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Part 1
PLE: Concepts and theory

This part of the volume serves to address the challenges for PLE in general and for using the CEFR for PLE (as outlined in Section ii: Challenges for PLE). Its three chapters:

- present nascent pluralistic approaches to language education, including intercultural language education, plurilingualism and pluriculturalism (Chapter 1)
- clarify the CEFR's descriptions of pluriculturalism, plurilingualism, mediation and other terminology, resolve issues in the descriptors, and present a model of CEFR-informed PLE (Chapter 2)
- review and assess publicly available examples of PLE learning materials (Chapter 3).

Readers may wish to consider the following questions while reading:

Chapter 1:

- *What are your views on (or understanding of) changes in approaches to language education as a global field in the 21st century?*
- *What do you know and think about pluralistic approaches to language education?*
- *What are your views on teaching and learning culture, cultural awareness and diversity in a language class?*
- *What do you know and think about pluriculturalism as part of language education?*

Chapter 2:

- *What are your views on (or understanding of) the CEFR's action-oriented approach to language use and learning, including learner autonomy?*
- *What are your views on (or understanding of) the CEFR's depiction of pluriculturalism?*
- *What are your views on (or understanding of) previous or potential usage of the CEFR for PLE in your context or practice?*

Chapter 3:

- *What similarities and differences can you observe between the examples in Chapter 3 and your existing practice?*

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- *Are any of the examples of practice contextualisable for your context? Why or why not?*
- *What aspects of your current practice can be considered pluralistic? What changes might you have to consider in order to 'pluralise' or 'pluriculturalise' your existing practice?*
- *How is a CLIL approach relevant to your context and practice?*

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1 Introduction to pluralistic approaches to language education

This chapter aims to address the conceptual and theoretical challenges discussed in Section ii: Challenges for PLE. Following an introduction to pluralistic approaches to language education, this chapter works towards clarifying the conceptual perspectives and terminology underpinning this volume's interpretation of PLE. Special attention is paid to intercultural language education (ICLE) as it is foundational both to the CEFR and to the approach to PLE taken in this volume. The chapter discusses the criticisms of the depiction of the construct of culture in language education over the past 50 years, which enabled the rise of ICLE. More current models of ICLE are also critiqued for how they represent the constructs of culture and language, and how plurilingualism and pluriculturalism can address these critiques is discussed. The chapter concludes with presenting the interpretation of pluriculturalism used in this volume.

1.1 Introduction

Pluralistic approaches to language education are characterised by learning objectives which extend beyond obtaining linguistic or communicative competence. They intend to mobilise learners for communication in other languages and diverse cultural contexts, partly by increasing learners' awareness of their own linguistic and cultural repertoires and those of others. They entail the simultaneous use of and reflection on more than one variety of language and/or culture without any kind of exclusion (Grommes and Hu (Eds) 2014); the languages can be linguistic varieties which are not taught within the educational system, used by members of the social system within the classroom (or not) or can exist anywhere in the world (Council of Europe 2016). The cultures can be individual, societal and geographic (including the home, family, social group, neighbourhood, district, city, region, country, continent and so on) (Bernaus, Andrade, Kervran, Murkowska and Trujillo Sáez 2007).

Pluralistic approaches are in stark contrast to didactic approaches which aim to foster linguistic and communicative competences alone and take account of only one language or one particular culture (often national). They reject static and singularistic representations of how communication occurs such as in historically dominant methodologies for language learning including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where usage of and

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reference to any other language beyond the target language has typically been discouraged (Candelier 2019). They also reject any practice of language learning geared towards:

- obtaining native-speaker-like abilities in a target language
- the compartmentalisation of the four language skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking
- the compartmentalisation of language and culture learning
- the conceptualisation of cultures being based on geographical borders or official languages.

Four main pluralistic approaches to language learning are commonly recognised: awakening to languages, intercomprehension, integrated didactics, and intercultural (Candelier et al 2010). Awakening to languages introduces learners, including at an early age, to the diversity of languages in their own community and beyond. It involves learning about languages, observation and critical analysis skills, and aims to stimulate curiosity and interest in languages and cultures. In an intercomprehension approach, a learner concurrently works on the development of two or more languages which are part of the same linguistic family. One of these can be the learner's mother tongue, the language of education or any other language that has been previously learned in addition to a new language – the knowledge of a related language is used to learn a new one. In integrated didactics, learners establish links between a number of languages, perhaps those which are taught within the school curriculum or those used at home, exploiting partial competences within each of them. In all three, relationships among the languages used and how to learn them are identified, recognised and then optimised for the learning process (Cavalli 2007). Of the four pluralistic approaches, the intercultural approach, discussed in the next section, 'has had a clear influence on the methodology of language teaching and, because of this, seems [already] fairly well known' in language education (Candelier et al 2012:6).

1.2 Intercultural language education

Gaining momentum in the 1990s, intercultural language education (ICLE) prepares language learners for intercultural encounters by fostering learners' cultural and intercultural competences alongside linguistic and communicative competence. ICLE is argued to better enable learners for meeting and communicating with people from different cultures and societies, including those attached to the language they are learning (Byram 1997). ICLE builds on skills and methods advocated by teaching methodologies such as CLT or task-based language teaching (TBLT) by adding intercultural skills and awareness. ICLE is neither based on a four-skills nor a native-speaker

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model, replacing these concepts with that of an intercultural speaker and citizen – someone who can take an objective perspective to understanding their own cultural norms. Accordingly, individuals trained in ICLE can mediate and negotiate a variety of communicative situations and accept and manage culturally derived miscommunication and misunderstandings. ICLE arose as a response to criticisms on how culture was treated in language education in three paradigms discussed in the next section: culture studies, culture as societal norms and culture as practice.

1.2.1 ICLE's predecessors

In the 1970s, the aim of culture and language studies was for the language learner to develop knowledge of a country that used that language. Cultural learning was limited to transmissible information on the country's history, geography, customs, institutions, arts, and literature, sometimes referred to as the four Fs: foods, fairs, folklore and facts (Kramsch 1991:218). The approach was criticised for not encouraging learners to explore the connections between their own culture and language and those of others, for ignoring social aspects of culture, for emphasising differences rather than similarities and for exclusivity rather than inclusivity (Lo Bianco, Liddicoat and Crozet 1999, Svarstad 2016).

To address these criticisms, the culture as societal norms paradigm rooted in the 1980s viewed culture as the practices, values and behaviours of members of a given speech community (Kramsch 1993). Cultural facts were still seen as important but were acknowledged as being situated in time and space, variable across regions, classes and generations (Crawford and McLaren 2003). However, this view was also questioned since the learner observes and interprets the behaviour and language of others from another cultural paradigm. In turn, communities of others are implied as homogenous entities thus creating and reinforcing stereotypes (Lange and Paige (Eds) 2003).

Conversely, the culture as practice approach viewed culture as the result of shared history and traditions, constructed through the interactions between social groups and individuals. In this paradigm, the trend of keeping language and culture separate within educational systems was rejected. The goal was to develop intercultural competence – language learners' knowledge and understanding of their own culture and culturally shaped behaviours – and become sensitised to the linguistic and cultural differences and worldviews of others (Kramsch 2009, Risager 2007). ICLE (and by extension PLE) is based in this third paradigm.

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1.2.2 Byram's ICC

Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) present an extensive review and classification of many models of intercultural competence. One of the most well-cited versions of ICLE is Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which also underpins the intercultural components of the CEFR. ICC pays respect and attention to both the target and learners' home languages and cultures. The model comprises 'five savoirs' as follows:

- Attitudes: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own (*savoir être*).
- Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction (*savoirs*).
- Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own (*savoir comprendre*).
- Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*).
- Critical cultural awareness: an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (*savoir s'engager*).

1.2.3 Criticisms of ICLE representations of culture and languages

Some have argued that ICLE models do not encapsulate the spectrum of diversity and hybridity of languages and cultures of stakeholders in language education (and beyond) (Vallejo and Dooly 2019). ICLE models, including Byram's ICC, have also been criticised for having nationalist and overly holistic orientations in their representation of cultures and languages. They have tended to position a foreign target culture against a native culture (us vs. them), overlooking that learners can claim a wide range of cultural affiliations and identities (Risager 2007, Spitzberg and Changnon 2009, Svarstad 2016). For example, Byram (1997) has been criticised for focusing on the European context, namely European learners of English, and promoting classroom interaction between language learners and native English speakers, primarily British and sometimes American (Baker 2009). This has led to favouring of UK or US culture as the basis of cultural content of English language learning materials in some contexts, thus ignoring the

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diversity of English speakers around the world. Not only is this unnecessary, as any culture of interest can form the basis of cultural content independent of the target language to be learned (English or otherwise), it also maintains the promotion of a native-speaker model of proficiency, a notion the CEFR also rejects (see Chapter 2).

In part, this may be due to the usage of the prefix inter-, meaning ‘between’, which inherently implies a between-ness of cultures. The compartmentalisation of cultures as being based on nationality of origin and as being separate from each other is continued in using this prefix, a reductionist perspective which, ironically, ICLE (and PLE) intends to combat. The conceptualisation of cultures as having identifiable boundaries which begin at a point and stop at another and that the values, beliefs, practices and languages associated with a given culture are therefore also distinctive, demarcated, and exclusive is neither mirrored by social science research nor a desired conceptualisation in language education (Blalock 1979, Budzyńska 2018, Piccardo 2019, Savski 2019). Cultural boundaries, even more so than linguistic, can overlap and blur at all individual, societal and geographic levels, including the individual home, family, social group, neighbourhood, district, city, region, country, continent and so on (Bernaus et al 2007).

The other criticism of ICLE is related to how other languages are represented. In general, ICLE models tend not to give any (substantial or explicit) consideration to the role of other languages in language learning. In doing so, they ignore both any extent of heteroglossia within individuals and the linguistic repertoires learners bring with them to their learning experiences. Overcoming these criticisms may be achieved with a plurilingual take on ICLE, a pedagogy discussed in the next section.

1.3 Plurilingualism

Plurilingualism refers to an individual’s abilities across all languages and knowledge of languages, including ‘the totality of linguistic, sociolinguistic, metalinguistic and (socio)cultural knowledge related to a number of languages (and their varieties and registers)’ (Chen and Hélot 2018:170), in other words, the plurilingual repertoire.

The plurilingual repertoire differs from (but encapsulates) the linguistic repertoire, i.e. the knowledge and use of languages and dialects individuals possess. It includes the languages and dialects learners have knowledge of and can use, but also entails those that they might avoid, or desire to learn. The plurilingual repertoire is said to be embedded in an individual’s historical, ideological, biographical and affective dimensions, their affiliation to groups, and their past, present and future identities (Beacco 2005, Busch 2012, Kramsch 2009). The following behaviours are all part of one’s plurilingual repertoire:

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- the ability to switch from one language or dialect to another
- expressing oneself in one language while understanding someone who expresses themselves in another
- calling upon the knowledge of a number of languages to make sense of a text
- mediating between individuals with no common language by bringing the whole of their linguistic equipment into play
- experimenting with alternative forms of expression in different languages or dialects
- exploiting paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.) or radically simplifying use of language (Ortega 2018).

There are many claimed advantages in being plurilingual, including:

- enhanced metalinguistic awareness
- positive self-identity
- positive and inclusive classroom and learning atmospheres
- socio-economic benefits
- greater employability and mobility.

Plurilingualism as a social phenomenon has a rich history in both ancient civilisations and in modern societies, where it is presently and commonly found all over the world (Vallejo and Dooly 2019). In language education however, the term plurilingualism has only recently worked its way into common usage among both language education scholars and practitioners (Galante 2018a). This is purportedly due to the tendency of English-medium academic research to maintain the usage of the terms bi- and multilingual. This overlooks plurilingualism as a distinct phenomenon and in using the prefix bi-, inherently implies an additive view of languages: languages are inherently positioned side by side, viewed as separate entities without overlap or integration (Heugh, Prinsloo, Makgamatha, Diedericks and Winnaar 2017). In such a perspective, language learning becomes reduced to the acquisition of separate standardised named languages, with the 'double monolingual as the ideal bilingual' (García and Otheguy 2019:21). Instead, in plurilingualism, speakers of more than one language are not seen as monolinguals in two different languages and languages are seen as part of a connected network rather than as separate, distinct entities. The next section discusses how these perspectives are incorporated into language learning.

1.3.1 Plurilingual language learning

Plurilingual language learning approaches generally have the common intention of overcoming the three ideologies of:

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1. The native speaker as the ideal model of proficiency.
2. The ideal bilingual or multilingual speaker as one that is fluent in one or more other languages.
3. The notion that partial competences in different languages, varieties or dialects are a deficiency. (These are also all perspectives shared by the CEFR; see Chapter 2).

Compared to monolingual approaches, whereby reference to any language other than the target language is typically disallowed, or at least discouraged, learners' knowledge and experience with other languages are viewed as potential resources for language learning. Learning can be accelerated by generally taking advantage of pre-existing sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills in addition to metalinguistic and interlingual awareness (i.e. the perception of linguistic organisation of different languages) (Coste and Simon 2009). This means that even if a learner is an absolute beginner in a given language, their abilities for communication in other linguistic contexts are recognised, valued and drawn upon rather than ignored or rejected. Plurilingual instruction (in alignment with the CEFR and Section 2.6: A model for CEFR-informed PLE) is based on heterogeneity, collaboration, learner-centredness, language and content integration, language use from the bottom up, experiential learning and local autonomy and responsibility (García 2008). In taking such an approach (and particularly in conjunction with other pluralistic approaches such as pluriculturalism, discussed in the next section), there is greater potential to address the communicative needs of mobile individuals in diverse contexts through acknowledging and incorporating the perspectives, repertoires and trajectories of learners and other stakeholders.

1.4 Pluriculturalism

Pluriculturalism has been presented as a concept to characterise the coexistence of all cultures, 'without entering into distinctions and differences', such as in the Olympic Games, where many different nationalities compete, but no distinction of nationality is made beyond the competition (Captio 2015). Within language education, pluriculturalism has been used to refer to a personal trait which underpins thinking and behaviour (Bernaus et al 2007) or as the 'ability to participate in different cultures' (Beacco et al 2016:18). It involves a deepening of one's understanding of and experience with languages and cultures, and 'an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences' (Council of Europe 2001:43). As with plurilingualism, there are numerous claimed benefits associated with pluriculturalism, including:

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- enhanced cognitive flexibility, creativity and innovative thinking, communicative sensitivity, cultural awareness
- increased tolerance and openness towards cultures, social structures and values of others
- transferable learning to learn abilities.

At the outset of the production of this volume, obtaining definitions for the term 'pluricultural' was quite challenging: definitions were sparse or unstable (including the definition in the CEFR). This is thought to be due in part to the continuation and uncritical acceptance of using the term 'intercultural' (see Section 1.2.3: Criticisms of ICLE representations of culture and languages). Indeed, pluriculturalism is often contrasted with interculturality, which:

- 'concerns how different cultures relate to one another' (Captio 2015) or
- 'consists of the ability to experience otherness and diversity, analyse that experience and derive benefit from it' (Beacco et al 2016:20)
- entails being open to, interested in, curious about and empathetic towards other cultures (Byram 2009b)
- refers to conditions or characteristics of a communicative situation (Bernaus et al 2007), or
- 'does not involve identifying with another cultural group or adopting the cultural practices of the other group' (Byram 2009a:326)
- concerns coping with cultural differences (Candelier 2019).

Conversely, individuals who do adopt and identify with traits or practices of another cultural group are described as pluricultural by Byram (2009a), who names three types of 'pluricultural' people:

1. Those who engage with aspects of a dominant majority national culture in which they live, having come from elsewhere, such as children of mixed parentage, or those of a minority whose ethnic culture is distinct from national peer culture (longer-term expatriates, migrants or immigrants could also be included in this group).
2. Individuals of said ethnically homogenous areas who grow into pluriculturalism through 'noticing the multiculturalism of their own society and others', eventually 'identifying with at least some of the values, beliefs and/or practices of two or more cultures', or
3. 'through hybridity, that is, through the eclectic fusion of resources and elements drawn from multiple cultures to create a novel cultural synthesis' (Byram 2009a:326).

None of these perspectives are adopted in this volume. This is due to their maintenance of the distinction between what is one's own versus what is not,

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