

10 Language in Education and in Teacher Education: Towards New Paradigms

Having looked in some detail at a wide range of issues related to language education and language in education, in this final chapter we bring together the main conclusions and recommendations that we wish to put forward. We do this out of a conviction that, for language education to respond effectively to the needs of society as well as to the beneficiaries of education in a rapidly changing world, new paradigms must be found and a more enlightened approach taken to policy making and practice than is currently the case in most education systems we know about. This is because, owing to their critical role in enabling individuals to reach their potential and be full participants in their societies, language and communication are absolutely central to all education.

The Story So Far

The preceding chapters have looked in selective detail at language education and the role of languages in education. Readers will have noticed that we have frequently referred to examples and case studies taken from the European context and have regularly referred to documents and projects developed under the auspices of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, and we do so again in this chapter. These examples and references do not diminish the importance of developments in language education elsewhere in the world and do not simply reflect the fact that we have lived and worked mostly in Europe. Rather, they exemplify the considerable emphasis that European institutions have placed on language education since their foundation, which in the case of the Council of Europe, now with 47 member states, took place in 1949, only four years after the end of World War II. The

rationale for the focus on language education in the European Cultural Convention of 1954 was clear: the enhancement of language learning in Europe was seen as an important part of bringing the continent's societies together and of helping to avoid such horrendous conflicts in the future. Over the past 60 years, European institutions and the specialists working under their auspices have concerned themselves more intensively and broadly with language policies and language issues than has been the case in other countries. While developed for European contexts, some of these initiatives (such as the CEFR) have begun to influence policy makers and researchers in other parts of the world, such as Uzbekistan, Malaysia, Japan and Argentina.

We began the book with an overview of how language, thought, learning and education interrelate and are interdependent before illustrating the central role that language and communication play in all teaching, whatever the subject. We ended the first chapter by citing some of the recommendations made in an important UK government report of the 1970s (Bullock Report, 1975), which were not implemented in the UK, but we believe are relevant to education systems worldwide. The remainder of Part 1 offered an overview of developments in language teaching and learning in general since the middle of the 20th century before turning to the 'special case' of English and the debate about its role in the world, including in the world's education systems.

Part 2 of the book moved on to consider teacher education and teachers' continuing professional development (CPD), starting with the initial teacher education and CPD for teachers of languages, where we were able to draw on data gathered from these fields of activity. We also discussed the place and space that is given to language, language awareness and 'pedagogic' communication in initial and in-service education for primary teachers and teachers of all subjects in secondary education. Here we found it surprisingly difficult to obtain clear information, but came to the conclusion that there is little evidence of consistent or sufficient attention being paid internationally to language and communication issues either in initial teacher education or in CPD.

In Part 3 of the book we turned to the issue of policy, in particular the ways in which stakeholders are typically able to influence policy or are left out of the policy development process. In many countries, policy is developed top-down in consultation with experts who may be working at some distance from the schools and classrooms where policies will be implemented. In most national systems, among the various stakeholders, academics and government advisors, and in line with their vested commercial interests, textbook publishers and examination boards have sought to have decisive influence on policy development and seem to be directly or indirectly involved in policy development to a far greater extent than representatives of school heads, teachers, parents and students, for example.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In this section we put forward our own recommendations concerning the main topics explored in the preceding chapters. Without minimising the context-related and practical challenges faced in implementing such proposals, our aim is to contribute to and move forward the discussion of what needs to be done to ensure that language and languages in education are given the urgent attention and prominence they deserve.

Policy initiatives

Our intention is not to be critical of those around the world who are responsible for policy in education, language education and teacher education – far from it. We understand the challenges they face as the pace of change in the environments around schools and the new generations of children entering them accelerates, sometimes in unpredictable ways. Change is inevitable and essential, but the processes by which changes are decided on and implemented are fraught with challenges. As Michael Fullan (2007) points out:

[...] *change is a process, not an event*, a lesson learned the hard way by those who put all of their energies into developing an innovation or developing legislation without thinking through what would have to happen beyond that point. (Fullan, 2007: 68, author's emphasis)

As Fullan also points out, it is not as if schools have to deal with only one innovation at a time. 'Thus, when we identify factors affecting successful initiation and implementation, we should think of these factors operating across many innovations and many levels of the system (classroom, school, district, state, nation)' (Fullan, 2007: 68). While often innovation is felt to be essential to meet the changing needs of society, there is no question that it must be initiated, piloted and implemented with great care and after wide consultation. For the effects of misguided or poorly implemented new policies can be damaging to those they are intended to benefit, and long-lasting.

Our first concern, therefore, goes well beyond language education. Especially in cases where new initiatives impact on school curricula, on teaching and assessment, and on teacher education, it is critical that, in national or regional systems where this does not already happen, wide and thorough consultation takes place with all the stakeholders who will be affected by the changes. Moreover, such consultation needs to be ongoing and to take place at various stages: it is necessary when the initiative and the rationale for it are first proposed, when the specific implications of the changes are fully specified, and later when the actual plans for implementation are made.

Clearly, the ways in which consultation and participation are organised will depend on the context of the proposed initiative and the nature of that initiative, but meaningful consultation and a readiness to listen to concerns and alternative ideas need to be part of the overall change process. This may take time and require some additional expenditure, but only in this way can the various stakeholder groups play a meaningful and constructive role in the change process, and it is the only way to guard against the potentially damaging influence of lobbyists and of those with vested political or financial interests. Thus, in the case of languages in education and language education, the teachers concerned, pupils, their parents and other relevant stakeholders need to fully understand the rationale behind and the implications of an innovation, such as the introduction of CLIL classes or the inclusion of language awareness in subject teaching, before implementation.

Language as a key feature of the school curriculum

At secondary level, in most educational systems the development of competence in the ‘language of schooling’ – generally the language used in the country or region where the school is situated and the first language of a majority of students – is seen as the responsibility of the teachers concerned. Teachers of other subjects pay relatively little attention to the language of schooling except where technical vocabulary and formulations relating to the subject are concerned. However, as has been highlighted in earlier chapters, language and communication skills, literacy and oracy, are fundamental ‘transversal’ skills needed by all students in many aspects of their schooling and their post-schooling lives. We have referred earlier to the concept of ‘linguistic repertoire’. This is a way of considering all the languages and varieties of languages that a person can use in different contexts and for different purposes, however limited their ability may be. Leaving aside for the moment languages other than the language of schooling, students’ repertoires in the language of schooling affect their learning. The narrower that repertoire, for example, the more limited it is to one variety or register of the language, say the informal spoken language of home life or the playground, the harder it is for students to learn from resources and in situations where other varieties and genres are used. The language used for explaining topics in the science curriculum is different from the language used to debate contentious ideas or to make an oral presentation about the results of an investigative project. As we pointed out in Chapter 1, the gradual broadening of literacy and oracy to encompass and develop competence in a range of varieties and registers of language is an essential aim of education internationally and should be the responsibility of all teachers, whatever their subject specialism. But the work of teachers on developing language and communication

skills and developing a critical awareness of language that can help students to cope with the ways in which language and communication are used in their actual and virtual environment inside and outside education needs to be well-informed, well planned and well-coordinated. This point is reflected in the *Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* (Council of Europe, 2018a) touched on in Chapter 6:

Language learning is always part of subject learning, and the learning of subject-specific knowledge cannot happen without linguistic mediation. Language competence is an integral part of subject competence. Without adequate language competences, a learner can neither properly follow the content that is being taught, nor communicate with others about it. (Council of Europe, 2018a: 17)

This means that there must be cross-curricular collaboration and guidance available such as was recommended over 40 years ago in the Bullock Report:

‘Each school should have an organised policy for language across the curriculum, establishing every teacher’s involvement in language and reading development throughout the years of schooling’; and: ‘Every school should have a suitably qualified teacher with responsibility for advising and supporting his colleagues in language and the teaching of reading’. (Bullock Report, 1975: 514)

At that time, reading was seen as the main route to developing greater literacy and it is still very important, but the work on oracy that has been done since the 1980s supports the contention that being able to participate in oral communication effectively in different situations is no less important.

More than 40 years after the publication of the Bullock Report, the attention paid by researchers, policy makers and practitioners to the important relationship between language development and the development of thinking skills, especially ‘higher order’ thinking skills and critical thinking, is in our view still insufficient. We would urge that more concerted attention should be paid across the curriculum to this key relationship and its importance and potential impact. It should involve focused collaboration among department heads and teachers across the curriculum and establishing language and communication as prominent elements in the curricula for *all* subjects as well as in teacher education. As has been highlighted in another Council of Europe publication on the subject:

It is no longer appropriate for language education to be conceived narrowly and confined to one or two areas of the curriculum. Instead it needs to be seen as central to every school’s mission and culture, and it needs to extend to all subjects in the curriculum. Only then will the

inequalities caused by taking language too much for granted be rectified. (Beacco *et al.*, 2015: 129)

Integration and coherence of curricula

Our own experience has spanned many different aspects of language education. It is an area which provides copious examples of the way in which curricula often lack coherence and miss opportunities for cross-fertilisation and cross-referencing. Like certain other subjects, in secondary education in particular, ‘foreign languages’ have traditionally been seen as belonging in a separate department with its own special needs and characteristics, and with little if any overlap with any other subject. Yet according to the view of language education that we have presented it is no longer right (if it ever was) to see ‘foreign languages’ as unrelated to the teaching of the language of schooling. With the explosion of global mobility and migration in the 21st century, the number of languages spoken by students in a given school or classroom has increased dramatically, as has the diversity of cultures that the students represent. The social advantages of a plurilingual repertoire, however limited, were discussed in Chapter 7. Such a repertoire potentially also enables students to use their knowledge of one language to support the learning of others, and to utilise more than one language in learning and in life, while expanding their understanding of how languages work. In 2019, the British *Guardian* newspaper published a series of articles decrying the lack of encouragement to learn foreign languages in the UK. In one of them, Sean Harford, national director of the agency responsible for school inspections in England and Wales, made the following case for introducing measures to tackle the issue:

Languages are an essential part of a broad, balanced curriculum. Not only do they provide an opportunity to communicate more effectively with others [...]: they also help pupils to understand what it is to be a global citizen, including the importance of tolerance and understanding. And they explicitly celebrate difference and highlight that which we all have in common. This is crucial knowledge in today’s world. (Harford, 2019)

There is also a strong case for somehow dovetailing the learning and use of other languages with the efforts to develop competence in the language of schooling across all subjects, and for the knowledge and learning of other languages to be encouraged by those teaching other subjects, thus fostering plurilingualism across the curriculum. Moreover, in primary and secondary schools, linguistic and cultural awareness can be enhanced in motivating ways by allowing space for the increasing numbers of children with migration backgrounds who have other first language and cultural backgrounds – other repertoires – to talk about and draw on their languages and cultures. As the teacher may well not

be familiar with these, such activities can provide ideal opportunities to temporarily move away from the dynamic in which the teacher is in ultimate control of the flow of knowledge and learning.

There is nothing new about this kind of proposal. A similar line of thinking is put forward in the discussion on curricula in the CEFR itself, where two key principles reproduced below are outlined:

Discussion on curricula should be in line with the overall objective of promoting plurilingualism and linguistic diversity. This means that the teaching and learning of any one language should also be examined in conjunction with the provision for other languages in the education system and the paths which learners might choose to follow in the long term in their efforts to develop a variety of language skills.

... Considerations and measures relating to curricula should not just be limited to a curriculum for each language taken in isolation, nor even an integrated curriculum for several languages. They should also be approached in terms of their role in a general language education, in which linguistic knowledge (*savoir*) and skills (*savoir-faire*), along with the ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*), play not only a specific role in a given language but also a transversal or transferable role across languages. (Council of Europe, 2001: 169)

To summarise the implications of the paradigm shifts proposed above, we see huge advantages in bringing together in one interlocking educational effort:

- Teaching and learning the language of schooling, including developing literacy, oracy and critical awareness of the ways it is used in the various school subjects, in society, in the media (including the social media used by students), in creative works, in political discourse, in marketing and so on.
- The role of language(s) across the curriculum in developing these different kinds of literacy, higher order thinking skills and critical awareness.
- Acknowledging the various home/first languages that form part of the language repertoires of all the people in the school and its environment, and of the cultures they represent, and encouraging them to draw on these when relevant.
- Teaching and learning at least one foreign language for active use and raising students' awareness of the practical and cognitive value of plurilingualism.

Internationally, some systems may well be moving towards such a curricular transformation but most that we are familiar with have yet to make a start.

The promotion of pluralistic approaches to language and culture

In Chapters 1 and 6 we drew attention to the important role of language awareness and of language and intercultural competences in the development and deployment of the constellation of competences that enable us to participate effectively and responsibly in democratic culture. Recent decades have seen a seismic increase in mobility and migration across the world, which has contributed to growing social, cultural and linguistic diversity and pluralism in our societies. Many of us consider this increased diversity to be an enrichment of our societies. However, following the devastating wars and upheavals of the 20th century, governments in Europe, mindful of the potential and historic fragility of democracy, have become especially sensitive to the potential for this increased diversity to be an excuse for extremism and intolerance. The *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* developed by the Council of Europe (2018a) as a support for policy makers and educators across its 47 member states is one of several pan-European responses to this situation.

Plurilingualism, the ability to draw on one's knowledge and awareness of other languages and varieties of language, however modest that knowledge may be, in everyday interactions, and pluriculturalism, the willingness to take account of and embrace cultural diversity in one's everyday encounters, are important life-skills:

Effective learning of one or more languages, awareness of the value of diversity and otherness, and recognition of any (even partial) competence are necessary for anyone who, as an active member of the community, has to exercise his or her democratic citizenship in a multilingual and multicultural society. (Beacco *et al.*, 2015: 17)

This point gains added significance in some contexts in today's Europe, where pride in one's language and cultural heritage too easily spills over into nationalism, particularly in cases where people may feel that their national identity is being swallowed up by the growth of 'Europeanism'. School language classes, both in the mother tongue and in other languages, are surely an appropriate forum for discussion of the balance that needs to be achieved in this sensitive area.

Work has been done on defining how schools and teachers of all subjects could approach the task of helping students of all ages to develop plurilingual and pluricultural competences (see Candelier *et al.*, 2012; Cummins, 1996). But this is no easy task for teachers whose initial training and experience may not have included guidance and practice in this area. Our view is that, for pluralistic approaches to education to become a reality, much more work needs to be done on the practical and curricular implications of such an approach.

In other words, establishing the worthy principles of a plurilingual and pluricultural approach to education and developing an awareness of its importance is not enough, and in many contexts that we are familiar with where diversity is a salient feature too little work has been done even on this. For effective application of these principles, teacher educators and teachers need to have access to or to create concrete and motivating activities and resources that can be used in classrooms, and ongoing support in using them needs to be provided. A concerted and collaborative effort on the part of specialists, teacher educators, school leaders and publishers of educational materials, along the lines raised in the questions at the end of Chapter 9, is needed if such a paradigm shift is to occur.

Teacher education

An implication of the international paradigm shifts recommended above is that further reform is needed in initial and in-service teacher education. As discussed in Part 2 of the book, the limited research we have carried out indicates that most teachers, irrespective of their subject or of the kind of school they work in, are not given the training needed to take on the challenges of understanding and implementing the kind of holistic language education policy outlined above. While in many countries increased mobility means that teachers themselves bring with them competences in other languages and familiarity with other cultures, the approach to language development and language awareness that we are advocating almost certainly was not a feature of their own school education, and, as discussed in Part 2, our limited research indicates that generally teacher education does not systematically include a focus on language and communication and its role in teaching and learning. Apart from the initial education of foreign language teachers we could find few examples where teacher education courses included modules on language, communication, their role in teaching and learning across the curriculum, and the rationale for cross-curricular attention to the development of literacy, oracy and plurilingualism during schooling. This means that teachers are generally left to learn about and learn how to cope with these issues ‘on the job’. Even where teachers of foreign or additional languages are concerned, the language focus of initial teacher education courses tends to be on the technical and discourse features of the so-called ‘target’ language rather than the encompassing broader aspects discussed, for example, in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* and the recently published Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2018b).

In our view, it is essential to build into the curricula for initial teacher education for all teachers of all subjects around the world a significant

strand, or more than one strand, that focuses on the key aspects of language and communication relevant to education. Such a development would be in line with another of the insightful recommendations contained in the Bullock Report mentioned above and in Chapter 1: ‘a substantial course on language in education (including reading) should be part of every primary and secondary school teacher’s initial training, whatever the teacher’s subject or the age of the children with whom he or she will be working’ (Bullock Report, 1975: 515). As indicated in further detailed recommendations in that report, the language dimension of the teacher education curriculum should straddle the building of critical awareness, knowledge and knowhow and the application of this knowhow in everyday teaching practice. For example, the ways in which student teachers and practising teachers use and deal with language and communication in their teaching could be a regular focus of observation of teaching and discussion of feedback, and this could be enhanced by group discussion of video-recorded samples of teaching of different subjects.

This recommendation is not relevant only to initial teacher education: it is essential that language issues should also be regularly included in in-service teacher education and support for the continuing professional development of all teachers, especially in systems where curricula are being reformed to encourage a more inclusive and holistic approach to language. The evidence we have been able to gather indicates that, for most teachers, there are few opportunities in their INSET programmes within and outside their institutions to work with other teachers of the same and different subjects on key issues such as oracy, the development of subject-related academic literacy, handling multilingual and multicultural groups, or looking closely at the language and communication strategies they themselves use in the classroom. In many respects, practising teachers are in an advantageous position since they can build on their experience and current practice to carry out collaborative or individual classroom research focusing on language development and subject-related language use that can inform others, including teacher educators and those implementing curricular reform. Literacy and oracy development and language use do not, however, only affect pedagogy: an enlightened approach to them is also needed in assessment, especially the ongoing assessment carried out by teachers.

The simple fact is that it takes language-aware teachers to develop language awareness in their pupils and students, it takes critically thinking teachers to help pupils and students to develop their critical thinking skills, and it takes teachers committed to a pluralistic approach to develop plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in their classrooms. A systematic structured approach to these and other language-related topics is therefore essential in the CPD of all teachers.

Ways Forward

It is not our place to add more detail to these proposed new paradigms. This prerogative belongs to those working on the formulation and implementation of curricular innovation and changes in the given local, regional or national contexts. The need for concerted action and joined-up thinking is evident, but where would the impetus come from and which stakeholders' initiatives would have the best chances of success? In some countries, such as Finland, it may be possible for individual schools to plan, pilot and implement such reforms, but in many national and regional systems, for such changes to be brought about carefully judged and well-researched policy initiatives are needed 'from the top'. It seems to us that those responsible for curriculum development and the design of teacher education programmes are best placed to instigate such initiatives, as these are two of the most powerful drivers of educational reform. By working together to develop new paradigms of this kind and to pilot new approaches with the help of researchers who are themselves committed to innovation and to breaking out of traditional subject boundaries, convincing evidence could be gathered to persuade those ultimately responsible for policy and its implementation of the importance of this kind of paradigm shift. Once such changes are finalised and implemented in a given context, examination providers, publishers and other stakeholders, who contribute to inertia in education and should not be driving policy, would find it in their interests to pay attention and to respond positively in their own areas. Indeed, as the balance of power and influence in language education shifts and develops, it is important that commercial interests should not be allowed to dictate policies, curriculum design and standards. These areas must remain in the hands of ministries and language teaching professionals, guided by but not dominated by academic institutions and research findings, where these are relevant.

Figures 10.1 and 10.2, taken from Bolitho (2012), are simplified representations of the way in which the impact of an innovation can be diluted depending on its origin and the 'direction of flow'. In Figure 10.1, let us imagine that the policy change originates at national ministry level, in the centre circle. As the structure of the innovation project is based on dissemination or cascading from this centre of activity and energy through regional and institutional levels, there is a likelihood that change messages will be diluted and distorted by the time they reach the teachers working in the outer circle.

In Figure 10.2, on the other hand, activity and energy is generated initially at classroom level, with high levels of involvement of both teachers and learners in the centre circle, which reverses the direction of flow in Figure 10.1.

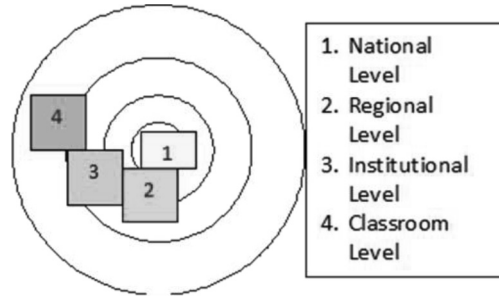


Figure 10.1 Change initiated 'top-down' at national level

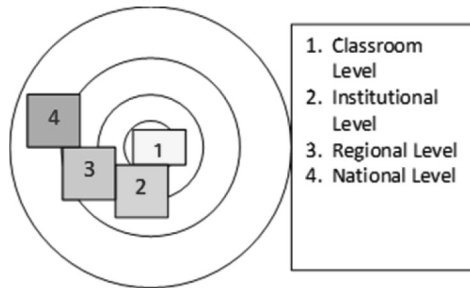


Figure 10.2 Change that starts in the classroom and works 'bottom-up'

However, it is equally hard for good practice at classroom level to be disseminated as far as the national level, where the impact might be heeded and lessons learned that can be applied nationally (Bolitho, 2012: 42–43). The key point is that in a sense change needs to be initiated and embraced in each of the concentric circles. This implies a careful process of needs assessment, consultation, trial implementation and further consultation. Only in this way can 'dilution' of change initiatives be avoided.

Figure 10.3 below illustrates a potential relationship between key stakeholders. The different categories of stakeholder are again organised in concentric circles, with teachers, learners and their parents 'at the sharp end' nearest the centre where the new policy will be developed, tried out and implemented, the most prominent stakeholders in the middle circle, and the advisers, researchers, funding agencies and, in the case of Europe, European bodies in the outer circle. But the key condition for these various stakeholders to be effective in delivering policies that reflect the new paradigms, we suggest, is that they must continually communicate with one another and take into account the views and experiences of fellow stakeholders. There needs to be constructive cooperation and communication within each layer of the circle as well as among stakeholders in different layers. In other words, joined up thinking and collaborative action along the lines we have indicated is essential for effective policy initiatives.

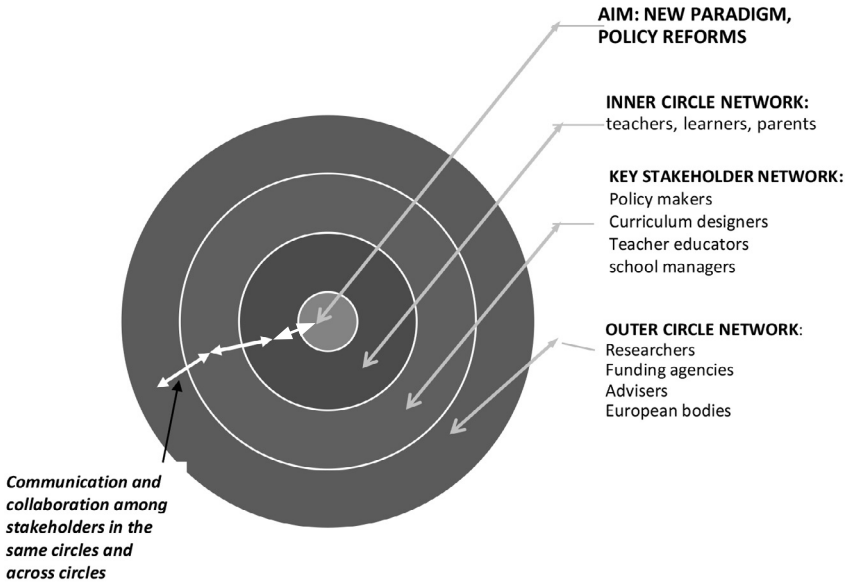


Figure 10.3 Involvement of and collaboration among different groups of stakeholders in a language-related reform process in education – a schematic view

Concluding Remarks

Educational reform in most countries in the world is driven by the twin concerns of employability and international competition, as well as the attention paid to national rankings in the triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies. But accompanying and underlying these preoccupations should be a desire to enable each student to reach his or her true potential in education and in society, and to become active and well-informed citizens. The first volume of *The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture* cited above summarises these objectives of education well:

Democratic education should be part of a comprehensive and coherent vision of education, of an education of the whole person. The Council of Europe, in Recommendation CM/Rec (2007), provides a vision of education that includes four major purposes:

- preparation for the labour market;
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- personal development;
- the development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base. (Council of Europe, 2018a: 14)

To achieve these goals, it is crucial for each individual to be able to use a well-developed language repertoire across disciplines, and in all

aspects of life outside and beyond education, and it is essential that teachers and curricula in schools enable them to do this. In this book, we have looked at some of the possible means of achieving this in any context internationally, in the hope that they will be re-examined and acted upon by educational decision makers.

Questions for reflection and discussion

- (1) How relevant are the proposals on curriculum reform in the context where you work? In your view, what steps are needed in your context to ensure a more coherent policy in language education across the curriculum?
- (2) How many languages and how many cultures are typically represented in schools in the educational environment in which you work? What steps are taken to cater for and take advantage of this diversity? What challenges, if any, does this kind of diversity present to teachers?
- (3) Do you agree that language and language awareness should be more intensively and broadly focused on in the initial teacher education and professional development of all teachers? How could this best be achieved in your context?