EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, LANGUAGES AND CITIZENSHIP

European Integration and the changing concept of Citizenship

1.

According to John Monnet 'the purpose of European integration is to unite [people], not to build a coalition of governments'[1]. Since its foundation, European integration has aimed not only to promote economic stability and growth but also to provide a social and political context in which a greater sense of community and shared cultural values can be established. Its development since 1957 through The Treaty of European Union (1992), the Treaty establishing the European Community (1997) to the Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) has been marked by an increasing emphasis on the enhancement of citizenship and a closer understanding what it implies in practical terms.

2.

Integration has not been a stable or constant process. As the movement towards closer political and economic cooperation has continued, the Community itself has been enlarged and diversified and stands today on the threshold of a substantial increase in its membership. There has been a growth in local and regional consciousness, an openness to inclusion within the Community of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, a fragmentation of cultural groupings below the national level and, in general, a greater need to embrace difference. European integration is accompanied by a simultaneous movement towards diversification and a growing sense of being subsumed within a wider global consciousness.

3.

As well as highlighting the cultural and linguistic differences between communities, political integration in Europe and the revolution in global communication have also heightened the disparities which exist between those who have access to the new technologies and those who, for reasons of economic or educational disadvantage, are excluded from their use. In this sense, citizenship, access to knowledge and education go hand in hand. The social objective of education cannot be seen as independent of the need to ensure that the population as a whole is in a position to acquire new forms of knowledge together with the special competencies which are required to take advantage of them. In order to interact effectively with other members of a diverse and widening community, young people need to master modern communication tools and be educated to use them to good effect.

What is citizenship?

4.

In the modern European context, the term 'citizenship' may be described conceptually as the civil, political and social rights appertaining to members of a politically defined community regardless of its size in terms of population and the geographical space of its territory: these rights being determined at the national level by regional assemblies and the governments of sovereign member states and supranationally in terms of EC treaties.

- By '**civil rights**' is meant the freedom of individuals to live where they choose, freedom of speech and religion, the right to own property and the right to equal justice before the law;

- **'Political rights'** include the entitlement to participate in elections and to stand for public office;

- **'Social rights'** concern the prerogative of every individual within a politically defined community to enjoy a minimum standard of economic welfare and security.

5.

Within modern democratic societies, the above rights may be viewed as fundamental principles which form the basis of constitutional citizenship and are distinguishable from universal human rights in that they are regulated differently by law within circumscribed, politically defined entities. They are constantly subject to change and are currently undergoing a re-evaluation which has a direct impact on the relevance of language proficiency to the exercise of citizenship in Europe.

6.

According to the terms of *The Treaty of European Union* (1992), all citizens of individual member states of the EU are automatically citizens of the European Community. This clause should not, however, be interpreted in a restrictive sense. Modern citizenship in Europe extends beyond the nation state. It is widely recognised that, in today's world, citizenship can no longer be understood exclusively in national or even strictly legal terms[2]. There are both political and social reasons for this. Politically speaking, the rights and duties entailed by membership of local communities and wider regional, national and supra-national entities co-exist within complementary and mutually supporting frames of reference[3]. Individuals are citizens of communities of different sizes which interact with each other legally and politically. They are represented by assemblies at a number of different levels. From a social point of view, the increasing complexity of these new structures and the greater mobility of individuals and groups from different ethnic backgrounds within and between them calls for a greater open-mindedness and flexibility of outlook in people's daily lives. This combination of knowledge and 'state of mind' is the foundation on which 'modern citizenship' is built.

The legal, functional and ethical bases of European citizenship: towards a culture of 'openness' and 'action'

7.

Building on the principle of freedom of movement established by *The Treaty of Rome* (1957) and extended by *The Schengen Agreement* (1989), *The Treaty of European Union – aka The Treaty of Maastricht* (1992) constitutes the legal basis for implementing rights of citizenship at the European level. According to The Maastricht Treaty, any national of a Member State is a *de facto* citizen of the European Union and enjoys the legal right

- to freedom of movement and residence;
- to vote and stand as a candidate in European elections;
- to request diplomatic protection;
- to petition the European Ombudsman.

The Treaty also laid down a range of social and political rights relating in particular to equal opportunities and conditions in the workplace - the 'Social Protocol' - which have been extended and developed by the Treaty of 1997 establishing a European Community – *The Amsterdam Treaty*[4].

8.

In adding to the provisions of previous European statutes, *The Amsterdam Treaty* represents the current legal framework within which a policy for languages grounded in principles of citizenship must necessarily be developed. The areas covered by the treaty include:

- measures to combat discrimination (Articles 12-13);
- provision for the exercise of citizenship rights as outlined in the Treaty of 1997, including in particular the right to petition the Community institutions in any of the official languages of the Community and to receive an answer in the same language (Articles 18-22);
- equal access to social protection in different member states to facilitate mobility of the workforce (Articles 40-42);
- enhancement of the conditions favouring freedom of establishment for the purposes of promoting self-employment (Articles 44-48);
- the development of a co-ordinated strategy for employment (Articles 125-130).

9.

Self-evidently, the legal basis for these rights only has validity if citizens are able to exercise them in practical terms and if they are recognised by national jurisdictions. The existence of rights implies in turn a duty on the part of governments and social institutions to make it possible for individuals to enjoy their benefits. In this sense, the concept of citizenship carries with it a functional imperative. Invoking the 'social' dimension of citizenship, the right of residence is meaningless if there is no housing. It is pointless establishing the right to be mobile if there is no public transport and a significant percentage of the population cannot afford a car. In an information-led society, it is equally contradictory for citizens to have the right to freedom of expression and access to information yet be unable to purchase or use the technology which would allow them to communicate effectively. The functional imperative has direct implications for the learning of languages in that the state has the duty to provide all its citizens with minimum standards of literacy in the language of the national jurisdiction concerned. Indirectly, the principle can be said to extend to other languages to the extent that it is judged to be a pre-condition of mobility – actual or virtual - which is itself a legal right.

10.

However, the principle that rights also entail duties does not simply involve the State. It applies to citizens themselves. It lends the concept of citizenship an ethical dimension which extends its implications beyond the legal and functional spheres. The 'ethical principle' finds expression in the *European Charter on Fundamental Human Rights* (December 2000), most notably in the chapters on 'Dignity' (1), 'Solidarity' (4) and 'Citizenship' (5)[5]. The Charter is only the last in a series of policy documents which stress that, to be meaningful, modern citizenship imposes special obligations on the individual, both professionally and personally. As the European Commission Report *For a Europe of civic and social rights* makes clear:

> 'The practical implementation of rights depends on interpersonal relations and a sense of individual responsibility for others; there are no rights without duties, nor democracy without civil commitment. [...] It is thus not sufficient to confer rights by statute; citizens must regard them as necessary and feel a duty to play their part.'[6]

11.

As well as the State's providing the material and legal conditions in which individual rights can be exercised, both institutions and individuals – as a mark of belonging to the community which has subscribed to the principles concerned – should promote attitudes and behaviours consonant with pluralism, tolerance and respect for cultural difference. Tolerance linked to agency are thereby the hallmarks of citizenship defined in European terms. The treaties, charters and supporting documentation offer a view of modern citizenship in Europe which is grounded in a culture of 'openness' and represents a blueprint for action. 'Active Citizenship' implies not merely the tolerance of social difference and an awareness of the rights and duties of different groups. It entails a duty to engage in the social and political processes which translate the principles of citizenship into reality[7].

Plurilingualism, intercultural competence, the exercise of active citizenship and EU educational policy

12.

Given the multilingual and multicultural character of the European Community, a greater understanding of its languages and of the nature of cultural difference is a pre-requisite for active participation as a citizen. Although in a limited number of cases, languages are acquired independently of any formally sponsored state programme, the majority of foreign language learning takes place within the framework of national education systems. The legal basis for Community action in the fields of education and training is provided by Articles 149 (ex.126) and 150 (ex. 127) of The Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties. Building on the Delors White Paper of 1994 *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment*[8] which emphasised the importance of technological training as a means of enhancing access to employment and economic growth, the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training *Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society*[9] recommended specific measures to combat exclusion and set as a general objective to promote proficiency in three community languages.

13.

The relationship between linguistic proficiency and citizenship was further underlined by the Cresson Green Paper of 1996 in which shortcomings in linguistic knowledge were identified as one of the major obstacles to transnational mobility within Europe[10]. Finally, the Commission Report on the implementation of the 1995 White Paper, published in 1999, highlighted the major initiatives which had been taken under the auspices of the Leonardo and Socrates Programmes[11]. The main thrust of these programmes has been

- to promote cultural awareness through mobility,
- to enhance the relationship between education and the workplace,
- to introduce a European dimension into the curriculum,
- to harmonise curricular structures and encourage the mutual recognition of degrees, diplomas and professional qualifications,
- to establish an infrastructure which would allow specific initiatives to be implemented within individual disciplines.

14.

In all the above areas, plurilinguistic proficiency has a key role to play. It is barely conceivable for a young person to consider studying or working in another country without previously attaining at least a minimal level of competence in the language of the country concerned. At the psychological level, it is difficult to empathise with the point of view of a speaker from another linguistic community unless one understands enough of his or her language to interpret fundamental nuances. As mobility and the nature of shared experience become more virtual, the capacity to make yourself understood across national boundaries and to be ready in turn to understand the language of your interlocutor becomes ever more essential. While the model of near-native competence in a number of community languages may be attainable by only a limited section of the population, the ability to understand a number of foreign languages while initiating communication primarily in one's own - 'plurilingualism' - is a goal which in theory is achievable for all and can be said to be a pre-requisite for modern European citizenship.

15.

Closely linked to the notion of plurilingualism is the increasingly widely accepted notion of 'intercultural competence'. This special combination of knowledge, insight and personality consists of knowing enough about the culture of another community that it is possible to distinguish between behaviours which can be explained by the personality of an interlocutor and those which arise from codes and customs embedded in the language and culture of the community concerned. It extends the notion of culture from the products of the printed, electronic and audio-visual media to the attitudes, behaviours, modes of dress and speech habits of ordinary people in their daily lives. It therefore entails developing particular personal qualities which involve refusing to allow one's own cultural pre-conceptions to condition one's interpretation of a speech event or situation and an ability to perceive the event from a number of different points of view.

16.

At a certain level, the development of intercultural competence is socialisation by another name, the essential difference being that rather than socialising learners into the culture of a single community, it entails educating them to accept the practices and points of view of others and to view difference positively. Young citizens must be led to question the validity of the constructed patterns of values, beliefs and attitudes on which the lives of their immediate communities are based. They must be brought to understand the processes of construction which have shaped their own community and others - within and beyond their national constituencies. They must develop strategies and states of mind - '*savoirs*'[12] - which extend beyond linguistic proficiency and enable them to communicate in the fullest sense with interlocutors from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It cannot be assumed that these abilities are the outcome of natural development. Tolerance has to be learned and one's natural responses to apparently incomprehensible situations suspended until a fuller understanding of the 'other's' perspective can be arrived at.

17.

Learning foreign languages and the contact with other cultures which this normally implies are thus an integral part of developing the behaviours which define citizenship of a multi-cultural community. It is axiomatic that entering another symbolic system involves viewing the world through other eyes yet it is equally clear that for most people, there is a limit to the number of linguistic systems in which they can operate fluently. Much intercultural communication demands that interlocutors infer, compensate and read between the lines of each others' language even though their active knowledge of the language concerned is limited. In educating modern citizens of a European Community, it should be the duty of governments and institutions to assist their young people to acquire these abilities and the responsibility of young people themselves to use them as part of a lifelong process of learning.

18.

To sum up, the development of language proficiency:

- **relativises and promotes an awareness of self**. Being a citizen of a multilingual community implies being aware of the complexities of the language and 'ways of seeing' of linguistic communities other than one's own. It promotes a consciousness of the interrelationship between language and community and thereby fosters tolerance and respect;

- **enables citizens to communicate with each other**. Even if the knowledge of the 'other' language is only partial, it enhances an 'openness to communication' and the acquisition of other transferable skills. The concept of plurilingualism, grounded in the ability to comprehend other languages while speaking or writing in one's own, is critical to more open forms of communication on which the exercise of 'multi-layered', active citizenship is based;

- **increases the opportunities for mobility** for the purposes of work, study or leisure in other communities and hence for fuller participation in the life of the community as a whole. As one of the founding principles of the European Community and one of the main objectives of

education and employment policy, mobility is a key component of citizenship and, in this, linguistic proficiency and intercultural awareness are vital facilitators;

- **facilitates the use of global technology** by enhancing the understanding of messages in other languages;

- **promotes an understanding of the cultural role played by discourse** by revealing the way in which knowledge is represented in different linguistic communities. Scientific investigation is subject to different approaches and forms of understanding according to the language in which it is carried out and described. Linguistic knowledge provides an essential insight into the nature of these differences which affect perceptions at the deepest levels. Without it, it is impossible to have access to them;

- **offers a better understanding of the inherent characteristics of citizens' native languages and enhances reflexion on the nature of the individual's own communication**;

- **acts as a catalyst in redefining disciplinary boundaries**. The study of languages is a cross-roads between specialist disciplines and has the power to invite re-evaluation of the relationship between them. It promotes an interdisciplinary view of knowledge within HE institutions;

- **encourages the sharing of discipline-based knowledge and an awareness of good practice** by institutions is different communities.

In general terms, multilingual knowledge is integral to the character of modern, active citizenship, both within and beyond the level of communities defined in national terms. The notion of modern citizenship is deprived of its meaning if it does not include an openness to linguistic difference and a readiness to communicate in a language other than one's own.

The role of languages within the HE curriculum: policies, practices and tendancies

19.
The factors cited above are general and frequently cited reasons for promoting the study of languages in higher education[13]. However, as an essential ingredient of active citizenship, what it means to 'know a language' varies according to the learning potentials of individuals and is a function of their personal and professional objectives. It also depends on the specific policies applied in different national and institutional contexts and, crucially, on the allocation of available resources.

20.
Nevertheless, there are a limited number of key factors relating to the link between citizenship and linguistic proficiency which HE institutions should take into account when determining priorities:

- **Despite the exceptional position of English, Europe is an increasingly multilingual community.** The number of officially recognised languages is likely to increase from 12 to 16. There are more than 100 languages in active use within the territories of the Community. The strengthening of regional consciousness - frequently linked to linguistic distinctiveness - has already been alluded to. In addition, the growth in the movement of populations from neighbouring countries into the territories of the Community and the redefinition of national boundaries have emphasised the need to recognise cultural minorities whose ethnic, religious and linguistic specificities have the right to be respected by member states' national educational systems and by the population at large.

- **For all the reasons which define an individual's membership of the European Community, European citizens have the legal right to communicate with other citizens in any official language and to expect to receive an answer in the same language - at least on their own linguistic territory.** Insofar as citizenship of the Community is predicated on membership of a nation state, that right cannot be said to apply on a territory whose official language is different from that of the speaker. Yet it is clearly unreasonable to expect citizens to be proficient in all official community languages. **Hence the critical importance of developing a notion of linguistic proficiency based on the principle of partial competence** which allows effective communication to take place, despite the fact that at least one of the interlocutors does not have advanced-level proficiency in the language being used.

- **For speakers of languages which are not 'officially recognised', the right to use the minority language and to expect consideration and respect on the part of interlocutors is an ethical obligation in a modern multilingual community such as Europe.** Such mutual cosideration is an integral part of a culture of 'openness' which has already been referred to as a defining characteristic of citizenship. In addition to knowledge and awareness, it demands the development of special skills and strategies which are essential properties of **intercultural competence**[14]. It is the task of HE institutions and of language departments in particular to ensure that the development of these properties, which should have begun in secondary education, is maintained and carried forward within the university curriculum.

- **Equally, it is legally incumbent on national governments through educational institutions to enable minorities to achieve full, functional competence in the officially recognised language of the country in which they have right of residence.** Such provision should be an essential priority of universities insofar as it is part of the relationship which HE institutions of different types should enjoy with the regional community.

21.

Taking the above factors into account means that universities have a responsibility to reflect the changing role of languages within European society and accommodate an increasingly diverse demand from different groups of learners. In practice, this is already taking place. A more diversified framework which allows for the attainment of different levels of proficiency to be clearly articulated has been developed by the Council of Europe (see Annexe 1) and its wider use within higher education strongly encouraged[15].

22.

The shift towards greater diversity in the range of types of language learning available in the context of European HE is marked by a several **distinctive features** including:

- **a move away from specialist language learning as an adjunct to culture represented in primarily historical terms.** This move is a reflection of the redefinition of culture itself as encompassing mediatic as well as literary artefacts. It has meant a blurring of the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular' culture, a greater preoccupation with cultural processes than with historical, fact-based knowledge. The change in perspective also implies a growing consciousness of the personal dimension of intercultural awareness which is finding an increasing place within the languages curriculum. Languages and 'Area Studies' are thereby brought into closer contact with cognate fields such as sociology, anthropology and psychology;

- **a heightening of the role of language and discourse as an object of study in its own right by 'specialist' students of languages within universities.** This is reflected in the growth of courses which examine the manner in which language mediates and instrumentalises the exercise of power in society and hence the interrelationship between language and social change;

- **a tendancy for language specialists to study more than one 'foreign' language at HE level**. This tendancy applies particularly to those wishing to become teachers or future 'language professionals' (translators, interpreters, specialists in international communication) but it is also true of vocational courses such as management where the study of at least two foreign languages may be compulsory;

- **an increasing motivation to study language for 'operational' or 'functional' purposes** rather than as a component of programmes centred on 'cultural history'. This tendency is reflected in the growth of courses combining languages with 'vocational' disciplines such as management, law and engineering. It should not be seen as implying lessening the importance of cultural knowledge or intercultural awareness within programmes of this type. It is students of this kind which will represent the majority of plurilinguistically competent citizens and for whom intercultural competence is likely to be most professionally relevant;

- **the embedding within universities of 'non-specialist' language learning facilities (or 'language centres')** which allow for the integration of language learning into the wider curriculum;

- **a greater emphasis on self-access and technology-based autonomous learning**, linked to virtual mobility - as a means of delivering fundamental language skills;

- **a more variegated understanding of what is implied by linguistic competence**. As defined by the Common European Framework, this can be represented on a scale ranging from advanced level, near-native proficiency to lesser degrees of 'partial competence' as described above;

- **a concomitant reassessment of the relationship between linguistic proficiency and the development of 'intercultural competence'** in the terms already outlined: viz. forms of behaviour, strategies and states of mind which facilitate interactions between members of different communities;

- **an increase in the number of 'non-specialist' courses which include periods of residence abroad and opportunities to study in culturally mixed groups**, normally releted to EU-supported exchange programme.

The above are general tendancies in policy and practice which are not applied uniformly or coherently across the European Community. It is, however, possible to draw up a typology of programme structures within which the qualities already identified with citizenship may be developed (see Table 1 below).

TABLE I
HE language programmes: a basic typology

Programme	Defining features	Common European Framework Proficiency Level
First degree specialist language courses	Frequently two languages formerly literature based general shift towards language and area studies growing interest in European politics, institutions and history of ideas normally includes period of residence abroad in one or two countries provides more or less sound insight into culture and society of languages studied	C2/C1
First degree combined degree course	one or two languages stronger focus on application within second subject studied retains more or less extensive cultural base	C2/C1
Non-specialist applied language study/ *Langues étrangères appliquées* First degree or professional diploma	language an adjunct to the main (generally vocational) subject studied: typically law, management, engineering, sciences strong emphasis on communication skills often includes period of study abroad in main discipline	C1/B2
In-service support language teaching within or outside structure of first degree	primary emphasis on support language skills limited contact hours low level of weighting in main degree programme often at beginners level normally taught by applied language centre	B1
Postgraduate teacher-training	normally one year of study including teaching practice may involve period of study and teaching abroad increasing tendancy to offer training in culturally mixed groups on joint European programmes strong emphasis on intercultural issues	C2+
Postgraduate courses in interpreting/translating	normally one year of study leading to a professionally recognised qualification necessary emphasis on issues of cultural transfer and the nature of cultural difference	C2++
Specially designed intensive courses preparing students for periods of residence abroad	normally short-term and offered immediately prior to departure or on arrival in host country primary emphasis on cultural issues and on the development of intercultural and study skills language performance seen as adjunct to interaction rather than as an objective in its own right	C2-B1
'Vacation' courses in 'host language' for visiting students	typically specially designed and offered on a multi-level basis by private language schools, government agencies or specialist university departments	C1-A2
'Host language' courses offered to minority groups in local community	generally offered by local support agencies within or outside mainstream HE provision as part of community education and development programmes primary focus on the development of language and literacy linked to the understanding of citizenship rights	A1-B2+

23.
Applied flexibly by HE institutions, the above framework offers opportunities for all students in HE as well as members of regional communities to benefit from language training at all levels, linked to the development of the skills and awareness necessary for the exercise of citizenship in European communities. This implies that the 'concepts of culture' offered by programmes be focused on the person as much as on historical and cultural background and that, in general, culture be taught in other than language-specific terms.

24.

Seen from a 'European' perspective, the implementation of good practice in the field of HE language learning and citizenship is dependent on the wider integration of a 'European dimension' in other areas of the HE curriculum. It cannot be seen as the exclusive prerogative of language departments nor can they shoulder alone the responsibility for delivering coherent programmes of study. More fully developed strategies for language learning are required at national and institutional levels for proper integration between language learning and supranational citizenship to be achievable.

Conclusion: identifying lines of action

25.
Universities must recognise and accept that their social responsibilities as institutions of higher education are not restricted to delivering academic teaching and research but also include transmitting the knowledge, values and skills required to exercise active citizenship. Their acceptance of this role has implications for programme design and pedagogy in Higher Education which condition the relationship between language learning and other areas of the curriculum. On the basis of the work carried out within the context of the Thematic Network Project for languages, the Task Force has identified the following fields in which continuing action should be regarded as a priority at the European level:

- language learning and, in particular, access to the less widely used and taught languages of the Community should be available to all students in Higher and Continuing Education as an integral and certified component of their programmes of study;

- the notion of 'native speaker competence' as a prime objective of 'degree level language learning' should be replaced by a more flexible view of language learning as a vehicle for cultural and linguistic mediation;

- there should be more widespread acceptance of a 'Common European Framework of reference' such as that developed by The Council of Europe and a further move towards implementing common criteria for assessment and evaluation;

- the knowledge and skills – linguistic and personal – which promote the development of 'intercultural competence' amongst learners in HE should be given special consideration in HE curriculum design, both outside and within language learning programmes;

- there should be a greater drive to share and disseminate good practice in 'integrated language learning', particularly in the use made of web-based learning materials developed in a European context;

- for students undertaking periods of study and work abroad as an integrated element of their HE programmes, language preparation and debriefing should be more directly linked to the linguistic and intercultural skills required during residence abroad;

- for future teachers, the access to intercultural learning experiences should be enhanced and they should be made more familiar with notions of plurilingualism and partial competence as components of intercultural awareness;

- further consideration should be given (a) to the languages in which 'non-linguistic' subjects are taught and (b) to the flexibility allowed to students in the submission of their work in terms of the language in which it is delivered.

26.

Measures such as those just outlined, designed to promote a more pro-active and lifelong relationship between HE language learning and qualities of citizenship cannot be envisaged if European universities do not develop clear, integrated policies for institution-wide language learning linked to established European information networks. It is our hope that, in accepting the principles of citizenship laid down by The Maastricht and Amsterdam Treaties and vigorously pursued since then by the European institutions, teachers, HE institutions and national governments will have the courage and conviction to rise to the challenge.

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