrate less on certain general aspects of language learning. Beacco et al (2010: 55) argue that due to the fact that education is geared towards the labor market, the need to teach languages faster and in more varied ways is felt by vocational institutions. However, ways could be found to build plurilingual and intercultural competence within a

vocational culture. The competences in the language of schooling and in the foreign languages are usually linked to vocational competences. In this scenario, the language of schooling should cover a level of proficiency required in the professional context. The competences in the two foreign languages may vary according to the occupation concerned. The general profile of competence for this scenario would certainly need to value the language competences acquired in relation to professional competences. Also, speaking and writing competences might take a special place as they are needed for specific occupations. A certain degree of specialization directed towards a certain purpose may be seen as more important. Nevertheless, learners should acquire competences of how to learn independently and use resources outside the school. Moreover, intercultural competences and flexibility in relation to the professional environment may be special aims.

The scenarios outlined are strongly based on synergies and links in language education and aim at a progressive and coherent learning of languages. In view of current practices, these basic scenarios for the implementation of the plurilingual approach might be feasible in many contexts. Even though these guidelines are not extremely specific and may seem simplified, they should indicate possibilities which can then be applied to local needs.

Despite these suggestions for the implementation of the plurilingual approach, a major paradigmatic change of the traditional organization of language education seems to be inevitable. In order to develop plurilingual and pluricultural competence as defined by the CoE, a number of reforms would be needed. Giving up on the compartmentalized view of languages and making use of synergies would probably be the most important step towards plurilingual education.

6.11. The semi-implementation of the plurilingual approach in Austria

In the Austrian context, some organizational and ideological factors with a long-standing tradition might be hindering the implementation of the plurilingual approach. Interestingly, the CEFR, developed by the CoE, is already given an extremely important place in language education. According to the BMU:KK,

foreign language teaching and learning in Austria is strongly oriented towards the CEFR. Moreover, a number of innovations like the Austrian educational standards and the new centralized and competence-oriented school-leaving exam are claimed to be based on it. Nevertheless, the CEFR's underlying approach to language education does not seem to find inclusion in Austrian language education policies.

As has been argued before, the actual implementation of policy can vary extensively and might not always reflect its original intentions. This certainly also holds true for the plurilingual approach in Austria. Even though the CEFR is used in Austrian language education, it seems that the standardized competence descriptors and assessment scales play the most central roles. Its underlying idea of the integrative and holistic competence does not seem to find attention. The main emphases of the CEFR, the development of the plurilingual and intercultural competence, seem to be disregarded by Austrian stakeholders. Compartmentalized language subjects, single-handed teachers and incoherent approaches to language education still seem to dominate. Only the use of the ELP in certain schools can be mentioned as a trend towards a more integrative approach.

The negligence of the underlying intentions of the plurilingual education is also addressed in the LEPP. It is stated that "more could be done to promote the growth of plurilingualism" in Austria (BM:UKK 2008: 9). The Austrian language curricula do not only neglect basic principles of the approach, but the use of assessment scales and competences provided by the CEFR is even used to enforce the clear-cut separation of language subjects. Far from valuing all the individual linguistic resources of pupils and establishing links, the CEFR is used to foster traditional ideas of language education. The following empirical study therefore investigates which factors hinder the plurilingual approach from being fully implemented and examines the state of knowledge of stakeholders.

7. Research design and methodology of the empirical study

In this section, the precise objectives of the empirical study will be defined and forms of data collection and analysis will be explained.

7.1. General objectives

The general question to this study is whether the plurilingual approach could be a way to diversify Austrian modern foreign language education. Given the situation that an extremely limited number of languages currently dominate the education system, the study sets out to examine the existing situation of modern foreign language education in terms of diversity and consequently investigates the chances and limits of the plurilingual approach as a means to encourage diversity in modern foreign language education. Since this approach favors a fluid and flexible perspective on language learning and teaching, its potential to open new doors to languages will be explored. More precisely, the perspective of decision-makers on different levels of the Austrian school hierarchy will be investigated. Two main topic areas will be tackled in the study. First of all, the respondents will be confronted with and asked about the current situation of modern foreign language provision. Secondly, they will be asked questions about possible chances and difficulties of the plurilingual approach.

Against the background of the macro-level of supranational and national language policy, it can be said that the study investigates a meso-level which is again subdivided into different levels. It should investigate stakeholders' knowledge, opinions and thoughts. What the study however does not do is looking at the micro-level of actual classroom practice. It rather relies on the experience and expertise of the persons in authority to evaluate and assess potentials and obstacles of current situations and new approaches. As Cohen et al (2007: 267) express it, the study should "enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view".

7.2. Data collection

The research relevant data will be collected through interviews with different respondents involved in language education. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed into a textual form for a closer analysis. The research method puts a focus on the participants as implementers. As Croker (2009: 7)

states, qualitative research can examine “how participants experience and interact with a phenomenon at a given point in time and in a particular context, and the multiple meaning it has for them”. The interviews are thus expected to “explore people’s experiences and worldviews and the meanings they bring to them” (Croker 2009: 18). Richards (2009: 183) similarly describes the data collection method as one that “offers different ways of exploring people’s experiences and views”. The research interviews should not only gather information, but also examine experiences and views that unveil chances and obstacles for diversity and the implementation of the plurilingual approach in the current system.

7.2.1. The question-sets

The question-sets used for the interviews are basically concerned with the same main topics. The first topic area relates to language education and diversity. The questions mainly concern actual modern foreign language provision in the institutions. The second part of the interview is dedicated to the plurilingual approach. The interview questions deal with central aspects of the approach such as the inclusion of mother tongues and partial competences and also address general chances and challenges for the implementation of the approach. However, the questions slightly vary according to the three different occupational groups. Since the participants do not all share the same features and can provide different insights on different levels, e.g. principals and teachers, the questions correspond to their kinds of expertise and experience. Accordingly, there is one question set for the person in response of the school authority, one question set for the principals and one for the teachers. Yet, the questions all concern the same themes and subthemes.

7.2.2. The format

The format of the interviews can be described as “standardized open-ended” (Cohen et al 2007: 270) or “semi-structured” (Dörnyei 2012: 136), meaning that the questions to be covered are pre-prepared in advance, but that the format is open-ended. The interviewer is thus free to modify the sequence or wording of the questions and may follow interesting developments. This format can be said

to be a compromise between a structured and a completely open interview. This approach is suitable for the issues at hand because it allows for more depth and can lead to unpredicted but fruitful directions.

7.2.3. Constraints of the interview

Cohen et al (2007: 269) see the direct interaction of the interview as “the source of both its advantages and disadvantages as a research technique”. Even though the interview allows for greater depth, more involvement and motivation, it can easily be prone to subjectivity and bias. On the part of the interviewer, leading questions and loaded words could influence the outcomes of the interview. The careful preparation of the interview should however minimize the bias on behalf of the interviewer. The respondents on the other hand will most probably try to display themselves and their institution in a good light. Especially persons in authority will tend to represent their profession and work positively and excel through their knowledge and expertise. As has been argued in chapter 4.2.1., educational institutions are underpinned by dominant ideologies. The respondents might therefore intentionally or unintentionally try to conform to the general tenor of superior education authorities and policies. In order to minimize the pressure to conform, the respondents have been guaranteed anonymity. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted at this point that all the respondents, despite their anonymity, might try to provide officially approved and authorized answers. The study might therefore not reflect actual reality, but the perceptions or opinions of people who are under the influence of social norms and institutions. Nevertheless, even if the respondents only conform to socially acceptable behavior, the reliability of the research is still given. As Talja (1990: 472) outlines:

The reliability of research results does not depend on the trustworthiness of participants' answers, because even a speaker who lies applies cultural forms and interpretative resources that, in themselves, are neither true or false, but simply exist (Silverman, 1985). [...] All forms of talk and texts represent situated speech that provides evidence of the various ways in which a particular phenomenon can be approached. Research data do not describe reality; rather, they are specimens of interpretative practices.

7.2.4. The respondents

As has been outlined before, the respondents of the research-project are stakeholders who take on different kinds of responsibilities in the Austrian education system. They all form part of the hierarchy of the education system and are involved in modern foreign language education. More precisely, a person in authority from the education authority 'Landesschulrat' (here after LSR), three principals and three language teachers constitute the target group of the study. These persons play key roles when it comes to decision-making and can provide insights into the processes that are at work at schools and on the level of the education authority LSR. As Dörnyei (2012: 126) suggests, one should preferably "find individuals who can provide rich and varied insights into the phenomenon" in order to conduct a fruitful interview. The respondents have been chosen accordingly, since they can provide information about the actual situation of language education and about possible chances and limits of an integrative approach to language learning and teaching. Neither gender, nor age was considered in the selection. They were selected because they all share important experience and knowledge relevant to this study and can provide research-relevant answers.

Person in authority LSR

The first respondent, who is situated on a higher level in the education system, is a person in authority from the LSR and can provide insights from the perspective of the education authority. The institution of the LSR oversees schools in the federal state and is the final decision-maker when it comes to major organizational questions. Generally, it has to approve of decisions that are taken by decision-makers in schools, but has to respect school autonomy regulations. As to the official description of the areas of responsibility by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, the education authority should ensure the quality of schools and provide help with management, planning and coordination, organizational and human resource development and conflict management in schools, while respecting the school's autonomy of decision.¹ It

¹ Aufgabenprofil der Schulaufsicht (Allgemeine Weisung gemäß § 18 Abs. 3 Bundes-Schulaufsichtsgesetz) 1999

is also specified that the education authority should ensure the offer of a diverse, but comparable, quality-oriented education. Even though it is further underlined that the offer should be need-oriented and is bound to both material and human resources, the fact that a varied offer is officially desired by the education authority is a relevant detail for this study. The respondent from the LSR is in charge of modern foreign language subjects and therefore the contact person when it comes to questions about language education and its organization on the federal level. The person oversees a number of schools in different districts in the federal state and also oversees the schools in question of this research-project.

Principals

In a next step, the principals of three different schools were interviewed. The principals are situated on a lower level in the school hierarchy, but still constitute extremely powerful decision-makers. Due to school autonomy regulations, schools have a certain freedom of choice and decisive power when it comes to modern foreign language provision. Principals can provide information about the choice and range of languages offered at their schools and about possibilities and constraints of the plurilingual approach. They might not be able to give detailed information about approaches to language learning and teaching, but they are familiar with organizational and administrative challenges and chances. Also, they may shed light on the circumstances and mechanisms that prevent modern foreign language provision from being more diverse in actual practice.

Language teachers

The experience and knowledge of language teachers will be consulted in a third step. Even though their decision-power might seem comparatively small in the broader picture, they are actually extremely important when it comes to implementing language policy in the classroom. In the end, they are the persons to enact and apply policy intentions. They are therefore highly qualified respondents for this study and can contribute relevant information. Since they are the classroom implementers, they are the most competent to evaluate approaches to language learning and teaching. The language teachers

interviewed for this study are in-service teachers working at two of the three schools. They have been purposely selected, because they all teach two modern foreign languages. It is assumed that they can thus more easily understand integrative approaches and provide more fruitful insights into the issues under investigation.

7.2.5. The schools

The schools where the interviews were conducted all belong to the school type AHS and have been purposely selected because of the greater freedom of choice of modern foreign languages of this school type. The schools are located in a rural area and are relatively close to each other, so that their catchment area and target group partly overlap. Nevertheless, the schools have a very similar offer of languages as the majority of schools in Austria do. All of the three schools offer English as a first modern foreign language. Latin, French and Italian are also provided by all of the schools. One school additionally offers Spanish as a second modern foreign language and Russian as an optional non-compulsory subject. The schools are rather small with regard to the number of pupils attending the school ranging from around 230 to 530 pupils.

7.3. Data analysis

According to Cohen et al (2007: 282), the analysis of the data gathered through interviews is “almost inevitably interpretive”. As to Dörnyei (2012: 242), it is however exactly the heart of qualitative data analysis that one can “develop and follow certain principled analytical sequences without being tied by the constraints of the procedures and sacrificing the researcher’s creative liberty of interpretation”. The underlying deeper meaning of the data can thus be explored through interpretive analysis. The narratives have been structured and labelled in order to describe and interpret the interview contents in a comprehensible manner. Following Cohen et al’s (2007: 282) way of analyzing interviews, the data has been classified, categorized and ordered according to main themes and subthemes. The two main interview contents, the current situation of modern foreign language provision and the plurilingual approach as a remedy for more diversity, have been subdivided into several themes which emerged

from the interviews. These subthemes have been inductively derived from the data obtained.

8. Findings of the small-scale study

This section should present the interview data and provide an analysis of the different issues addressed in the interviews. The results are presented in the form of themes and subthemes which are discussed and elaborated in some detail. For the sake of anonymity, the respondents are given the designations principal x, y, z and teacher a, b, c. The respondent from the school authority will be cited as such.

8.1. The current situation of modern foreign language provision

In a first step, the current situation of modern foreign language provision was discussed with the respondents. The choice of languages provided at their institutions and the role of other languages were central topics.

8.1.1. The choice of languages

What emerged as utterly striking from the interviews was that all of the respondents were uncertain how the offer of languages at their institutions came into being. All the respondents could not satisfactorily explain why the choice of languages offered in their institutions had been made or why it was still upheld.

Surprisingly, the person from the school authority was equally not able to answer the question which specific factors there were involved in the individual choices of languages at schools. The person assured however that the current offer of modern foreign languages corresponded to the demand of parents and pupils. According to the person, the offer was strongly oriented towards the demand of the schools' clients. Throughout the interview, the person appeared to be very confident that the offer of languages was fulfilling the current demand.

Ex.1

PFS und an der tabelle sehen sie auch, was da an sprachen angeboten wird. das ist das eine, und das entspricht ganz bestimmt auch der nachfrage. natürlich auch den personellen ressourcen, keine frage. bestünde aber das interesse an mehr spanisch, würden die schulleiter natürlich schon auch jemanden anfordern, und dann wird ja abgestimmt, nicht?

Similarly, all the principals indicated the demand of parents and pupils as a decisive factor for the offer of modern foreign languages.

Ex. 2

INTER also sie reagieren da schon stark auf die nachfrage?
PRINCY natürlich, natürlich, ja. aber nur, ah, hm, also ich glaube sie verstehen jetzt so ungefähr, dass wenn ich so eine gruppe anbiete, dann muss ich auch garantieren können, dass ich sie bis zur achten klasse führen kann.

Ex. 3

INTER mhm. also richtet es sich schon ziemlich nach der nachfrage von den schüler her, oder.
PRINCY ja es ist so (.) es ist die nachfrage der schüler sehr wesentlich, aber nicht unwesentlich ist auch, was man eben im lehrkörper hat, nicht? also wenn die sprachen schon vorhanden sind, ist natürlich auch ein interesse das angebot zu machen.
INTER also eine personelle frage auch.
PRINCY auch ja.
INTER mhm.
PRINCY und natürlich, es helfen fünf spanischlehrerinnen nix, wenn die schüler es nicht wählen. egal was jetzt, latein, egal welche sprache, nicht?

Principal x stated that the decisions about the range of languages offered had been made by his predecessors. He could not exactly recall why the choice had been made. Principal y and z also explained that certain languages had been offered since the foundation of the schools or that they had had a long tradition.

Ex. 4

INTER und was mich jetzt interessieren würde, aus welchen gründen werden die sprachen angeboten, oder wie ist die entscheidung darüber gefallen, dass es die sprachen sind und keine anderen? oder beziehungsweise welche faktoren sind da.
PRINX ää (.) wie die entscheidung gefallen ist, dass wir in der dritten französisch anbieten, kann ich nicht ehrlich beantworten.

Ex. 5

PRINX und dadurch haben wir (.) geht sich das in der gesamtstundenzahl aus und da ist die entscheidung unter meinem vorgänger und ich vermute, weil die frau professor (anonym) administratorin war und französisch hat, für französisch gefallen.

Ex.6

INTER ok, und jetzt würde mich interessieren, aus welchen gründen sie diese sprachen anbieten? oder wie die entscheidung darüber gefallen ist, dass sie diese fremdsprachen anbieten, oder welche faktoren.

PRINCY ganz einfach. zum einen war natürlich das latein von vorne herein im werdegang an und für sich. es ist dann französisch dazugekommen, wobei wir immer französisch und italienisch schon gehabt haben. also seit ich an der schule bin, und das ist viele, viele jahre.

Ex. 7

INTER mhm. meine erste frage wäre jetzt eh aus welchen gründen sie diese fremdsprachen anbieten. also wie ist da die entscheidung quasi gefallen, dass sie die sprachen anbieten und keine anderen? oder welche faktoren sind da wichtig?

PRINCZ ja, die klassische wahl war zwischen latein und französisch. das war seit der schulgründung weg so.

Even though all the respondents pointed out that the offer would correspond to the demand, it may be questioned in how far the clients of the schools were actually involved in the decision-making. Only in one school, the principal talked about an ongoing phase of school development and an increased involvement of parents' and pupils' wishes and demands. In all the schools, the modern foreign language provision had not changed in a noteworthy manner for many years. It might therefore be said that the system of the dominating languages rested stable. The question may then be raised whether the provision remained the same because of the stable demand or whether the clients did not even have another choice.

Some developments could however be observed. All the principals reported that the demand for French was declining, while the demand for Spanish was rising. According to them, the offer of languages might therefore be reconsidered and adapted accordingly in the near future.

Another central aspect of why a language was offered was raised by all of the principals. The question of human resources was designated to be a decisive factor in the offer of languages. Principal y and z even described it as extremely important to already dispose of a teacher in one's staff who could teach a certain language subject (see Ex. 3).

Ex. 8

PRINCY äh (.) es kommen verschiedene aspekte zusammen. es ist auch die beschäftigungspolitik. wenn ich zum beispiel keinen lehrer im haus hab, müsst ich meine lehrer freisetzen, damit ich eine andere sprache anbieten kann und einfach einen anderen lehrer hereinholen. äh (.) das waren an und für sich immer so entwicklungen. ich habe eine russisch kollegin gehabt, das heißt da haben wir russisch in der oberstufe angeboten als mehrschulenkurs. ich hab eine spanisch kollegin im haus gehabt, da haben wirs übers wahlpflichtfach angeboten. das heißt schon eine breite fülle, aber das hängt immer davon ab, welche ressourcen ich hab, zur Verfügung hab.

They both claimed that certain languages could only be provided as non-compulsory subjects at their schools because of motivated in-service teachers. In one case, the non-compulsory subject even became an electable compulsory subject because of the increasingly high demand. It thus seems that principals tend to rely on teachers and resources that they already have in their institutions than to venture a new step on their own and offer other languages. Understandably enough, the principals try to work with the resources they already have.

Concerning the choice of languages, it can be summarized that the respondents lacked the knowledge of how the offer of modern foreign languages at their institutions came into being. Most of the languages offered had had a longstanding tradition. However, they all indicated that the languages on offer corresponded to the demand of parents and pupils. Nevertheless, it may be questioned in how far the latter were included in the decision-making. The clients of the schools can most probably only choose between languages already provided at the institutions. They will most likely not get the chance to demand other languages than the ones offered. What the interviews accordingly

revealed was that the range of languages offered in the schools rested rather stable. Certain institutional and administrative constraints undoubtedly also play a role in the language options. Especially the question of human resources seemed to be a central factor for the school's language provision. Moreover, it appears that the traditional set of languages, which is currently dominating the Austrian educational system, is extremely deeply rooted and often taken for granted by all the persons involved. Considering the enormous impact of educational institutions on the linguistic landscape of a country, these results are astonishing. Even the persons who fill these institutions and control the linguistic repertoire do not seem to be well aware of their choices.

The role of English

When the respondents talked about the offer of languages at their institutions, it became clear that while other languages could be questioned, English as *the* first modern foreign language remained beyond question.

The person from the school authority pointed out the importance and significance of English and expressed that this would most probably also be the tenor of the parents. Drawing on her own experience as a parent, the person rejected the idea of not offering English as a first modern foreign language.

Ex. 9

- INTER dürfte ich sie zuerst noch fragen, wie das überhaupt (.) wie die entscheidung über die fremdsprachen an einer schule gefällt wird?
- PFS naja, dass englisch, wie soll ich sagen, angeboten wird, steht ja außer diskussion. also da gibt's ja keine möglichkeit.
- INTER ok, obwohl auch eine andere sprache zum beispiel möglich wäre? zum beispiel französisch als erste lebende Fremdsprache, oder (...)
- PFS ääh (...)
- INTER oder welche auch immer.
- PFS oder welche auch immer (...)
- INTER ich habe zum beispiel nachgeschaut, in den studentafeln steht ja zum beispiel immer nur, ahm, erste lebende fremdsprache, da steht ja nicht englisch zum beispiel.
- PFS ja (...)
- INTER im prinzip (.) oder nur zweite lebende fremdsprache (.) da könnte man ja auch (.)
- PFS man könnte eine andere nehmen, aber ich glaube, dass die nachfrage nicht besteht.

INTER ok (.)
 PFS also ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, also wenn ich jetzt auch (.)
 INTER also glauben sie will wer (.)
 PFS als mutter jetzt, also ich habe selbst zwei kinder, die in der schule sind, jetzt noch in der volksschule, also ich würde sie nie an eine weiterführende schule schicken, wo englisch nicht angeboten wäre.
 INTER mm, ok.
 PFS da würde ich gar nicht daran denken.
 INTER also wird das (.)
 PFS und ich glaube auch, dass das der tenor ist der eltern.
 INTER ok, also hängt es wahrscheinlich schon von den eltern ab.
 PFS es hängt ganz bestimmt von der nachfrage ab.

All of the principals were mainly in line with this view. Principal x was of the opinion that English was the compulsory first modern foreign language. Even when he was told that other languages were possible, he insisted that the role of English was not debatable and other first modern foreign languages were no option.

Ex. 10

PRINCX also meines erachtens ist englisch als erste lebende fremdsprache gesetzlich verankert.
 INTER mmm, ist es nicht. für gymnasium steht lediglich erste lebende fremdsprache in den studentafeln habe ich gesehen.
 PRINCX aha, ich war der meinung, dass das verpflichtend ist.

Ex. 11

INTER also das wäre keine option, dass sie englisch (.)
 PRINCX also eigentlich (.) das ist für mich viel, viel weiter weg, als das einführen einer slawischen sprache.

Principal y also described English as *the* main language and as one of the basic languages nowadays. Principal z showed awareness of approaches that suggest other first modern foreign languages, but also highlighted that English was *the* inevitable lingua franca.

In summary, it can be said that the central role of English as a first modern foreign language was encouraged by all the persons in authority. Even more so, in contrast to other languages, the place of English in the Austrian modern foreign language education seems to be undisputable.

The role of Latin

The role of Latin for the school type AHS also has significant effects on the modern foreign language provision. Latin does not only have a longstanding tradition in schools, but it is at a certain level also a compulsory subject for school types with a focus on languages. All of the principals indicated that Latin had always been part of their language offer and indicated its important place because of university regulations.

Ex. 11

PRINCZ und ja, latein natürlich im angebot damit die volle studienbefähigung für alle fächer gleich mit der matura geliefert werden kann, und das nicht erst nachgelernt werde muss dann, wenn man sich für ein studium mit latein als vorraussetzung entscheidet.

Considering the fact that numerous courses of studies at universities in Austria demand Latin as admission requirement, its place in the education system is indeed justified. Especially pupils attending AHS, following a general higher education, are likely to enter universities. Latin is therefore highly relevant for them. Nevertheless, the question arises if compulsory Latin takes away possible spaces for modern foreign languages. As Krumm (2004: 70) suggests, schools could also provide one language that opens doors for other languages. This subject could be named 'language awareness' and include Latin. Latin would thus be assigned a different place and make room for modern foreign languages. Generally, it can be said that the role of Latin is not insignificant for the modern foreign language provision and will certainly remain a question in the future.

8.1.2. The range of possible languages

When the respondents were asked about the range of first and second modern foreign languages officially possible for their school type, only two of them were to some degree informed about potential possibilities.

Notably, the person from the school authority as well as two out of the three principals acknowledged that they lacked the knowledge of which languages would even be possible options for their institutions.

Ex. 12

INTER ähm, und sind sie darüber informiert, welche ersten und zweiten lebenden fremdsprachen es eigentlich im gesetzlichen rahmen jetzt zur auswahl gäbe?
PRINCY muss ich ehrlich gestehen, weiß ich nicht, wie das gesetzlich verankert ist. nein.

Principal z and teacher c claimed to know which possibilities there were, but only roughly named some languages. It might therefore also be questionable in how far they were actually informed.

In general, it was extremely surprising that the majority of the persons in authority were not on familiar ground with the range of languages possible. It may be assumed that the dominating set of languages is already firmly established in the stakeholders' minds. Also, it may be doubted that parents and pupils are sufficiently informed about the possible choices of modern foreign languages. The question then arises in how far the demand is actually responded to, when the people involved are not even informed what the possible choices are.

Concerning the offer of languages at their institutions, all the respondents claimed to be satisfied. The person from the school authority described the range of languages provided by schools as "diverse". The example schools the person cited were however rather rare exceptions to the rule.

Ex. 13

PFS liebenau, genau, liebenau bietet natürlich auch russisch an. Griechisch ist da dabei, also das ist bunt gemischt.

The person from the school authority also noted that there were so-called 'Mehrschulenkurse' (courses taking place across two or more schools) for other less-demanded languages. The respondent thus underlined that there would be efforts towards a diverse language education if there was some demand.

Nevertheless, the person from the school authority rather seemed to picture an idealistic situation which only corresponds to reality to a limited extent.

All of the principals shared the opinion that the offer of languages provided by their schools was good. Principal y mentioned in this respect that in her opinion a broad offer of languages would certainly be the future, but that the number of languages still had to be manageable for schools.

Interestingly, all of the teachers were also of the opinion that their schools offered an excellent language education. Teacher a described the offer of languages as very good and teacher b claimed that it was quite good. Teacher c acknowledged that the range of languages was not very broad, but that the quality of the language education would in return be excellent.

Ex. 14

INTER und jetzt wollte ich sie fragen, was halten sie den vom fremdsprachenangebot an dieser schule?
TEACHA sehr viel. (laughing). sehr viel, weil ja, weil wir haben natürlich englisch, natürlich ist die erste lebende sprache, die wir, äh, die unsere schüler lernen. und dann bieten wir natürlich ab der dritten klasse, bieten wir entweder latein oder französisch, und dann ab der oberstufe bieten wir nicht nur zusätzlich italienisch und spanisch, sondern auch, man hat hier die möglichkeit zum beispiel russisch zu erlernen, und ich finde also so ein angebot findet man selten. also ich bin, also, sehr zufrieden mit unserem angebot.

Ex. 15

TEACHB also man kann immer mehr sprachen anbieten, als sprachenlehrerin würde ich das natürlich auch noch besser finden. aber ich glaube, dass es schon hier im durchschnitt ist. ich finde es schon relativ gut, ja, mhm.

Summarizing, it can be reported that all the respondents felt that the offer of modern foreign languages provided by their institutions was sufficient and good. However, the fact that the majority of persons in control are not even aware of other possible language options may give rise to some questions. As already mentioned in chapter 4.2.1., long-established and culturally-anchored beliefs about the purpose and the aims of language education may come into play here.

“Exotic” languages

Strikingly, the term ‘exotic’ was used in two instances when the respondents were talking about other possible modern foreign languages. The person from the school authority and one of the principals referred to more “exotic” languages or exceptions when describing languages deviating from the traditional offer.

Ex. 16

PFS für, ich nenne es jetzt einmal exotischere sprachen, ja, oder einfach sprachen, die weniger nachgefragt sind, bieten wir mehrschulenkurse an.

The designation of other languages as ‘exotic’ can be said to be already revealing about the place of these languages in the stakeholders’ views. What became clear from the interviews was that languages differing from the dominant offer were mainly considered to be of less value.

When the respondents were asked about other languages than the ones offered, they all claimed that there was no demand of other languages. Especially the principals emphasized that there was no demand at all of other languages such as Slavic languages. The respondents gave similar reasons why they would not offer other languages. Principal x explained that the school would be located too far from the border in order to be interested in neighboring languages. In his personal view, people still tend to devaluate Eastern languages and countries. Also for tourism in the area, other languages would not play a significant role. According to principal x, it was the task of the school to offer the languages which were in demand rather than raising the interest for another language. Only a trigger from the outside like requests from parents or from the tourism association could change the situation. Principal y stated that she could not judge the value, advantages or disadvantages of certain languages, but supposed that there was no wish to change the situation.

Ex. 17

PRINCY ich kann es nicht bewerten. ich kann es nicht beurteilen.
INTER ok.

PRINCY ich mein nachdem es nicht angefragt wird, nehme ich auch nicht an, dass so ein bedarf und so ein wunsch wäre.

Principal z claimed that she had never really considered offering other languages. After some consideration, she replied that it would rather be a disadvantage to offer other languages since the majority of pupils would not be interested in them. Again, only a considerable demand was said to be able to change the situation.

Ex. 18

PRINCZ ich glaube, wenn wir jetzt sagen, wir bieten an latein und slowenisch und chinesisches meinetwegen, dann glaub ich, wäre es ein nachteil, ja.

INTER mhm. wieso?

PRINCZ ja, weil das wie gesagt eine nische wäre, die ganz wenige schüler nur interessiert, und es würde nicht die masse anziehen, die wir aber brauchen, damit wir überhaupt als schule existieren können.

Generally, it seemed that especially the principals viewed other languages than the four to five common modern foreign languages as not profitable or advantageous. Since the heads of schools often strive for a high number of pupils, they offer languages which are frequently chosen by pupils. They do not seem to see it as their task to raise awareness of or interest in other languages; rather they claim to react to the demand. Not surprisingly, they consider the economic perspective to language learning rather than any educational reason or intrinsic value. Since these persons need to manage and control their institutions, the benefits and costs of language learning are considered first and foremost.

As has been discussed in chapter 4.2.1., institutions such as schools influence the value of languages. Certain languages are thus privileged and supported, whereas others are suppressed by the established norm. This also seems to be true in this case. Certain language ideologies seem to be passed on through institutional relations of power. Not only the persons in response, but also the schools' clients are to a certain extent be influenced by these ideologies. Other languages than the ones offered are apparently regarded as less-valued and are thus stigmatized.

8.2. Chances and challenges of the plurilingual approach

The second central question in this study was whether the plurilingual approach could be a way of promoting diversity in Austrian modern foreign language education. Several key elements and essential issues of the approach were discussed.

8.2.1. Familiarity with the approach

First and foremost it has to be said that none of the respondents was actually familiar with the plurilingual approach as encouraged by the Council of Europe. Even though the majority of them claimed to be familiar with the CEFR, they were all unable to describe its underlying approach to language learning. Teacher a stated that she had at least already heard about the approach and principal c guessed what the approach could possibly be about. Yet, all of them admitted that they were not on familiar terms with the approach and asked for clarification.

Ex. 19

INTER mhm, ok. genau (.) und in meiner diplomarbeit behandle ich jetzt den plurilingualen ansatz, der wird vom europarat quasi also vorgeschlagen, und auch vom gemeinsamen europäischen referenzrahmen für sprachen. haben sie von dem schon gehört, von dem plurilingualen ansatz? und was der ungefähr besagt (.) im gegensatz jetzt zu anderen mehrsprachigkeitsansätzen?

PRINCX nein sagt mir nichts dieser ansatz. welcher ansatz soll das sein? also der gers schon, das ist mir schon.

Apparently, the supranational language policy goals promoted by the Council of Europe and the CEFR have not yet reached all the implementers on the national level. As described in chapter 4.2., policy intentions can considerably vary from actual practice. Especially in the case of supranational policies where several hierarchies come into play this seems to hold true. The lack of knowledge on the part of the respondents raises the question of whether the Council of Europe failed to capture and inform implementers about their policy goals, or whether the users of the CEFR fail to fully understand the principles of the framework.

8.2.2. The role of the mother tongue

The role and appreciation of the mother tongue is a central aspect of the plurilingual approach. The respondents were asked about the mother tongues of the pupils attending their schools and whether they played a role in education. All the respondents with the exception of one teacher claimed that pupils attending their schools and classes had very diverse linguistic backgrounds. Most of the respondents named some languages and noted that the pupils' mother tongues were 'mixed'.

Ex. 20

INTER mhm, das ware auch meine nächste Frage, welche muttersprachen haben die?
TEACHA ja, also wir haben wirklich quer durchs, ää, also wir haben wirklich sehr viel muttersprachler aus kroatien, oder slowenien, also ja, schon russen auch einige.

Ex. 21

INTER mhm, das wäre eh meine frage eben, obs, welche muttersprache schülerinnen und schüler an ihrer schule haben?
PRINCY wir haben von chinesisches bis hin eben die ganzen slawischen sprachen, also da gibt es eine ganze menge.

Interestingly, when they were asked about the inclusion of the pupils' mother tongues in language education, most of them indicated that the number of pupils with different mother tongues was not that significant.

Ex. 22

INTER aber, dass es (muttersprache) auch im unterricht genutzt wird?
PRINCY ahm, wissen sie, wir haben auch nicht, wir haben nicht, wie soll ich sagen, diesen großen unterschiedlichen muttersprachlichen kontext dahinter. also, das, so gesehen sind wir nach wie vor, also es, es bricht jetzt eigentlich erst stärker in der unterstufe auf. und bis jetzt war das kein thema bei uns an der schule. und ich denk mir das hängt auch davon ab, wo die schule steht, wie das klientel ausschaut, wie die schüler sind.

The role of the different mother tongues was thus at once reduced. This phenomenon might reflect what Berényi-Kiss (2012) found in her study. She describes that multilingual competence is in general abstract terms often

considered to be positive, but seen as hindering and deficient when it comes to language teaching. De Cillia (2010) also argues that multilingualism related to less-valued languages is often stigmatized and devalued. The interviews also gave the impression that linguistic diversity among pupils was generally reported to be positive and noteworthy in a general manner, but that its value immediately changed when it came to its inclusion in actual language education.

What mainly emerged from the interviews was that the majority of the respondents could at least imagine including the pupils' mother tongues in language education. Only principal x could not see in how far the different mother tongues could be useful in modern foreign language teaching. All other respondents however claimed that they viewed the mother tongue or home languages of their pupils as a valuable resource. The person from the school authority drew on her own experience as a teacher and claimed that the incorporation of the pupils' home languages had always been important to her. Nevertheless, the person highlighted that the inclusion of the mother tongue was only possible to a limited extent. Especially the extremely heterogeneous linguistic background of different pupils would pose a challenge.

Ex. 23

PFS mhm, weil, dass man immer wieder (.) ich habe durchaus an schulen unterrichtet, wo zum beispiel der migrantenanteil relativ hoch war. und mir persönlich war es immer ein anliegen auch die, sozusagen die sprachen der migrantinnen, ich sag jetzt gar nicht muttersprache, weil oft war dann schon die muttersprache deutsch, aber halt die erstsprache zuhause eine andere. und da war es mir immer ein anliegen das miteinzubeziehen in den unterricht. aber das ist natürlich nur limitiert möglich, das muss man ganz ehrlich sagen, weil man ja, man muss den lehrplan in der fremdsprache erfüllen, man muss die standards sozusagen erreichen, man muss sie hinführen zur neuen reifeprüfung. also man hat da schon ein paket an zielen, die man erreichen muss, und das ist, und da bleibt leider, dass man auch dazu sagen, relativ wenig spielraum für anderes.

This concern was in line with the teachers' views on the inclusion of the mother tongue. Teacher c claimed that she was very interested in the pupils' mother

tongues and wanted them to use this valuable resource at home. Teacher pointed out that she encouraged comparisons between mother tongue and target language in her lessons, but that certain limits would exist.

Ex. 24

- INTER genau. und dabei ist eben auch wichtig, dass die verschiedenen muttersprachen der schüler im fremdsprachenunterricht eine rolle spielen.
- TEACHA mhm. ich habe zum beispiel, am, einige schüler, die also, die also, äh, ausländer sind, und die zum beispiel, wenn ich irgendwas erkläre, wie grammatik funktioniert, und, oder, ich weiß nicht, also genre, weiblich, männlich, und so weiter und sofort, äh, dass sie sich wirklich melden, und sagen, aha, frau professor sehen sie, in meiner sprache funktioniert das so und so, oder da sehe ich schon eine ähnlichkeit mit meiner sprache. und das finde ich natürlich immer sehr interessant, wie sie das machen. also die versuchen schon selber sich, ja (.)
- INTER aber würden sie das auch fördern von sich aus?
- TEACHA ja.
- INTER oder wirklich die verschiedenen muttersprachen einzubinden? wenns wirklich verschiedene gibt?
- INTER naja, das ist natürlich schwer. es kommt immer darauf an, wieviel es gibt, und natürlich ist unsere zeit auch so limitiert. Natürlich so ein paar einsätze sind immer interessant und immer wichtig, aber ich weiß nicht, in wie fern könnte man das alles berücksichtigen. das ist schon schwer.

Even though most of the respondents considered the pupil's mother tongues as a resource one could theoretically use in language education, they claimed that it was only possible to a limited extent in actual practice.

8.2.3. Partial competences

One important aspect of the plurilingual approach is its openness for partial competences. In this view, different levels and stages of competence in different languages are valid and valuable. The approach thus moves away from idealistic ideas of native-like skills in all competences.

The attitudes expressed about the idea of partial competence in language education only slightly varied among the respondents. With the exception of principal x, all of the respondents were generally in favor of the idea. In principal x's opinion, a high level in one language was much more useful than a low level

in several languages. He stated that he would rather provide high quality language education in two modern foreign languages than partial competences in several languages. In his perspective, pupils could easily acquire partial competences during holidays or through computer-assisted language courses. Partial competences would thus rather be competences that could be acquired outside the school.

Ex. 25

PRINCX und da denke ich mir das gleiche. wenn heute englisch und der computer, wie ich vorher schon gesagt habe, als voraussetzung hergenommen wird für einen guten beruf, dass du einen guten job kriegst und ein gutes geld verdienst, dann kann ich mir nicht vorstellen, dass es dann reicht englisch, sag ich jetzt einmal, auf einem a zwei level abschlieÙe, aber dafür kann ich sagen, ich kann ein bisschen tschechisch kann ich, und guten morgen kann ich auf griechisch auch sagen.

Principal z uttered the concern that focusing on partial competences could consume the time needed for the other privileged competences in the target languages.

Ex. 26

INTER wobei vielleicht gerade dann die kompetenzen, man könnte ja sagen, keine ahnung, man hat dann in der sprache nur diese kompetenz. zum beispiel, wenn das eh schon in kompetenzen gegliedert ist, wäre es vielleicht eh gar nicht so schwer, da eine andere lösung irgendwie zu finden.

PRINCZ vielleicht. aber so, wir haben jetzt als projekt, dass jetzt auch italienisch lesen gelernt wird, und man investiert da jetzt ein paar wochen dafür, könnte schon wieder die angst aufkommen, ja, aber in diesen paar wochen könnten wir jetzt mindestens zwei andere textformen üben nicht? also das.

All other respondents acknowledged that all competences in a language, no matter of which level, could be a useful resource for language learning. Especially the language teachers drew on personal experiences and approved of the idea that native-like competence was not the goal of all language learning.

The person from the school-authority stated that she would also like to support any kind of language learning, but that the current legal framework would not be

open for partial competences in other languages. Several time-consuming projects like the new testing formats and the new centralized leaving exam would moreover hinder the introduction of a system of partial competences. This concern was also uttered by principal z. Both respondents believed that the current organization of language education would not leave enough space for the acquisition of partial competences in other languages than the target language.

Overall, the majority of the respondents seemed favorable to partial competences and considered them as a valuable resource in theory. Nevertheless, the concern was raised that in the current system, the acquisition of partial competences would be too time-consuming and could not be officially graded.

8.2.4. The separation of subjects

Following the plurilingual approach to language teaching and learning, the organization of languages into different subjects would certainly have to be questioned. This fluid and flexible approach to language learning and teaching could break up language boundaries and therefore also the organization of the different language subjects.

The question of the separation or fusion of language subjects generated different reactions among the respondents. The person from the school authority strongly insisted that the organization of languages into subjects would in any case be maintained in the foreseeable future.

Ex. 27

INTER	ok, hm. also zur zeit gibt's nicht so den ausweg aus dieser abgrenzung von den sprachfächern. ok. und sie denken das wird auch so bleiben?
PFS	bestimmt noch einige zeit, ja.
INTER	ok.
PFS	und damit meine ich viele jahre. ja. nein, das kann ich mir nicht vorstellen, dass sich das ändert.

The person indicated that all recent national policy efforts relied on this organization and it would therefore certainly not be questioned. The fusion of the different language subjects would in this person's opinion require a dramatic paradigmatic shift. The respondent from the school authority however called attention to already existing projects like the 'day of languages' where the contact of languages could be encouraged.

Concerning the principals and teachers, different opinions on this matter could be observed. Principal x could not imagine in how far the fusion of language subjects could be useful. Principal y however stated that her language teachers were already working together in a close manner and that numerous exchanges in the form of projects were already taking place. She could thus also imagine that a more open organization of language subjects could be possible. Similarly, principal y claimed that based on the organization of the time table, the fusion of modern foreign languages could be possible. She indicated that she could imagine a closer networking of language subjects in the form of projects.

Ex. 28

PRINCZ also von der stundenplanorganisation wäre es gut möglich, weil die zweite sprache wird bei uns praktisch immer parallel unterrichtet, also die sind über den ganzen jahrgang in drei gruppen meistens eingeteilt. also das würde eventuelle projekte in die richtung schon erleichtern.

The teachers generally displayed themselves open-minded to this idea. All of them could imagine a more holistic approach to language education with no clear-cut language subjects. However, the teachers still had some reservations about the idea. Teacher b indicated that at the beginning of modern foreign language learning, a clear separation of the languages could be more useful. She reported from her personal experience that one could easily get confused when several languages were learned at the same time. In her view, pupils should rather dispose of a certain level in a language before they could efficiently use transfer strategies. Teacher a liked the idea of abandoning traditional ways of teaching and could imagine more flexible teaching and learning. Teacher c uttered her opinion rather cautiously; she could imagine a

more fluid approach, but insisted on an extremely good preparation of this approach.

In the main, it can be said that the question of the categorization of language subjects is a complex one. This paradigmatic shift would indeed require a major change that would also lead to other enormous changes in the education system. Not surprisingly, the respondents who take on a lower place in the hierarchy of school administration showed more openness to this idea and did not rule it out as a whole. The seemingly natural distinction of languages underpinned by dominating concepts of languages as discrete entities seems to be more significant for the managers of schools. They do not seem to be very likely to question the current organization of language subjects because deeply rooted ideologies, administrative routines and related policies form the base of this way of language education.

8.2.5. Implementation issues

One rather broad question concerned possible chances and challenges concerning the approach. Even though the respondents were asked about both chances and challenges, they all rather touched upon possible problems relating to the implementation of the approach. Several concerns regarding the implementation were uttered by all the respondents. The issue of teacher education, which was a central point, will be covered as a subtheme.

The person from the school authority claimed that the actual implementation of the plurilingual approach in schools would generally be hard to imagine.

Ex. 29

PFS auf alle fälle. nur für mich persönlich, aber vielleicht bin ich da auch zu, wie soll ich sagen, traditionell in meinem denken oder so, ist es, stell ich mir diesen plurilingualen ansatz im unterricht GANZ schwer vor.

Not surprisingly, this respondent underlined several times that such an approach to language education would require considerable time and effort in order to become reality. In the person's view, the current challenges of teachers such as the preparation of lessons, different conferences, the work in school development teams and correcting work leave only limited space for such an

individual approach. Again, the person from the school authority pointed out that there were currently other paradigmatic changes taking place which would only hardly leave room for the plurilingual approach. Curricula, the grading system and other major organizational factors would need to be changed. Likewise, teacher b noted that this approach of language education would probably require a fundamental change of the overall system. She stated that she could only hardly imagine how this approach could work in the current system.

Ex. 30

TEACHB weil hier in diesem system könnte das ja schwer funktionieren, weil jetzt haben wir die situation, dass wir hier am ahs schularbeiten haben, noten haben, also in, das kann ich mir jetzt schwer vorstellen, wenn sie das so sagen, das konzept, dass man sagt, das ist sehr sehr offen, und es gibt keine noten, da müsste das ganze schulsystem anders werden. dann natürlich, aber wie das jetzt zu verändern wäre, das kann ich jetzt schwer sagen natürlich.

Two out of the three principals and all of the teachers were more open to the approach. Principal z argued that the new centralized leaving exam would take away a lot of time and freedom in language education. She expressed the concern that the school and the teachers could get criticized for following this approach instead of preparing the pupils for the new challenges. In her opinion, the approach could be feasible and implemented, if it really yielded positive results. Teacher c shared this view; she reasoned that the approach theoretically sounded doable, but that it would require extremely careful preparation. Principal y shared the opinion of the person from the school authority and admitted that other changes currently created challenges and took up space. Nevertheless, she highlighted that whenever changes were necessary, one could find ways to organize things differently.

Ex. 31

INTER und, also, wie, also ich hab ja jetzt den ansatz erklärt. also, welche großen änderungen würden ihnen da jetzt spontan in den sinn kommen, würde das erfordern dieser ansatz vom sprachenlernen? auch vielleicht jetzt, was zur zeit administrativ nicht möglich wäre (.) weil ich will die grenzen ja auch erforschen.

PRINCY ich will nicht die ganze zeit das administrative so in den vordergrund stellen. ich glaube es geht darum kreativ zu sein, und äh, da, ich meine, in dem fall kann ihnen ein sprachenlehrer

wahrscheinlich viel eher sagen, wo möglichkeiten sind, und, ah, ich kann mir durchaus vorstellen, wenn das ein ansatzpunkt ist, dass man da dann an und für sich in einem bereich eben so einen freiraum schafft. aber da hab ich nicht die administrativen grenzen, ich meine, die muss man aufmachen. wenn der vorteil, wenn darin so ein großer vorteil besteht.

Generally, it can be said that the respondents were only able to provide rather vague answers concerning the implementation of the approach. Certainly, the chances and challenges of such a demanding approach are only predictable to a certain extent. The implementation issues of the approach can therefore only be roughly assessed from the respondents' perspectives. It seems however to be clear that some major changes of the system would be necessary in order to fully meet the requirements of the approach.

The education of language teachers

One major concern related to the implementation of the plurilingual approach identified in the interviews was the education of language teachers.

The person from the school authority commented that teachers would have to be extremely well-educated in order to manage the multitude of languages that they would have to face. The respondent feared the overload of teachers and of the system as they would have to include all the linguistic resources of the individual pupils.

Ex. 32

PFS andenken kann man es auf alle fälle. man darf nur, man muss wirklich aufpassen eben die lehrerinnen und lehrer nicht zu überfordern, das muss man auch dazu sagen. und wie gesagt, wir sind momentan mit diesem riesen projekt reifeprüfung und bildungsstandards beschäftigt, das sehr viel arbeit und veränderung erfordert, und da muss man schon eben, wie soll ich sagen, heikel an die sachen herangehen, äh, dass es dann auch wirklich funktioniert in der umsetzung, dass meines erachtens nach, so ein, und das ist doch ein paradigmenwechsel, dieser plurilinguale ansatz, nicht? das ist ja doch (.)

INTER ja, sehr.

PFS ja, eben. das wäre ein großer wechsel, der da, da wär glaub ich moment auch die lehrerschaft überfordert.

All of the principals also raised the question of teacher education. Principal x claimed that teachers might not be able to face the challenge of knowing several languages. Principal z wondered how competent the teachers would need to be in the different languages.

Ex. 33

INTER was würden sie da sagen, welche änderungen würde es da brauchen?
PRINCZ naja, also (.) die, die frage ist, wieviel die vorhandenen lehrer über die sprachen wissen müssen.

Having sufficient competence in several languages was also the main matter of concern for the teachers. Teacher b indicated that she would personally feel that she needed to learn more languages in order to face the challenges of the plurilingual approach.

Ex 34

TEACHB vor allem, wir brauchen die, die lehrer, die, die sprachlichen kompetenzen dafür (.) weil wenn jetzt ein kind bosnisch spricht, und ich die sprache jetzt nicht kann, ah, dann tu ich mir jetzt schwer, am, verknüpfungen zu finden.
INTER mhm.
TEACHB weil wenn das kind sagt, ist das das jetzt auf bosnisch, dann kann ich leider nix dazu sagen.

Teacher a was also of the opinion that major changes in the teacher education would be necessary. For her it would be a serious challenge to include all the language competences present in her classroom in her lessons. Teacher z even declared that at the time being, she did not feel qualified enough to implement such an approach. According to her, one would have to have the right teacher education.

Certainly, the question of the language teacher education is a valid and extremely relevant question when considering the plurilingual approach. However, all the respondents adopted a somewhat teacher-centered view. The chances, needs and challenges for pupils were not at all addressed in these interviews. Rather than seeing possible chances and difficulties for their pupils, the respondents only considered their role in this approach.

8.2.6. Possible ways out

Having discussed some of the potential obstacles for the implementation of the plurilingual approach, some possible ways to put the approach into practice were mentioned by the respondents.

Possible first attempts to apply the approach could take place in the form of projects. The majority of the respondents claimed to be open for projects involving all the linguistic resources of the pupils. Teacher a explained that she could imagine having some lessons which offer a kind of extended language education. Teacher b also stated that she could imagine lessons where several language teachers might be working together. Principal y thought that you just had to be creative in order to organize useful projects. The person from the school authority indicated that a so-called school pilot project could be a way to test the approach. The results would then have to be analyzed in order to have a more grounded base for the approach. The person highlighted that it was extremely important not to change the curricula and the whole school organization before one would have results from pilot projects.

Ex 35

- PFS naja, und das könnte, also ich kann mir das zum beispiel nur so vorstellen, dass man das im rahmen eines schulversuchs, dass das einmal irgendjemand startet oder so, also so könnte ich mir das irgendwie vorstellen, nicht? und, dass man dann einfach mal, dass man dann ergebnisse hat, die man dann präsentieren kann.
- INTER mhm, ok. schulversuch.
- PFS ja. wobei den lehrplan zu verändern, ohne zu wissen, was da auf uns zukommen würde, das kann ich mir nicht vorstellen.

On the whole, it seemed that none of the respondents could actually see a way how the approach could be fully implemented in the current system. However, the willingness and openness shown by most of the respondents indicated that there might be possible beginnings such as projects, where one could start working with a more integrative and flexible approach to language education and using synergies. It also has to be noted at this point that some projects related to the ideas of the plurilingual approach such as mentioned in chapter 5.3.5.1. have already been implemented in schools.

9. Conclusion

This study has attempted to investigate the current situation of modern foreign language provision and the potential of the plurilingual approach to allow for more diversity. Against the background of dominating concepts of languages, supranational and national language policies as well as the principles of the plurilingual approach, the study has examined current situations and possible chances and challenges from the perspective of stakeholders. The answers provided by the respondents should not be overgeneralized and taken as the general view, but still give an insight into issues as felt by persons involved.

As to the current situation of modern foreign language provision, it has been found that all of the respondents do not seem to question the dominating set of modern foreign languages. Even more, they take the range of languages provided by their institutions for granted and assess it as good. The respondents claimed to provide the modern foreign languages which were in demand. Some organizational factors, such as human resources, also seem to play a key role in the offer of modern foreign languages. Not surprisingly, English is awarded a special place in language education. French, Italian and Spanish seem to be regarded as the most important second modern foreign languages. Other languages than the leading ones seem to be considered out of the ordinary, less in demand and therefore less attractive for schools. Generally, it can be stated that the dominating modern foreign languages have a strong and deeply rooted position in the education system. Even though supranational language policies strive for more diversity in modern foreign language provision, the study showed that the stakeholders do not seem to see a need or a demand for more diversity. Also, they do not seem to view it as their task to actively encourage the learning of a diverse number of languages.

With regard to the plurilingual approach, the respondents could understandably only evaluate possibilities. Even though several of the respondents were open to this approach, the majority saw serious issues in its feasibility. The inclusion of the pupils' mother tongues and of partial competences were generally felt to be positive ideas, but were also connected to concerns related to their implementation. On the administrative side, the respondent from the school

authority pointed out the limits of the school system. The education and competence of language teachers emerged as another probing question for the participants. Overall, it can be summarized that several challenges of organizational, administrative and financial nature currently prevent the plurilingual approach from being implemented in actual practice. The feasibility of this certainly demanding approach has in summary been questioned by all the respondents. Nevertheless, certain aspects or possible initiatives were seen as positive and feasible. The openness shown by some of the respondents and especially by teachers may give reason to believe that the approach could to some extent be implemented. The possibility of using all the linguistic resources, valuing partial competences and therefore including more diversity in language education could thus become reality.

As Hogan-Brun (2008:5) describes, many supranational policies are not appropriately applied because of tensions and conflicts with local concepts of language education. The plurilingual approach is certainly based on principles that clash with dominating ideas of language education in Austria. As already discussed, the implementation of the approach may need a whole paradigmatic shift and require a change of long-established beliefs. More precise guidelines and scaffoldings for the implementation of the approach would also need to be developed. Even though the approach might allow for the inclusion of more linguistic resources and therefore of more diversity, it still needs concrete and feasible suggestions for its implementation in the Austrian context. Otherwise, the implementers and learners might feel overwhelmed by the new challenges. The development of a reasonable framework how to apply the approach in actual practice is thus absolutely necessary. Just as teacher c indicated at some point: “the idea alone is not enough”.

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Appendix

1. Question set person in authority LSR

Language education and diversity

1. How are decisions about modern foreign language provision made? Who is involved in the process of decision-making? What factors are important? Which aims are being pursued? How much power of decision do schools have?
2. According to the Language Policy Profile (2007), the majority of Austrian pupils learn English as a first and French, Italian or Spanish as a second modern foreign language. Are there any schools in your commuting area where the offer of languages is significantly different?
3. In your opinion, what are the reasons for the choice of these dominating modern foreign languages when other languages such as Russian, Slovene, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Hungarian, Slovak, Polish would also be possible?
4. Are there any efforts that aim at increasing the diversity of languages in the Austrian modern foreign language provision? If yes, which ones and which aims are pursued?

The plurilingual approach

1. What do you understand by the plurilingual approach?
2. Which challenges do you see in the implementation of a holistic, integrative and flexible language education?
3. Which possibilities to evolve does language education have in the currently existing legal framework?
4. Could the clear-cut separation of language subjects be abandoned?
5. Which chances or challenges do you see related to partial competences?
6. Could the competence-oriented approach of current language education make room for partial competences?
7. What is your vision how language education should be like in the future?

Is there anything else you would like to mention?

2. Question set principals

Language education and diversity

1. Which modern foreign languages does your school offer?
2. What are the reasons you offer these languages? How have the decisions been made? Which factors played a key role?
3. Do you know about the range of other modern foreign languages you could offer?
4. Is it an aim of your school to provide broad range of languages?
5. What could be advantages of different offer of languages?
6. What could be disadvantages of different offer of languages?
7. Which mother tongues do your pupils have?
8. Do they play a role in the education? Are there any supporting instruction in the pupils' mother tongues?

The plurilingual approach

1. Are you familiar with the plurilingual approach as promoted by the Council of Europe and the Common European Framework of References for Languages?
2. Do you think that the pupils' mother tongues could be used as a resource in the language education?
3. Do you think that other linguistic competences could be used in the language education?
4. Can you imagine offering partial competences at your schools?
5. Which possibilities to evolve does language education have in the currently existing legal framework?
6. Do you think that borders between language subjects could be abandoned?

Is there anything else you would like to mention?

3. Question set teachers

Language education and diversity

1. Which subjects do you teach?
2. What do you think about the offer of modern foreign languages at your school?
3. Are you informed which other modern foreign languages your school could offer?
4. Which mother tongues do your students have? Do they play a role in the education?
5. Do other linguistic competences play a role?

The plurilingual approach

1. Are you familiar with the plurilingual approach as promoted by the Council of Europe and the Common European Framework of References for Languages?
2. Can you imagine using the pupils' mother tongues as well as their other linguistic resources in your lessons?
3. Can you imagine teaching partial competences? Can you imagine teaching for example reading in Italian in your French class?
4. Can you imagine offering interdisciplinary language education across language subjects?
5. Which chances and challenges does the plurilingual approach pose for you?

Is there anything else you would like to mention?

4. Transcription conventions

Spelling

Non-English (here German) words are spelled according to the standard spelling (with umlauts).

Capital letters are only used to mark emphasis.

Verb contractions are used whenever uttered in this form.

Intonation at the end of prosodic unity

. falling intonation

? rising-falling intonation

Pause

, micro pause with stable intonation

(.) short pause (few seconds)

(...) long pause

Emphasis

capitals indicate additional stress/emphasis

Comments

() editorial comments are given in parenthesis

(laughing) = laughter

Abstract

Taking the current situation of modern foreign language education in Austria as point of departure, this thesis sets out to explore the potential of the plurilingual approach to diversify language education. Given the fact that modern foreign language provision in Austria is mainly dominated by the same limited set of languages, this study seeks to examine reasons for the relatively uniform language education and also tries to investigate a way out of uniformity. Against the background of more fluid and open concepts of language and multilingualism as well as the context of supranational and national language policies, possible chances and challenges of the plurilingual approach in the Austrian education system are discussed. The plurilingual approach to language learning and teaching as promoted by the Council of Europe and the CEFR constitutes a holistic and integrative approach to language education which considers the student's whole linguistic repertoire. It thus includes and values all linguistic resources of the learner and is open for partial competence. Instead of adding more or different language subjects to the curriculum, this integrative approach could be a way to increase the number of different languages present in language education. Interviews with stakeholders who operate on different levels in the education system serve as data for the analysis. More precisely, the experiences and opinions of one person from the school authority, three principals and three teachers are analyzed. The main questions concern the actual situation of modern foreign language provision in the institutions on the one hand, and the feasibility of central aspects of the plurilingual approach to language teaching and learning on the other hand. With regard to the actual situation of language education, it emerged as utterly striking that the dominating set of languages seems to be extremely deeply rooted in the Austrian education system. It has been found that the longstanding tradition of the leading modern foreign languages English, French, Italian and Spanish is hardly ever questioned by all people involved. Other languages are considered to be less in demand, less attractive for schools and therefore of less value. Also, the stakeholders do not seem to see it as their task to diversify the offer of languages at their institutions, rather they claim to react to the demand. As to the plurilingual approach, it has to be noted that none of the

respondents were on familiar grounds with the approach. The inclusion of the students' mother tongues and of partial competences in language education were generally felt to be positive ideas. The organization into school subjects and other administrative challenges were however considered to be hurdles for the use of these resources. The adequate education and linguistic competence of teachers was also addressed as a major concern in the implementation of such an integrative approach. Overall, several organizational, administrative and financial issues for the implementation of the approach were raised by the respondents. Even though some of the respondents, especially teachers, showed openness to the approach, the feasibility of this certainly demanding approach to language teaching and learning in the current system has been questioned by all persons interviewed.

Zusammenfassung

Ein kurzer Blick auf den Fremdsprachenunterricht in Österreich zeigt, dass eine Handvoll Sprachen das Schulsystem dominieren. Englisch, Französisch, Italienisch und Spanisch sind bei weitem die meist gelernten Sprachen auf allen Schulstufen. Vor dem Hintergrund von offeneren und flexibleren Auffassungen von Sprache und dem Kontext supranationaler und nationaler Sprachenpolitik will diese Diplomarbeit Gründe für das relativ limitierte Sprachenangebot beleuchten und setzt sich mit dem plurilingualen Ansatz als Lösungsvorschlag für mehr Vielfalt im Sprachenunterricht auseinander. Der plurilinguale Ansatz des Sprachenlernens und -lehrens, wie von Europarat und GERS vorgeschlagen, stellt einen ganzheitlichen und integrativen Ansatz dar, der das gesamte sprachliche Repertoire des Lerners berücksichtigen soll. Kompetenzen in der Muttersprache, aber auch Teilkompetenzen werden in diesem Konzept genutzt und wertgeschätzt. Anstatt mehr oder andere Sprachenfächer zum Lehrplan hinzuzufügen, könnte mit diesem Ansatz mehr Vielfalt ins Sprachenlernen gebracht werden. Das Ziel der empirischen Studie ist es, die derzeitige Situation der Fremdsprachen an Schulen zu untersuchen und die Möglichkeiten des plurilingualen Ansatzes für mehr Vielfalt zu erforschen. Eine Person der Schulbehörde, drei DirektorInnen, sowie drei LehrerInnen wurden zu diesen Themen befragt. Basierend auf den Interviews mit den verschiedenen Akteuren des österreichischen Schulsystems wurden verschiedene Themen

herausgearbeitet. Was das derzeitige Sprachenangebot angeht, enthüllten die Interviews, dass das traditionelle Fremdsprachenangebot von allen Beteiligten kaum hinterfragt und als gegeben hingenommen wird. Andere Sprachen als die dominierenden Sprachen werden als nicht nachgefragt, nicht attraktiv und deshalb als weniger wertvoll für die Schulen betrachtet. Außerdem empfanden es die Befragten nicht als ihre Aufgabe, Interesse an anderen Sprachen zu wecken. Der plurilinguale Ansatz als Lösungsvorschlag wurde von den Interviewten unterschiedlich bewertet. Generell muss hervorgehoben werden, dass zunächst keiner der Befragten vertraut mit dem Ansatz war. Ebenfalls herausgestrichen werden sollte, dass die höheren Instanzen im Schulsystem dem Ansatz kritischer gegenüber standen. Die Idee der Nutzung des gesamten sprachlichen Repertoires der Lerner wurde generell als positiv eingeschätzt. Dennoch hatten die Befragten Bedenken, in welchem Ausmaß Muttersprachen und Teilkompetenzen genutzt werden könnten. Die derzeitigen institutionellen Grenzen und auch administrative Hindernisse wurden vor allem in den Vordergrund gestellt. Außerdem wurden die notwendige sprachliche Kompetenz der Lehrpersonen und damit die Ausbildung der Lehrpersonen in Frage gestellt. Insgesamt wurden einige Herausforderungen organisatorischer, administrativer und finanzieller Natur identifiziert. Mögliche erste Schritte in Richtung eines integrativeren Sprachunterrichts könnten jedoch in Form von kleineren Projekten gesetzt werden.

Curriculum Vitae

Language skills

German: mother tongue

English: C1+

French: C1+

Education

2000- 2008 BG/BRG Mürzzuschlag (Matura mit Auszeichnung 2008)

2008- 2010 Teacher Qualification Degree, English and French
(Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch UF Französisch),
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2010- 2014 Teacher Qualification Degree, English and French
(Lehramtsstudium UF Englisch UF Französisch), University of
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2012 Semester abroad (Auslandssemester), Université Nice Sophia-
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Work experience

2007 Internship "Frauen in die Technik", Institute for architecture and
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2010 Pedagogic traineeship (Pädagogisches Praktikum), BG/BRG
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2011 Teaching practice English (Unterrichtspraktikum Englisch), Hertha
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2013 Tutoring, Lernquadrat Kapfenberg