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An overview of the assessment of language proficiency in a sample of bilingual jurisdictions

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SECTION 1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Note:

Following discussions with Qualifications Wales since beginning work on this research project, the scope was increased. By the time this report is published, work by various groups within the government, e.e. those developing the curriculum and Welsh language, has gone ahead, and thus, some of the recommendations in this report are already being undertaken. What is clear from all discussions is that there is no take-away framework suitable for wholesale adoption by Wales. This presents an opportunity to develop assessment methods that are uniquely suited to the linguistic context of Wales.

SECTION 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the result of work commissioned by Qualifications Wales to look at trends in language teaching and assessment in bilingual jurisdictions, identifying those that might suggest a route for developments in Wales, with recommendations on possible areas for further investigation.

The report is presented as an orientation exercise and as such has mainly focussed on trends in jurisdictions that have linguistic characteristics that are in varying degrees similar to Wales, namely the Basque Country, Finland and Fryslân, with Ireland as an additional point of reference.

The research team conducted desk research and Skype interviews with experts in the field in each jurisdiction.

To accompany the international aspect of the report, assessment scales used in language schools in the UK have been included. A comparison of the current language assessment models in Wales was also examined and preliminary findings of this work have been shared with Qualifications Wales (see Recommendations).

The overriding finding is that in general, the methods of language teaching, learning and assessment in the jurisdictions that form the basis of this overview are in flux. The policy changes in Europe as a whole in relation to language learning, combined with an increased drive to promote minority languages, are leading to a revision of how languages are presented in education systems. This revision includes looking anew not only at what constitutes the core language skills and the way they are taught and assessed, but also at the role of language in society.¹

While we found evidence of these changes with new methods being piloted, there are no clear indications as yet of their success or otherwise. And while there is no single ‘take away’ model that readily lends itself for Wales, there are certainly elements that are worth exploring further.

Context

- Assessment cannot be effectively developed in isolation, but rather in partnership with curriculum and pedagogic development. In order to understand how it can best serve as a tool to encourage pupils’ progression, it is necessary to take into account a variety of considerations such as national and international policy trends, schooling context and the status and nature of the subject in question.
- The landscape of language learning is changing in Wales, as it is in Europe. Politicians and educationalists are recognising the value of promoting the language proficiency of pupils. As part of this trend, the way we understand the role of language, and in particular multilingualism, is developing, with an increasing sense of the value of languages as a potential agent of cultural cohesion.

¹ As our overview was drawing to a close two papers were published, both confirming this state of flux. See: *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe*. Available online at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL_2017_internet.pdf and *the Policy Review: The role of assessment in European language policy – a historical overview*. Available online at: <http://www.meits.org/policy-papers/paper/the-role-of-assessment-in-european-language-policy-a-historical-overview>. [Accessed September 2017].

- In this state of flux, emergent themes in the discussion include:
 - The value of language learning and skills
 - Multilingualism/ Plurilingualism
 - Multilingualism and pedagogy
 - Multilingualism and assessment
 - The language skillset in a multilingual context
 - The role of digital technology

Key Terms

Of the terms and acronyms that appear in the report, one of the most significant is ‘The Common European Framework Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment’ (CEFR). The CEFR is a widely used tool not only for the articulation of a progression pathway through language proficiency, but also as a comparative tool in the benchmarking of attainment across languages. Its ‘can-do’ statements influence teaching practice and assessment, where it may be used formatively, summatively and ipsatively (see Section 2). It can be effectively adapted from context to context (either for different languages or different age-groups). Its illustrative descriptors are currently under review.

The Basque Country

- The Basque Country encompasses seven regions; three in France and four in Spain. Of the four in Spain, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba form the Basque autonomous community, where the Basque language is the co-official language, but Basque is also spoken in Navarre.
- For the purpose of this research, the ‘Basque Country’ mainly refers to the autonomous community in Spain.
- In terms of the Basque language in Spain, 33.9% of the population of the Basque Country and about 10% of the population of Navarre are Basque speakers, (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 53).
- Schooling is compulsory for 6–16 year olds. It can be divided into 3 categories according to language medium, where schools are classified as A-model, B-model and D-model. In the A-model, the instruction is in Spanish; in the B-model, it is mainly in Spanish but also in Basque; in the D-model it is entirely in Basque, with Spanish taught as a compulsory subject. The D-model is becoming increasingly popular.
- Having undergone a period of providing intensive Basque language tuition for teachers, the education system now has a clear recognition of the level of proficiency needed in Basque in order to enter the profession.
- There are no formal, external assessments until 18 years old where the *Selectividad* exam must be passed to gain entry to higher education.
- Language lessons in general at secondary level are orientated towards grammar and literature. (There is, for example, no oral element in languages examinations at *Selectividad*.)
- A striking feature of the Basque-medium schools is the development of trilingual competence (Basque, Spanish and English) where the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) method is prominent for the transfer of English, with an emphasis on creating confident speakers.
- There is a well-developed programme of Basque classes outside the school system, with an emphasis on the communicative element of language. These are accompanied with progression pathway exams known as the *Perfiles Lingüísticos* (trans: Language Profiles) and the *Euskerra Gaitasuna Agaira* (trans: the Basque Competence Certificate). Attainment in these exams is linked to officially endorsed obligations with respect to some professions.

- The CEFR is used to measure competence in Spanish in the Official Schools of Languages and the Institute of Cervantes where Spanish is taught to foreigners. Native speakers, however, cannot take these exams. In the case of Basque, all students who have finished their secondary education in the D-model schools are considered to have reached the CEFR B2 level, the C1 level upon graduating from Basque-medium university education, and the C2 level if they have written a doctoral thesis in Basque. In the new curriculum plan for 2020, the CEFR is specifically referred to in the context of foreign languages.

Finland

- A Scandinavian country, Finland has two main official languages, Finnish and Swedish. It has several other official minority languages. Swedish is the second official language of Finland with 5.5% of the population speaking Swedish as their first language, (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 97).
- Other languages, whose speakers' rights are protected by law include Sámi, Romani, Finnish Sign Language and Karelian.
- Schooling is compulsory for 7–16 year olds, and 6 year olds can attend pre-school for one year free of charge. In 2009, about 3,200 pupils attended Swedish pre-school out of a total of 57, 000 pupils, (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 97).
- In the Finnish-medium schools Swedish is compulsory, and in the Swedish-medium schools, Finnish is compulsory.
- All pupils learn at least 3 languages with the 1st 'non mother tongue', as it is known in Finland, usually introduced at 9 years old, and the 2nd 'non mother tongue' a year later.
- There are no national, external exams until the matriculation exam for university entrance. Throughout, emphasis is very much on formative assessment (across all subjects and ages), with a clear focus on learning rather than testing.
- All teachers have a Masters degree, and Continuous Professional Learning Development (CPLD) is valued. There is also recognition of the importance of developing teachers' understanding of assessment techniques, as well as an expertise in Education and curriculum subjects.
- A periodic immersion-type method known as the 'shower' is used to teach languages, and elements of CLIL are in evidence where the focus is on building pupils' confidence as speakers.
- An integrated method of language learning, where a multilingual as well as a multidisciplinary approach is taken, leads to an enhancement of pupils' perception of cultural diversity.
- An adapted version of the CEFR is in use to articulate progress across languages, and plans to increase targets and attainment for both the speaking and writing skills components are in motion.

Fryslân

- Fryslân (also Friesland or Frisia) is a province in northwest Netherlands. It has a population of approximately 650,000. Frisian is the second official language, next to Dutch. About 67% of the population speak Frisian reasonably well, about 97% understand it and about 15% can write it well, (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 57).
- Schooling is compulsory for 5–16 year olds.
- There are no bilingual or monolingual Frisian secondary schools.

- Assessment is a blend of internal and external tests, with an aptitude test available at the end of primary education, and exit point exams at 16 and 18 years old.
- Frisian is compulsory throughout the primary and secondary sectors; however, although the implementation of Frisian has been compulsory in the secondary sector since 1993, it has 'not yet achieved the results that were expected' (Mercator, 2010: 39), and in practice most schools teach Frisian as a subject for only one hour per week.
- In the final stages of secondary education, while pupils can choose a 'profile' of subjects, Dutch and English are compulsory subjects regardless.
- For Dutch, reading, writing and sometimes listening skills are assessed, while for Frisian, only reading comprehension is assessed.
- A striking development in the Frisian system is the drive towards trilingual education. As part of this work, a whole new programme of teaching, learning and assessment materials is being developed. It is based on the *Referinsjeramt Frysk* (Frisian Progression Framework) which is a progression framework related to the CEFR 'can-do' statements for the various competence domains. The programme is known as GRIP and features include:
 - emphasis on digital technology
 - recognition of a 5th language skill ('conversation' is added to listening, speaking, reading and writing)
 - emphasis on self-evaluation and individualised progression plans
 - task-based learning.

Ireland

- The 2011 Census in the Republic of Ireland states that 41.4% of the population define themselves as Irish speakers (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 79).
- Irish is the national language of Ireland and as such is the first official language of Ireland with English the second official language (ibid.).
- Schooling is compulsory for 6–16 year olds, and is divided into primary and post-primary sectors. In terms of language, schools are categorised as: Irish-medium, English-medium and schools with Irish-medium streams attached to English-medium schools.
- Irish is compulsory in each school type (from the age of 6), and a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) is introduced in the post-primary sector.
- Plans to reform the teaching of Irish are underway as part of a 20-year strategy (2010-2030).
- In April 2017 the government called for a revision of MFL teaching including plans to introduce a foreign language in the primary sector.
- Teachers in the primary sector need some level of Irish proficiency, though the entrance level requirements into Initial Teacher Education are currently being revised.
- Irish-medium schools follow the immersion method in the primary sector.
- At the secondary (post-primary) level there are two sets of exams: *Junior Certificate* and *Leaving Certificate*. These too are under review. In terms of the Irish language assessment, there is currently only one type of language exam, which is at L2, second language level, whereas English is assessed as L1, first language level. Furthermore, the elements of literature, history and cultural identity have been diminished in the current Irish language exam.
- One of the proposals for reform is that the new programme should include a new assessment of oral skills for MFL and Irish.
- In terms of the potential of digital technology to improve language learning, again this forms part of the 20-year strategy with a recognition that it is an area in need of development.

- There is no obvious cross reference to the CEFR in the school-system, though it is used to map the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (trans: European Certificate in Irish), which is a separate set of examinations mainly geared towards adults.

Points of Comparisons: Basque and Irish

The Basque country and Ireland offer the closest parallels with Wales in terms of linguistic profiles. The following are the strategies in place in the Basque Country that are not as evident in the Irish or Welsh education systems.

- the use of the CEFR to map and indicate progression levels (both in the school system and in the adult language learning system)
- a balance between internal and external assessment
- a flexible multilingual pedagogy with an emphasis on developing plurilingualism
- a rich CLIL pedagogy that ensures a high number of contact hours timetabled for the promotion of language instruction
- intensive teacher education language programmes
- a language curriculum that includes cultural dimensions such as literature across all languages
- government-enforced obligations for high-level Basque fluency for public office and other employment routes

Assessment Models in the UK

- The CEFR is prevalent as a tool in the teaching, learning and assessment models for English (for speakers of other languages), with many adaptations thereof to suit particular contexts.
- In terms of Welsh, while qualifications for 'Welsh for Adults' are referenced to the CEFR, in the school system there is at present no clear and readily available tool to map comparisons between levels of attainment in Welsh and Welsh 'Second Language'.

Recommendations include:

- Consider conducting further exploratory work based on the emerging trends identified from all the sampled jurisdictions to gain a more detailed understanding of the teaching and assessment of language proficiency; this might include, amongst others, examining the shift from norm to criterion-referenced assessment and to ipsative assessment; it might also include an analysis of a sample of exam papers aimed at 16 year olds for each of the languages taught.
- Consider how assessment of language proficiency could be enhanced by exploring the possibilities and implications of understanding and labelling the learning of languages as the development of a skillset beyond the four traditional divisions of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and a consideration of the advantages that might come from manifesting combinations that cut across these.
- Support Welsh Government's intention to establish a continuum of language learning.

N.B. In terms of these last two points in particular, there is clearly a potential to combine Qualifications Wales' work with the work of the 'CMAU' project, led by Yr Athrofa, University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and Glasgow University in collaboration with the Welsh Government (WG). This project aims to explore how progression can be described and best developed in respect of each of the Areas of Learning and Experience of the new curriculum. The project is also researching how progression steps can be articulated, described and used in order to support the learning process in the most effective way. As part of the discussion in relation to the 'Languages, Literacy and Communication' curriculum area, the group is asking how generic progression descriptors can be differentiated to take into consideration the experience of learners of various languages.

SECTION 2.

EXPLANATORY NOTES ON SOME KEY TERMS

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N.B. For full list of abbreviations and acronyms see Appendix 1.

i. Assessment: Criteria-based or criterion-referenced

In this form of assessment, the result indicates whether the learner (or test-taker) has performed well or not in the test in question; i.e. its main purpose is to establish whether the learner has learnt the material, rather than to compare the learner's performance against that of other learners.

ii. Assessment: Ipsative

In an educational context, this form of assessment generally refers to the practice of assessing the learner's (or test-taker's) present performance against his/her prior performance.

iii. Assessment: Norm-referenced

This form of assessment is a process that compares one learner (or test-taker) against another; i.e. the result ranks the learner according to the performance of other learners in the test in question, indicating whether the test-taker has performed better or worse than others.

iv. The Common European Framework Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, usually abbreviated as CEFR, was established by the Council of Europe in 2001. It is the result of a range of projects and processes developed by the Council of Europe and the European Union which were closely related to language assessment, including the Association of Language Testers in Europe's *Item Writer Guidelines*, the *Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms*, the *Content Analysis Checklists* and the *Framework for Critical Levels of Language Performance* (for details see Gutierrez Eugenio and Saville, 2017: 2). It has become a standard tool not only for mapping language proficiency, but also for guiding language learning and teaching across Europe and beyond. It has six reference levels from A1 to C2, where A1 indicates the 'breakthrough' or 'beginner' level and C2 the 'mastery' or 'proficiency' level.

Coinciding with the work on this overview, a consultation on a new and extended version of the illustrative descriptors of the CEFR was undertaken with a closing date for comments on the 15 February 2017. The new version is due out in the summer of 2017, but to date has not been published. It will be available on the CEFR pages of the Council of Europe Website in due course.²

Some language schools and examination boards have developed levels leading into the A1 to accommodate younger learners (for examples, see Section 9).

The CEFR descriptors are based on a 'can-do' approach. They are not prescriptive and cannot be simply translated and 'matched' from one language to another. Thus the tool, while offering effective international comparisons, is designed to be interpreted according to the characteristics of each language. For example, if a basic low-level achievement in English would be to answer a 'yes/no question', then in Welsh, it would be classified as a much higher level of achievement, given that to

² Council of Europe. No date. Common European Framework Reference Languages. Available online at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages> [Accessed August 2017].

answer in the affirmative in Welsh requires an understanding and knowledge of multiple forms, i.e. requires more proficiency.

The three main dimensions of the CEFR are:

- i) language activities, which in turn are divided into:
 - a. reception (listening and reading)
 - b. production (speaking and writing)
 - c. interaction
 - d. mediation (translating and interpreting)
- ii) domains of language usage, e.g. educational, occupational, social, personal etc.
- iii) the competencies speakers apply when they are engaged in language activities

Many language assessment bodies use the CEFR framework to describe progression levels, e.g. the *Cambridge English Language Assessment*, the *Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogique* (CIEP, trans: International Centre for Pedagogic Studies) and the *Teastas Eoprach na Gaeilge* (TEG, trans: European Certificate in Irish).

It is impossible to calculate exactly how many teaching and learning hours are needed to reach the various CEFR levels, as each language, as well as each learner, has different demands. However, Tables in Appendix 9 give some indication of this from Cambridge English and the basic curriculum for Basque.

Table 1 shows the standard narrative 'can-do' descriptors for each level.

TABLE 1. The CEFR levels as described by the Council of Europe³

PROFICIENT USER	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
INDEPENDENT USER	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
BASIC USER	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

³ Council of Europe. 2017. CEFR. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>. [Accessed August 17].

v. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Content and Language Integrated Learning (usually abbreviated as CLIL), is an approach based on an amalgamation of the method of language immersion and content-based instruction. It teaches curriculum content (specifically, subjects other than 'language', e.g. geography, history etc.) through a language other than the pupils' home (or school's main) language. It was promoted by the Commission of the European Communities under the Socrates and Eurydice programmes as part of their drive 'to disseminate new, specific methodologies for teaching subjects through languages other than the lingua franca' (Commission of the European Communities, 2003:16).

vi. Language transactional skills/ Language transactional competence

One of the stated aims of the research brief was to clarify what is meant by 'language transactional skills' or 'language transactional competence'.

In none of the countries explored were these terms current, though the related noun does feature as a sub-category ('transactions to obtain goods and services') in the CEFR level descriptors.⁴

While traditionally language competence is divided into four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (known throughout the document as 'the four core skills'), the briefest online search will indicate that the call to identify further language skills is gaining momentum.

One of the interviewees from Fryslân deemed that the phrase 'transactional competence' could be interpreted as 'interactional competence'; where this, in turn, could correspond to the 5th domain (or skill) of 'conversational competence' included in the new Frisian language framework. (This is the digital language-learning tool under development in Fryslân, known as the *Referinsjeramt Frysk*, see Section 7).

This skill of 'speaking in conversation' is seen as a different skill from 'speaking' or 'listening' alone; it requires the ability to digest meaning, (which might be defined as the 'active' dimension of 'listening') as well as the ability to 'respond in speech'.

In addition, an interviewee from the Basque Country, was keen to emphasise the potential benefits of developing recognition for broad 'comprehension' skills, where a citizen might be able to identify him/herself as being able to *understand* a language, though not yet able to *produce* it.

The UWTSD team was also able to discuss with some interviewees the possibility of developing recognition for the skillset that is required to communicate *across* languages and process *multiple* languages.

vii. Multilingualism

On the whole, this term is used to describe the co-existence of different languages in society or in the mind of an individual. It denotes that there is a diversification of languages available but that they are used separately.

⁴ Council of Europe. no date. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. ONLINE. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168045b15e> [Accessed November 2017] p.17.

viii. Multiliteracy

The Finnish curriculum refers to ‘multiliteracy’. This term was coined by the New London Group of academics in the 1990s and refers to the various ways of communicating meaning in the context of a society that is using constantly-changing technology. It has developed many definitions but is broadly understood to refer to the ability to navigate multimodal text influences and to be able to communicate and understand meaning not only through the linguistic forms but also the visual, audio, spatial and gestural (see Cazden, C.; Cope, B.; et al, 1996: 60–92).⁵

ix. Plurilingualism

Plurilingualism emphasizes how languages (and cultures) interrelate and interact in an individual’s mind. This is closely associated with intercultural competence. The explanation below is taken from a recent Council of Europe publication:

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 those languages (languages of schooling, regional/minority and migration languages, modern or classical languages [...]) Once acquired, intercultural competence makes it easier to understand otherness, establish cognitive and affective links 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, 2016b: 10).

x. Transversal competencies

One of the interesting terms that occurs in the Finnish curriculum is ‘transversal competencies’. These are defined by UNESCO as broad-based skills that aim to meet new, global challenges, such as technological advances and intercultural communication. They are sometimes referred to as ‘21st century skills’. The domains and key characteristics of UNESCO’s working definition of transversal competencies are as follows:

Critical and innovative thinking / Creativity, entrepreneurship, resourcefulness, application skills, reflective thinking, reasoned decision-making

Inter-personal skills / Presentation and communication skills, leadership, organizational skills, teamwork, collaboration, initiative, sociability, collegiality

Intra-personal skills / Self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, compassion, integrity, commitment

Global citizenship / Awareness, tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, ability to resolve conflicts, civic/political participation, conflict resolution, respect for the environment

Optional domain: (Example) Physical and psychological health / Healthy lifestyle, healthy feeding, physical fitness, empathy, self-respect

(UNESCO, 2003: 4–5)

⁵ Note that the concept of ‘multiliteracy’ is potentially particularly interesting from a Welsh standpoint, given the way ‘Communication’ is included as a discrete element in the ‘Languages, Literacy and Communication’ Area of Learning and Experience in Donaldson’s *Successful Futures* curriculum reform in Wales (WG1, 2015).

SECTION 3.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

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i) Purpose and scope

This overview was commissioned by Qualifications Wales to support the development of the teaching, learning and assessment of 2 (+1) languages in Wales.⁶ It was limited to 25 days' worth of research over a period of two months.

It was designed as an orientation exercise to mark out the trends at work in language teaching and assessment in bilingual jurisdictions, identifying those that might suggest a route for developments in Wales, and offering a comprehensive base of secondary sources with recommendations on possible areas for further work (see Section 10).

It also invited a *reflective* component that linked findings back to Wales and to the role of assessment in the reformed curriculum. In this respect, while the overview has produced recommendations that Qualifications Wales could usefully act upon in the immediate future, it has also suggested some areas that are beyond the scope of Qualifications Wales' responsibilities. These have been included nevertheless, recognising that developing effective assessment does not take place in isolation, but rather in partnership with curriculum and pedagogic development, where its overall aim is to encourage learners' progress.

ii) Approach and rationale

The research brief stipulated the need to consider jurisdictions that have linguistic characteristics in common with Wales. Of the five listed as examples in the brief, UWTSD's tender document noted that work would mainly consider three, namely the Basque Country, Finland and Fryslân, with Ireland as an additional point of reference.

The Basque Country, Finland and Fryslân were of particular interest as each has engaged with what is known as 'the Barcelona objective' of developing pupils to become speakers of 'mother tongue + 2' languages, or in the case of bilingual jurisdictions, of '2+1' languages. The 'Barcelona objective', (resulting from a meeting of the European Council [EC] in March 2002), is a strategy that sees education systems work towards equipping their pupils with trilingual competence (for background, see Gutierrez Eugenio and Saville, 2017:3, also EC, 2002: 19 para. 44). This is in keeping with the Welsh Government's ambition set out in the *Global Futures* document in 2015 (WG 3, 2015).

Ireland and the Basque Country offer an obvious parallel, given that these are bilingual jurisdictions in a minority/majority context where the languages (Basque and Spanish / Gaelic and English) do not share the same linguistic root.

Fryslân is somewhat different, for while it too is a bilingual jurisdiction with a minority/majority context, the languages in question, Frisian and Dutch, are derived from a common root and are closely related. Nevertheless, because of recent developments in Fryslân, particularly in the field of digital assessment of language, that attempt to tailor an individualised, digital progression tool, it was considered to be a worthwhile area to include in our survey.

Finland offers a different model, where Finnish and Swedish are the two main official languages, with several official minority languages including Sámi and Romani. Of the two main official languages in Finland, Swedish is the minority language, yet it is the majority language of neighbouring Sweden. This puts it in a very different position from Welsh, Basque, Frisian and Irish,

⁶ For '2 (+1)' see 2nd paragraph under 'Approach and rationale' below.

as these are not majority languages in any country. (For an overview of the linguistic profile of the countries in our survey, coupled with an indication of their use of the CEFR, see Table 5, Appendix 2).

As outlined in the tender document, the research team conducted desk research, and phone and Skype interviews with experts in the field in each of the jurisdictions in question.

It should be noted that within the confines of the research project, it has clearly not been possible to exhaust the vast field and access all relevant articles and studies; furthermore, as already mentioned, it should also be noted that new and different information is constantly emerging. An important source has been the phone/Skype interviews with experts, which accounts for the anecdotal nature of some of the statements in the report. As a first port of call, the interviewees were able to orientate the team, pointing out any significant areas of interest; in some cases they were also available to steer further enquiry along the way, depending on any questions the desk research might have revealed.

The expert interviewees and respondents are listed at the end of this document. They were chosen as specialists in aspects of language education, and as experts the research team were able to contact in the time available. In thanking all interviewees and contributors for giving their time to respond to queries, the authors note that the responsibility for conclusions reached and views expressed lies with the authors alone.

The lines of enquiry were established in discussion with Qualifications Wales and aimed to probe seven main themes (with an inevitable degree of overlap between them), namely:

- i. The language skills assessed and clarification on terminology used
- ii. The use of external and internal assessment
- iii. The relationship between assessment and teaching/learning strategies
- iv. The mechanisms of mapping the progression of the individual learner
- v. The relationship between the assessment of the two (or more) languages in question
- vi. The role of digital technology in assessment of language skills
- vii. Any recent successful/unsuccessful interventions in assessment methods.⁷

The variation in detail between the reporting on the four countries reflects the nature of the material available within the confines of the project. A good deal of the Finnish documentation was available in English, which has enabled us to include direct quotations from these sources. The publications from the Basque Country and Fryslân are almost exclusively in Basque/Spanish and Frisian/Dutch, which accounts for the fewer direct quotations. The Irish section was an addition to the scope agreed originally, and more details can be found if needed on the websites referenced in the bibliography in Section 11 and in the appendices in Section 12.

To accompany the overview of language assessment in the international context, it was agreed that the report should establish an overview of assessment scales used in language schools in the UK (see Section 9), as well as considering the current language assessment models in Wales and the linkage between the Literacy Framework and other progression pathways (this has been submitted to Qualifications Wales).

In addition to the above, during the course of our research it became clear that any developments in the field of language assessment would have to take into account the changing landscape of

⁷ For the framework of the interview questions, see Appendix 8.

languages in education in general. A significant body of recent publications draws attention to the current drive that is redefining how the role of languages in school and society is perceived and what its value beyond the purely communicative might be. This discussion is heard on both a European and Welsh platform. This redefining, bringing with it a suggestion that it is time to change how we classify the four core language skills, will inevitably lead to the need to develop not only *how* language is assessed, but also *what*.

SECTION 4.

EUROPEAN AND WELSH CONTEXT

SECTION 4. CONTEXT

EUROPE

Gutierrez Eugenio and Saville (2017), in a recent paper on the role of assessment in European language policy, usefully summarise how the Council of Europe (CE) and the European Union (EU) have led European language policy over the past 40 years. They describe how the development in the field can be categorised into three different periods.⁸

The first period (1989–2002) culminates in the launch of the CEFR and the establishment of the EU's goal of 'mother tongue + 2' (developed in bilingual jurisdictions as 2+1).

The second period (2002–2015) is concerned with 'the need to measure progress in the development of language competences, with language assessment as the central instrument for policy making' (ibid: 1), and as part of this, the European Survey on Language Competences (ESLC) was launched to collect relevant data.

In this second period, in 2012, the EC's *Rethinking Education Communication: Language competences for employability, mobility and growth* suggested the creation of a European benchmark to monitor the development of language competences in the EU; this included two goals:

- by 2020, at least 50% of 15 year-olds should attain the level of independent user of a first foreign language (compared to the present 42%)
- by 2020, at least 75% of pupils in lower secondary education should study at least two foreign languages (compared to the present 61%)⁹

The third period (starting in 2015) sees movement towards promoting integrated approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, and in 2015 the EC launched three studies:

- i. an overview of national language tests across Europe (by the EC's Eurydice Network)
- ii. an assessment of the comparability of the results from these national language tests (by Cambridge English Language Assessment supported by ALTE members)
- iii. an investigation of the relationships between language competences and the employability across EU Member States (by the Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning: CRELL).

(For more detail, see Gutierrez Eugenio and Saville, 2017: 4–5.)

In short, this work concluded that because of the wide diversity in language assessment systems across Europe and in the way results are presented, meaningful comparison is almost impossible. This recognition led to 'an important shift from measuring progress in language competences to facilitating the development of students' language-learning skills' (ibid., 5).

With a focus on this, the authors of the policy review note how the European Survey on Language Competences showed that 'language learning at school is not providing students with the language skills needed. The focus in most language education across European schools remains on aspects

⁸ Though beyond the immediate scope of this review, an interesting sister policy paper, also published in 2017, outlines trends in learning foreign languages in primary schools; see Myles. 2017. Trends in Learning Foreign Languages in Primary Schools. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.meits.org/>. [Accessed August 17].

⁹ Europa. 2012. Rethinking Education: Language competences for employability, mobility and growth. P. 5 [ONLINE] Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012SC0372&rid=1>. [Accessed August 2017.]

that are either too difficult or not useful, which negatively affects learners' motivation' (ibid., 6). They then draw attention to the concept of 'linguistic repertoires' (ibid., 6), and remark that this is 'especially useful since it does not focus on mastering isolated languages, but rather on developing different levels of ability in a number of languages which are used in different spheres of life and for different purposes' (ibid., 6).

They find that European policy makers need to embrace 'multilingualism agendas aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours towards language learning' (ibid., 6) and see a role for digital learning tools to 'enable the breaking down of barriers between school and language learning, and have a unique potential to connect what happens in language classrooms with learners' everyday realities'. (Gutierrez Eugenio and Saville, 2017, 6).

The policy overview concludes by stating how, in this context, 'language assessment can play an important role by facilitating learning more effectively, especially if it is appropriately built into the learning tools to monitor progression and to provide relevant and timely feedback' (ibid.).

However, in an important publication by the CE under the title: *Guide for the Development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education*, while it too encourages the need to revise how languages are taught in schools and impresses the need to establish points of convergence between languages, it sees how assessment should move from articulating 'levels' of attainment to stating 'competence profiles'. From this it explains:

Summative or certification assessment is possible, using stringent methods, but most assessment will be formative, and emphasise self-assessment. It may be based on exercises which are aimed at a specific language, but can highlight cross-cutting competences when similar tests are used in different languages or the ability of learners to switch between languages in an appropriate manner is mobilised (Beacco et al, 2016b, 10).

It develops the case for plurilingual education and explains how the main language of the schooling should be linked more closely with the foreign languages taught. It argues that this should not only be because of the intercultural understanding it brings with it, but also because of the way it develops a 'linguistic reflexivity' that enhances pupils' understanding of language. This is the result of the way 'the decentring process brings out the workings of the different languages by contrast' (ibid., 11).

The point about the role of language as an agent for intercultural understanding is developed in many spheres. The Gutierrez Eugenio and Saville's policy review paper also notes how the EU and the CE consider languages to be much more than an educational matter, and see it as 'a transversal skill with relevance to many objectives, such as social integration, employment, mobility or minority rights' (2017: 6), drawing attention to how the CE 'promotes linguistic diversity and language learning as a way to achieve greater unity among European citizens' (ibid., 2).

Much is made of this in another insightful publication from the CE, *A Handbook for Curriculum Development and Teacher Training, The Language Dimension in all Subjects* (Beacco et al, 2016a). It draws attention to the need for 'language-sensitive' teaching and explains in practical terms the links between language teaching and the promotion of 'social inclusion, social cohesion, equity and respect for diversity' (ibid., 113). It calls for a reconsideration of how language education is conceived, and goes on to state that 'language education should always embrace diversity and plurilingualism, respecting, but also seeking to extend, the language repertoires that pupils bring to school' (ibid.).

WALES

In the summer of 2016, with the publication of its consultation document on a strategy to reach a million Welsh speakers by 2050, the Welsh Government's policy towards the Welsh language adopted a more pronounced promotional, rather than protective, standpoint. At the time of researching this overview, the findings of that consultation were unknown. Nevertheless, it was evident that the education system would have a prominent role to play in achieving the government's ambition, given that it has long been recognised that the traditional inter-generational language transfer methods alone are not going to be enough to create a significant increase in numbers of Welsh speakers.

By the time of the publication of this overview, the Welsh Government's strategy has been announced and, as anticipated, education does indeed play a prominent role in it (WG 1, 2017; WG 2, 2017).

The strategy has been influenced by the 2013 *Un Iaith i Bawb/One Language for All* (WG, 2013) report that demonstrated the weaknesses of the current education system in terms of producing confident and fluent Welsh speakers. Beyond Welsh-medium schools, despite the valiant efforts of teachers (and the exceptional success of some), generally speaking, it found that at 16 years old, only very few of those pupils who attend English-medium schools make good progress towards becoming fluent speakers of Welsh (ibid., 17). This has led to an inequality whereby only pupils who attend Welsh-medium schools can be sure of becoming fluent speakers of both the official languages of Wales.

A salient recommendation (Recommendation 6) from the *Un Iaith i Bawb/One Language for All* report was that the notion of two 'types' of Welsh language should be abolished. Instead of this a more unified approach should be adopted, with one continuum of learning for Welsh, and 'as a consequence the Welsh second language element of the Welsh programme of study would be removed along with the term Welsh second language' (ibid., 25–26).

With the publication of the new GCSE specifications in 2016, and the continuation of the two options of 'Welsh' and 'Welsh Second Language' (albeit revised), a renewed call for a single 'continuum' approach to Welsh assessment was heard; (though a clear definition of what is meant by this term is yet to be articulated).

GCSE examinations and other assessment tools however do not exist in a vacuum. They go hand in hand with pedagogy and curriculum content. The methods of assessment, teaching and learning influence one another, and changing one must implement changes in the others.

In terms of curriculum development, 2016 saw schools actively progressing the implications of the review undertaken by Professor Graham Donaldson as published in *Successful Futures* and subsequently in *A Curriculum for Wales, A Curriculum for Life*. (WG 1, 2015; WG 2, 2015).

As far as 'languages' are concerned, these curriculum reform documents are significant. *Successful Futures* proposes as one of its six 'Areas of Learning and Experience' the grouping together of 'Languages, Literacy and Communication'. This is of consequence and indicates a potentially radical change. The insistence on separately listing the three components, 'languages', 'literacy' and

‘communication’, draws attention to the difference between them, and opens the door to a more creative approach to how these might be delivered – and assessed – in schools.¹⁰

Furthermore, the plural – ‘languages’ – indicates how in future, schools will need to reconsider the traditional ‘silo’ approach where Welsh, English and MFL are treated as completely separate subjects; this is perhaps a further indication of the need of new pedagogic methods and assessment mechanisms.

Other significant publications in recent years in terms of the development of languages in Wales is the Welsh Government’s *Global futures: A plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales 2015–2020*, (WG3, 2015), the 2016 Estyn report *Modern Foreign Languages in Wales*, and the British Council’s 2016 *Language Trends Wales* report, all of which point to the need to revise the teaching of languages (in these instances, Modern Foreign Languages) in Wales and to change the models of delivering languages in schools in Wales.

Thus, we see how it is against a background of policy change, one that has called for a new approach to how we understand language, and from that, how languages are taught and assessed, both in a broad European context and in a specific Welsh context, that the research team responded to the Qualifications Wales tender for this review.

While it is recognised above how pedagogy, curriculum content and assessment influence one another, the research team is of the view that it is fair to claim that in the current education system in Wales, where so much emphasis is placed on measuring schools against performance in examination results, of these factors, assessment carries a particularly forceful potential as a driver of change.

¹⁰ Separating languages from the other two elements suggests the possibility of understanding ‘language’ as a science or rational set of rules; it also offers the possibility of exploring language as an agent that develops a sense of belonging and identity through its creative expression in idiosyncratic syntax and unique concepts.

SECTION 5.

THE BASQUE COUNTRY

SECTION 5. THE BASQUE COUNTRY

The Basque Country encompasses seven regions; three in France and four in Spain. Of the four in Spain, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba form the Basque autonomous community, where the Basque language is the co-official language, but Basque is also spoken in Navarre. For the purpose of this research, the 'Basque Country' mainly refers to the autonomous community in Spain. In terms of the Basque language in Spain, 33.9% of the population of the Basque autonomous community speaks Basque (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 53) and about 10% of the population of Navarre.

i. Schooling context and teacher expertise

In the Basque Country, pupils may attend pre-school between 2 and 6 years old. Schooling is compulsory between 6 and 16 years old, and can be continued until 18. Those who leave at 16, take with them a certificate that lists the courses (not examinations) they have 'passed'. No marks are specified. No external examinations are taken.

Schools are categorised as A-model, B-model and D-model according to language of instruction.

- In the A-model schools, the instruction is entirely through the medium of Spanish. Basque is taught for 3 hours a week, where (according to some) the language transfer is deemed unsatisfactory.
- In the B-model schools, as well as receiving instruction in Basque as a subject, between 30% and 40% of the curriculum is taught through the medium of Basque.
- In the D-model schools, instruction is through the medium of Basque with Spanish as a compulsory subject.

It should be noted that the A-model schools are becoming less popular as parents and pupils are increasingly choosing B- and in particular D-models where Basque is more prominent and language transfer thus more successful.¹¹

Students can stay on at school until they are 18, and may study for what is generally known as the *Selectividad* certificate, which is the universities' entrance exam. This consists of two parts, the 'common' or 'general' part with 'core' subjects (which includes a Basque language element), and the 'specific' part where students can choose from a range of specific subjects. The final marks for each part are expressed as a single combined score based on an average of the scores achieved on a range of 0–10. To gain admission to university, the marks are weighted, with 60% applied to the subject-specific elements and 40% to the general part, and further consideration given to the marks in the subjects related to the university course in question.

In the early 1980s, the Basque Government established a range of intensive Basque language courses for practising teachers. These varied from full-time courses to part-time courses. At the time of writing his study, *Language Policy for Basque Education*, it was possible for Nicholas Gardner in 2002 to state that teachers could be released on full pay for a period of up to three years. Though this is generally no longer the case, teachers are still able to attend three to four-week Basque refresher courses offered by *IRALE* (Irakasleen Euskarazko Pretakuntza Zerbitzua, the agency to

¹¹ For more information see http://www.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0008400/not0008480_c.html#axzz2gUMlAdfU

promote teacher literacy and Basque language competence) following which they continue for a further two months preparing teaching material (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 30). The level of Basque language competence required of teachers depends on the post and varies from primary to secondary. Job descriptions, as a matter of course, include the language profile required. From a brief overview of vacancies in recent years, the most common requirement has been the *Perfil Lingüístico 2* (trans: 'Language Profile 2'; see iii below); all vacancies require at least the *Perfil Lingüístico 1* (trans: 'Language Profile 1'; see iii below.) The gold standard qualification is the EGA (see iii below). Note that the *Perfiles Lingüísticos* 1 and 2 for the teaching profession are of higher standard than usual (see iii below and Table 2).

ii. Language teaching and learning, approaches and methods

Within the language lessons at secondary level in general, instruction is orientated towards grammar and literature. Spanish at the *Selectividad* level places emphasis on text commentaries and parsing, with some appreciation and analysis of literary texts.

However, an interesting development in terms of language teaching in the Basque Country is the increasing support given for the CLIL approach. This has been enthusiastically adopted at the D-model *Ikastola* schools to bring third language fluency to pupils.¹² It has been found to yield positive results in producing trilingual speakers, namely of Basque, Spanish and English.

The CLIL project in the *Ikastola* D-model schools is a carefully planned system with timetabling, training and classroom resource implications all taken into account, and applied in various degrees from the youngest to the oldest year groups, primarily with the aim of increasing pupils' English-language competence. They are taught English as a subject, but exposure to English is strengthened by a range of subjects taught through the medium of English. A team of dedicated educationalists is employed to develop materials to support teachers and schools in order to make the CLIL approach possible. As with the Finnish model (see Section 6ii below), the pupils' individual interests are taken into account when developing content for language learning.

While there is no oral element to the English external examination (apparently due to practical and budgetary considerations), the CLIL approach to English in the D-model schools ensures that pupils gain plenty of practice (and thus confidence) in speaking English.

N.B. Pupils in the D-model *Ikastola* schools are also taught Spanish as a subject, but this does not form part of the CLIL approach as it is deemed that exposure to Spanish is sufficiently strengthened by dint of being the language of much of the extra-curricular lives of the pupils.

While it is the responsibility of schools in the compulsory education system to teach Basque to the under 16 year olds, the over 16s and adults can access Basque language tuition through the government's Basque language schools, the *Euskaltegiak*, leading to progression through the *Perfiles Lingüísticos* (see iii below). The body responsible for this is the *Helduen Alfabetatze eta Berreuskalduntzerako Erakundea*, (HABE, trans: Organization for the Literacy and 'Re-basquification' of Adults). It oversees a network of 44 municipal *euskaltegis*, run by the local councils. In addition to these, there are 'official language schools' connected to the Departments of Education (14 in the

¹² For more information see: <http://www.ikastola.eus/>.

Basque Autonomous Country and 1 in Navarre). Both these types of schools ‘offer in-class and self-learning options’.¹³

The focus of the *Euskaltegiak*’s curriculum is on communicative competence; it underlines the role of the speaker (here the language learner) as a social agent and the role of language as a dynamic tool. The relationship between text (the produced/needed language) and the ‘context’ (the circumstances under which the language is produced/needed) drives the lessons. The impossibility of covering all potential and eventual texts and contexts in any classroom is recognized, and the goal therefore is described as being to create independent speakers, equipped with strategies to enable them to communicate in the new language. The curriculum is delivered through mixed media, including face-to-face, interactive classroom-based teaching, course book guidance and independent learning.¹⁴ It is closely aligned with the CEFR, with level 1 corresponding to CEFR B1, level 2 to CEFR B2, level 3 to CEFR C1 and level 4 to CEFR C2. Table 11 in Appendix 9 notes the learning hours (guided and independent) suggested for each level.

Each level is assessed according to proficiency in terms of adequate and correct development of the communicative act; this will include: comprehension; register; coherence of ideas; organizational skills; connection and cohesion in conversation; and what is described as ‘prosody’ (i.e. the patterns of stress and intonation in a language); grammar; vocabulary; punctuation and spelling.¹⁵

iii. Language assessment

Selectividad

- the Spanish language examination that forms part of the *Selectividad* bears no official correlation to any progression scale, such as the CEFR.
- the Basque language examination at *Selectividad* however is ranked as comparable to the CEFR B2 level and assesses ‘reading’ and ‘writing’ skills, but no aural/oral skills.
- the English language examination at *Selectividad* does not include aural/oral skills either and has no stated CEFR ranking.

Perfiles Lingüísticos (PL): the ‘Language Profiles’ suite of examinations

Outside the school-based system, a parallel suite of Basque language examinations is on offer to all Basque citizens. These are known as the *Perfiles Lingüísticos* (PL) which, as already explained, can be translated as ‘Language Profiles’ and are run by the ‘municipality’ (which corresponds to the town council or local authority). These examinations are taken on a voluntary basis. Broadly speaking, PL1 (Language Profile 1) corresponds to CEFR B1, and PL2 corresponds to CEFR B2. Each municipality receives funding to prepare students for these examinations, and to administer them. They run at certain times of the year (usually November and June) and students pay a small and heavily subsidised fee to sit them.

¹³ Etxepare. No date. Learn Basque [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.etxepare.eus/en/learn-basque>. [Accessed August 2017].

¹⁴ For more details see: www.habe.euskadi.eus.

¹⁵ Laadministracionaldia. 2017. Language Assessment. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://laadministracionaldia.inap.es/noticia.asp?id=1143650>. [Accessed August 2017].

Euskerra Gaitasuna Agaira (EGA): the Basque Competence Certificate

However, the most significant Basque language examination is *the Euskerra Gaitasuna Agaira* (EGA) (the Basque Competence Certificate). This was originally planned to reach the CEFR C2 level but is generally considered to be closer to CEFR C1. It is run by the municipality and on offer to all Basque citizens. It is essential to obtain the EGA for any professional work at 'functionary' level (e.g. civil service). For this examination, you cannot proceed to sit the aural/oral exam without having first succeeded in the reading/writing element.

Note that the *Perfil Lingüístico 4* (PL4) is an even higher qualification than the EGA, and is required for some professions (see below).

Progression

As already explained, in the Basque Country, the examinations associated with the *Perfiles Lingüísticos* are taken outside the school-based education system and are on offer to all Basque citizens regardless of age. The examinations themselves are not age-defined, though according to our interviews, the PL1 is generally not sat by students younger than 14 years old. The EGA requires some maturity and is generally not sat by students younger than 18 years old.

Interestingly, a pupil who has been instructed in the D-model schools (i.e. through the medium of Basque) in the primary and secondary sectors can automatically claim to have reached CEFR level B2 competence in Basque. Similarly, a student who has been taught at university through the medium of Basque is considered to have reached a CEFR C1 level of competence. A postgraduate student who has written a doctoral thesis in Basque can claim CEFR C2 competence.

However, this does not obviate the need to pass the EGA certificate for anyone seeking a range of official positions. An even higher degree of competence and fluency is required for positions such as doctors and the highest-ranking servants of the Basque Institute of Public Administration (IVAP: Instituto Vasco de la Administración Pública). This is ranked as a CEFR C2 competence, which the PL4 achieves.

In the Basque Country, there are no formal, state examinations at a governmental level for any language other than Basque, and at no point in the system is the exit level of a student's Spanish competence (*Selectividad* or otherwise) mapped against the CEFR. As in the whole of Spain, there are many external tests available in the Basque Country for English (e.g. the Cambridge English tests), which pupils enter on a private basis. There are also local official language schools, but most go through commercial channels such as the Cambridge English tests.

TABLE 2. A comparison of the EGA, Perfiles Lingüísticos, HABE and CEFR levels.¹⁶

CONVALIDACIONES ENTRE TÍTULOS Y CERTIFICADOS
DE EUSKARA CONFORME AL MARCO COMÚN EUROPEO

**MARCO COMÚN EUROPEO
DE REFERENCIA
PARA LAS LENGUAS**

Gobierno Vasco

Departamento de Cultura
HABE

HAAE - IVAP

Osakidetza

Servicio vasco de salud

Ertzaintza

Departamento de Educación,
Universidades e Investigación

Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas

Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas

Departamento de Educación
del Gobierno de Navarra

Euskaltzaindia

Office Public de la
Langue Basque

B 1

Nivel 1

Perfil lingüístico 1

Perfil lingüístico 1

Tercer curso de euskara
(Plan de Estudios Antiguo)

Nivel Intermedio

B 2

Nivel 2

Perfil lingüístico 2

Perfil lingüístico 2

PL1 Ertzaintza

PL1 Docentes

HLEA

(Hezikuntzako Langileen Euskara Agiria)

Cuarto curso de euskara
(Plan de Estudios Antiguo)

Nivel Avanzado

C 1

Nivel 3

Perfil lingüístico 3

Perfil lingüístico 3

PL2 Ertzaintza

Euskararen Gaitasun Agiria (EGA)

PL2 Docentes

Certificado de aptitud a 5º curso
(Plan de Estudios Antiguo)

Nivel de Aptitud (C1)

Euskararen Gaitasun Agiria (EGA)

Certificado "D"

Euskararen Gaitasun Agiria (EGA)

Decreto 297/2010

BOPV Nº 219 - 15 de noviembre de 2010

HABE

Enkuntze autonomikoa
Organismo Autonomo del

EUSKO JAURLARITZA
GOBIERNO VASCO

Glossary:

Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas:	CEFR
Nivel:	Level
Pérfil Lingüístico:	Language Profile
Docentes:	Teachers

iv. Further notes

The notion of developing plurilingual pupils has been given clear expression in the *Heziberri 2020*, the new curriculum and pedagogy plan, launched in 2014 by the Department of Education, Language Policy and Culture and due to be implemented in 2020.¹⁷ Its aim is to ensure that pupils leave formal schooling able to communicate adequately and effectively in Basque and Spanish, in terms of both speaking and writing, and to be able to communicate adequately in at least one other language in personal, social and academic contexts. It specifically includes the teaching of literature under this heading and embraces an understanding of developing plurilingualism as a culturally and socially enriching process where languages interrelate. The aim is thus to develop the plurilingual repertoire of each pupil (ibid: 33–35). In terms of assessment, while the plan does not specify language assessment, the general movement is towards a formative rather than summative approach, where the competencies are to be developed through ‘feedback, orientation and reflection’ (ibid: 45).

According to our interviewees, there is currently some experimenting with the use of more digital technology in assessment and it is possible to sit parts of the language examinations online, but because of security logistics (encryption etc.), this is currently seen as an expensive option.

¹⁶ HABE. 2010. Convalidaciones entre los títulos y certificados que acreditan los conocimientos de Euskera y adecuación al marco común Europeo de referencia para las lenguas. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.habe.euskadi.eus/s234728/es/contenidos/informacion/tituluen_baliokidetza/es_titbalio/tituluen_baliokidetza.html. [Accessed August 2017].

¹⁷ Heziberri 2020 Marco del Modelo Educativo Pedagógico. 2014. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.hezikuntza.ejgv.euskadi.eus/r43573/es/contenidos/informacion/heziberri_2020/es_heziberr/adjuntos/Heziberri_2020_c.pdf. [Accessed September 2017]

SECTION 6.

FINLAND

SECTION 6. FINLAND

A Scandinavian country, Finland has two main official languages, Finnish and Swedish. It has several other official minority languages. Swedish is the second official language of Finland with 5.5% of the population speaking Swedish as their first language (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 97).

Other languages, whose speakers' rights are protected by law include Sámi, Romani, Finnish Sign Language and Karelian.¹⁸

i. Schooling context and teacher expertise

Schooling is compulsory for 7–16 year olds, and 6 year olds can attend pre-school for one year free of charge. In 2009 about 3,200 pupils attended Swedish pre-school, out of a total of 57,000 pupils (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 97). There is also provision for early childhood education and care, which is guided by the National Core Curriculum. This 'pre-primary' provision leads to 'basic education' for 7–16 year olds; then the path splits and pupils can choose to follow either the 'matriculation examination' route leading on to university degrees, or the 'vocational qualifications' route leading on to universities of applied sciences.

The Finnish National Agency for Education clearly states that: 'The focus in education is on learning rather than testing. There are no national tests for pupils in basic education in Finland. Instead, teachers are responsible for assessment in their respective subjects on the basis of the objectives included in the curriculum'.¹⁹

It goes on to explain that: 'The only national examination, the matriculation examination, is held at the end of general upper secondary education. Commonly, admission to higher education is based on the results in the matriculation examination and entrance tests'.²⁰

While the process for admission to 'basic education' is non-selective:

the selection of students for upper secondary school is based on their grade point average for the theoretical subjects in the basic education certificate. Entrance and aptitude tests may also be used, and students may be awarded points for hobbies and other relevant activities.²¹

All teachers have university Masters degrees. A class teacher will have studied Education as their 'major' subject, with an option to specialize in a curriculum subject. A subject teacher will have studied the curriculum subject as their 'major', but will also have completed subject studies in Education. While the first six years of education is usually provided by a class teacher, foreign languages are quite often taught, even at this early stage, by subject teachers if the class teacher has

¹⁸ Kotus. Institute for the Languages of Finland. No date. On language. [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.kotus.fi/en/on_language [Accessed September 2017].

¹⁹ OPH Finnish National Agency for Education. No date. Education System. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.oph.fi/english/education_system. [Accessed August 2017].

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ OPH Finnish National Agency for Education. No date. Education System. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.oph.fi/english/education_system/upper_secondary_education_and_training. [Accessed August 2017].

not specialized in the foreign language. During the last three years (grades 7–9) separate subjects, including foreign languages, are taught by subject teachers.

The continuing education of teachers is valued, and improved pupils' performance is at least in part attributed to this (see iii below).

ii. Language teaching and learning, approaches and methods

There is a degree of flexibility in terms of when pupils can begin to study their first non-mother tongue language (known as the LG1) in Finland, but this usually takes place in grade 3 of basic education at the age of 9, and pupils usually begin their second non-mother tongue language (known as the LG2) in grades 4 or 5. The third non-mother tongue language (known as the LG3) is introduced in grade 6; pupils who have not chosen the other national language (Swedish or Finnish) must do so at this point. In the Finnish-medium schools, Swedish is compulsory (typically it starts in grade 6, though earlier in some schools), in the Swedish-medium schools, Finnish is compulsory (typically it starts earlier, in the first four years, as it is the majority language in Finland).

The National Core Curriculum encourages that instruction of the language(s) other than Finnish (e.g. English, another foreign language and/or the Sámi language) may be provided 'in connection with lessons in other subjects, as part of multidisciplinary learning modules, or during specifically allocated lessons or teaching periods' (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014: 13.4.2).

The curriculum guidelines place considerable emphasis not only on tailoring the language instruction so that topics are selected based on the pupils' interests, but also on providing pupils with opportunities for making individual progress, including giving support to those pupils who demonstrate capacity for fast advancement, or those with previous proficiency.

In the early stages of primary education, a method known as the 'shower' is used to introduce and transfer language through songs, play, games, and physical activities. This method is repeated at later stages of education with adapted age-appropriate content.

The CLIL method is much in evidence, especially in the primary and lower secondary grades, though it is not as common in the upper secondary grades where it is only implemented by a few pioneer teachers at this level (and usually in the case of English). This is probably on account of the fact that the tests in the *Matriculation Examination* cannot be taken in the target language (Pöyhönen, 2009: 164).

Throughout, the focus for language instruction in Finland is on building pupils' confidence as speakers of language. Moreover, the instruction of the second and third languages is designed to improve pupils' confidence in their first language as it searches for opportunities to make connections between languages. This 'integrated' approach to language learning develops into a multilingual and multidisciplinary approach. Furthermore, language instruction is also used to enhance pupils' perception of cultural diversity as different value-based phenomena related to language communities are discussed.

In the report on the 2013 results for Swedish in Finland, it's worth noting that a key contribution in the improved performance levels of pupils was deemed to be the continuing education of teachers.

It was also shown that the application of authentic teaching methods improved pupils' success in reading comprehension. Moreover, it was shown that: 'The more the teachers applied authentic working methods the more their pupils enjoyed the Swedish language and found it useful' (Hildén and Rautopuro, 2014: 13).²² It was perhaps not surprising to read that the 'enjoyment of Swedish language and studies was related to the number of opportunities teachers offered during lessons for spoken and written communication and planning and assessing learning: the more opportunities offered, the better the pupils liked the Swedish language' (ibid., 14).

From the corresponding report on the 2013 results for English, it's noteworthy that factors listed as those influencing pupils' performance included 'an interest in the English language outside school (for example, listening to music, watching films and video clips, joining in online discussion forums) and the perceived usefulness of the English language' (Härmälä, Huhtanen, and Puukko, 2014: 12). In contrast however, the report notes that 'a clear connection could not be established between the frequency of practices used during English lessons that promote learning (such as ICT, self-assessment, recording of spoken exercises) and the language learning outcomes' (ibid.). It goes on to say that 'regular home study' did not 'affect the results to any significant degree' (ibid.).

iii. Language assessment

We have already seen how the Finnish National Agency for Education places emphasis on 'learning', rather than 'testing'. It is thus not surprising to find that in the education system in Finland, on the whole there has been a shift from the traditional approach of norm-referenced assessment to criterion-based grading. As the emphasis is on formative assessment and individual feedback, this becomes an integral component of the day-to-day teaching and learning practice. Feedback is provided as part of instruction and teachers are required to create situations where 'feedback that promotes and motivates learning is given and received through joint discussions' (Finnish National Board of Education, 2014: 6.4.1). The teacher pays particular attention to the 'competence objectives' that play a key role for the pupil's learning process.²³ In terms of linguistic capabilities, this is more particularly focussed on skills in asking questions and listening, as well as interaction skills and skills in expressing oneself by different means (ibid: 6.4.4).

A summative element is seen at the end of the learning process, the results of which are communicated to the pupils in reports, certificates or assessment notes; and according to the Basic Education Decree it is obligatory to provide an end of year school report (ibid., 6.4.2).

Since the early 2000s, a CEFR-based scale has been used for the teaching, learning, assessment and target setting of languages, which means that targets have been defined in terms of 'levels of proficiency instead of lists of descriptors or descriptive texts about the nature of the language skills and use of language' (Huhta, 2015: 266–301).²⁴

²² i.e. lessons based on the use of authentic materials, which are designed for native (L1) speakers; i.e. 'real' texts, designed not for language students, but for the native speakers of the language.

²³ For UNESCO's working definition of 'Transversal Competencies', see Section 2vi.

²⁴ Ari Huhta of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland (and interviewee in this study) has written an important study entitled *Using the Common European Framework of Reference in the evaluation of educational achievement in foreign and second languages*. It shows how the CEFR can enable meaningful comparisons of the results from different 'studies of language proficiency, such as the European and the Finnish evaluation studies, because of the transparent, criterion-referenced nature of that Framework'. This is as yet unpublished, though a ppt. presentation (2015) is available online – see bibliography for full reference.

Our interviews suggested that this change in practice, coupled with the need to combine levels of proficiency with the traditional grading, has been challenging for teachers. In the *Matriculation Examination*, grading is still norm-referenced, and the distribution of 13 different grades remains the same across different subjects and examinations.

In keeping with the original intention of adapting the CEFR to suit the specific language contexts in which it operates, it's worth noting that the framework in Finland has been modified as listed below:

- A1.1 First stage of elementary proficiency
- A1.2 Developing elemental proficiency
- A1.3 Functional elementary proficiency
- A2.1 First stage of basic proficiency
- A2.2 Developing basic proficiency
- B1.1 Functional basic proficiency
- B1.2 Fluent basic proficiency
- B2.1 First stage of independent proficiency
- B2.2 Functional independent proficiency

CEFR proficiency levels at age 15 are noted in the table in Appendix 3 (Table 6), where expected teaching time is also listed. (For a comparison of some of the CEFR levels attained in English by pupils from the Scandinavian countries with EU average see Appendix 3, Table 7).

In Finland, different curricula, assessment methods and expectations exist for languages studied as mother tongue, 1st or 2nd non-mother tongue languages (including Finnish and Swedish), as reflected in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education. (This is in contrast to the curriculum, assessment methods and expectations for English in Wales, which are the same in Welsh-medium schools and English-medium schools.)

In Finland, the goals for English as a non-mother tongue language are higher than for other non-mother tongue languages, which is explained 'by the fact that informal learning – media and popular culture – is significantly supporting formal learning' (Pöyhönen, 2009: 157). It should also be noted that the goals for Finnish as LG1 or LG2 are higher than for Swedish, and this is presumed to be the case on account of the dominant role of Finnish in society (ibid.).

The report on the 2013 results for English suggests that a different level of competence is currently expected across the four skills, but that consideration should be given in future to increasing the targets for language production (i.e. 'speaking and writing'), in order to harmonise 'the level of good proficiency across the skill set' (Härmälä, Huhtanen and Puukko, 2014: 13).

iv. Further notes

Our interviews established that there is no particular emphasis on the role of digital technology in the assessment of language skills in Finland. However, there is an on-going move to computerise the entire *Matriculation Examination* by the late 2010s, which as yet has not been achieved.

SECTION 7.

FRYSLÂN

SECTION 7. FRYSLÂN

Fryslân (also Friesland or Frisia) is a province in northwest Netherlands. It has a population of approximately 650,000. Frisian is the second official language, next to Dutch. About 67% of the population speak Frisian reasonably well, about 97% understand it and about 15% can write it well (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 57).

i. Schooling context and teacher expertise

In the Netherlands, pupils usually start school at 4 years old, though education is not compulsory before the age of 5. Pupils may leave full-time education at the age of 16 but must attend partial compulsory education in some form, generally until the age of 18.

Primary education (4—12 years old) is divided into year groups (1—8), and it is in Group 7 or 8 that children mostly start to learn English.

There are three types of secondary schools: VMBO (Voorbereidend Meddelbaar Beroesponderwijs, trans: preparatory secondary vocational education) which lasts four years; HAVO (Hoger Algemeen Voortgezet Onderwijs, trans: senior secondary general education), which lasts five years; and VWO (Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs, trans: pre-university education) which lasts six years. Cross-over routes between these three streams are possible.²⁵

In both the HAVO and VWO systems, pupils choose a ‘profile’ of subjects at the end of the third year. The ‘Culture and Society’ profile teaches the arts and foreign languages (usually French and German). In Fryslân, Frisian is also taught under this ‘profile’. (Dutch and English are compulsory subjects regardless of the ‘profile’ chosen).

In terms of Frisian, Alex Riemersma, who heads the ‘Friesian and Multilingualism in Education and Parenting’ Research Group at Stenden University, notes in his discussion paper *From ‘weak’ Bilingual Education to ‘strong’ Trilingual Education in Fryslân* (2014) that though the teaching of Frisian is compulsory in Fryslân, ‘in practice, most schools teach Frisian as a subject for only one hour per week’.²⁶

According to the EU-funded ‘Language Diversity’ website, there are no bilingual schools and no monolingual Frisian schools in the secondary sector in Fryslân.²⁷ Furthermore it notes that: ‘In the schools that have Frisian in their curriculum, most teachers do not differentiate between mother tongue speakers and those students who learn Frisian as a foreign language’ (ibid.). It also draws attention to the lack of ‘exchange of information between primary and secondary schools as regards curriculum, teaching methods or the results of language learning’ (ibid.).

²⁵ SSB. No Date. The Dutch educational system.[ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.s-bb.nl/en/education/dutch-educational-system>. [Accessed August 2017].

²⁶ Stenden. No date. Alex Riemersma (Professor of Applied Sciences).[ONLINE] Available at: https://stenden.com/fileadmin/user_upload/documenten/research/fries_en_meertaligheid_in_onderwijs_en_opvoeding/2014-10-12_From_Bilingual_to_Trilingual_education__Fryslan.pdf [Accessed August 2017].

²⁷ Language Diversity. 2013. The Friesians in the Netherlands. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://language-diversity.eu/en/knowledge/regions-of-europe/die-westfriesen-in-den-niederlanden>. [Accessed August 2017].

ii. Language teaching and learning, approaches and methods

In Fryslân, according to one of our interviewees, the current system does not require pupils to learn specific Frisian language skills but rather have ‘an open mind and positive attitude’ towards Frisian (with no obvious and available tool for measuring ‘an open mind and positive attitude’).

An important development in recent years however, has been the development of trilingual education. This initiative is supported by a research project at the University of Stenden which aims to ease the transition from trilingual primary education to multilingual secondary education, focusing in particular on:

- developing English and Frisian as the languages of instruction (i.e. beyond ‘subject’ languages) in secondary education and in teacher training programmes
- continuous curricular strands (i.e. curriculum and teaching with differentiation)
- clearer alignment between the reference levels and target levels of language mastery in the various target languages²⁸

As part of this drive to foster the use of three target languages in secondary school, a collaborative project known as the ‘My Schools Network for Trilingual Primary Education’ (which cooperates with schools in Wales and the Basque Country) aims to support pupils to acquire and use all three target languages, ‘based on equality and with the intention of using them in other areas in their secondary education’ (ibid.).

The ambition of rolling out trilingual education, coupled with a new assessment framework (the *Referinsjeramt Frysk* - RRF), is intricately linked with the introduction of new teaching and learning strategies and a set of evaluation tools known as ‘GRIP’ (for both the RRF and GRIP, see iii below).

The assessment framework, in the interest of consistency, has one shared, Fryslân-wide curriculum. It is accompanied by a suite of teaching materials, which leads the learning by working on set goals. (Our interviews established that this is essentially a ‘task-based learning method’, which is a new pedagogy for the teaching of Frisian and is an entirely different system from the former language instruction models.) The activities are ‘random’ in that they are based on themes but do not develop thematically. The language criteria are linked. An example might be a ‘nature’ theme, where the pupils are tasked with visiting a farm and interviewing the farmer, asking him about subjects related to the farming business. Pupils would need to hold a conversation in Frisian with the farmer, ask questions, interpret answers, as well as write the questions and answers.

iii. Language assessment

In the school system in The Netherlands in general, the emphasis is on a blend of internal and external assessment. In the final year of primary education an aptitude test is available, though this is not mandatory, and the teacher, pupil and parent will all contribute to making the choice regarding which type of secondary school is best suited for the pupil. Secondary school leavers sit a variety of papers based on a mixture of internal and external assessment across a variety of

²⁸ Stenden. No date. Friesian and multilingualism in education and parenting. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://stenden.com/en/why-stenden/research/friesian-and-multilingualism-in-education-and-parenting>. [Accessed August 2017].

assessment techniques, from multiple-choice type questions, to practical work, course work, written and sometimes oral exams.²⁹

It is possible to sit a Frisian exam at these points (i.e. at 16 and 18 years old), but this is not common, and while for Dutch, reading, writing and occasionally listening skills are assessed, the central examination for Frisian consists of reading comprehension only.

However, at the request of the Province of Fryslân, a multi-agency partnership has recently conducted a Frisian 'evaluation system' with the aim of developing a 'comprehensive digital testing and classroom environment with a student monitoring system for the subject of Frisian at primary and secondary schools'.³⁰ (The partnership consists of *Afûk*, the departments of 'Frisian and Multilingualism in Education and Parenting' and 'Language Use and Learning', NHL University and Stenden, and the education services provider Cedin.)

It started in 2013, and since 2016 the teaching, learning and assessment tools have been available for use in schools. As noted above, this is known by the term 'GRIP' and is supported by a lively website explaining its aims and functions.³¹

This is an entirely new, digital system related to the Referinsjeramt Frysk (RRF) and was piloted last year. (The RRF is a progression framework where the levels are based on the CEFR and contain all of the 'can-do' statements for the various domains from A1–C2.)³² As part of the new framework, a set of observation and evaluation instruments have been developed, alongside specific learning materials that link the 'I CAN' statements at every level.

The resulting new teaching method is entirely digital and pupils access it via devices such as iPads. From our interviews we learnt how, in the new language programme, the grammar and spelling aspects of the former course have been taken out and made into a series of digital 'games', which the pupils undertake at their own pace. (This, it was explained, is comparable to the Duolingo programme, in that it is interactive and individualised, but is more 'playable' as the content is designed as 'games' rather than 'exercises').³³ Progress is monitored on an individual basis enabled by digital technology.

The framework is accompanied by a set of self-evaluation tools for the pupils and a separate set of observation tools for the teachers. These tools ask the pupils, e.g. 'how confident and how competent do you feel you have carried out the task?'; and the teachers fill in an observation form to record their views on the pupils' progress.

²⁹ WWU Munster. 2014. Das Schulsystem der Niederlande. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.uni-muenster.de/NiederlandeNet/nlwissen/bildungsforschung/vertiefung/bildungsforschung/examen.htm>. [Accessed August 2017].

³⁰ Stenden. No date. Friesian and multilingualism in education and parenting. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://stenden.com/en/why-stenden/research/friesian-and-multilingualism-in-education-and-parenting>. [Accessed August 2017].

³¹ This can be accessed via: <http://www.grip.frl/>.

³² GRIP. 2015–16. Referinsjeramt. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.grip.frl/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Referinsjeramt_feb2016_web.pdf. [Accessed August 2017].

³³ Duolingo is a language-learning app. Duolingo. No date. Learn a Language for Free. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.duolingo.com/> [Accessed August 2017].

This has not been evaluated as yet, but the response from teachers has been positive and the learning materials have proven to be motivational.

iv. Further notes

Of all the models examined, the new development in Fryslân offers the most innovative approach to ensuring pupil progress along an individual pathway. It is a competency-based framework and not age-related as such, though it has an '8 Track' component to the model which is loosely connected to 8 age groups. This is designed as one continuum of learning from CEFR A1 to C1 levels. The primary school focuses on CEFR A1 and A2, and secondary school on CEFR B1 and B2. CEFR C1 is achieved at university level. It relates only to Frisian and there is no corresponding programme for the development of Dutch.

Particularly interesting is how the new reference framework measures progress against 5 skills, with 'in conversation' added to the traditional four of 'listening', 'speaking', 'reading' and 'writing'.³⁴

³⁴ Colleagues in Fryslân engaged in this initiative have expressed a willingness to communicate further with Qualifications Wales officers and an exchange visit following this year's assessment cycle is recommended.

SECTION 8.

IRELAND

SECTION 8. IRELAND

The 2011 Census in the Republic of Ireland states that 41.4% of the population define themselves as Irish speakers (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 79). Irish is the national language of Ireland and as such is the first official, with English the second official language (ibid.).

i. Schooling context and teacher expertise

In terms of language, there are essentially three types of schools in Ireland: English-medium, Irish-medium streams attached to English-medium schools and Irish-medium schools (also known as Gaeltacht schools if they are located in the Gaeltacht areas, i.e. areas which are designated as Irish Speaking). In each of the three the study of Irish is compulsory for all pupils from the age of 6 and this continues until the end of secondary school.

A MFL is introduced in the secondary sector, though in a statement in April 2017 the government announced a strategy aimed at bringing about a 'significant change of mind-set about language learning', where the introduction of MFL in the senior classes of the primary sector will play a role.³⁵ It draws attention to CLIL as an effective method of language transfer, and indicates that aspects of the primary curriculum should be taught through both Irish (presumably in English-medium schools) and foreign languages. It also calls for a wider diversification of the MFLs on offer in schools in Ireland and sees the fact that Irish is already taught in schools as a 'major asset' on which the languages strategy can build (ibid.).

According to the *Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta* (CnaG) the Irish-medium sector has been growing in recent years with 'Irish-medium Education becoming the preferred choice of an increasing number of parents throughout Ireland'.³⁶

There are:

- 143 Irish-medium primary schools located outside the Gaeltacht that teach all subjects through Irish. English is introduced in these schools after 2 years.
- 40 post-primary (i.e. secondary) Irish-medium schools outside the Gaeltacht teaching all subjects through Irish.
- 126 primary schools in the Gaeltacht.
- 22 post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht.
- Numbers attending Irish medium education including Gaeltacht are 41,486 in Primary = 8% of total, and 12,806 pupils at Post Primary = 3.5% of total.
- 10 English-medium schools with an Irish 'stream' and a further 5 where some subjects are taught through the medium of Irish.^{37 38}

³⁵ The Department of Education and Skills. No date. The Inspectorate. Press Releases. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2017-Press-Releases/PR17-04-19.html>. [Accessed August 2017].

³⁶ This is the representative body for Irish-medium Education. Established in 2000 by the Department of Education to promote, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium Education. Its three main areas of work are: the provision of teaching resources; the provision of support services; research. See www.comhairle.org/english.

³⁷ From correspondence with the General Secretary of An Foras Pátrúnachta. An Foras Pátrúnachta was founded in 1993 to support Irish-medium schools in Ireland at both primary and secondary level. For more details see: An Foras Pátrúnachta. 2017. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.foras.ie/en/> [Accessed August 2017]. NB van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk (2017:79) state that there are 247 Irish-medium primary schools in the whole of Ireland with 41,961 pupils in total, and 15 Irish-medium secondary schools and 3 English-medium secondary schools that offer multiple subjects in Irish, with 5,917 students from the 2014/2015 cohort educated fully or partially through the medium of Irish.

Irish, along with Mathematics and English, is listed as an ‘essential subject’ for entry to Primary Initial Teacher Education programmes, and prospective student teachers currently need to prove proficiency to a minimum ‘Higher 5’ level (ca. 55%) in the *Leaving Certificate* examinations, with a range of ‘in lieu’ acceptable equivalence qualifications.³⁹ However, following proposals to raise the level from ca. 55–59% in the *Leaving Certificate* to 70%, entry requirements are currently under revision, and a report on this matter by the Economic Social and Research Institute is due to be submitted soon.⁴⁰

For post-primary teachers who want to teach Irish as a subject, they must provide evidence of linguistic competence in the language. This can be demonstrated by providing evidence of achieving a minimum level of B2.2 on the CEFR or equivalent. (It should be noted that this is the same standard required for teachers of other languages, e.g. German or English.) Alternatively, applicants can gain access upon successful completion of an independent language competency test.⁴¹

ii. Language teaching and learning, approaches and methods

Irish-medium schools follow the immersion method of education that allows children to acquire the language naturally through daily experience of an Irish-language environment. Irish is the primary language of instruction and communication within Irish-medium schools, but there is also significant emphasis on the formal teaching of English.

Attention should be drawn to the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030*. The 2015 progress report on this notes that support material has been prepared to assist English-medium schools to develop Irish through ‘partial immersion’ and CLIL in primary schools, and recommends that the teaching of English in Irish-medium schools ‘may be postponed until the end of senior infants’ class subject to the approval of the school’s board of management’ etc.⁴²

iii. Language assessment

The Department of Education and Skills requires all primary schools to administer standardised testing. English-medium schools are required to administer standardised testing in English reading and Mathematics during the period May/June for all students in the 2nd, 4th and 6th classes annually.

³⁸ Note that a slightly different set of numbers is presented in the van Dongera, R., et al report (2017) p.80.

³⁹ Education Ireland. No date. Primary Entry Requirements. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Teacher-Education/Initial-Teacher-Education/Entry-to-Initial-Teacher-Education> [Accessed August 2017].

⁴⁰ The Department of Education and Skills. No date. The Inspectorate. 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 Progress Report: 2010 to 2015. P.5 [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/20-Year-Strategy-for-the-Irish-Language-2010-to-2030-Progress-Report-2010-2015.pdf>. [Accessed August 2017]; and for the strategy itself, see: 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/20-Year-Strategy-English-version.pdf>. [Accessed August 2017].

⁴¹ The Teaching Council of Ireland. 2015. Teacher Education. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Registration/Documents/Curricular-Subject-Requirements-after-January-2017.pdf>. [Accessed: August 2017].

⁴² The Department of Education and Skills. No date. The Inspectorate. 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 Progress Report: 2010 to 2015. P.3 [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/20-Year-Strategy-for-the-Irish-Language-2010-to-2030-Progress-Report-2010-2015.pdf>. [Accessed August 2017].

Irish-medium schools are required to administer standardised testing in Irish reading, English reading and Mathematics on the same basis.⁴³

At the secondary level, there are two sets of state examinations. These are administered by the State Examination Commission. These are the *Junior Certificate* (sat at ca. 15 years old) and the *Leaving Certificate* (sat at ca. 17/18 years old) which most (70%) teenagers take. Irish is the only compulsory subject for the *Leaving Certificate* (English is not). The *Junior Certificate* and *Leaving Certificate* (which can be taken at a Higher or Ordinary level) are both externally assessed.

The *Junior Certificate* is currently assessed as a written exam at the end of the programme (i.e. in June at the end of the third year) with aural and oral exams in Irish and MFL undertaken sometime during the third and final year.⁴⁴

The *Junior Certificate* is currently being phased out to be replaced by a *Junior Programme*, which will be based on continuous assessment. We understand that this move has not been welcomed by the profession, resulting in industrial action. In terms of the Irish language, the main criticism is that there is only one type of examination and it is at L2 level, with no real distinction between L1 and L2 speakers. English is tested as L1.⁴⁵ A certain number of students in the Gaeltacht areas are L1 Irish speakers, but even in the Gaeltacht areas, the language is assessed as an L2 language, while English is assessed as an L1 language.

Our interviews revealed that there has been a significant change to the *Leaving Certificate* syllabus (examined in 2012 for the first time) where a great deal of literature content was removed from the curriculum for Irish (including cultural elements, language identity and history etc.) with a view to enhancing communicative confidence. It was explained that the four skills ('listening', 'speaking', 'reading' and 'writing') are assessed, with a 40% weighting given to the oral element.⁴⁶ However, the general consensus is that the testing is poor, with students given a list of topics and pictures 18 months in advance of testing. These are memorised and then 'regurgitated'.

In terms of MFL at the *Junior Certificate* level, there is an oral option that is rarely taken. It is proposed that the new programme, which will have a blend of continuous assessment and written examinations, combining internal and external assessment, will include the assessment of oral skills for MFL.

⁴³ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. No date. Standardised Testing. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.ncca.ie/en/Curriculum_and_Assessment/Early_Childhood_and_Primary_Education/Primary-Education/Assessment/Standardised_Testing/. [Accessed August 2017].

⁴⁴ Citizen's Information. 2017. Junior Certificate. [ONLINE] Available at: http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state_examinations/junior_certificate_programme.html [Accessed September 2017].

⁴⁵ For L1, L2: Language 1, Language 2 etc. see list of abbreviations.

⁴⁶ For more details see The Department of Education and Skills. No date. The Inspectorate. 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 Progress Report: 2010 to 2015. P.4 [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/20-Year-Strategy-for-the-Irish-Language-2010-to-2030-Progress-Report-2010-2015.pdf>. [Accessed August 2017]; and for the strategy itself, see: 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2015/07/20-Year-Strategy-English-version.pdf>. [Accessed August 2017].

For the *Leaving Certificate* at the higher Level in the MFL examinations, the oral element is marked at 25%, and at 20% for the Ordinary Level. For the MFL oral assessments, as with the Irish, external examiners visit the centres and record all sessions.

There is no oral/aural component for English, and there is no cross-referencing of the language papers to a scale such as the CEFR.

A separate set of Irish language examinations are organised by the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG), but these are mainly geared towards adults. These are mapped against six levels along a progression pathway that is linked to the CEFR (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 9, Table 12). They are general proficiency tests that look at the four traditional skills. Each element needs to be passed in order to gain a 'full certificate' at each level. Progression to the next level depends on convincing evidence of proficiency in the previous level across all skills. It is however possible to take the oral exam only and gain 'partial certification'.⁴⁷ It is available to secondary school students but is separate and different from the school education system, and is at a higher level than the *Leaving Certificate Examination* for Irish.

The testing from language to language in Ireland is very different. The English assessment involves the study of literature but since 2010, the Irish model has no emphasis on history/culture with only one text (in 70 pages of text) placing any emphasis on literature. One view expressed was that the memorization of text specifically for assessment purposes means that 'deculturation' has taken place and noted that 30–40 years ago, 6 novels were studied as part of the Irish assessment.

Digital technology does not feature as part of the assessment. As for support materials, some apps have been independently created but nothing has been centrally funded. However, the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills, in its 2015 report on Irish-medium education provision in Gaeltacht schools, recognised the need to explore and fully realise the 'potential for the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, develop linkages, and share resources and examples of effective pedagogical practice' (2015: 40).⁴⁸ It should also be noted that Irish Duolingo has 2.3 million users and is the 9th most popular language in the Duolingo range. According to our interviews, it is suspected that a high number of *Leaving Certificate* students use this app.

Any centrally-funded resources may be found via the *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* website. (See additional information in Appendix 3).⁴⁹

iv. Further notes

Changes are planned in the Irish system but as yet there are no indications of the success or otherwise of these proposals. At the time of writing, the 2016 progress report on the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030* was unavailable.

⁴⁷ TEG. 2017. TEG Levels. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.teg.ie/>. [Accessed August 2017].

⁴⁸ https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Events/Gaeltacht-Education-Policy-Proposals/Case-Study-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Gaeltacht-Schools_Irish-medium-Educational-Provision_2015.pdf.

⁴⁹ <http://www.cogg.ie/>.

SECTION 9.

ASSESSMENT MODELS USED FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE OR ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

SECTION 9. ASSESSMENT MODELS USED FOR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE OR ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

In the many language schools that operate in the UK offering various scales of qualifications in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), progress is routinely mapped by linking the assessments and examinations against the CEFR. To become a UK citizen, along with the 'Life in the UK' test, immigrants are asked for English competence only, which is measured summatively against the CEFR and based on exam performance.⁵⁰

For qualifications in the Welsh language, the CEFR grades are most clearly in use in the field of Welsh for Adults (see Appendix 7).

The British Council lists a range of bodies offering English language qualifications including:

Ascentis

Cambridge English

C&G City and Guilds

English Speaking Board International

IELTS International English Language Testing System

LCCI London Chamber of Commerce and Industry International Qualifications

(where the English programmes are specifically work-related, e.g. 'English for Business' etc.)

Password English Language Testing Ltd

PTE Pearson Language Tests

TKT Teaching Knowledge Test

TOLES Test of Legal English Skills

TCL Trinity College London

These and others can be found on the British Council's website.⁵¹

To serve as illustration, below are some details from the provision offered by three of the above:

- i. Cambridge English
- ii. International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- iii. Password English Language Tests

In each case, we will find that there is evidence of consistency in terms of the terminology used, as well as a shared sense of how the progression continuum may be defined.

⁵⁰ For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/browse/citizenship/citizenship>.

⁵¹ Available at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/exam/uk-boards-overseas/english-language>.

i. Cambridge English

Cambridge English is a popular route to gauge levels of competence and is recognised by universities, employers and governments. Much emphasis is placed on 'communication' and it is said that the examinations are specifically designed to assess 'how learners use English to communicate in real-life situations'.⁵²

Amongst the seven reasons the company offers for choosing its programmes are that:

- students preparing for the examinations are provided with communication skills useful in everyday life, work and study, and
- the examinations are aligned with the CEFR⁵³

It's worth noting how Cambridge English emphasises that the assessments are supported by a full set of teaching and learning materials, and furthermore that they offer a range of programmes that can equip teachers with professionally-recognised qualifications, such as the CELT– P (Certificate in English Language Teaching – Primary) or CELT– S (Certificate in English Language – Secondary). These, it is claimed, enable students to combine improving their personal language skills with improving their language pedagogy.

ii. The International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

IELTS is another common method of measuring the language competence of people who wish to live or study in a country where English is the main language of communication.⁵⁴ This system employs a 9-point scale to identify competency levels. A score is given for each test component. The individual scores are then averaged and rounded to produce an overall band score. They are described as follows:

9. Expert user
8. Very good user
7. Good user
6. Competent user
5. Modest user
4. Limited user
3. Extremely limited user
2. Intermittent user
1. Non-user
0. Did not attempt the test

For a full table and level descriptors, see Appendix 6, Table 8.

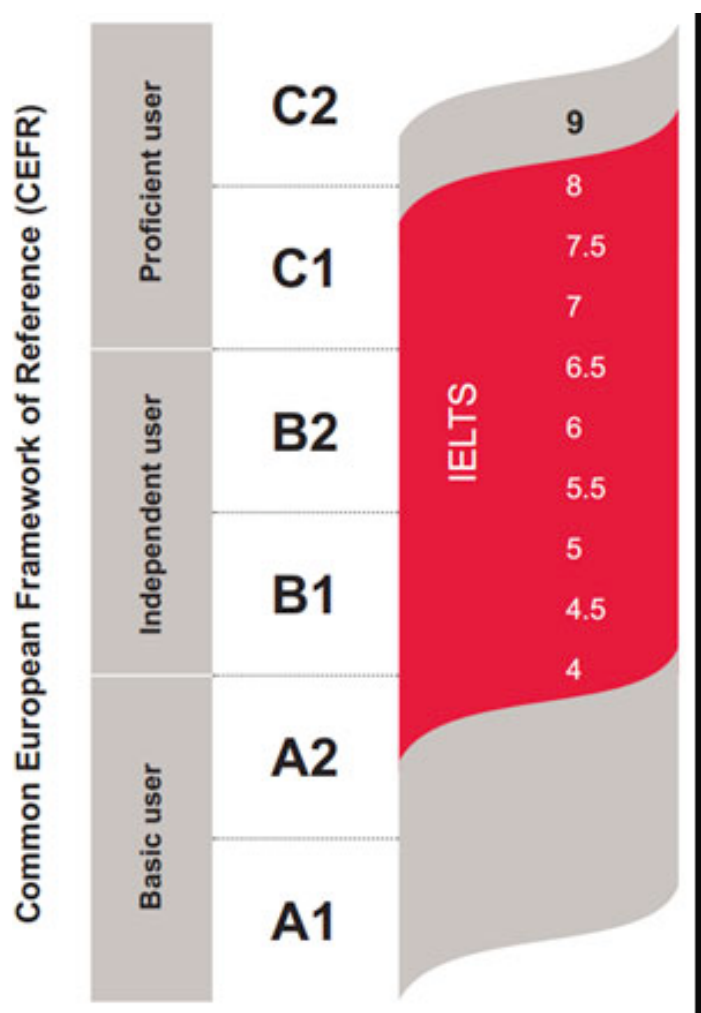
⁵² For this and more details, see: <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/>.

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ For details, see the IELTS website, available at: <https://www.ielts.org/>.

The 9 points have been calibrated to match the CEFR progression pathway as illustrated in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3. How the IELTS map the progression levels against the CEFR.⁵⁵



Password English Language Tests

A popular online series of tests are offered by Password English Language Tests, launched in 2008 and developed by the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA). According to their website, they have been developed 'to support schools, colleges and universities by providing accurate and reliable *gold standard* English language assessment'.⁵⁶ These too are aligned with the CEFR (as seen in Table 4 below) and have a series of tests suitable for younger learners.

⁵⁵ IELTS. 2017. Cefr-ielts. [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://www.ielts.org/~media/images/resources/cefr-ielts-300px.ashx> [Accessed August 2017].

⁵⁶ www.englishlanguagetesting.co.uk.

TABLE 4. How the Password English Language Tests map their levels against the CEFR.⁵⁷

Password Score	CEFR
Password 7.0 and above	C1 and above
Password 6.5	B2
Password 6	
Password 5.5	
Password 5	B1
Password 4.5	
Password 4	
Password 3.5	A2
Password 3	
Pre-password	

CEFR for the younger ESOL students.⁵⁸

The British Council also draws attention to a range of language courses aimed specifically at young people. This range of progression steps is loosely ‘age-specific’ in that it uses contexts appropriate for the primary and early secondary pupil. These steps too are linked to the CEFR with three levels specifically for the younger learners: *Starters*, *Movers* and *Flyers*; where *Starters* are set at ‘pre A1’, *Movers* at ‘A1’ and *Flyers* at ‘A2’, each covering the four core skills.

These courses expect that the young students take ‘an active role in their own learning and reflect on their progress’, and while they cover all aspects of communication, the emphasis is on ‘developing confidence in speaking to equip students with the English they will need for future academic study, employment and social situations’.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Council of Europe. 2017. CEFR [ONLINE]. Available at: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp. [Accessed August 2017].

⁵⁸ The CE has collated representative samples of descriptors of language competences developed for young learners aged 7–10 years, drawn from European language portfolios and other sources and mapped to the extended set of illustrative descriptors of CEFR. Tunde Szabo. 2016. Preliminary consultative edition Resource for Educators [ONLINE]. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680697fca>. [Accessed August 2017].

⁵⁹ Examples can be found on e.g. British Council. 2017. Qatar. [ONLINE] Available at: www.britishcouncil.qa/en/english/courses-children/levels. [Accessed August 2017].

It is said that students on the courses for 7—10 year olds, for example will:

- cover topics of interest to children and relate these to their own experiences
- increase their confidence and interest in the English language
- learn and practise a wide range of language functions
- are exposed to natural language through activities giving them a real purpose to communicate in familiar and meaningful situations
- extend their knowledge of the world
- develop thinking and problem-solving skills and model universal values and behaviour

Of the students on the next stage of courses (for 11—17 year olds), it is said that they will not only develop the skills and knowledge listed above but also ‘engage in a variety of activities such as interviews, surveys, role-plays, giving presentations, writing book reviews etc. to facilitate and develop a rich and effective use of English’.⁶⁰ Particular attention is paid to how the course will use ICT and authentic materials.⁶¹

Cambridge English has also developed a range of programmes specifically for schools:

Key (Key English Test: KET) for Schools

able to communicate in simple situations (A2)

Preliminary (Preliminary English Test: PET) for Schools

mastered the basics of English and now has practical language skills for everyday use (B1)

First (First Certificate of English) for Schools

have the language skills they need to communicate in an English-speaking environment (B2)

Here again, each examination deals with a range of language skills, and an initial impression suggests that these models are perhaps simpler and more accessible than the current levels of the Literacy Framework used in Wales.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.*

SECTION 10.

CONCLUSIONS, REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 10. REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overriding finding is that in general, the methods of language teaching, learning and assessment in the jurisdictions that form the basis of this overview are in flux.

The policy changes in relation to language learning in Europe as a whole, combined with an increased drive to promote minority languages, are leading to a revision of how languages are presented in education systems. This revision includes looking anew not only at what constitutes the core language skills and how they are taught and assessed, but also at the role of language in society.⁶²

While we found evidence of these changes with new methods being piloted, there are no clear indications as yet of their success or otherwise. And while there is no single 'take away' model that readily lends itself for Wales, there are certainly elements that are worth exploring further (see 'Recommendations' below).

In conclusion, the emergent themes of the review can be grouped under the following headings:

- The value of language learning and skills
- Plurilingualism /Multilingualism
- Multilingualism and pedagogy
- Multilingualism and assessment
- The language skillset in a multilingual context
- The role of digital technology
- Particular parallels with Wales

The 'value' of language learning and skills

The educational value of language learning, where stated, is seen as much in terms of developing the pupils' cognitive and cultural understanding as on developing a skillset aligned to increasing their employability. Pöyhönen's article shows clearly the two sides of this 'language coin' when it asks: 'What are the costs for the society if its citizens do not know languages?' (2009: 149). It answers on the one hand with a further set of questions pointing to the utilitarian value of languages: 'How much will we need to increase translation and interpretation services? How much will it cost if an individual cannot get employment because of her/his inadequate language skill?' (ibid.); before turning to present another answer that reveals an understanding of the 'value' of language beyond the workplace:

However, when analysing the effects of language education, other than financial factors, social factors must also be taken into account. Language education may also be seen as a national value choice: the value basis of a society can be educating its citizens to become individuals who have good language skills and who understand and respect other cultures (ibid.).

⁶² As our overview was drawing to a close two papers were published, both confirming this state of flux. See: *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe*. Available online at: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/images/0/06/KDL_2017_internet.pdf and *the Policy Review: The role of assessment in European language policy –a historical overview*. Available online at: <http://www.meits.org/policy-papers/paper/the-role-of-assessment-in-european-language-policy-a-historical-overview>. [Accessed September 2017].

This echoes the Council of Europe's statement that sees the promotion of 'linguistic diversity and language learning as a way to achieve greater unity among European citizens' (in Gutierrez Eugenio and Saville, 2017: 2).

Such an understanding of the value of language is particularly interesting in terms of the four purposes of the new curriculum in Wales, where the discourse is very much in tune with these kinds of ideals:

The purposes of the curriculum in Wales will be that children and young people develop as:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

(WG1, 2015: 29)

It is also interesting in terms of how the new curriculum in Wales has brought together 'languages', 'literacy' and 'communication' (within one Area of Learning and Experience) as three distinct sub-headings. Explicitly referring to 'languages' apart from 'literacy' and 'communication' not only affords an understanding of 'language' as a science or rational set of rules, but also the possibility of exploring language as an agent that develops a sense of belonging and identity through its creative expression in idiosyncratic syntax and unique concepts. While this is a discussion beyond the scope of our overview, it will evidently be necessary to consider how any new assessment tools will encourage and gauge progress in all the three elements of this Area of Learning and Experience.⁶³

Plurilingualism/ Multilingualism

The insistence of 'languages', in the plural, in the new curriculum in Wales (see above) aligns us with the other education systems that are endeavouring to produce speakers of multiple languages and delivering a '1+2' or '2+1' language policy.

As schools in the jurisdictions we considered are attempting to realise this ambition, we found how they are beginning to embrace an 'integrated' approach to language. Sometimes this 'integration' appears in terms of the presentation of multiple languages, as well as in terms of combining language teaching with other subjects, and in terms of developing assessment tools that allow comparisons across languages. In Finland, we found that this integrated approach was in keeping with the Council of Europe's ambition to use the teaching and learning of languages in order to develop a repertoire of resources that enables pupils to gain an intercultural competence that leads to a better understanding of otherness.

In Finland in particular, where all pupils learn at least 3 languages (their mother tongue + 2), we found that comparisons and connections are made between languages where the knowledge of one language is used to support the learning of another, which in turn develops the pupils' understanding of how language works (i.e. the grammar of language). Pupils are also encouraged to use all the languages they know to access information to develop learning across subjects. This 'integrated' approach to language learning is thus both multilingual and multidisciplinary. Moreover,

⁶³ Note that the concept of 'multiliteracy' is potentially particularly interesting from a Welsh standpoint, given the way 'Communication' is included as a discrete element in the 'Languages, Literacy and Communication' 'Area of Learning and Experience' in Donaldson's *Successful Futures* (WG1, 2015) curriculum reform in Wales.

in Finland in particular we found that languages are also used to enhance pupils' perceptions of cultural diversity, developing their understanding and respect for cultural differences.

Multilingualism and pedagogy

The most striking example of integrating the transfer of language with the teaching of other subjects was found in the Basque Country, where the CLIL approach is developing to be a popular method of increasing pupils' motivation in speaking non mother-tongue languages (Lasagabaster, D. and Lopez Beloqui R, 2015). This pedagogy has the benefit of increasing pupils' contact hours with the language (not only in terms of number but also frequency) without having to add hours to the language classes at the expense of other subjects. Any other opportunities to use the language outside the class/school are also seen as effective tools to increase pupils' engagement and confidence.

In all jurisdictions we found language transfer methods in the early stages of schooling comparable to the 'immersion' method common in nursery and reception classes in schools in parts of Wales, (cf the 'shower' method in Finland, for example).

In Fryslân and Finland we found evidence of task-based learning and the use of authentic material. There are reports, from Finland at least, that the more the teachers applied authentic working methods, the more their pupils enjoyed learning, and the better their performance in reading comprehension.

In general, we found that a ready acceptance of pupils' potential as speakers of three languages seems to be bringing with it possibilities of a pedagogy (and curriculum) that places emphasis on:

- comparing languages and using the knowledge of one language to support the learning of another
- understanding how language works (i.e. the grammar of language)
- developing confident speakers of multiple languages
- using language to develop understanding and respect for cultural differences
- using all languages available to access information about other subjects

Multilingualism and assessment

In general, we found how in the school systems in Finland, the Basque Country and Fryslân, external assessment is balanced with formative, internal assessment, and on the whole, the examinations deal with the four core skills, with the exclusion at times of the oral element.

In none of the countries considered was there parity between the assessment of the two official languages in question, (or indeed between these and further languages taught). However, we also found that only in Finland was any one language assessed in different ways depending on context (e.g. language medium of school), where different curricula and assessment methods exist for languages studied as mother tongue, 1st or 2nd 'foreign' language. This is of particular interest to Wales as we have parity between the assessment of the two official languages (minority Welsh and majority English) in some contexts but not others (see final paragraph of this section).

Finland, in particular, places significant emphasis on internal, formative assessment and this has an impact on the expectation of teacher expertise that goes beyond that of expert subject knowledge to include an understanding of assessment techniques.

In general, there is evidence of a shift from norm to criterion-based assessment, and the concept of ipsative assessment, though not articulated as such, seems to be part of the drive in Fryslân and Finland, as increasingly individualised learning plans that include self-assessment are being developed.

In each of the four jurisdictions considered, we found that the CEFR is used to map progression, though not always within the state school system.

In Finland, the Basque Country and Fryslân, the CEFR is used not only for Finnish, Swedish, Basque and Frisian but also for English. In Ireland, the CEFR has currency only in the field of adult learners of Irish.

The Basque Country maps the progress of Basque language learners on a series of qualifications known as the *Perfiles Lingüísticos* (PL, trans: Language or Linguistic Profiles). These are accessible outside the school system and can be linked to levels on the CEFR.

We saw how the CEFR, a benchmark that is used in many countries for many languages, is flexible enough to be adapted where necessary to suit the needs of learners across age-groups and according to the nature of the languages assessed.

We found that in the UK, the CEFR is commonly used to map the progression pathways for ESOL students, and in Wales, as in Ireland, the CEFR is used in the context of Welsh/(Irish) for Adults.

In Wales in general, in the absence of the CEFR (or similar standardised tool) we found that the variety in the modes of measuring the progress of learners' language competence makes comparisons across languages difficult. In other words, apart from within the Welsh-medium secondary school system, where pupils sit parallel Welsh and English GCSE exams, learners (and others) cannot easily relate one set of language qualifications and levels against those in another language.

A particular confusion emerges in Wales with the division of the Welsh language into 'Welsh' and 'Welsh Second Language'. This originally came about in order to give learners from non Welsh-speaking backgrounds an opportunity to gain a qualification. But one of the unfortunate results of this was to create two types of languages, one for 'learners' and one for first language speakers; or at least, some perceive that the two groups speak different types of Welsh. While it must be conceded that there are as many variations of any language as there are speakers thereof, essentially, as an 'officially recognised language', there is only one. In no other case did we find that any language was divided into 'two types', quite as is the case in Wales. Of the countries we considered, Finland was the only one that ranks the indigenous languages (Finnish, Swedish, Sámi) as first, second, third etc. However, it is able to overcome the kind of confusion we have by using the CEFR scale, thus ensuring a meaningful reading and comparison of students' competences across languages.

The language skillset in a multilingual context

We found that a side effect of the 1+2 or 2+1 language policy, though the connection is not explicitly made, is that education systems working in a multilingual context are faced with a traditional 'core' skillset that is inadequate. In addition to the traditional four skills, we have seen the Frisian system acknowledging the skill of 'conversing' as a specific 5th skill separate from the oral/speaking skill, (which may come close to the 'transactional competence' referred to in *Successful Futures*, WG1, 2015: 60).

We have also found calls for acknowledging the more nuanced skills of ‘comprehension’ and ‘working across languages’, which are vital both in terms of encouraging a more inclusive understanding of bi- and multilingualism, and of accepting the complexity of the linguistic competences needed to survive in a bi-, multi- and even plurilingual context.

Addressing these calls and recognising the need to develop suitable teaching methods, as well as assessment tools, will be a particular challenge. This is what Gorter and Cenoz suggest in their study of the Basque Country and Fryslân, when they see the problems of evaluating bilingual and multilinguals against the ‘yardstick of the ideal monolingual’, rather than ‘evaluating them as multilingual speakers who have a linguistic repertoire which is different from that of monolinguals’ (2011: 659—669). They recognise that ‘a holistic view of multilingual proficiency as a reference is more challenging and difficult to put into practice in syllabus design, teaching practice and assessment, but it approaches the teaching of different languages from a more realistic perspective’ (ibid.).

The role of digital technology

In terms of digital technology, we found that all four education systems are developing aspects of digital technology in their assessment models in various degrees. The most radical is the Frisian model that is developing its digital provision in an integrated way across its new teaching, learning and assessment programme. However, all the digital assessment programmes encountered during the research are in their infancy and thus cannot be fully evaluated at present.

Particular parallels with Wales

Of the four jurisdictions explored, those with the linguistic profiles closest to Wales are the Basque Country and Ireland, where the minority language exists alongside a majority language, and where the two languages are not closely related. Given that the most recent Basque census returns show an increase in the number of Basque speakers, it is worth noting the differences between the Basque and the Irish and Welsh models.⁶⁴ Some of the aspects evident in the Basque system, but not so evident in the Irish and Welsh systems, include:

- i) the use of the CEFR to map and indicate progression levels (both in the school system and in the ‘adult’ language learning system)
- ii) a balance between internal and external assessment
- iii) a flexible multilingual pedagogy with an emphasis on developing plurilingualism
- iv) a rich CLIL pedagogy that ensures a high number of contact hours timetabled for the promotion of language instruction
- v) intensive teacher education language programmes
- vi) a language curriculum that includes cultural dimensions such as literature across all languages
- vii) government-enforced obligations for high-level Basque fluency for public office and other employment routes

⁶⁴ Eustat. Euskal Estatistika Eraundea/Instituto Vasco de Estadística, trans: Basque Institute of Statistics. 2013. *Más de seis de cada diez residentes en la C.A. de Euskadi tiene algún conocimiento de euskera* [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.eustat.eus/indice.html>. [Accessed September 2017].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Of the questions that formed the basis of our enquiry, the two that merit further examination are: ‘the relationship between assessment and teaching/learning strategies’ and ‘the mechanisms of mapping the progression of the individual learner’.

Below are some recommendations for how this could be done to help inform developments in Wales. In taking forward these recommendations, we would encourage Qualifications Wales to work with key stakeholders in the field including Welsh Government, WJEC, Estyn and Regional Consortia as well as others involved in developing the new curriculum for Wales

Recommendation 1

Consider conducting further work as outlined below to gain a more detailed understanding about the teaching and assessment of language proficiency:

i) From the Basque Country

- Explore the ‘Perfiles Lingüísticos’, including any accompanying curriculum and assessment materials
- Meet with representatives of the Ikastola CLIL group to discuss curriculum and assessment materials, methodology and any evidence of impact

ii) From Finland

- Explore the potential benefits and challenges of the shift from norm to criterion-referenced assessment
- Examine the role of ipsative assessment processes in the context of language learning and teaching.

iii) From Fryslân

- Meet with staff involved in the RRI/GRIP to discuss curriculum and assessment materials, methodology and any evidence of impact

iv) From Ireland

- Analyse the TEG curriculum and assessment materials

v) From Wales

- Produce a tool to map comparisons between language frameworks and assessment models currently used in Wales to gauge variations in levels and proficiency descriptors.

vi) From across all the sampled jurisdictions

- Conduct a systemic analysis, including a consideration of skills and levels, of a sample of exam papers aimed at the 16 year olds
 - i) from the Basque Country: Basque, Spanish, English
 - ii) from Finland: Finnish, Swedish, English, Sámi,
 - iii) from Fryslân: Frisian, Dutch, English
 - iv) from Ireland: Irish, French, English
 - v) from Wales: Welsh (Welsh and Welsh Second Language), English and MFL

Recommendation 2

Consider how assessment of language proficiency could be enhanced by exploring the possibilities and implications of:

- assessing and recognising conversation/interaction and/or ‘cross-linguaging’ (i.e. the multilingual skills of, e.g. translating, paraphrasing, interpreting, translanguaging etc.) as skills that are specifically separate from the traditional core skills,⁶⁵
- (further) developing assessment tools for the ‘traditional’ **four** core language skills:
 - Listening, (where emphasis is clearly both on passive and active listening – i.e. ‘listening comprehension’)
 - Reading (where emphasis is clearly both on passive and active reading – i.e. ‘reading comprehension’)
 - Writing
 - Speaking
- developing a ‘Comprehension Certificate’, perhaps aimed mainly at the adult language learner, based on reading/listening that enables citizens to identify themselves on the bilingual continuum, with the aim of encouraging progression from passive to active language users.

Recommendation 3

Support Welsh Government’s intention to establish a continuum of language learning by:

- conducting a comparative analysis of the content, assessment and performance standards in the Welsh Language and Welsh Second Language GCSEs, to establish crossovers and possible points of comparison
- carefully mapping the specification, assessments and candidate work for the current GCSE Welsh Language and Welsh Second Language against the CEFR
- taking advantage of the new progression models outlined in the Donaldson *Successful Futures* review to explore how best to establish one ‘Progression Pathway’ for all languages. In this context, consider the appropriateness of the CEFR (or an adaptation thereof) as a framework that harmonises the current (complex) comparisons between Level Descriptors, Literacy Framework and external grades such as GCSE and A level. The aim would be to enable Welsh citizens (school pupils and adults alike) to cite their own ‘Linguistic Profile’ against all the languages they speak (e.g. ‘Welsh: C1’, ‘English: B2’; ‘Spanish: A2’ etc.).
- working with the CAMAU project (see below) to explore how progression can be described and best developed
- considering the assessment implications of introducing a CLIL approach to language teaching and how this might be explored through the development of the new curriculum
- considering responding (or working with respondents) to the CE’s invitation to educational institutions interested in exploring the relevance of the new descriptors to their educational context in the academic year 2017–18.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ We have deliberately avoided the term ‘translanguaging’ because of the element of confusion it generates in some academic discourse.

⁶⁶ Project coordinator Brian North. Council of Europe. Common European Framework Reference. [ONLINE]. Available at: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>. [Accessed August 2017].

Further areas of collaboration might include:

Working with Teacher Education to develop Continuous Professional Learning and Development.

As assessment methods place more emphasis on 'individual learning plans', teachers need to be confident in using criterion-based scales such as the CEFR.

Working with WG, Pioneer Schools and Consortia; in particular the group for the '*Languages, Literacy and Communication*' *Area of Learning and Experience*, to establish a network of 'Leaders in Language Learning', where organisational and practical aspects of implementing the above can be piloted immediately, e.g. establishing a CLIL pedagogy in the timetable.

Working with the CAMAU project, which is the partnership between UWTSD and the University of Glasgow that is collaborating with WG to explore how progression can be described and best developed in respect of each of the Areas of Learning and Experience of the new curriculum. The project is also researching how progression steps can be articulated, described and used in order to support the learning process in the most effective way. A part of the discussion in relation to the 'Languages, Literacy and Communication' curriculum area is asking how generic progression descriptors can be differentiated to take into consideration the experience of learners of various languages.

Working with WJEC to establish:

- i) a *Welsh Language Assessment Group*, which will include Welsh in the Welsh-medium sector, (currently WL1); Welsh in the English-medium sector (currently WL2) and Welsh for Adults, and bring together and benefit from the expertise within in each sector.
- ii) A *Languages Assessment Group* to include the Welsh Language Assessment group as well as English and MFL.

SECTION 11.

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SECTION 11. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

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Finnish National Agency for Education

<http://www.oph.fi/english>

Go Study link <http://gostudylink.net/en/support/levels>

GRIP Referinsjeramt Frysk, RRF <http://www.grip.frl/rrf/>

HABE <http://www.etxepare.eus/en/learn-basque>

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Ikastola <http://www.ikastola.eus/>

Interagency Language Roundtable

<http://www.govtilr.org/>

Lingualo <http://www.lingualo.com/language-travel/exam-comparison.html>

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State Examinations Ireland	http://www.examinations.ie
TEG	http://www.teg.ie

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SECTION 12. APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1

Acronyms and abbreviations

AFûk	Algemiene Fryske ûnderrjocht Kommisje (trans: general Frisian education commission)
ALTE	Association of Language Testers in Europe
CE	Council of Europe
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Language
CELT– P	Certificate in English Language Teaching – Primary
CELT– S	Certificate in English Language – Secondary
CIEP	Centre International d’Etudes Pedagogiques (trans: International Centre for Pedagogic Studies)
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CnaG	Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta (trans: The Council for Irish language/medium education)
CPLD	Continuous Professional Learning Development
CRELL	Centre for Research on Education and Lifelong Learning
CRELLA	Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment
EC	European Commission
ECMRL	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
EGA	Euskerra Gaitasuna Aguiria (trans: the Basque Competence Certificate)
ESLC	European Survey on Language Competences
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
Four Core Skills	The four traditional language skills of ‘listening’, ‘speaking’, ‘reading’ and ‘writing’
GRIP	Name used for the Frisian Evaluation System
HABE	<i>Helduen Alfabetatze eta Berreuskalduntzerako Erakundea</i> , (trans: Organization for the Literacy and ‘Re-basquification’ of Adults)
HAVO	Hoger Algemeene Voortgezet Onderwijs (trans: senior secondary general education)
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IRALE	Irakasleen Euskarazko Pretakuntza Zerbitzua: the agency to promote teacher literacy and Basque language competence
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
IVAP	Instituto Vasco de la Administración Pública (trans: Basque Institute of Public Administration)
LIC	Llywodraeth Cymru
L1	First or main language

L2	Second language
L3	Third language
LG1	Used in Finland to refer to the first non-mother tongue language learnt
LG2	Used in Finland to refer to the second non-mother tongue language learnt
LG3	Used in Finland to refer to the third non-mother tongue language learnt
MFL	Modern Foreign Language
NHL	Noordelijke Hogeschool Leeuwarden (trans: University of Applied Sciences)
PL	Perfiles Lingüísticos (trans: Language Profiles; system in use in the Basque Country)
RRF	Referinsjeramt Frysk (trans: Frisian Reference Framework)
TEG	Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (trans: European Certificate in Irish)
Trans.	Translated
UWTSD	University of Wales Trinity Saint David
VMBO	Voorbereidend Meddelbaar Beroesponderwijs (trans: preparatory secondary vocational education)
VWO	Voorbereidend Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs (trans: pre-university education)
WG	Welsh Government

APPENDIX 2

The linguistic profile of the countries in our survey and an indication of the use of the CEFR

Table 5a. The linguistic profile of the countries in our survey, + indication of the use of the CEFR

Country/ Jurisdiction	Majority Language	Minority Language examined	Other official language(s)	L3 Modern Foreign Language(s) most commonly taught	Are the CEFR levels applied as competence indicators?
Spain*	Spanish	Basque	Catalan Galician Valencian	English	Yes (but mainly for Basque and English)
The Basque Country	Spanish (French)	Basque			
Finland	Finnish	Swedish	Sámi, also recognized: Karelian, Finnish- Romani, Finnish-sign language	English German French Russian	Yes (for all languages)
Netherlands	Dutch	Frisian		English	Yes (for all languages)
Fryslân	Frisian	Dutch			
Ireland	English	Irish		various	Yes (but only for Irish for adults)

*N.B. The Basque Country covers areas of France as well as Spain; however in France, the Basque language is not recognised as an official language. This makes pinpointing comparative percentages across the whole Basque Country difficult, and is why this report's focus is on the Basque Country of Spain.

For more information see European Commission, 2012, Eurobarometer 386 report: *Europeans and their languages*

Table 5b.

The linguistic profile of the countries in our survey with position under the European Charter for Regional Minority Languages (ECMRL), notes on best practices and challenges.

N.B. this is an adaptation of Table 1 in *Minority Languages and education: best practices and pitfalls report* (van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 13–14).

(Original table includes key statistical data of the 13 case studies involved in the report.)

Language Vitality as defined in UNESCO's *The Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (Moseley, 2010, in van Dongera, van der Meer and Sterk, 2017: 16).

Languages	Demographics (most recent numbers)	Position under ECMRL	Language vitality	Best Practices	Challenges
Basque in Spain	33.9% of the population of the Basque Country and about 10% of the population in Navarre are Basque speakers	Ratified (2001) Basque is covered under Part III.	Vulnerable	Language models - Refresher course for teachers	- Non-native Basque speaking teachers - Teaching material for vocational education not commercially available
Frisian in the Netherlands	67% of the total population in the province of Fryslân are Frisian speakers	Ratified (1996) Frisian is covered under Part III.	Vulnerable	Trilingual education	- Quality of teachers - Continuity of Frisian in secondary education is needed
Irish in Ireland	41.4% of the total Irish population are Irish speakers	Not signed	Definitely endangered	- Large amount of teaching material - Students results	Language skills of teachers
Swedish in Finland	5.5% of the total Finnish population are Swedish mother tongue speakers	Ratified (1994) Swedish is covered under Part II.	Not listed	Total immersion programme	- Availability of textbooks - Students' results
Welsh in the United Kingdom	21.8% of the total Welsh population can speak, read and write Welsh	Ratified (2001) Welsh is covered under Part III.	Vulnerable	- Wide variety of educational material - FE colleges Welsh education strategy	- Matching the school needs and material provided - Teaching resources

APPENDIX 3

Additional information, Finland (Source: National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014)

Objectives of the instruction of English / other foreign language / the Sámi language in grades 1–2

At school, studies in the first foreign language or the second national language usually start in the third grade. However, instruction in the A syllabus may begin before the third grade. In that case, the instruction follows the core curriculum of the A syllabus, taking the pupils' age into account. Pupils may be given a preliminary introduction to certain languages, such as English, the Sámi language, or some other language, even before the instruction in the A syllabus begins. In this approach, called a language shower, the pupils learn the basics of a language or languages by means of songs, play, games, and physical activities. The topics are selected together with the pupils based on their interests. The instruction may be provided in connection with lessons in other subjects, as part of multidisciplinary learning modules, or during specifically allocated lessons or teaching periods. Language showers may also be organised in higher grades.

Objectives of the instruction of English / other foreign language / the Sámi language in grades 3–9

The teaching and learning strengthen the pupils' confidence in their own language learning skills and in using languages confidently. The pupils are provided with opportunities for making progress individually and receiving support for learning if needed. The instruction is organised to support also the progress of those advancing faster than others or those with previous proficiency in the language. Multiliteracy is developed and diverse texts are discussed in the teaching and learning of languages. The varying interests of children and young people are taken into account in the selection of texts. The instruction also connects and makes use of different languages as well the pupils' language use in their leisure time. The pupils are guided to seek information using all the languages they know.

English as a foreign language, A syllabus in grades 3–6

In grades 3–6, all pupils receive instruction of mother tongue and at least two other languages: a core A1 language and a B1 language, and possibly also an A2 language, which is an optional syllabus of the A language. Many pupils increasingly use English in their free time. This competence acquired by pupils through informal learning is taken into account in the planning of instruction and when selecting contents.

English, A syllabus in grades 7–9

The pupils are encouraged to use the English language in diverse interaction and information acquisition. The objective of the instruction is to support the pupil in enhancing the proficiency acquired in grades 3–6 and in developing his or her linguistic reasoning skills while promoting language-learning skills. The pupil's perception of cultural diversity is enhanced by discussing different value-based phenomena related to language communities. There is also room for processing

emotions, and, if necessary, difficult issues may be discussed in the school's language of instruction. Many pupils increasingly use English in their free time. This competence acquired by pupils through informal learning is taken into account in the planning of instruction and when selecting contents. The instruction of English may be integrated with different subjects and multidisciplinary learning modules and vice versa. The pupils are encouraged to search for information in English in different subjects.

Table 6 below shows the adapted CEFR levels (see Section 6iii) attained in Finland by pupils at the end of secondary school based on information from Pöyhönen (2009, Appendix 3, pp. 172—173). The final column shows the total number of hours taught during primary and secondary education combined. In Finland, it can be seen that higher levels of attainment in English are generally expected and achieved in the passive skills of listening and reading. It should be remembered that LG1 is compulsory, whereas LG2 is optional, which may account for the lower number of hours required to achieve the levels shown. For a key to CEFR levels as adapted in Finland, see the list beneath the table.

TABLE 6. CEFR Proficiency levels attained in first non-mother tongue language (LG1) and second non-mother tongue language (LG2) in Finland by the end of comprehensive school (grade 9, age 15/16), with total minimum teaching hours.⁶⁷ Scores are related to an average of LG1 and LG2.

Note

- i) as exemplified in the key beneath the table, a score of B is higher than A
- ii) in the Finnish National Core Curriculum in order to gain an award of 'Excellent' at the end of grade 9, pupils must have achieved B1.1/A2.2

Language	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Total minimum teaching hours (primary and secondary combined)
English	Excellent target of B1.1 (achieved by 67% of pupils)	Excellent target of A2.2 (achieved by 77% of pupils)	Excellent target of B1.1 (achieved by 62% of pupils)	Excellent target of A2.2 (achieved by 72% of pupils)	LG1 : 456 hrs LG2: 342 hrs

A1.1 First stage of elementary proficiency
A1.2 Developing elemental proficiency
A1.3 Functional elementary proficiency

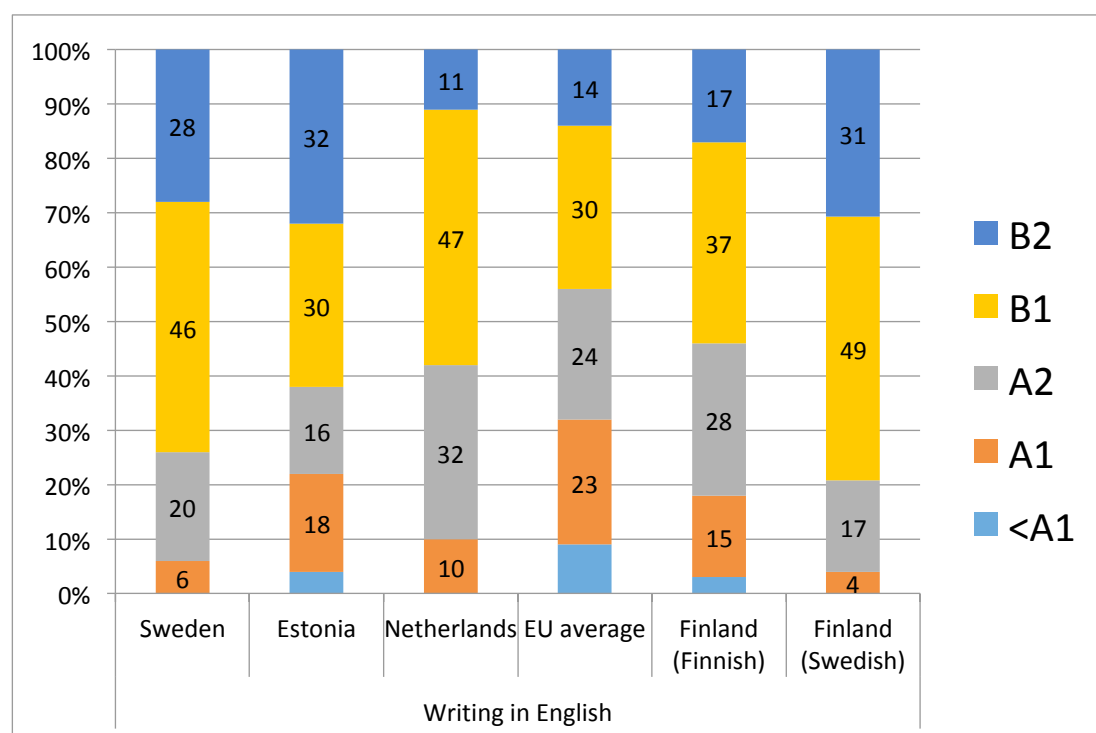
⁶⁷ From a Wales perspective, table 6 might suggest to us the potential attainment levels for language learners in Wales and an indication of the contact hours required to achieve those levels.

- A2.1 First stage of basic proficiency
- A2.2 Developing basic proficiency
- B1.1 Functional basic proficiency
- B1.2 Fluent basic proficiency
- B2.1 First stage of independent proficiency
- B2.2 Functional independent proficiency

Table 7 below compares the attainment of CEFR levels in English by pupils in Sweden, Estonia, Netherlands, Finland and the EU average.

We see that the results in Finland surpass the average results for the EU. It is said that the pupils with Swedish as mother-tongue have an advantage over those with Finnish as mother-tongue given that Swedish is an Indo-European language (as is English, but not Finnish). It is also interesting to note that Swedish mother-tongue speakers in Finland achieve marginally higher levels than the Swedish mother-tongue speakers in Sweden. This suggests that the approach taken by Finland, involving CLIL, highly-trained teachers, an emphasis on 'learning' rather than 'testing' and the emphasis on formative assessment and individual feedback leads to higher achievement.

TABLE 7. Comparison of the attainment of CEFR levels in English by pupils in Sweden, Estonia, Netherlands, Finland and the EU average.



(This table) has been compiled from the published results of both the ESLC study (European Commission, 2012a) and the English sub-study of the Finnish educational evaluation study (Härmälä et al., 2013). To make the comparison of the results easier, the more fine-tuned results of the Finnish study are presented as full CEFR levels, since that was how the ESLC results were reported. The figure shows the distribution of the results for writing in English

as a foreign language for three European countries (Sweden, Estonia and the Netherlands) that participated in the European Commission's ESC study in 2012, as well as the average result for all the 14 countries or areas involved in the study. The two columns on the right display the results of the study in Finland in 2013 for two populations of learners: those in the Finnish-medium schools and those in the Swedish-medium schools.

From (as yet unpublished): *Using the Common European Framework of Reference in the evaluation of educational achievement in foreign and second languages*, Ari Huhta, University of Jyväskylä.

The higher levels achieved in Finland suggest that a closer examination of the various strategies at work in Finland, in particular the blend of teaching/learning methods and assessment, is warranted.

APPENDIX 4

Additional information, the Basque Country

Translation and summary of aspects concerning the development of *plurilingualism* in the proposals for the 2020 Basque curriculum (Heziberri, 2014: 33-35).⁶⁸

Pupils should leave compulsory education able to communicate in Spanish and Basque ‘adequately and effectively’ in both the spoken and written form.

In addition, they should also be able to communicate ‘adequately’ in at least one foreign language in personal, social and academic settings. Likewise, they should have a literary education that will help them better understand themselves and the world around them.

The focus on developing plurilingual pupils, takes into account that plurilingual pupils do not keep different languages and cultures in separate mental compartments, but rather that they develop a communicative competence to which all their linguistic knowledge and experiences contribute and in which the various languages interact.

From this point of view, the purpose of teaching and learning a language is entirely modified. It is no longer a case of simply succeeding in two or three languages, each one treated separately. Quite the opposite, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertoire in which all linguistic abilities play their part.

This has implications for the teachers of languages in that they need to pay special attention to the integration of languages. This must be reflected in the objectives, content and methodology of their lessons.

Teachers of language need to be aware:

- that at any given moment, bilingual or plurilingual students have at their disposal the different languages they know, and the knowledge acquired through them, as part of their cognitive and emotional endowment;
- of transferability of language learning from one language to another;
- of the simultaneous presence of different languages in the speaker’s environments.

Teachers of subjects other than languages also share the responsibility of working towards the development of the communicative-linguistic ability of students, an ability required by each student for adequate and effective problem solving in each subject area.

The success of basic, disciplinary competence in the subject areas requires that students not only learn the content of the lesson, but also the correct forms of expression in each area and that they use these in an integrated manner when solving situations and problems in each subject.

Integrating content and language brings with it the development of linguistic-communicative competence.

⁶⁸ Heziberri 2020 Marco del Modelo Educativo Pedagógico. 2014. [ONLINE} Available at: http://www.hezkuntza.ejgv.euskadi.eus/r43573/es/contenidos/informacion/heziberri_2020/es_heziberr/adjuntos/Heziberri_2020_c.pdf . [Accessed September 2017].

Planning for the success of plurilingual abilities in the two official languages as well as in at least one further foreign language by means of an integrated curriculum for languages and all other subject areas, demands that the following principles are understood and accepted:

- The teaching of languages should be based on inclusion, i.e. it should provide students with the opportunity to fully develop their plurilingual competence, regardless of their mother-tongue.
- The teaching of languages should be based on their use, i.e., the languages should be learned through both social and academic use, these being the pragmatic necessities for communication, guiding language learning and contributing to commanding the linguistic code.
- The teaching of languages should be based on communicative focus, i.e. classrooms should be turned into special spaces for communication that favours the effective participation in diverse communicative practice.
- The teaching of languages should be based on the development of positive attitudes towards the languages and the speakers, taking into consideration the languages' importance to social connections and to the emotional development of individuals.
- In school, the most frequent and natural environments and situations for using the language are produced during the teaching and learning processes in curricular areas, where it is fitting to adopt the integration of language and content.

These principles deal with a methodology that:

- assumes a learning process guided by meaningful communication projects which draw fundamental communicative unity from texts;
- structures learning in didactic sequences orientated towards succeeding in concrete communicative tasks;
- prioritizes procedural content; the 'knowing how' not the mere superficial knowing.

APPENDIX 5

Additional information, Ireland

(Source: TEG website, available at: <http://www.teg.ie/>)

Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) provides a series of general Irish language proficiency examinations and qualifications for adult learners of Irish. TEG exams give candidates an opportunity to show their ability in speaking, listening, reading and writing Irish at different levels, from absolute beginner to intermediate and advanced levels.

Exams are offered at five levels at present and are taken each year by candidates with various levels of fluency. These have included:

- Adult learners taking part in a Dublin evening course, returning to the study of Irish for the first time since 1970
- Irish language tutors at an Irish university
- County council staff from Kerry, Galway, Tipperary and Clare, to name but a few
- Irish-language journalists
- Teachers of Irish at primary and secondary school level
- Students at a Canadian university learning Irish for the first time

Candidates also have the option of taking the oral exam only, with a view to gaining specific certification in the spoken language.

Exams take place in April and May each year in ten centres in Ireland and in four centres abroad. Several hundred learners take TEG exams each year.

TEG syllabuses and exams provide both teachers and learners with clear learning objectives and a structured step-by-step path to fluency in Irish.

As well as being the preferred method for learners to make progress in the language, a number of organizations now use TEG exams in recruitment and selection procedures as a means of ensuring that potential employees/students have the required language skills.

These exams are broadly based on the CEFR.

APPENDIX 6

International English Language Testing System Scale (IELTS) and Level Descriptors

TABLE 8. IELTS Scale and Level Descriptors⁶⁹

Band score	Skill level	Description
9	Expert user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language. Their use of English is appropriate, accurate and fluent, and shows complete understanding.
8	Very good user	The test taker has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriate usage. They may misunderstand some things in unfamiliar situations. They handle complex and detailed argumentation well.
7	Good user	The test taker has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings in some situations. They generally handle complex language well and understand detailed reasoning.
6	Competent user	The test taker has an effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriate usage and misunderstandings. They can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
5	Modest user	The test taker has a partial command of the language and copes with overall meaning in most situations, although they are likely to make many mistakes. They should be able to handle basic communication in their own field.
4	Limited user	The test taker's basic competence is limited to familiar situations. They frequently show problems in understanding and expression. They are not able to use complex language.
3	Extremely limited user	The test taker conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. There are frequent breakdowns in communication.
2	Intermittent user	The test taker has great difficulty understanding spoken and written English.
1	Non-user	The test taker has no ability to use the language except a few isolated words.
0	Did not attempt the test	The test taker did not answer the questions.

⁶⁹ IELTS essentials. 2017. IELTS 9_Band Scale. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.ieltsessentials.com/global/results/ielts9bandscale>. [Accessed August 2017].

APPENDIX 7

Welsh language examinations available

TABLE 9. Welsh language examinations available

Welsh Second Language Entry Pathway	Entry 2 / 3
GCSE Welsh Second Language Applied	A*–G
GCSE Welsh Second Language	A*–G
GCE AS Level Welsh Second Language	A–E
GCE A Level Welsh Second Language	A*–E
Essential Skills Communication (Welsh medium)	Entry 1
Welsh First Language Entry Pathway	Entry 2/3
GCSE Welsh Language	A*–G
GCSE Welsh Literature	A*–G
GCE AS Level Welsh	A–E
GCE A Level Welsh	A*–E
Welsh for Adults:	
Entry (A1 CEFR)	
Foundation (A2 CEFR)	
Intermediate (B1 CEFR)	
Advanced (B2 CEFR) equivalent of A Level Welsh Second Language (though, in practice, it appears that this is generally considered to reach a significantly higher standard)	

For a general cross-referencing tool between various qualifications and the levels of attainment they indicate (i.e. one that does not specifically relate to Welsh-language qualifications), see the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) diagram.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales diagram.[ONLINE]. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/150928-fan-diagram-en.pdf> [Accessed August 2017]. and for more details see the CQFW brochure: Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales Brochure. [ONLINE]. Available at: <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170712-cqfw-brochure-en.pdf> [Accessed August 2017].

APPENDIX 8

Questions for international interviews

- i) Which 'core' language skills are assessed and how are they assessed?
- ii) What is the relationship between the assessment and the progression of individual learners' language skills?
- iii) What is the balance between norm and criterion based approaches?
- iv) What is the balance between external and internal assessment?
- v) What role does age play in the assessment models?
- vi) What is the particular relationship between the assessment methods and teaching/learning strategies?
- vii) How are the two (or more) languages in question treated in relation to one another in terms of assessment?
- viii) What role does digital technology play?
- ix) Are there recent successful/unsuccessful interventions?
- x) What terminology is used to describe competence and progression, in particular terms related to 'language transactional skills' / 'language transactional competence'?

APPENDIX 9

Learning hours and the CEFR

TABLE 10. CEFR indicative guided learning hours from the Cambridge English support site.⁷¹

How many hours do I need to prepare for my exam? It takes approximately 200 guided learning hours for a language learner to progress from one level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) to the next. For example, a candidate who has passed <i>Cambridge English: First (FCE)</i>, aligned to level B2 on the CEFR, might need approximately 200 hours of lessons and supervised study to prepare for the <i>Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)</i>, which is aligned to level C1. However, there are a number of factors that can affect how long it might take you to achieve your desired level of English, including: • your language learning background • the intensity of your study • your age • the amount of study/exposure outside of lesson times The table below suggests how many hours you might need to spend to reach each level of the CEFR, but remember these figures are intended as a guideline only. You may require more or less time and support depending on your own needs.		
Common European Framework Guided Learning Hours (from beginner level)		
CEFR Level	Cambridge English Exam	Number of Hours (approximate)
C2	<i>Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE)</i>	1,000—1,200
C1	<i>Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE)</i>	700—800
B2	<i>Cambridge English: First (FCE)</i>	500—600
B1	<i>Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)</i>	350—400
A2	<i>Cambridge English: Key (KET)</i>	180—200

TABLE 11. CEFR indicative learning hours (guided and independent) from the Basic Curriculum for Euskara (Basque Language) in adult education.⁷²

LEVEL	DIRECTED/GUIDED	SELF-STUDY/INDEPENDENT
Level A1	125	75
Level A2	200	100
Level B1	250	150
Level B2	350	250
Level C1	400	350
Level C2	200	500

⁷¹ Cambridge English Support Site.2017. Guided Learning Hours. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://support.cambridgeenglish.org/hc/en-gb/articles/202838506-Guided-learning-hours>. [Accessed August 2017].

⁷² HABE. 2004. Horas de enseñanza y horas de aprendizaje [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.habe.euskadi.eus/informacion/horas-de-ensenanza-y-horas-de-aprendizaje/s23-4728/es/> [Accessed August 2017].

TABLE 12. Indicative learning hours for the CEFR and the TEG progression pathway.⁷³

Level	Hours of study recommended
Bonnleibhéal 1 (A1)	80 - 100
Bonnleibhéal 2 (A2)	+ 160 - 200
Meánleibhéal 1 (B1)	+ 350 - 400
Meánleibhéal 2 (B2)	+ 500 - 600
Ardleibhéal 1 (C1)	+ 1000
Ardleibhéal 2 (C2)	+ 1500

⁷³ TEG. 2017. TEG Levels. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.teg.ie/teg-levels.8.html>. [Accessed August 2017].

