

**Reading 4:**

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## 7 The European School Model<sup>1</sup>

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### Structure

'European Schools' have been specifically designed as multicultural establishments, i.e. where more than two languages function as medium of instruction. These schools have officially existed since 1958 and have acquired a solid reputation for scholastic achievement, linguistic equity, multilingual proficiency among the pupils and the promotion of multicultural awareness.

European Schools form part of a network of 9 schools situated in 6 different countries (Brussels I and II, Mol, Munich, Culham, Varese, Karlsruhe and Bergen) and are attended by approximately 12,000 children. They were specifically designed to provide education for the children of civil servants working for one of the supra-national European institutions. The schools are collectively controlled by the education authorities of the 12 member states of the European Economic Community. Each school consists of different linguistic sub-sections in which everyone follows the same programme irrespective of the language of instruction. The largest European School (Brussels I) is in the Belgian capital and has about 3000 pupils ranging from kindergarten to the end of secondary education at age 18. At present the Brussels I European School contains 8 sub-sections covering all the official languages of the member states of the European Economic Community except Portuguese, namely, Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Italian and Spanish. A Portuguese sub-section exists at the second European School in Brussels where there is no Spanish sub-section.

Priority of access is given to European civil servants' children, ranging from the offspring of cabinet ministers to those of porters and cleaning staff. The schools are under an obligation to admit non-civil servant children if space is available in order to avoid the formation of population ghettos and to balance out the numbers in each linguistic sub-section where possible. One of the schools has a large number of

immigrant steel-workers' children, another a large contingent of ex-miners' children. Education is free, except for the non-civil-servant children whose parents pay a very small, nominal contribution.

European Schools have a distinct philosophy as supra-national institutions which aims to reconcile two apparently contradictory goals. On the one hand they attempt to guarantee the development of the child's first language and cultural identity, while on the other they strive to promote a European identity through instruction for all pupils in at least 2 languages, compulsory learning of a 3rd as a subject and options regarding a 4th language. It is important to bear in mind that within Europe this European identity is not self-evident, and that national differences are keenly felt. The schools need to be constantly aware of the need to eliminate prejudice and nationalistic antagonisms in order for them to function harmoniously and to do so they use multilingualism as a tool for both scholastic achievement and harmonious ethnolinguistic relations.

The following principles determine the nature of the programme in the schools.

- (1) The child's distinct national, cultural and linguistic identity must be maintained, underlining the significance of instruction in the first language.
- (2) Throughout schooling the child must build up competence in a second language through which he or she will be able to learn content matter and take examinations.
- (3) The higher the child progresses in the school the more lessons are taught via the medium of a second or third language.
- (4) All children are to be treated equally so that all are obliged to take on a second and third language, the third language becoming a compulsory component of the curriculum from the first year of secondary education. No sub-section is privileged linguistically.
- (5) From primary school onwards communal lessons are taught to members of different sub-sections brought together for integration purposes. In the primary section these communal lessons are known as European Hours. The further the children progress in the programme the more lessons are taught to mixed groups from different sub-sections.
- (6) In final examinations all pupils are expected to take content-matter examinations, both written and oral, at least in their first and second language; the third language might be examined solely as a subject or for content, depending on the individual's course options.
- (7) Examination criteria are theoretically the same whether the pupil is

taking an examination through the medium of the first or the second language. They are also comparable to the criteria used in examinations in the different member states of the European Economic Community.

It should be noted that the nature of the programme in a European School does not fit into any clear-cut model with reference to bilingual education. It is neither an immersion nor a submersion programme. On the other hand it does represent a combination of maintenance, transitional and enrichment programmes. The first language lays the foundations for education, is maintained throughout the programme, but gradually decreases in significance as the pupils get older. Reading and writing are initially taught through the medium of the first language. A second language is introduced as a subject matter from the beginning of the programme and gradually, but not completely, takes over for content matter in secondary education. As the second language gradually increases in significance it represents a type of transitional experience which in theory and in practice will enable the student to pursue higher education through the medium of this language if desired. However, the programme has more in common with the enrichment model since the second language does not take over to the detriment of the first.

A fundamental difference between European Schools and the Canadian immersion model is the place given to formal instruction in the L2. In European Schools the L2 is taught formally as a subject prior to being used as a medium for content. Moreover, once the L2 has become a medium of content instruction it continues to be taught separately as a subject throughout the curriculum. It is probably this factor which accounts for the high level of grammatical accuracy attained by European School pupils by the end of the programme when they are expected to be able to write and speak in a way comparable to native speakers (cf. Swain & Lapkin, 1982).

On the cultural level the European School model shows an attempt to integrate children from different national backgrounds into a broader, communal, new identity which will not threaten that of origin. Thus the school does not exacerbate ethnolinguistic tensions but harmonises modes of thinking while respecting different linguistic backgrounds. The details of how this is achieved will be examined later.

A further significant point is the notion of linguistic equality striven for in the European Schools. All children, whatever their linguistic background, are put through the same constraints where language acquisition is concerned.

## Language in the Curriculum

Since there are 8 linguistic sub-sections in the largest European School it is important to evaluate the role of language in the totality of the curriculum. Designers of the programme have had to bear in mind the desire to respect each group's first language together with the need to create a harmonious and integrated school population which does not break up into factions based on linguistic criteria. Thought was also given to the possibility that many of the children might wish to continue their studies through the medium of a different language than their first. Two major strategies help to reconcile these goals. On the one hand there is the promotion of bilingualism for all, and on the other there is a good deal of social engineering, about which more will be said later, which both enhances the language learning process and avoids the dangers of fragmentation on linguistic lines.

In the primary school the majority of instruction is given via the medium of the first language. From the very beginning a second language is taught as a subject to all children. The second language is either English, French or German, which represent the L2s used for inter-group communication. The language of the sub-section in which a child is enrolled may not be selected as an L2 so that an English-speaker has to select French or German as an L2 whereas a Danish speaker may select from any of the three. Often the language of the host community in which the school is located is selected as the preferred L2 of a particular school so that French is the most favoured L2 in the European School of Brussels while English is the most favoured in the school in Britain.

As in all complex linguistic settings the ideal of equal linguistic treatment for all must be reconciled with practical considerations of making the given entity viable. Thus although 8 of the 9 official languages of the member states are on an equal footing in the sub-sections of the Brussels European School they are not all exactly equal. A Danish or a Dutch sub-section, for example, may consist of small groups of one class of pupils per grade whereas there may be 3 parallel classes for each grade of English, French or Italian children; this is unavoidable and reflects European population statistics. Statistics for the 1986/1987 school year reveal that in secondary education there were 738 children in the French sub-section but only 270 in the smallest Danish sub-section. Also, the fact that the compulsory L2 must be selected from either French, English or German, makes these languages more equal than the others. The disparity in numbers and functions of different languages within a

given school has consequences on language acquisition since the school represents a multilingual micro-community where social forces affect the acquisition process.

Another factor to be borne in mind is that the schools' policy of admitting non-European civil service children means that there are more languages present than can actually be catered for. The European School of Brussels, for example, has children of 43 nationalities outside the European Economic Community (171 pupils in 1986/1987) on its enrolment and these are distributed among the 8 established sub-sections, with the majority in the English or French sections.

## L1 Instruction in European Schools

In primary school teachers pay particular attention to the quality of the L1 since the multilingual environment in which the children evolve is not conducive to optimal input conditions. The majority of children are not in their country of origin, they are all subjected to L2 experience from the beginning of schooling and there are many languages around them. The particular circumstances usually affect the vocabulary so that teachers have to pay more attention than in a monolingual school to extending the range and precision of lexical usage.

Teachers who use the medium of a given language are always native-speakers of that language, a quality considered as essential given the role models they represent and the linguistically mixed population they are confronted with. All teachers are also bilingual to different degrees since they mostly work in a country other than their own and this is considered an asset since it gives them an insight into the nature of bilingualism in the children they teach.

Particular attention is paid to spelling in the L1 and is controlled in all lessons once the children have learned to read and write.

The insistence on a native-speaker requirement in teachers is important in schools where several languages are used as the medium of instruction. In many bilingual programmes teachers often teach through a medium which is not their native language, which at times restricts them as role models. It can also cause problems in cases where there is a significant mismatch between a teacher's non-native patterns of usage and the more native-like patterns children bring with them. This can even be the case if the teacher has specialised in the study of the non-

native language. Moreover, the fact that there are native speakers of the L1s among the children implies that the teachers' prestige may be adversely affected if language ability is not at least as fluent as that of the pupils. The European School insist that the native-speaker requirement amongst teachers plays a significant role in the quality of the linguistic outcome of the programme.

### **The Place of the L2 in Primary Education in the European School**

From the very beginning of primary school the different L2s, destined to develop into lingua francas for inter-student communication, are taught by native speakers (not the class teacher, note) as subject matter in the same way that foreign languages are traditionally taught. There is one major difference, however, and that is that the L2s in a European School also figure as the L1 for some pupils within the same buildings, something which brings them to life as observable, genuine tools of natural communication amongst children and adults. Moreover, these same L2s serve as language of instruction for certain subjects in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades of primary school so that even in the early stages language learning is not totally divorced from language usage. Foreign language instruction is designed to be educationally enriching as well as promoting cross-cultural interaction, and its success is partly due to the fact that it goes on throughout the twelve-years of schooling.

In the primary school the L2 is taught by concentrating on the spoken language, written competence being left to the secondary programme. The focus of attention is on basic grammar and lexis (this process continuing into the secondary programme up to the age of 14, beyond which there is no more structural work on the L2 but the language is used as a medium of instruction for both language and non-language subjects).

Two types of special support are provided for children who arrive in the middle of the school year, perhaps from another country or a monolingual programme. Students with no knowledge of an L2 are sent to 'cours de rattrapage' or 'catching-up classes' during the periods when their classmates are receiving L2 as a subject; they are not separated, however, when the L2 is used for teaching content-matter, where such late arrivals may have difficulty in following in the initial stages. The remedial teachers then try to bring the new arrivals up to class levels by

tailor-made intensive teaching which is supplemented by extra lessons outside the normal school timetable, i.e. on Wednesday afternoons which is free for other children. The second type of special provision for late arrivals with inadequate knowledge of the L2 in the secondary programme is known as 'cours de soutien' or 'support classes' where further tailor-made instruction is provided, including help with handling content-matter material taught through the L2. These support classes take place when the late arrivals' classmates follow their optional 'complementary courses' in the secondary programme (cf. p. 130).

From the 3rd grade onwards physical education is taught to mixed groups via the medium of the shared L2, a practice which is continued right through the programme till the end of secondary education. For example, the teacher of physical education might be a native-speaker of French taking a class made up of children from four or five linguistic sub-sections. In theory the teacher will only use French to explain the nature of the game or activity that is to take place. Questioning the children involved reveals that in practice the teacher, in these early stages, will predominantly use his or her native language but may often translate instructions into two or three languages in order to proceed more quickly. This often may go little further than translating a few key words to make sure everyone has understood. Another area where the L2s come into their own is in the set of communal activities known as European Hours which represent an important element behind the philosophy of the schools (cf. below). By the end of primary school the build up of instruction of and through the medium of the L2 means that approximately 25% of the time-table is taken up via the L2 and as children progress through secondary education this proportion increases significantly.

Note the major difference between immersion programmes of L2 instruction and the above model. The L2 is taught as a subject before it becomes used as a medium and when this does occur it takes place in cognitively undemanding and highly contextualised circumstances (cf. Cummins, 1981, 1984) such as physical education or during European Hours. Once the L2 starts to be used as a medium of instruction it continues to be taught separately as a subject.

### **European Hours**

These represent a very important component in the philosophy of the schools. From the 3rd year of primary education 3 lessons per week

are devoted to what are called 'European Hours'. These lessons are conducted in the L2 but are not intended as language lessons. Their primary goal is to group children from the various language sections and, by getting them to work and play together, to make them aware of their common European heritage. They form part of the social engineering designed to break down the fragmentation inherent to the presence of 8 sub-sections.

Children are brought together in classes of about 20 to 25, made up of groups of four to five children from each sub-section for one afternoon per week. Nearly 600 children are involved in these European Hours in the European School of Brussels, organised in some 30 groups of roughly 20 children each. Priority is given to co-operative activities based on creative tasks such as sewing, cooking, construction projects, making puppets and often a theme is developed over several weeks, such as preparing for carnival. Teachers are free to carry out any activity they like as long as it mixes children from different sub-sections and encourages them to co-operate with each other. Half way through the school year a different teacher, from a different language background takes over the European Hours, this to reinforce the multicultural aspect of education. All class teachers in the primary school are involved in European Hours.

When a theme is introduced in European Hours the following 5 phases are borne in mind:

- (1) creation of an atmosphere where each child will feel comfortable and be encouraged to get actively involved in a group project;
- (2) fixing a realisable goal;
- (3) forming working groups to attain the goal;
- (4) encouraging communication so as to seek to work together;
- (5) showing the results to the rest of the school, e.g. through demonstrations, exhibitions, dances, songs.

Observation of a sample lesson during a European Hour revealed the following features. The 22 children in the 5th year class were made up of 5 children from the German section, 6 from the French section, 6 from the Italian section and 5 from the Dutch section. Children from the same group tended to cluster and talk to each other in their own languages. The teacher, a French speaker who used no other language, explained the creative activity which consisted of producing a three dimensional work of art using many different materials. Some children in the class had insufficient command of French to clearly understand what was expected (these were recent arrivals at the school). Other children from the same language background would act as informal

interpreters or would show their classmates what to do. Once the activity had been explained the teacher would help individual children to perform the activity. Note that although the 'European Hour' is not a language lesson the L2 assumes great relevance by the very fact that it is the only medium common to the whole group. Of the three lessons per week devoted to 'European Hours' two are classroom activities and one is a games activity conducted outside. No attempts are made to force children to use the L2, though obviously the teacher cannot be expected to know the four languages present in the whole class. By the nature of the circumstances, however, the L2 is perceived as significant as the *lingua franca* so that children become sensitive to the different roles languages play in their immediate environment and accept the circumstances as natural. Again the activity in the L2 is context embedded and cognitively undemanding.

A second function of the 'European Hours' is that they represent the first instance of the school trying to promote a new European identity, an avowed policy aim. By familiarising the children with representatives of other European countries the schools hope to overcome prejudice and stereotyped reactions before they have had time to develop. Throughout schooling the programme insists on building up a supra-national, European identity and effects this by gradually mixing children from different countries in as many activities as possible.

How successful the programme is in this respect is difficult to assess. It has been noted that whereas in primary school most friendship circles remain within the language sub-section to which the child belongs, by the end of secondary education the majority of friendship patterns are outside the sub-section to which a student belongs. One investigation revealed that among the 17 and 18 year olds studied the majority had their best friends in a sub-section other than their own (Housen & Baetens Beardsmore, 1987).

The above lessons represent the first attempt by the school to manipulate the population so as to interact across the language barriers, and with time such mixings become ever more significant. In a multilingual school it is vital to avoid segregation which might lead to tensions between groups. It is also vital to produce circumstances where an L2 assumes a natural function but where the linguistic demands are not beyond those that can be expected from limited contact with that language. The mixed group sessions provide non-threatening circumstances for interaction across groups.

## Primary School Curriculum

The primary school programme consists of a 5 year cycle in which all sub-sections follow the same timetable and same programme, irrespective of the language of the section. Primary education may be preceded by voluntary attendance in the kindergarten which may fulfil a useful function for certain children by consolidating language skills in the language of the sub-section which is later to be attended in school. This may be necessary for children who come from bi- or multilingual home backgrounds, or who have travelled about a lot. Table 7.1 gives the programme for the whole grade for each year, expressed in terms of 30 or 45 minute lesson slots. All subjects are taught through the L1 of the section except those in italics.

## Secondary School Programme

The secondary school programme breaks down into 3 phases, the first of which is called the 'observation cycle', and which lasts for 3 years from grades 6–8. During the observation cycle the general programme is followed by everyone, though a limited number of options are introduced. In the 8th grade the L3 is introduced as a compulsory subject and the choice of L3 may be made from any of the official languages in the school which have not yet been studied, except for Irish and Belgian nationals. Irish nationals must take compulsory Irish as an L3 and Belgians their second national language (French or Dutch) if this has not been part of their curriculum lower down in the school; these obligations are made so as to align Irish and Belgian children on the national programmes in their country of origin. The L3 is taught as a subject and not used as a medium of instruction, though later on in secondary education it may figure as a medium of instruction if available on the set of elective courses which pupils may decide to follow.

The L2 takes on a more significant role in the observation cycle. Whereas music and art had been taught in the respective L1s in primary school they are now taught to mixed groups through the medium of the L2. A set of 'complementary activities' are now offered as elective subjects, from which at least two must be selected in the first year of secondary education (grade 6), and these are also taught through the medium of the L2. Complementary activities consist of such subjects as electronics, computer science, photography, painting, typing, needlework, etc. and are aimed at developing other than purely intellectual capacities.

TABLE 7.1 *Primary school curriculum expressed in number of lessons per week and per grade (Lessons using the L2 are in italics)*

| Curriculum                     | No. of lessons per week        |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>1st and 2nd Grades</i>      |                                |
| L1 as a subject                | 16 × 30 mins                   |
| Mathematics                    | 8 × 30 mins                    |
| <i>L2 as a subject</i>         | 5 × 30 mins                    |
| Music                          | 3 × 30 mins                    |
| Art                            | 4 × 30 mins                    |
| Physical education             | 4 × 30 mins                    |
| Environmental studies          | 2 × 30 mins                    |
| Religion or ethics             | 2 × 45 mins                    |
| Recreation                     | 7 × 30 mins                    |
| Total                          | 25.5 × 30 or 45 mins per week. |
| <i>3rd, 4th and 5th Grades</i> |                                |
| L1 as a subject                | 9 × 45 mins                    |
| Mathematics                    | 7 × 45 mins                    |
| <i>L2 as a subject</i>         | 5 × 45 mins                    |
| Environmental studies          | 4 × 45 mins                    |
| Art                            | 1 × 45 mins                    |
| Music                          | 1 × 45 mins                    |
| <i>Physical education</i>      | 1 × 45 mins (mixed langs)      |
| <i>European Hours</i>          | 3 × 45 mins (mixed langs)      |
| Religion or ethics             | 2 × 45 mins                    |
| Total                          | 33 × 45 mins per week.         |

Note that in this phase where the role of the L2 is extended the activities in which it is used are still relatively context-embedded and cognitively undemanding.

In grades 6 and 7 the human sciences (i.e. history and geography) are taught via the different L1s of each sub-section in order to familiarise children with their national origins. In grade 8, however, the human sciences are taught to mixed groups through the medium of the L2 and take on a different perspective. The subject matter is now taught in a European light, bringing out the varied perspectives on European history. For example, a French pupil with English as an L2 will be taught the

history of the French revolution in English by an English-speaking teacher.

There is one fundamental difference with respect to the L2 when one compares the primary and the secondary school programmes. In primary school communal lessons taught to mixed language groups will include native-speaker peers of the given L2 (for example in European hours). In the secondary programme it is the exception to have native-speaker peers in classes taught through the medium of the L2 since all pupils receive instruction through their non-native language in the same time slot.

In the secondary school programme standard manuals or textbooks play a far less significant role than in monolingual schools. Only for the teaching of languages themselves or for subjects taught through the medium of the L1 are standard text books used, and for the different L1s these obviously differ from sub-section to sub-section. For all other subjects teachers rely far less on standardised textbooks than in monolingual schools and are expected to devise much of their own material in order to meet the requirements of their mixed language populations. Whatever materials are used require slight modifications at this level and teachers may provide multilingual glossaries of the specific subject-matter terminology to ensure that the student has the requisite vocabulary in both the L1 and the L2. Atlases used never provide place names in translation, as would happen in monolingual settings (e.g. Londres = London) but instead give place names in the original language.

Since parents express worries about the capacity of their children to acquire more abstract content-matter through the medium of the L2 when the human sciences switch over to the use of this language briefing sessions are organised where teachers provide reassurance about the nature and outcome of the programme.

At the organisational level the logistics of the secondary school programme are different from those applicable in primary school. Whereas in primary school children had fixed classrooms which represented the 'home-base' of their particular sub-section in secondary school it is not the pupils who have a fixed classroom but the teachers. Thus the 120 teachers in the secondary programme in Brussels each have their fixed classroom in which they can express their personal identity and subject orientation. Pupils are constantly on the move between classrooms during breaks since this more easily allows for the assignment to mixed groups which take into account great flexibility inherent in the number of elective courses available. The movement from classroom to classroom also allows

for informal interaction between pupils which also enhances opportunities to use their different languages outside the formal setting.

By the end of the observation cycle (grade 8) the amount of instruction not provided through the L1 has increased to approximately 15 periods a week, or almost half of the curriculum.

Table 7.2 provides the curriculum for the observation cycle in secondary school expressed in lesson slots of 45 minutes per week and per grade.

Two important factors need to be noted with reference to the early grades of secondary education. The first is the increase in time devoted to using the L2 as a medium of instruction and the second is the nature of the transition taking place in the curriculum. Whereas in primary school and the first two grades of secondary school matter dealt with in the L2 is mainly context-embedded and cognitively undemanding, by the 8th grade, when the human sciences are taught via the L2 the task has become more cognitively demanding and context-reduced (cf. Cummins,

TABLE 7.2 *Secondary school programme for the observation cycle (Grades 6-8) (Lessons not using the L1 are in italics)*

| <i>Subject</i>                    | <i>Grade 6</i> | <i>Grade 7</i> | <i>Grade 8</i> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| L1 as a subject                   | 5 × 45"        | 5 × 45"        | 4 × 45"        |
| Mathematics                       | 4 × 45"        | 4 × 45"        | 4 × 45"        |
| Latin (optional)                  | —              | —              | 4 × 45"        |
| Integrated science                | 4 × 45"        | 4 × 45"        | 4 × 45"        |
| Religion or ethics                | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        |
| Human sciences <sup>a</sup>       | 3 × 45"        | 3 × 45"        | 3 × 45"        |
| <i>L3 as a subject</i>            | —              | —              | 4 × 45"        |
| <i>L2 as a subject</i>            | 5 × 45"        | 4 × 45"        | 4 × 45"        |
| <i>Graphic &amp; plastic arts</i> | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        |
| <i>Music</i>                      | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        |
| <i>Physical education</i>         | 3 × 45"        | 3 × 45"        | 3 × 45"        |
| <i>Complementary activities</i>   | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        | 2 × 45"        |
| Total                             | 32 × 45"       | 31 × 45"       | 31/35 × 45"    |

(a) Taught through the medium of the L2 in grade 8.

(b) Those who select Latin may drop either music or graphic and plastic arts.

(c) In grade 6 two optional complementary activities must be selected but may be dropped in grades 7 and 8.

1981), and therefore linguistically more challenging. However, it is not as though a completely new subject were being taught through the medium of the weaker language since the same area of study has been dealt with in the L1 in grades 6 and 7. Moreover, the provision of multilingual glossaries serves the function of both helping comprehension in the L2 and ensuring that the pupil can acquire the relevant lexis in the L1.

### The Middle Cycle of Secondary Education

The middle cycle of the secondary school programme, covering grades 9 and 10, is known as the 'semi-specialisation cycle' where pupils have a greater selection of options available which enables them to specialise their interests. During this period there is a certain amount of variability in the amount of time taken up by subjects not taught through the L1, depending on the combination of elective courses chosen. A glance at Table 7.3 shows that from a maximum total of 31–35 periods a week, and depending on the choice of elective courses, a pupil can receive 20 periods not taught through the L1, or almost two thirds of the curriculum.

### The Final Cycle of Secondary Education

The last two years of secondary education, grades 11 and 12, known as the specialisation cycle, have a limited number of compulsory subjects. In 1986–1987 in the European School in Brussels almost every one of the 400 pupils involved had a tailor-made timetable, leading to complex organisational questions. A new set of elective courses are introduced at this level, known as advanced courses in a particular domain, and consist of a more intellectually abstract approach to the field.

It is impossible to calculate the amount of time devoted to the use of each language at this level, given the great individual variation, though it is clear that the amount of instruction received through the L1 is likely to be about a third of the programme. Religion or ethics, which until now had been taught through the L1, are continued in the L2 as compulsory subjects.

Although there have been no in-depth studies to date on the methodology followed in using the L2 either as a subject or a medium

TABLE 7.3 *Secondary school programme for the semi-specialisation cycle in number of lessons per week and per grade. Lessons not using the L1 are in italics*

| <i>Subject</i>                         | <i>9th &amp; 10th Grades</i> |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| L1 as a subject                        | 4 × 45 mins                  |
| Religion or ethics                     | 1 × 45 mins                  |
| Biology                                | 2 × 45 mins                  |
| Chemistry                              | 2 × 45 mins                  |
| Physics                                | 2 × 45 mins                  |
| Mathematics <sup>a</sup>               | 4 or 6 × 45 mins             |
| <i>L2 as a subject</i>                 | <i>3 × 45 mins</i>           |
| <i>Physical education</i>              | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>           |
| <i>History</i>                         | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>           |
| <i>Geography</i>                       | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>           |
| <i>L3 as a subject</i>                 | <i>3 × 45 mins</i>           |
| Total                                  | 27 or 29 × 45 mins           |
| <i>Elective subjects</i>               |                              |
| Latin                                  | 4 × 45 mins                  |
| Greek                                  | 4 × 45 mins                  |
| <i>Economics &amp; Social Sciences</i> | <i>4 × 45 mins</i>           |
| <i>Plastic arts</i>                    | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>           |
| <i>Music</i>                           | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>           |
| <i>L4 as a subject</i>                 | <i>4 × 45 mins</i>           |

(a) Depending on the student's choice.

(b) Enough elective subjects must be chosen to guarantee a curriculum of minimum 31 and maximum 35 periods per week.

of instruction, observation of a restricted number of sample lessons gives some idea of teaching practice. It has already been noticed that in primary education the L2 is taught as a subject to mixed groups before its introduction as a medium for relatively undemanding cognitive activities. In the L2 language lessons there are no native-speaker peers present (unless children come from mixed marriage bilingual backgrounds as is sometimes the case) since all sub-sections are being taught a different L2. Teachers concentrate on the spoken language and follow standard practice for teaching a second language to young children. In lessons where the L2 functions as a medium of instruction, native-speaker peers may be present in primary school, for example in European Hours discussed earlier.

TABLE 7.4 *Secondary school programme for the specialisation cycle expressed in subjects per grade per week (Subjects not taught through the L1 are in italics)*

| <i>Compulsory subjects</i>                | <i>Grades 11 &amp; 12</i> |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| L1 as a subject                           | 4 × 45 mins               |
| Philosophy                                | 2 × 45 mins               |
| Mathematics                               | 3 or 5 × 45 mins          |
| <i>L2 as a subject</i>                    | <i>3 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>History</i>                            | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Geography</i>                          | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Physical education</i>                 | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Religion or ethics</i>                 | <i>1 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Elective courses</i>                   |                           |
| Latin                                     | 5 × 45 mins               |
| Greek                                     | 5 × 45 mins               |
| Physics                                   | 4 × 45 mins               |
| Chemistry                                 | 4 or 5 × 45 mins          |
| Biology                                   | 4 or 5 × 45 mins          |
| <i>L3 as a subject</i>                    | <i>3 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>L4 as a subject</i>                    | <i>3 × 45 mins</i>        |
| Advanced course in L1 as a subject        | 3 × 45 mins               |
| Advanced course in mathematics            | 3 × 45 mins               |
| Advanced physics and chemistry            | 2 × 45 mins               |
| <i>Economics</i>                          | <i>5 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Advanced course in L2 as a subject</i> | <i>3 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Advanced course in geography</i>       | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Advanced course in history</i>         | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Plastic arts</i>                       | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Music</i>                              | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Sociology</i>                          | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |
| <i>Other subjects</i>                     | <i>2 × 45 mins</i>        |

Note: A pupil must have a timetable with a minimum of 31 and a maximum of 35 periods per week.

In the secondary programme no lessons using the L2 contain native-speakers of that language except in certain elective courses in the final grades, such as economics or sociology. Teachers all claim that native-speaker peer contacts develop spontaneously the further up the school the pupil moves, and this has been borne out by interviews. Given the size of the Brussels I school and the number of teachers and languages involved it is difficult to describe typical teacher-pupil interaction patterns or instructional style when the L2 is being used. Observations of sample lessons have revealed considerable differences depending on the stage in the programme at which the L2 is being used, the nature of the subject-matter being treated, the particular language involved, and the type of training a teacher has received which reflects that teacher's national background. What does come clearly to the fore, however, is that all teachers are aware of the particular multilingual circumstances of the school so that all share a few basic principles.

For example, when pupils from different sub-sections come together for L2 lessons they automatically tend to group themselves according to language of origin. The majority of teachers try to break up such patternings by encouraging people from different sub-sections to sit together so as to render the use of the L2 necessary and natural. All teachers in L2 classes, whatever their nature, tend to include linguistic features in their teaching, paying particular attention to lexical precision and controlling the accuracy of written production. Teachers observed in L2 medium classes all tended to spontaneously correct minor errors in a naturalistic fashion by merely repeating the correct form before moving on. In the secondary school programme lessons involving the L2 are continued and conducted at a natural pace and the tempo does not appear to be slowed down because of the presence of non-native speakers. Considerable pupil-teacher interaction occurs via rapid and natural question and answer strategies and indeed to the casual observer it is not evident that pupils are receiving instruction through the medium of an L2.

To illustrate the nature of teaching practice four types of L2 lesson will be briefly described.

In grade 8 a combined history and geography lesson was observed being taught via the L2 French by a French teacher. There were 20 students in the class made up of 7 English-speakers, 8 speakers of Greek and 5 speakers of Italian. The lesson was observed during the second week of the new school year, i.e. at the beginning of the phase where the L2 is first used as a medium of instruction for cognitively demanding activities and therefore a new experience for the students. The manual

used was a standard text-book published in France for French native-speakers. Content-matter was presented in a highly structured fashion, though with many questions and answers provided fluently with little hesitation. A Greek and a British pupil were first invited to summarise points dealt with in the previous lesson and prepared for homework. The British boy was requested to correctly identify neolithic, paleolithic and bronze-age specimens present in the classroom on a time scale. Population densities were discussed and comparisons made with populations in the different countries represented in the class. Almost all pupils were called upon to provide information at some time. The very few language errors that were made were spontaneously corrected by the teacher repeating the correct forms without dwelling on them. As the lesson progressed the teacher provided a sentence-by-sentence summary of the major points which pupils copied from the blackboard on the right-hand page of their notebooks. On the left-hand page pupils were requested to note down new words, concepts and definitions. For homework pupils were requested to look up the words 'nomade' and 'sédentaire' in any French dictionary and to be prepared to discuss these concepts in the following class.

The above lesson can be compared with a 10th grade economics lesson provided in the L2, English, by a British teacher in the second week of the school year. Again this represented a new experience since economics was a new elective subject. There were 13 pupils, including 2 native-speakers of English as this is an elective course, 6 Danish-speakers, 2 French-speakers and 3 German-speakers. A standard British manual designed for native-speakers was used, supplemented by photocopies of newspaper extracts. In this introductory lesson very basic concepts were defined by means of rapid questions and answers stimulated by cartoon drawings. All pupils were called upon to help make the concepts precise; there was no language correction and the pace of the lesson appeared similar to that of a native-speaker class. The quality of English was fluent and not significantly marked.

In lessons observed where the L2 was the subject of instruction, as opposed to the medium, there was a notable difference in approach according to the language. A 10th grade lesson in L2 French as a subject, taught by a French national, concentrated on a literary analysis at a level of abstraction similar to what is likely to occur in the same type of lesson where French is the L1. Of the 21 pupils present, 9 were English-speakers, 4 Dutch-speakers, 3 Italian-speakers, 2 Greek-speakers, 2 Danish-speakers and 1 German-speaker. The pace of the lesson was extremely lively with rapid question and answer strategies directed towards discovering the structure and theme of the text. The level of abstraction led to problems

of lexical availability which were dealt with either by synonym-seeking or by direct reference to grammatical terminology. The liveliness of this lesson might be accounted for by the teacher's personality and the fact that in Brussels French is the out-of-school language which provides it with massive reinforcement. What was more striking was the fact that to the observer it did not come across as significantly different from an L1 lesson and that pupils obviously coped and enjoyed the activity.

An 11th grade lesson where L2 English was the subject of discussion differed significantly from the preceding in that it was far more obviously a language lesson. The class of 24, taught by an Irish teacher, was made up of 8 Italian-speakers, 7 Spanish-speakers, 2 German-speakers, 2 speakers of Greek and 1 speaker of Danish. An advanced English-as-a-foreign language manual was used as a basis for discussion after certain extracts had been read aloud by the teacher. Discussion developed freely after intensive questions and answers. The teacher concentrated specifically on highly idiomatic vocabulary, there was little correction and no writing involved, though pupil intervention was lively. The difference in nature between the English and French L2 lessons could be accounted for in several ways, primarily the fact that English is not the major out-of-school language in Brussels and therefore requires more language-focused treatment. Although pupils were generally fluent accents were more marked than in the similar French lesson as was the occasional grammatical feature. Another explanation for the difference is perhaps that the English teacher was qualified in English-as-a-foreign language whereas a similar qualification is rare in France. A third difference might be explained by different intellectual and teacher-training traditions in the countries from where the teachers came and which were reflected in the lessons, the French lesson reflecting a quest for abstraction and generalisation whereas its English counterpart reflected pragmatic considerations. What was striking, however, was that in spite of these differences, the amount of pupil involvement was equally lively, fluent and spontaneous.

The above descriptions merely serve as illustrations and may in no way represent all L2 lessons in European Schools. Indeed, the difference observed may have been purely coincidental since the English-as-a-subject L2 programme also contains the study of literature and may just have been absent from preoccupations at the point of observation.

### Timetables

In order to get a clear understanding of the organisation of a school which contains 8 parallel sub-sections it is interesting to examine the

timetables of both teachers and pupils. Irrespective of the language sub-section they are enrolled in all pupils follow the same curriculum and same timetable, except for new arrivals in the middle of the school year or those who join a European School programme from a standard monolingual school and who need special tuition in order to reach their class L2 level. Such new arrivals follow the same programme as their classmates except during language lessons when they may attend special remedial classes (cf. pp. 125-8); they may also be requested to attend special remedial classes on Wednesday afternoons when the rest of the school has a half-day holiday. The school day starts at 8.10 a.m. and classes end at 16.35 p.m. in the secondary school, a little earlier in primary school.

In the primary school timetables are fairly straightforward. Since all children spend most of the time with their class teacher the curriculum consists of 8 parallel timetables side by side as if they were in one monolingual establishment. In the time slots devoted to lessons on the L2 as a subject everyone is involved with different languages so that children move to the class where the L2 chosen by their parents is taught. These L2 as-a-subject lessons do not normally contain native speakers. Teacher timetables fit into this distribution, whereby native-speaker primary school teachers of the L2s (English, French and German) take on mixed groups instead of their normal classes while the others, e.g. Danish or Greek class teachers, may take on physical education to mixed groups. In communal lessons children are split up and directed to a particular class in groups of about 5. All primary school teachers are involved in European Hours which are not considered as language lessons and where any combination of pupil make-up may exist; these lessons are gathered into one half-day per week so that the timetable is straightforward.

In the secondary school timetables must be worked out individually. Each child is given a tailor-made timetable which he or she is expected to have readily available as a means of identification, given the size of the population. Since there are 2000 secondary pupils constantly moving from class to class on the Brussels site this personalised timetable is one of the few means of controlling the legitimacy of free periods. As in the primary school the same timetable applies to a particular grade irrespective of the language sub-section, though elective choices may well mean that a given pupil's timetable is very different from that of a classmate. Individual timetables contain the time-slot, name of the subject, teacher's name and classroom number.

To illustrate how pupils are combined and separated according to

their sub-section, their L2 option and their electives Table 7.5 compares two 9th grade pupils and Table 7.6 two 12th grade pupils.

As far as teacher timetables are concerned these are designed in European Schools in terms of language, subject matter and level in the programme. Primary school teacher timetables are similar to those in monolingual schools in that each teacher in a given sub-section is responsible for the class for a particular grade.

In the secondary school programme attempts are made to enable pupils to have the same teacher for each subject for the whole of one of the three cycles so as to provide continuity. Table 7.7 illustrates an English language teacher's timetable. This teacher teaches English as a native language and as an L2 to different grades. Timetables for teachers

TABLE 7.5 9th grade timetables for pupils from the French and English sub-sections (*Communal lessons to mixed groups are in italics*)

*Pupil no. 110 9th grade French sub-section*

|   | MON              | TUES             | WED              | THURS            | FRI          |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1 | <i>Phys. Ed.</i> | Physics          | <i>L4</i>        | Maths            | Maths        |
| 2 | Physics          | Maths            | <i>Music</i>     | <i>L2</i>        | <i>Music</i> |
| 3 | Maths            | Maths            | <i>Phys. Ed.</i> | Biology          | <i>L2</i>    |
| 4 | <i>History</i>   | <i>Geography</i> | <i>L3</i>        |                  | <i>L4</i>    |
| 5 | <i>L4</i>        | L1               | <i>History</i>   | Chemistry        | L1           |
| 6 |                  |                  |                  |                  |              |
| 7 | Maths            | <i>L4</i>        |                  | <i>Geography</i> | Religion     |
| 8 | <i>L3</i>        | Biology          |                  | <i>L3</i>        |              |
| 9 | <i>L2</i>        | L1               |                  | L1               | Chemistry    |

*Pupil no. 38 9th grade English sub-section*

|   | MON              | TUES             | WED            | THURS            | FRI              |
|---|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | <i>Economics</i> | Physics          | Computer       | <i>Phys. Ed.</i> | L1               |
| 2 | Biology          | L1               | <i>Art</i>     | <i>L2</i>        | <i>Art</i>       |
| 3 | L1               | <i>Phys. Ed.</i> |                | Physics          | <i>L2</i>        |
| 4 | <i>History</i>   | <i>Geography</i> | <i>L3</i>      | <i>Economics</i> |                  |
| 5 | Computer         | Biology          | <i>History</i> | Chemistry        | Ethics           |
| 6 |                  |                  |                |                  |                  |
| 7 | Maths            | <i>Economics</i> |                | <i>Geography</i> | <i>Maths</i>     |
| 8 | <i>L3</i>        | L1               |                | <i>L3</i>        | <i>Economics</i> |
| 9 | <i>L2</i>        | Maths            |                | Maths            | Chemistry        |

TABLE 7.6 12th grade timetables for pupils from the French and the English sub-sections (*Communal lessons are in italics*)

## Pupil no. 91 12th grade French sub-section

|   | MON            | TUES             | WED       | THURS            | FRI              |
|---|----------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Maths          | L1               | Chemistry |                  | L2               |
| 2 | <i>Ethics</i>  | Chemistry        | Maths     |                  | L3               |
| 3 | Chemistry      | <i>History</i>   | Maths     | Philosophy       | Physics          |
| 4 |                |                  |           |                  |                  |
| 5 | L1             | Maths            | L3        | Maths            | <i>Geography</i> |
| 6 | L3             | <i>Geography</i> |           | <i>Phys. Ed.</i> |                  |
| 7 | L2             | Physics          |           | Physics          | Maths            |
| 8 | <i>History</i> | L2               |           | Maths            |                  |
| 9 |                |                  |           |                  | Maths            |

## Pupil no. 62 12th grade English sub-section

|   | MON              | TUES             | WED       | THURS            | FRI              |
|---|------------------|------------------|-----------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | <i>Religion</i>  | L1               |           | L1               | L2               |
| 2 | Maths            |                  | Chemistry | <i>Phys. Ed.</i> | L3               |
| 3 |                  | <i>Geography</i> | Chemistry | L1               | Biology          |
| 4 | Maths            | Chemistry        | Chemistry | Philosophy       | Philosophy       |
| 5 | L1               | Maths            | L3        |                  | <i>Geography</i> |
| 6 | L3               | <i>History</i>   |           | Biology          | Biology          |
| 7 | L2               |                  |           | Chemistry        | Biology          |
| 8 | <i>History</i>   | L2               |           | Maths            | Biology          |
| 9 | <i>Phys. Ed.</i> | Biology          |           | Maths            |                  |

of non-language subjects are similar to those in monolingual schools so that for example, mathematics teachers in a French or Italian section would have similar or even parallel timetables since they do not have to cross over languages or teach to mixed groups.

## Teachers and Staff

Teachers and directors of European Schools are seconded from their different national education systems for a period of years which differs from country to country. Hence all teachers using a given language are native-speakers of that language, irrespective of the population make-up

TABLE 7.7 Secondary school programme: English teacher's timetable

|   | MON            | TUES           | WED            | THURS          | FRI            |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 | Grade 11<br>L1 |                |                |                | Grade 12<br>L2 |
| 2 | Grade 7<br>L2  | Grade 7<br>L2  | Grade 11<br>L1 | Grade 9<br>L2  | Grade 6<br>L1  |
| 3 |                |                | Grade 6<br>L1  | Grade 12<br>L1 | Grade 9<br>L2  |
| 4 | Grade 6<br>L1  | Grade 11<br>L2 |                | Grade 7<br>L2  |                |
| 5 | Grade 12<br>L1 | Grade 6<br>L1  |                | Grade 6<br>L1  |                |
| 6 |                |                |                |                |                |
| 7 | Grade 12<br>L2 | Grade 11<br>L1 |                | Grade 11<br>L2 | Grade 7<br>L2  |
| 8 |                | Grade 12<br>L2 |                |                | Grade 11<br>L2 |
| 9 | Grade 9<br>L2  | Grade 6<br>L1  |                |                | Grade 11<br>L1 |

*Note:* This particular teacher teaches English as an L1 subject to native-speakers and as one of the compulsory L2s to pupils from other sections. Each teacher is required to teach 23 periods a week.

of the classes, and all must be bilingual. After a particular director's period of office his or her successor must be of a different nationality.

No special certification is requisite for work in a European School beyond national teacher certification requirements. The European Schools represent an exception in that national teacher certification is not recognised in the different member states of the European Economic Community so that teachers from one country cannot normally work in a different country.

There is no training available in Europe for working in a multilingual school and most teachers learn how to adapt to the special circumstances of the school while on the job. Some of the British teachers have specialist qualifications in EFL but this is an exception. When new teachers are engaged they usually spend two or three weeks in the European School the year preceding their contract so as to become familiar with the system. New teachers are also assigned to the care of an existing teacher who

acts as a guide and mentor in the initial stages. Given the complexity of the programme as far as languages and nationalities are concerned new teachers sometimes need time to adapt to the circumstances of a curriculum totally different from any they may be familiar with.

The whole network of European Schools regularly organises in-service re-training sessions or study seminars for different groups of teachers. In 1986/1987, for example, the following courses took place for teachers, a seminar for teachers of Italian as a first or a foreign language, one for teachers of Danish as a first or foreign language, one for music teachers; working group sessions for biology, physics and chemistry teachers.

In order to co-ordinate the activities across grades and across languages non-remunerated co-ordinators are elected among the teachers for a 2 year period whose task it is to unify the treatment of subject-matter. Alongside the teachers are a group of pedagogic advisers who are responsible for the care and control of each grade, the library and the classrooms, while the natural sciences also have a team of laboratory assistants.

In the primary and secondary school there are teams of remedial teachers whose mother tongues are those of the 8 language sub-sections. The functions of these remedial teachers are to provide extra instruction to new arrivals, who may join the school at any time of the year, either in the L1 of the sub-section to which they are assigned, or more usually in the L2. A child who is not up to grade level in the L2 receives special instruction in this language for up to two years, both inside the normal timetable and in the form of extra lessons after class. Lack of proficiency in the L2 during this adaptation period will not hold a child back as the grade moves up since the L2 test results are excluded from the overall grade averages during the adaptation period.

Two types of special support are provided for children who arrive in the middle of the school year, perhaps from another country or a monolingual programme. Pupils with no knowledge of an L2 are sent to 'cours de rattrapage' or 'catching-up classes' during the periods when their classmates are receiving L2 as a subject—they are not separated, however, when the L2 is used for teaching content-matter, where such late arrivals may have great difficulty in following in the initial stages. The remedial teachers then try to bring the new arrivals up to class levels by tailor-made intensive teaching which is supplemented by extra lessons outside the normal school timetable, i.e. on Wednesday afternoon which is free for other children as is standard in many European countries.

The second type of special provision for late arrivals with inadequate knowledge of the L2 is known as 'cours de soutien' or 'support classes' where further tailor-made instruction is provided, including help with handling content-matter material taught through the L2. These support classes take place when the late arrivals' classmates follow their optional 'complementary courses' in the secondary programme.

Secretarial support services are made up of personnel who between them speak all the languages of the different sub-sections.

There is a medical service available made up of part-time and full-time personnel. In the largest school in Brussels this consists of a doctor of Italian nationality who speaks Italian and French and a psychologist of Finnish nationality who speaks French and English, both of whom work on a part-time basis. There is a full-time Belgian nurse who speaks French, German and Dutch and a full-time French nurse-secretary who speaks French. The medical team can also call upon the services of 8 people of different nationalities and languages who work as auxiliary staff to help children who suffer from dyslexia, psycho-motor and graphic problems.

Directors, teachers, pedagogic advisers and secretarial staff are all bi- or multilingual so that a student can always find someone to help him or her in the dominant language. This is highly important given the fluctuation in student turnover as children arrive in the school from a monolingual national system at almost any age.

An important factor on the organisational level is the multilingual nature of the support staff which enables a child to get assistance in his or her strong language. The fact that all personnel are bilingual is also significant since it gives staff an insight into the facts of life with respect to manipulating more than one language and gives them greater sympathy and understanding about the nature of bilingualism.

The presence of remedial teachers to assist new arrivals to the programme is of great significance since such pupils are not left to struggle alone or to depend on the availability of the class teacher to help overcome the hurdles of insertion into the bilingual environment.

### Parental Involvement

Although the internal working language of each school tends to be that of the host environment, e.g. French for the school in Brussels,

communication from the school to parents occurs in the languages of the sub-sections, i.e. the child's L1. Parent-teacher meetings on the school premises that take place either in the language of the sub-section involved, or if a larger, mixed language meeting, in the working language of the school with interpreting available where necessary.

The parents' associations tend to be quite strong since the schools themselves do not undertake the responsibility for transportation or the provision of meals but delegate this to the parents' association. Hence bussing and catering imply considerable parental involvement and organisation which automatically bring at least some parents into regular contact with the school.

Parent delegates attend certain school meetings but merely as observers without any discussion power or direct influence. Before children move from primary school into secondary school a parent-teacher meeting is organised to brief parents on the nature of the programme to be followed. In secondary school all parents are invited once a year to make appointments with a maximum of 5 individual teachers with whom they can discuss their child's progress.

## Examinations

The European School programme leads to a special diploma, called the European Baccalaureate, which gives access to universities in most countries of the world. Attainment requirements are harmonised across the language sub-sections for many subjects, e.g. mathematics, natural sciences, philosophy, Latin, and the written examinations for these are identical in nature, irrespective of the language in which they are taken. Other subjects, including the languages themselves, are comparable in the nature of the tasks required. The final examination consists of 5 written and 4 oral sub-components, while the compulsory L2 as a subject consists of 1 written and 1 oral examination. In theory the achievement level expected for the L2 is the same as that for pupils who have that language as their L1 in the appropriate sub-section. In practice, however, concessions are made to those taking examinations through the L2 for less complex syntax or slightly less precise or varied vocabulary, though few concessions are made on accuracy.

Examinations do not become an important issue until the semi-specialisation cycle in secondary school, i.e. after grade 8. It is a deliberate policy of the European Schools not to place too much emphasis

on examinations or tests until a child has gone through the observation cycle or the first three years of secondary school. Normally most children move up from grade to grade according to age and not according to test scores, at least until the 8th grade.

## Social Engineering

Given the presence of 8 linguistic sub-sections in the largest European Schools this leads to a multilingual and multicultural environment. Great care is taken to produce a unified school population by mixing children for as many subjects and activities as possible. These mixtures increase in significance as the children get older and have important consequences on language learning.

One consequence is that within the school everyone interacts regularly in a language that is not their L1 and that inhibitions to experiment in a weaker language are not strong. Interviews with pupils reveal that all are willing to try out a weaker language, that no-one mocks at linguistic inadequacies since everyone in the school has to try out a weaker language at some time.

The social engineering has important linguistic repercussions in that it promotes conversational interactions in languages other than the L1 with both native and non-native speakers of the other languages. Wagner-Gough & Hatch (1975) showed that acquisition is a process which relies on conversational interactions, while Wong-Fillmore (1986) pointed out the significance of peer-group interaction in promoting language competence. In European Schools the social situation has been so designed that there is frequent contact between native and non-native speakers of the languages being learnt.

## Research on European Schools

Several investigations have been conducted to measure the linguistic results obtained by the European School system and to explain the processes by which they have been achieved. Baetens Beardsmore & Swain (1985) compared proficiency in French as an L2 as obtained by 13+ year olds in Canadian immersion programmes and those in the European School of Brussels. Standardised test results revealed that highly comparable scores were obtained by the European children after

approximately 1300 classroom contact hours with the language and Canadian immersion children after approximately 4500 contact hours. These results in no way showed the superiority of one model over the other but could be explained by the totally different circumstances in which each programme evolved.

In the European School investigated, the L2, French, was the dominant out-of-school language and was regularly used by the pupils in natural interaction. This was not the case in Canada. Given that French was the L1 of some pupils in the European School and also served as the common language for intergroup communication for those who had it as an L2 this led to it being used at least sometimes, and often more, in all out-of-class activities apart from at home and with relatives. Outside classes it tended to be used between friends, at lunchtime, in the wider community, and also figured in recreational pursuits like reading magazines and comics and watching television. Thus unlike their Canadian counterparts who only use French inside the classroom the European children were in a context which provided immediate stimulus for out-of-class use of French as well as in class.

An interesting observation has been made by an investigator of the European School established in Britain (personal communication), where English tends to be the natural *lingua franca* since it is present in the out-of-school environment. Parents of Italian siblings studying at the European School there were distressed to note that in spite of their children being enrolled in the Italian sub-section and the fact that Italian was the home language their children tended to interact in English. Also, one German teacher in the German sub-section in Britain began to penalise his pupils for using English during his lessons. This anecdotal evidence points to the overwhelming impact of the out-of-school environment on language usage.

A second study in the European School of Brussels examined linguistic proficiency among pupils in the final grade of secondary school (Housen & Baetens Beardsmore, 1987). The pupils had all obtained satisfactory grades both in scholastic achievement and in their different L1s, L2s, L3s and L4s. Their productive competence in L1 and L2 was sufficiently high for them to take equivalent examinations in either language and it was also discovered that competence in all languages varied in function of a variety of factors. The most important factor was the spontaneous seeking out of opportunities to use a particular language in self-initiated interactions, particularly with peers. This factor outweighed attitudinal and motivational dispositions and was clearly dependent on the nature of the social environment in the school. Given the ample

opportunities to use a particular language in social interactions the pupils perceived language acquisition as immediately relevant to their everyday needs and not subordinated to either some long-term goal, as is the case with standard foreign language learning classes, or as an obstacle to be overcome in moving on to other interesting activities, as is the case when language learning is totally divorced from other learning processes.

A third study (Baetens Beardsmore & Kohls, 1988) looked into this question of immediate pertinence of the language acquisition process as a causal factor in determining the success of the European School system. Current theories on second language acquisition place considerable emphasis on input as a primary source of progression in competence (Gass & Madden, 1985). Krashen (1981) hypothesises that comprehensible input, where the learner focuses on understanding messages and not on form, gradually leads to the acquisition of structure. For Krashen it is sufficient to provide large quantities of comprehensible input, without grammatical or structural lessons, for a learner to progress in a second language. This practice is what mainly occurs in Canadian immersion programmes to date, but it has been noted that the results in grammatical accuracy leave much to be desired if teaching relies exclusively on the absorption of input. In European Schools, however, lessons on the structure of the L2 precede the use of the language in content-matter lessons and continue throughout the programme, even after the L2 has taken over for the majority of content-matter lessons. This factor probably accounts for the high levels of grammatical precision in the L2 obtained by the majority of European School pupils by the end of schooling.

A second major difference between the European School model and immersion models is that the structure of the European School programme forces learners to interact at peer level in the L2. Unlike immersion pupils who have little opportunity to engage in two-way negotiated meaning exchanges in the classroom (Swain, 1985: 247) European School pupils have ample opportunity, both inside and outside the classroom, to do so. Swain has argued that input alone does not lead to high levels of productive competence and that output is equally important, where the learner is pushed to negotiate meaning by delivering a message that is conveyed as precisely, coherently and appropriately as possible. For a learner to be willing to put in the effort to produce output the attempts must be perceived as immediately pertinent; such is the case in the European School model where use of the target language is immediately rewarding as it is necessary for establishing friendship circles and conducting co-operative activities in mixed lessons.

For learners to be willing to take linguistic 'risks' in attempting to

produce accurate output the circumstances must not only be naturalistic but also non-threatening. In Canadian immersion programmes using French in the classroom is non-threatening since all the pupils come from the same background and are not made to feel inferior because of inadequacies in language. In European Schools the situation is the same since everybody has to use a weaker language at some time so that feelings of monolingual superiority cannot easily be maintained. In many American schools where limited English proficient pupils find themselves next to native speakers of English only the former are subjected to the struggle of expressing themselves in a weaker language, which may give rise to feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, thereby impeding the spontaneous arising of output. Consequently, friendship circles may well form among the in-group of speakers from the same language background, preventing the two-way peer interaction. This is why it is felt important to give all children in a multilingual school the opportunity to learn and use a second language, and to make the process pertinent for all. The constant mixing up of children for group activities provides the natural environment for such pertinence to be perceived, as has been borne out by the study by Housen & Baetens Beardsmore (1987).

A final study by Baetens Beardsmore & Anselmi (1991) looked into the way code-switching operates in a European School, with particular emphasis on its function as a tool for language acquisition among secondary school pupils, once again revealing how the extra-curricular factors, with the design of the programme, the social engineering and the out-of-class peer negotiation influencing language choice and usage.

## Conclusions

The fact that approximately 90% of all pupils attending European Schools since their foundation in 1958 have obtained certification leading to higher education clearly indicates that the model is successful both academically and linguistically. This success is not to be attributed simply to the social class make-up of the population or the status of the different languages involved, though they undoubtedly play a role. More important is the care with which the programme has been developed so as to take into account a certain number of fundamental principles which are strictly adhered to so as to give the complex situation a chance to succeed. These principles can be summed up as follows.

- (1) All pupils are put on an equal footing as far as language requirements

are concerned and all are led through the same process of transition from instruction through an L1 into that of an L2.

- (2) The L1 serves as the basis for instruction as competence in the L2 is gradually built up, while the L1 is never totally abandoned.
- (3) Transition to the use of the L2 is a gradual process which moves from cognitively undemanding and context embedded activities in the language to more cognitively demanding and context reduced activities as the student gets older. An examination of the curriculum shows how this process breaks down into three major phases. The L2 is first introduced as a subject while the task of coping with general learning takes place in the L1. In the second phase the L2 is used in naturalistic circumstances that are non-threatening and easy to handle (in European Hours, for example). In the third phase, when more intellectually demanding activities are undertaken in the L2 they are first conducted in areas similar to those that had been previously treated in the L1 (e.g. history and geography) before spreading out into new activities.
- (4) Throughout the programme both the L1 and the L2 are taught as subjects in order to reinforce grammatical accuracy and lexical precision.
- (5) Testing and examinations are not allowed to determine success or failure until the pupil has had sufficient time to become thoroughly acquainted with a language; ultimate attainment is considered more important than mid-stream progress and there are no unrealistic comparisons with monolingual peers until the very end of schooling.
- (6) The programme is organised to promote considerable interaction at peer-group level between both native and non-native speakers of a given language so as to reinforce the formal teaching aspects of language acquisition.
- (7) Using a particular language occurs in naturalistic, non-threatening circumstances which are immediately pertinent to the task in hand, making the operation a rewarding one and a stimulus to further effort.
- (8) Great care is taken to avoid the formation of linguistic ghettos by mixing children up for as many activities as possible.
- (9) Teachers are all bilingual in different combinations of languages but always teach through their first language, no matter what the subject or the population make-up of the class they are taking. This situation is possible in Europe with a large pool of qualified teachers to draw from.
- (10) Attempts are made to eliminate strong ethnolinguistic perspectives by fostering a European identity and a cross-cultural view of the

world while maintaining respect for the student's national heritage. In another context a similar respect for the home language and ethnic heritage could be maintained while promoting a pluralistic cultural identity which reflects the kaleidoscopic make-up of contemporary society.

The positive linguistic and academic results obtained by the multilingual school described in this monograph are not a uniquely European phenomenon based on some supposedly inherent superiority in language acquisition. Similar positive results based on fundamentally similar approaches have been achieved in bilingual education in the United States involving two languages in the curriculum. Krashen & Biber (1988) have posited three requirements as necessary for successful bilingual programmes, namely,

- (1) rigorous subject matter teaching such as mathematics, social studies and science in the first language;
- (2) development of literacy in the first language;
- (3) English instruction that is comprehensible through daily English as a second language lessons and subject matter teaching geared to the second language acquirer.

Krashen & Biber's (1988) examination of seven schools or school districts in which the above principles were rigorously followed showed that in comparison with pupils not receiving properly organised bilingual instruction five of the bilingual programmes provided clearly superior results, one produced comparable results and in one case there was insufficient data to draw any conclusions. The results also showed that adequate levels of conversational ability in English were obtained after about two years in a given programme but that adequate levels of formal or academic language took from five to seven years. Once the time factor had been taken into consideration the children involved in the properly structured bilingual education programmes investigated in California were comparable to native speakers of English on all tests used. However, this success was determined by the fact that children in the successful programmes were not exited from bilingual education into mainstream, monolingual education prematurely.

The above results reveal certain parallelisms with the practice of the European Schools and reveal similar positive outcomes. The only major difference between Krashen & Biber's findings and those for European Schools is the number of languages involved on the particular school site. The European School model shows that it is possible to operate a multilingual school made up of unequal numbers of pupils with different

language and cultural backgrounds. Success is determined by the care which has gone into enabling the transition from one language to another to take place, as well as the continuous efforts to integrate the school population in order to achieve the desired linguistic, cultural and interethnic goals.

As a model the European School should not serve as a blueprint in a totally different environment. On the other hand, many of the features that have been incorporated over the years are well-tried elements that can serve as guidelines for other societies confronted with similar complex linguistic and educational issues.

### Note to Chapter 7

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