SECTION 9 (on-line version only):

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Reading literature: a major domain in German primary and secondary education under challenge

Introduction

Literature certainly is an important component of the teaching of the language(s) of schooling throughout Europe. With respect to a common framework of reference, the domain of literature is particularly challenging: literary education can mean the introduction to written or symbolic culture in a broad sense. Besides, it is linked to education in the field of aesthetics and to the formation of cultural as well as personal identity. Hence, discourse in the field deals with highly valued concepts. It has been influenced by philosophy and literary studies as well as by the theory of "Bildung"[1]. A certain tension can be observed between this discourse and current concepts of competences and their assessment.

The case of Germany, a federal republic where each of the 16 states is responsible for its own educational policy, is particularly interesting due to:

● diversity within the curricula of the various states[2], which can demonstrate the general issues concerning literary education;

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[1] A helpful definition used in the context of the Council of Europe reads: BILDUNG (in German) means developing and bringing out the full potential of a human being, based on his/her nature, but stimulated and structured by education (nurture). This dynamic concept encompasses the product or relative state reached by a human being as well as the process of becoming educated/becoming one's own self. During this process the mental, cultural and practical capacities as much as the personal and social competencies are being developed and continuously widened in a holistic way.

[2] For access to the curricula see the database: http://db.kmk.org/lehrplan/ .

● the tension between the concept(s) of *Bildung* and the current shift towards output-orientation which can be observed in curriculum reform post-PISA and in the introduction of national standards of education since 2004 (*Bildungsstandards*);

● the introduction of central standards which serve as a common framework for the curricula in the different states and which define what students should be able to do at certain stages.[3] The parallel to the Council's project ends, however, where the obligatory character of the standards is recognised;

● the challenges of reform for teacher training and research on language and literature education.

Moreover, the traditional link between reading literature and reading literacy in Germany can, if developed, offer a route towards an integral approach within a framework for language education in Europe. Thus, it can be argued that the current situation in Germany offers insights into key problems of education in language and literature.

1. Literature as a sub-discipline?

German curricula do not treat literature as a separate subject but as a part of *Deutsch* (German). Dealing with literature can form a significant share: in German classrooms literature is frequently read and where books are brought in, they are often dealt with for two, three or more weeks. Especially within the *Gymnasium*[4], reading literature seems to

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[3] While each of the 16 member states of the Federal Republic is still responsible for its education and sets up its own curriculum, all of them now have to adapt these standards which have been set up by the Conference of the Ministries of Culture (Kultusministerkonferenz) since 2003. They define content and expected students' output with regard to main subjects at the end of grades 4, 9 and 10 and have been introduced as a first step for the subjects German, Mathematics, Foreign Language 1 (English or French) since 2004/05 (first for grade 10/middle school or *Realschulabschluss*; in 2005/06 for grade 4/Primary school and grade 9/*Hauptschulabschluss*). Standards for the natural sciences biology, chemistry and physics for grade 10/middle school were also introduced in 2005/06. For access to the *Bildungsstandards der Kultusministerkonferenz* see http://www.kmk.org/schul/Bildungsstandards/bildungsstandards.htm.

[4] Secondary education in Germany basically distinguishes between two, three or four forms depending on the state: The *Gymnasium* leads to the Abitur which enables for university education. It covers grades 5 (or 7 in Berlin and Brandenburg) to 12 or 13. The *Realschule* finishes with grade 10 and the *Hauptschule* with grade 9. Both *Haupt-* and *Realschule* are meant to prepare for vocational training of different forms (vocational training is accompanied by

be more at the heart of the subject the older the students are. The term *Literaturunterricht* as opposed to *Sprachunterricht* (literature classes vs. language classes), which suggests even more independence than the term "sub-discipline", is often used in the context of higher education and its professional discourse, a terminology which is not supported by the curricula. In primary education and in the other forms of secondary education, literature is not stressed in the same way (see section 2). It is, however, often emphasised in teacher training at university including – in the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg – the universities of education. Teacher training there implicitly supports the view of literature being a subject of its own: in line with the development of modern sciences, German linguistics and literary studies (*Germanistik*) have come to form highly differentiated disciplines. In the 1970s, the sub-discipline of didactics was established to strengthen a theoretical approach to learning in the various subjects which goes beyond the analysis of method. Since then, a further differentiation has been introduced between literary studies and linguistics which relates didactics of language to linguistics and didactics of literature to literary studies.[5] Nowadays, the status of "Literaturwissenschaft" in the latter tandem, which traditionally means literary history, literary theory, genres and comparative literature, is often stronger. The focus on the perspective of learning with literature is far less developed and didactics in literature still focus on the *Gymnasium* in many cases.

The structure of *Germanistik* has a significant impact on teacher training. On taking up their studies, students often stress the literature part more than the language part . This is true regardless of the different teaching-positions they are aiming at.[6] Within the second

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attending the *Berufsschule*). Transfer to other forms of secondary education has to be granted if students qualify. In some states of Eastern Germany only *Gymnasium* (grade 5 to 12) and *Mittelschule* (Middle School; grade 5 to 10) are offered. The *Gesamtschule* is an extra option which covers all forms and was introduced in the reform movement of the 1970s: All students attend the same school but often different courses within the school. The last two or three years (grades 11 to 12 or 13), which not all the *Gesamtschulen* offer, again lead to the *Abitur*. The form of secondary education usually reflects the main policies of parties in charge. The Social Democrats are normally in favour of the *Gesamtschule* and inclusive curricula (*Rahmenrichtlinien*).

[5] There are exceptions. Especially at Bavarian universities the subject is conceptionalised in a more integrated manner as "Didaktik der deutschen Sprache und Literatur".

[6] Unfortunately this fact, well known within teacher training, cannot yet be proved by a systematic study. A small questionnaire I gave to first year students in the compulsory course "Introduction to didactics in German" at the University of Frankfurt in February 2006 shows that more than half of the students intend to stress literature rather

phase of their training, i.e. during the *Referendariat* where they are posted in a school and teach regularly, they learn that *Deutsch* deals with language and language skills to a much larger extent. Where literature is concerned they have to turn towards German literature as a field of learning. This shift is often insufficiently prepared and students and young teachers conclude that university education does not offer an adequate basis for their teaching. This gap, which is especially felt by young teachers, probably allows for a stronger influence of traditions in the field of teaching and their stereotypical adaptation. The perception of literature as a sub-discipline of *Deutsch* might then soon be followed by a stronger orientation towards the language curriculum.

2. Literature and curricula

German curricula usually offer a frame (*Rahmen*) of instruction in the different subjects but not instructional designs. The following terms are in use: *Lehrplan* (plan of instruction), *Bildungsplan, Rahmenplan (*framework*), Rahmenlehrplan, Rahmenrichtlinien (Richtlinien:* guidelines*).* The last three terms are particularly used where one plan covers all the forms of secondary education. *Curriculum* has long been connected with the reform movement of the 1970s when curricula formulated aims of teaching and the methods to achieve them in a rather precise manner. The idea was that method and evaluation of learning should be scientifically observed. Soon this way of setting up norms in education was criticised and "open curricula" were proclaimed which emphasised student-orientation rather than the relation to the disciplines at university. This debate is now receiving attention once more, as the introduction of *Bildungsstandards* and their evaluation seem to echo the ideals of the 1970s (Spinner 2005) and *Kerncurricula* (core curricula) which set central aims are being requested. However, curricula as well as *Bildungsstandards* insist on freedom of the schools to

than language (78 students out of 134), often together with didactics (38 out of 134). However, 98 students wish to focus on didactics. In addition, students who aim at teaching in primary education claim that they mainly do German because it forms part of their curriculum. This also hints at the discrepancy between the aim of "becoming a teacher" and the academic training in *Germanistik*.

create learning environments and teachers traditionally have considerable liberty in designing the process of instruction.

Hence, German curricula only partly describe the way teaching and learning is organised in German schools. Written by experienced teachers, teacher trainers and policy makers, they nevertheless give insights into conceptions of mother tongue education, of traditions in the field, education policies and shifts therein. They are intended to frame education at school by defining what should be taught in the different subjects (Ossner 2003). Due to the federal structure and the diversified school system of Germany, more than 2 000 curricula are currently in use (Kämper-van den Boogaart 2004b).[7]

In contrast to the diversified field of linguistics, literary studies and didactics at university the subject concerned is simply called *Deutsch* in all the curricula. It is structured through three to five domains of learning (*Arbeitsbereiche*) or – since the introduction of the *Bildungsstandards* – through five domains of competences which are considered to be interrelated. The curriculum does not normally define what the share of an *Arbeitsbereich* is within the whole of mother tongue education, due to the *Arbeitsbereiche* being interrelated. Teachers can in fact stress some aspects in favour of others. *Stundentafeln* generally only state how many lessons a week or a year are given in each subject. Historically, the share of *Deutsch* within the whole curriculum has decreased and PISA 2000 has pointed out that the share of mother tongue education is rather small in Germany, whereas it has been observed that the share of foreign languages is rather big and that tasks to be covered by the subject (e.g. information technology) have increased (Hoppe 2001).

From the perspective of curriculum, the field of language and its use is more differentiated than the field of literature. Literature is seldom mentioned explicitly but

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[7] The following analysis is based on overviews given by Hoppe, Giese/Osburg/Weinhold, Fix and Peyer and on studies of the curricula mainly of Hesse, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg.

included in the domain 'Dealing with texts' or 'Reading – dealing with texts' which could be considered as part of the language curriculum. Other typical domains are 'Speaking and writing', more recently distinguished in 'Speaking' and 'Writing', and 'Reflecting upon language'. If the term *Literatur* is used *Text* and *Medien* is added (e.g. in Bavaria). This reflects the broadened concept of literature since the 1970s (Hoppe 2001) and a growing awareness for diversification within subject matter. Pragmatic texts, films and other mediaare thus covered. It is to be noted that this overall structure does not support the specific role of literature at the *Gymnasium*.

'Reading' is especially emphasised for primary school. If the term is not explicitly mentioned within secondary education it is still meant to be covered by the field *Umgang mit Texten* because no other area includes reading. Thus, on the level of curricula, reading literature and general reading literacy are integrated. However, as this integration used to be implicit rather than explicit, until recently the area of reading has often been insufficiently structured. The unreflected link between reading and *Umgang mit Texten / mit Literatur* may be one of the reasons why a reading curriculum has been largely missing in the German context. It seems quite significant that an article on German language curricula in secondary school, which can be found in the major work of reference in didactics of language, the handbook *Didaktik der deutschen Sprache* (2003), leaves out the whole area of *Umgang mit Texten*. The author has apparently internalised that this is the field of literature – with the result that reading in this article does not occur as a domain within the language curriculum (Fix 2003) while the handbook naturally deals with reading in other sections.

The following Table presents an overview on the curricula which generalises common trends and is commented upon below.

Literature in the curricula of German: general observations		
Domain of competences (1 out of 5)	**Primary education (grade 1 to 4)**	**Secondary education (grade 5 to 10)**
Reading - Dealing with texts *Lesen - Umgang mit Texten* text selection	literary texts, pragmatic texts, other media spectrum of criteria for text selection; no fixed canon (international) children's literature / literature for younger readers included	
central concepts	literature for personal enrichment development of regular reading habits (*Leseförderung*)	
	introductory knowledge about genres	*Literarische (Grund-) Bildung* (including literary history, cultural contexts)

link between reading and reading literature	introduction to written culture
	
	learning to read and learning to write
	
	(expertise: didactics of language)
		different concepts:
		
		reading abilities and skills
		  a) can be presupposed
		  b) will be developed automatically via further reading
		  c) have to be developed via continuous instruction

	new focus: reading curriculum for grade 3 onwards (*weiterführendes Lesen*)	
method	*Handlungs- und Produktionsorientierung* (stress on encouraging creative processes: acting with and producing of…)	
	teacher reading to students presentations (poetry / book reports…) verbal interaction / discussion (*Gespräch*)	teacher reading to students (mainly in grade 5 and 6) presentations (poetry / book reports…) verbal interaction / discussion (*Gespräch*) interpretation and analysis (essay)

2.1 Text selection and central concepts

With regard to the texts and media to be dealt with, it can be stated that the curricula do not set a canon. For primary education a variety of genres is to be included: folk literature like tales and legends, fables, poems, stories and novels from children's literature, dramatic texts and comics. International classics are mentioned and texts from diverse cultural backgrounds and of different languages (e.g. Bavaria 2000). Other media, such as audio books and children's films are also included. With secondary education, more genres are incorprated, such as ballads (grade 7), short stories (grade 8 and 9), parables (grade 8 and 9), the novella (grade 8) and tragedy (grade 10). Until grades 8 and 9, youth literature is still considered appropriate but classical texts come in more and more. Curricula often include text recommendations. Baden-Wuerttemberg offers an extensive list from which most of the literary reading has to be taken. Generally, teachers and students can follow their own interests within a framework of selection criteria. An implicit canon can still be recognised as some exemplary texts frequently reappear as recommendations – and in class.

Curricula of both primary and secondary education emphasise that texts should meet students' interests and should allow for broadening their world knowledge, for developing self-perception as well as the perception of others. Literature is also considered as an appropriate means for dealing with morals and ethics and with existential themes. Hence, criteria are interrelated with central concepts of literary education: Dealing with literature at school should be experienced as personally enriching, thus allowing for the development of broad reading interests and regular reading habits. The aims of *Leseförderung* (support of reading) are stressed in all the curricula – and the *Bildungsstandards* – of both primary and secondary education. Research on the socialisation in reading, mainly carried out by experts in didactics of literature, gives support to the relevance of *Leseförderung* (Rosebrock 2004).

At present, policies are still following this line despite the shift towards outcome-orientation. It therefore has to be acknowledged that a major aim of literary education is hardly open to evaluation and assessment.

More specific aims with reading literature are introductory knowledge about genres in primary education, more advanced knowledge in secondary education and abilities to interpret literature within the context of literary history and societal developments from grade 8 onwards. The concept of literary history then also influences text selection. However, especially with regard to these traditional aspects of *literarische Bildung,* curricula might differentiate between the different forms of secondary education. While Hesse leaves out literary history and cultural contexts in the curriculum for *Hauptschule* in the curriculum of 2001 in favour of tools for vocational training, Bavaria insists on *literarische Grundbildung* for all. Upper-secondary education at the Gymnasium strengthens literary history and even aspects of literary theory. This phase is often regarded as propaedeutical for university studies and the connection to literary studies is obvious.

2.2 Reading literature and reading literacy

Another area where curricula show significant differences is the link between literary reading and the reading curriculum. The way this relation is established in the curricula further enlightens key concepts of literary education.

Within primary education the acquisition of competences in reading and writing is mostly seen as an integrated process. The majority of curricula stress the importance of introducing students to the field of written culture in a broader sense. The term *Schriftkultur* is mentioned frequently. The link between learning to read and learning to write is stressed. *Literatur* is regarded as a manifestation of written and oral culture, and students are seen as participants in culture and as active creators of stories and texts from

the very beginning on. In these curricula, traces can be found of research in the field of *Schriftspracherwerb* (learning to read and learning to write) which has pointed to the necessity of an integral approach: students know diverse functions of written language from the start, they should experience different cultural usages and should meet authentic situations which ask for reading and writing (Giese/Osburg/Weinhold 2003).

Traditionally primary education has been structured into *Erstlesen* (learning to read) in grade one and two and *weiterführendes Lesen* (reading beyond) in grade three and four.[8] This sharp distinction of phases has been criticised in favour of an approach that stresses interaction between the different levels of reading comprehension and also between the media associated.[9] Lately, researchers have come back to the concept of *weiterführendes Lesen* from a different angle: They point to the gap that appears between the first phase "learning to read and learning to write" and the acquisition of more elaborated skills in the field of reading which are suddenly presupposed without being taught. Consequently, a new interest in *weiterführendes Lesen* can be noticed which even suggests to extend the area way into secondary school.

However, there are hints that experiences with literary reading might somehow be hindered by reading instruction. For instance, Hesse (1995) distinguishes between reading for information reasons and reading literature, suggesting a distinction between the use of pragmatic and aesthetic texts. The curriculum further specifies the field of dealing with literature by stating that reading literature is not to be undertaken in order to practise reading: The first aim was to open an interest in literature via various "informal methods". Reading literature should be practised in such a way that "personal profit" can be experienced. Traditional aims such as text comprehension, knowledge of genres, learning about different functions of reading, learning about different intentions and influences, getting aware of specific forms of aesthetic language become relevant in context.

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[8] See the curricula of Niedersachsen 1984, Rheinland-Pfalz 1984, Sachsen 1992, Sachsen-Anhalt 1993.
[9] See Hesse (1995).

However, reading in pragmatic contexts is only partly specified with regard to reading techniques so that a coherent reading curriculum is missing.

Quite differently the curriculum of Bavaria 2000 points to the necessity of developing reading literacy throughout primary school: It emphasises the relevance of introducing students to literature in such a way that they experience reading as interesting and enjoyable and as a way of learning about oneself and the world. In contrast to Hesse, the development of reading abilities and skills is explicitly acknowledged as a presupposition of such attitudes. Consequently, Bavaria structures the area 'Reading - dealing with literature' into: developing reading interests, developing reading techniques, developing abilities in reading comprehension, getting to know genres, participating in literary culture. These fields get more differentiated with every year of schooling.[10]

In general, the curricula for secondary education are more diverse due to the different forms of secondary education. A distinction between reading literature and reading pragmatic texts can be observed in the curricula of Hesse where a systematic reading curriculum is largely missing. In middle school grade 7 (Hesse 2001), method is not explicitly elaborated upon in the field of reading pragmatic texts. Three points are stressed: read between the lines; comprehend terminology; analyse language. For literary texts lists of "procedures" (*Verfahrensweisen*) are set up which emphasise subjective encounters with literature but also mention tropes and the relation between reality and fiction. It can be concluded that the abilities and skills to construct adequate meaning are presupposed - while the texts and comprehension tasks are getting more complex. Curriculum designers might well have assumed that students would develop the necessary abilities and skills automatically via regular reading practices. Thus, the Bavarian curriculum for the Gymnasium of 1990, which does not include a systematic reading

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[10] Note that this curriculum was developed before the so called *PISA-Schock* and that Bavaria performed better than all other German states and than the average of the OECD.

curriculum, emphasises *Gewandtheit im Umgang mit Büchern und im Lesen* (routine in dealing with texts and reading).

The new Bavarian curricula for Hauptschule (2004), Realschule (2001) and Gymnasium (2006) explicitly link the development of reading abilities and skills to all reading processes within class and stress reading instruction. This is the tendency of the new curricula which reflect the PISA-debate and the introduction of the *Bildungsstandards*. Nevertheless, the emphasis on the concept of literature for personal enrichment remains a stable feature.

2.3 Method

In primary as well as in secondary education a strong methodological consensus can be observed as all curricula mention the concept *Handlungs- und Produktionsorientierung* (focus on acting and producing). The concept generally aims at allowing for subjective approaches and at encouraging creative processes via manifold methodological designs including drawing, role-play and creative writing. It stresses the dominant aim of allowing enriching experiences with literature and at the same time encourages aesthetic practices. Its prominence in German curricula reflects the critique on analytical methods of close reading which often are found to hinder meaningful encounters with literature. Other methods also aim at *Leseförderung* (see the above table). All these methodological approaches intend to support students' participation in cultural life. Beyond primary education, the related instructional designs have long been disconnected from the acquisition of reading abilities and skills. Some evidence is given that these approaches exclude students who are not well prepared through socialisation and have not yet acquired the presupposed skills (Pieper et al. 2004).

This might also be true for traditional writing tasks which require a thorough understanding of text: Especially from grade 8 onwards, analysis and interpretation are to

be practised. The essay on literature is an important form of writing which students frequently have to produce in German exams.

3. Output: a challenge to traditional concepts

It has been pointed out that as a result of the current reform reading curricula are introduced which help to close a gap in the conceptions of dealing with literature. Hence, a broader concept of *Leseförderung*, which also – not only – insists on the development of students' abilities and skills in the field of reading, is on the way. While reading in general and reading literature are getting closer via text-comprehension tasks, an orientation towards the 'literal' meaning of literary texts is strengthened. Though this might seem insufficient from various views of the diversified field of literary theory, sensible close reading might well open a way of literary reading for all learners. Such a sensitivity would draw attention to the specifics of a text which attracts the attention of the naïve reader. It would at the same time have to take into account that what is content-adequate in the view of experts is sometimes likely to be unachievable by non-experts who cannot build on the same form of context knowledge (Kämper-van den Boogaart 2004a). This quest points to another gap which has become apparent through the introduction of the *Bildungsstandards*: In order to evaluate the processes of learning and to assess students' output, models of competences including levels are being asked for.

If curricula are analysed with regard to the learning with literature, one strong feature is expanding knowledge about genres. Their succession seems plausible to experienced teachers and so does the introduction to tropes such as images, comparison and metaphor or the conception of texts as fictional (basically from grade 6/7 on). Still, a sound empirical basis for a distinct model and its operationalisation is missing. The set standards are therefore considered as insufficient, forming merely an extensive list of well-known instructional aims (Spinner 2005).

Especially with regard to the richness of literature and the uniqueness of many texts, limits have to be acknowledged: To apply a set of well-introduced procedures does not necessarily lead to a convincing interpretation. The tension between what is adequate to learners and what is adequate to text – from the expert's perspective – marks research demands beyond traditional literary studies and their didactics.

These limits of standardisation are partly acknowledged within the present debate. Standards and assessment are not considered to cover the entire area of institutional learning or *literarische Bildung* in particular. Still, central assessment has become a fact in German classrooms which has started to dominate the agenda and which might well contradict the aim of the project: to develop and secure successful learning in favour of *Bildung* in its rich sense.

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Steps towards a Framework for Languages of School Education

Introduction

In 2002, the 'European Language Portfolio for adult learners of a second language' was published in the Netherlands. This Language Portfolio was validated and accredited by the Council of Europe under number 36.2002. The existence and use of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in education create a rather unique situation in Europe that reinforces the need for the development of a Common European Framework for Languages of School Education (LEF) that is closely related to the Common European Framework of Reference for (foreign) Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001).

Most of the 69 Language Portfolios that have been validated and accredited by the Council of Europe so far (April 2006) were made for students who learn a 'foreign' language, i.e. a language rarely used in their own environment, for example English in France or in Poland. In most schools, the 'foreign language' would be different to the language used when instructions are given in the classroom. European Language Portfolio 36.2002 is the only language portfolio that is called[11] a 'model for *second* language learners'. To begin with, this language portfolio was intended for students who take Dutch courses as a Second Language (DSL) in vocational and adult education. Successful completion of these courses, with, for example, a DSL 1 or DSL 2 certificate, opened up access to the labour market or to higher education.

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[11] As seen at http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio, on *20 April 2006*

In 2005, this ELP was adapted for students of 12 years and older who learn Dutch as a second language (SLO, 2005)[12]. Following an introductory course these students, and also adult second language learners, begin regular education together with native Dutch speakers. Therefore, the Language Portfolio for Dutch as a Second Language has entered the Dutch classroom and caters for Dutch taught as a school subject. This raises the question of to what extent the European Language Portfolio can be used for non-DSL students.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch Council for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (BVE)[13] has advised students and other interested parties to refer to the DSL framework in establishing the new qualification profiles (competence profiles) for all courses in vocational education. In these language profiles, they advise that an indication be given of the level at which a student should be able to listen, read, write and speak (interaction and production) in Dutch and – if appropriate – in one or more foreign languages.

Research shows that, according to teachers and experts (Leenders et al. 2005)[14], using the CEFR for describing competences for the Dutch language causes a number of problems:
- most of the 12 interviewed teachers said they did not use it because they have few or no NT2 students;
- almost all teachers doubted its usability because its descriptions were too rough and too general;
- when interviewed, some of the experts said that the NT2 framework was not suitable for Dutch (L1 learners), because the language acquisition process differs from learning a language as a second language. However, it could be used in order to indicate the learner's level of proficiency and production abilities.

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[12] *SLO (2005).* Taalportfolio NT2 voor leerlingen van 12 jaar en ouder (Language Portfolio DSL 12+). *Enschede. Published at* www.slo.nl/isk

[13] *The organisation represents all institutes for secondary vocational education and training and adult education in the Netherlands.*

[14] *Leenders, E., P. Poelmans & H. den Exter (2005).* Nederlands en het Raamwerk NT2 in het mbo. (Dutch and the Framework DSL in vocational training) *'s-Hertogenbosch: CINOP/SLO*

Nevertheless, the research showed that all respondents were positive about the many uses of a Framework of Reference for language education.

In 2004, SLO was given the task of developing a learning programme for the Frisian language with the aim of aiding transition from primary to secondary education. Frisian is an acknowledged, regional minority language that is integrated in the curriculum of primary and secondary education in the Dutch province of Friesland. Roughly 50 per cent of the students are native Frisian speakers. Due to a limited amount of time, we chose, in consultation with our client, to adapt the European Language Portfolio based on the CEFR for pupils in Friesland, without worrying too much about the fundamental question of whether the CEFR is appropriate for L1 learners. The idea was to test the outcome in real classroom practice.[15]

In this report we give a theoretical analysis of the usefulness of CEFR-levels for native language instruction (paragraph 2), and try to identify which aspects of the Framework of Reference need to be adapted (paragraph 3). Paragraph 4 concludes this paper with some proposals.

2.   Usefulness of the CEFR for LEF/MTE

Trying to find out to what extent the scales of the CEFR can be applied to languages of school education, or 'mother tongue education', we looked closely into the scales of chapter 4 and 5 of the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001: 43-130) and the examples of the descriptors given in the European Language Portfolio, as compiled by Liemburg and Meijer (2004)[16]. In short, in that publication the descriptors are congruent with the

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[15] *Students can hold track of their language development for Dutch as a second language (12+) and for Frisian on the website* http://www.europeestaalportfolio.nl *, along with that of other languages.*
[16] *Liemberg, E. & D. Meijer (eds) (2004)* Taalprofielen. Leerlijnen voor competentiegericht vreemdetalenonderwijs. *Enschede: NabMVT*

descriptors in chapter 4 of the CEFR and the scales of chapter 5 of the CEFR are summed up as 'features of the text'. We were particularly interested in the lower scales of the CEFR (levels A1, A2 and B1), because we assumed that the higher levels wouild be more appropriate for L1 development than the lower levels.

The tentative assessment below includes the responses given by consulted experts . In due course, our evaluation will need to be based on further research.

2.1   Listening

Descriptors

Only one sub-skill was selected, from the CEFR and *Taalprofielen*, A1 descriptors, namely listening to announcements and instructions. It was assumed that pupils will usually have achieved a higher level than A1 in the other sub-skills (understanding conversations between native speakers, listening as a member of a live audience and listening to TV, video- and sound recordings), when entering primary education (group 1, in the Netherlands at the age of 4, formerly nursery school). Pupils will probably still have more to learn with regard to listening to announcements and instruction,, e.g. listening to instructions that include more than one step.

At a rough estimate, children of approximately 7 years old will be able to deal well with level A2. Only the instructions on how to operate a machine may require more advanced cognitive development. It probably depends on the machine itself as to whether pupils of this age can handle it.

Features of a text

From a mother tongue perspective, it can be said that features at A-level such as 'the complexity of texts'; 'speak slowly', 'noise on the line' and 'use of dialect/non-standard language' are unlikely to be relevant.

2.2   Reading

Descriptors

It is significant that technical reading, which in education precedes the first level of reading for understanding, is not mentioned or described. If pupils learn the basics of technical reading, pupils in group 3 will probably be able to cope with the sub-skills of reading correspondence, reading for orientation and reading instructions. Reading for information also requires the ability to relate concise information to real situations. As long as they are concrete, familiar and everyday situations , this will probably not be aproblem.

A2 level seems to match the 8- to 9-year-old age group. B1 level can possibly correspond to the end of primary education, although most pupils will not have reached this level by then. The following step to B2 seems to be quite large and for many pupils, this could well be as far as they get. Some may not even get to this stage. Further research is needed to provide more answers.

Features of a text

Apart from some references to foreign language aspects (familiar from one's L1 language, etc.), these features seem to be useful for mother tongue speakers.

2.3   Speaking, interaction or production

Descriptors

In general, when children enter primary education (in the Netherlands at the age of 4), the can-do-statements at A1 level are doable in their native language as, perhaps are those at A2, although here the role of education becomes more important. These children seem to be more advanced in their linguistic development than is described at A2 level; however, cognitively, they have not developed that far.

'Arranging business matters' is an example of a sub-skill that cannot be acquired by 7-year-olds as set out in the descriptors. In order to achieve A2, there needs to be a development in socio-cultural skills, i.e. the ability to understand the appropriateness of language, as well as an increased knowledge of relevant subject areas. Primary education can play an important role with regard to the development of skills up to B1 level: 'the world becomes larger for children, among other things by education itself.' B2 level could be placed at the end of secondary education.

Features of a text

Up to level B1, several features are hardly relevant for mother tongue speakers. Pupils are competent technically at the lower levels. Features such as speed of speech, articulation and fluency are, from a mother tongue's perspective, less relevant than from an L2 or foreign language perspective. Subject and coherence are approached and structured cognitively rather than linguistically.

2.4   Writing

Descriptors

From a native language instruction point of view, it is significant that there no attention is paid to technical writing (see also reading). Several A1 and A2 descriptors and examples, such as 'fill in personal information at a hotel' or 'confirm appointments in writing', are not appropriate to 7 to 10 year olds. However, in general, it seems that the levels of writing can be used to describe the development of written texts.

Features of a text

Subject knowledge and grammatical accuracy are described and structured from a foreign language learning point of view, e.g. 'expressions learnt by heart'. Up to B1-level, these are not relevant for L1 speakers. The vocabulary is not that limited for L1 writers, often the range of subjects is wider (A1 and A2 for example also include events) and there is more grammatical accuracy. Regarding coherence, spelling and punctuation, it seems that the process of learning is transferable.

2.5   Expressive language use

The descriptors and features pay insufficient attention to expressive language use.
Only writing has a sub-skill termed 'creative' writing. In all other cases, sub-skills mainly concern transactional and, to a lesser extent, conceptual language use. From the perspective of learning a modern foreign language, this is not surprising; however, from learning a standard language (as an L2) it is a deficiency.
Expressive language use would be needed in relation to such things as fiction, literature and drama. Also, when getting involved in other subject areas, the use of formal language in an expressive and conceptualising manner can support language acquisition.

2.6 Conclusion

In this paragraph, we looked at the possibilities of using the CEFR (2001) for the language of school education. In our opinion, the Common European Framework for Languages offers a useful basis for a set of scales for language proficiency, even if it concerns the native language of the children, pupils, learners or students. As a result, it seems worthwhile to develop general level descriptions, along the lines of the CEFR, and in keeping with its six scales.

Based on the discussion above, we would like to recommend maintaining its subdivision of levels (A1-C2), which, amongst other things, would provide a comparison with other languages. The fact is that level A1 in speaking cannot be used in education for children whose mother tongue is the same as the language of instruction because they will have reached a level higher than A1. However, this level is important to second language learners.

A framework of Reference for languages of instruction will need to be able to accommodate all students including those who do not speak the language of instruction as L1. Levels above A1, particularly higher levels, are useful for all skills.

Our conclusion is that the CEFR as such cannot be applied to L1 language learning and that a careful procedure is necessary to adapt the existing scales and to add new scales, e.g.:

- Regarding the sub-skills (chapter 4 of the CEFR), expressive language use should be mentioned (fiction/literature for reading, drama for speaking).
- Regarding 'features' (primarily chapter 5 of the CEFR), strategic and pragmatic competences should be developed further than in *Taalprofielen*.

3. Adapting the CEFR to Frisian as a first and second language

3.1 Introduction

Friesland is a Northern province in the Netherlands where Frisian is an officially acknowledged language integrated into all domains of Frisian society. At Frisian schools, about half of the students speak Frisian as a mother tongue; the other students speak Dutch at home, or Frisian or a Saxon dialect, or another language.

Education in Frisian forms part of the curriculum of schools in primary education and the first years of secondary education. Schools' interpretation of this part of the curriculum varies enormously. This fact, apart from a great variety in local speech, results in a situation in which teachers who teach Frisian as a subject in secondary education teach students with a wide range of proficiency in the Frisian language. Using the Language Portfolio for the Frisian language may be helpful in forming a picture of this variety.

3.2 Working method

Language specialists from primary and secondary education with expertise in bilingual primary education and education in Friesland evaluated all the descriptors, sub-skills, detailed descriptors and features (see paragraph 2) for usefulness and appropriateness for pupils who learn Frisian from an early age in Friesland. The publication *Taalprofielen* (Liemberg & Meijer 2004), and the Dutch text of the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe 2001), forms the basis. Furthermore, the original publication of the Council of Europe was used as a reference. During the evaluation, several adjustments were made, an overview of which is given below. As a result, all examples were removed from *Taalprofielen*. This resulted in a document for each skill (reading, listening, speaking production, writing, speaking interaction) with partly adapted sub-skills, descriptors and features.

Then, at a two-day conference involving the input of twelve experienced teachers from primary and secondary education in Friesland, new relevant examples for each descriptor were formulated and discussed. Afterwards, three experts compared these examples to the examples at the same level of *Taalprofielen* and if necessary, adapted them. This resulted in five checklists that together form the Language Portfolio for learning, teaching and assessing the Frisian language in Friesland (Bonset, Oosterloo & Meestringa 2005)[17].

3.3   Examples of alterations that are considered inevitable

While developing the Language Portfolio for pupils in Friesland, we consciously made some alterations to elements of the CEFR and *Taalprofielen*.

First, we deleted or replaced elements which specifically referred to foreign language learning. Two examples may illustrate this:

- text features at level A2 described: 'The pronunciation is clear enough to be able to understand the speaker, despite a clear accent. Sometimes listeners will ask for a repetition'. These features do not apply to native speakers, which is why they were deleted;

- the clause 'practice beforehand', also at level A2 of speaking, is replaced by 'prepared', which corresponds more accurately with the terminology used in mother tongue education.

The second alteration was to make it more relevant to young learners, younger than is the case in CEFR and *Taalprofielen*. Two examples may be given here:

- at level A2 of reading, the descriptor 'Can understand a simple standard letter or circular' is removed. In mother tongue education, these kinds of texts do not match the age group that corresponds with level A2;

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[17] *Please contact the authors if you want to have a look at the checklists (for reading and speaking)[17] of the Language Portfolio Frisian Language (in development)*

- at level B1 of speaking, in one of the descriptors the term 'field of work' is replaced by 'field of interest', because not all pupils at that age have a job.

The third alteration is the addition of a sub-skill at the level of global descriptors, namely 'read fiction'. In the opinion of the group of experts, this important element in L1 education is not described explicitly enough in CEFR and *Taalprofielen*. Two examples:
- at reading level A1 the descriptor: 'Can understand short and simple stories and simple poems' is added. In the explanation there is a reference to illustrations (picture books);
- at reading level B1, the descriptor: 'Can understand long stories and poems' is added. In the explanation there is a reference to novels for young people.

The fourth alteration involved adding elements that provide room for expressive language use. So, for example:
- at listening level A2, this descriptor has been added: 'Can understand the story line of a simple story.';
- at speaking level B1 (production), the following descriptor has been added: 'I can describe the plot of a book or film and say what I think about it.'

In addition to these four changes compared to the CEFR and *Taalprofielen*, in the Language Portfolio for Frisian Language we have clarified some issues, simplified the language use for the benefit of the young target group, and on some points geared sub-skills to one another.

4.   In the short-term perspective

The Dutch government is now convinced of the need to develop a 'possibly digital Language Portfolio' for Dutch as an L1. The minister writes: 'The Language Portfolio is

an instrument for individual planning and progress. It also stimulates students to reflect on their own language proficiency level and to consider the steps needed to achieve the target level of language proficiency.' [18] Meanwhile, the Centre of Innovation and Training (CINOP) has been given the task of initiating and co-ordinating this development. The experiences described above show that the CEFR of the Council of Europe can be endorsed here and that previous experience with its use can be built upon.

In our opinion, the following activities are of high priority:

1. Standardising research. The Language Portfolio NT2 for students of 12 years and older and the Language Portfolio for pupils and students in Friesland contain numerous examples of actual linguistic performance situations at levels A1 to C1. For further development and the testing of practical techniques, it is necessary to examine these examples for usefulness and appropriateness.

2. A closer analysis of the similarities and differences between language acquisition processes as described in the CEFR of the Council of Europe, and greater scientific knowledge of mother tongue language acquisition from the age of four.

   This analysis should take into account that:

   a. the framework is meant for learning, teaching and assessing language(s) of school education (LEF), and pre-school development is less relevant in this regard;

   b. the framework attempts to describe the successive levels of language proficiency, and does not attempt to incorporate other areas, such as identity development, or civic or other educational responsibilities.

3. Critical reflection on and, if necessary, further adaptation and increase in the number of sub-skills and descriptors/can-do-statements of the CEFR we have selected and formulated for the Frisian language. A start has already been made in this direction.

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[18] Ministerie van OC&W, (2005) 'Van A tot Z betrokken'. Een aanvalsplan laaggeletterdheid. Den Haag: Ministerie van OC&W

As far as we are concerned, these three activities can be launched simultaneously and we hope that the Netherlands and other European countries will carry this initiative forward.

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