

# Multilingual Cities Project: Crossnational Perspectives on Immigrant Minority Languages in Europe

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## Abstract

Few studies have taken both a crossnational and a crosslinguistic perspective on the status and use of IM languages in Europe (Jaspaert & Kroon 1991, Extra & Verhoeven 1993b, 1998, Fase *et al.* 1995, Ammerlaan *et al.* 2001). Here we present the rationale, methodology, and outcomes of the *Multilingual Cities Project*, carried out as a multiple case study in six major multicultural cities in different EU member-states. Our focus will be on the two major private and public domains in which language transmission occurs, i.e. the home and the school, respectively. For a full report we refer to Extra & Yağmur (2004).

## Summary

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## 1. Introduction

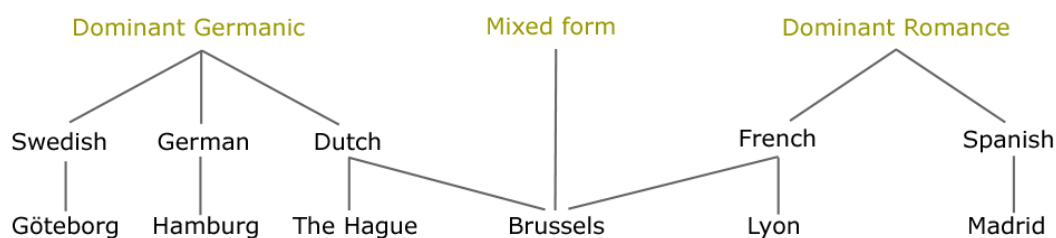
Given the overwhelming focus on processes of second language acquisition by immigrant minority (IM henceforth) groups, there is much less evidence on the status and use of IM languages across Europe as a result of processes of immigration and minorisation. Obviously, typological differences between IM languages across EU member states do exist, e.g. in terms of the status of IM languages as EU or non-EU languages, or as languages of formerly colonized source countries. Taken from the latter perspective, e.g. Indian languages are prominent in Great Britain, Arabic languages in France, Congolese languages in Belgium, and Surinamese languages in the Netherlands. Most studies on IM languages in Europe have focussed on a spectrum of IM languages at the level of one particular nation-state (e.g. Alladina & Edwards 1991, LMP 1985, Extra & De Ruiter 2001, Extra *et al.* 2002, Extra & Verhoeven 1993a, Caubet *et al.* 2002) or on one particular IM language at the national or European level (e.g. Obdeijn & De Ruiter 1998 and Tilmatine 1997 on Arabic in Europe or Jörgensen 2003 on Turkish in Europe).

Few studies have taken both a crossnational and a crosslinguistic perspective on the status and use of IM languages in Europe (Jaspaert & Kroon 1991, Extra & Verhoeven 1993b, 1998, Fase *et al.* 1995, Ammerlaan *et al.* 2001). Here we present the rationale, methodology, and outcomes of the *Multilingual Cities Project*, carried out as a multiple case study in six major multicultural cities in different EU member-states. Our focus will be on the two major private and public domains in which language transmission occurs, i.e. the home and the school, respectively. For a full report we refer to Extra & Yağmur (2004).

## 2. Rationale and data base of the Multilingual Cities Project

The project was carried out under the auspices of the European Cultural Foundation, established in Amsterdam, and it was coordinated by a research team at Babylon, Centre for Studies of the Multicultural Society, at Tilburg University in the Netherlands, in cooperation with universities and educational authorities in all participating cities. The aims of the MCP were to gather, analyse, and compare multiple data on the status of IM languages at home and at school. In the participating cities, ranging from Northern to Southern Europe, Germanic and/or Romance languages have a dominant status in public life. Figure 1 gives an outline of the project.

**Figure 1. Outline of the Multilingual Cities Project (MCP)**



The rationale for collecting, analysing and comparing multiple home language data on multicultural school populations derived from three different perspectives:

taken from a *demographic* perspective, home language data play a crucial role in the definition and identification of multicultural school populations;

taken from a *sociolinguistic* perspective, home language data offer relevant insights into both the distribution and vitality of home languages across groups, and thus raise the public awareness of multilingualism;

taken from an *educational* perspective, home language data are indispensable tools for educational planning and policies.

Our questionnaire for data collection was designed after an ample study and evaluation of language-related questions in nation-wide or large-scale population research in a variety of countries with a long-term history of migration and minorisation processes (see Broeder & Extra 1998), and also derived from extensive empirical experiences gained in carrying out municipal home language surveys amongst pupils both in primary and secondary schools in the Netherlands (see Extra *et al.* 2001, 2002). Table 1 gives an overview of the resulting data base derived from the reports of primary school children in an age range of 4-12 years (only in The Hague were also data collected at secondary schools). The total crossnational sample consists of more than 160,000 pupils.

**Table 1. Overview of the MCP data base (\* Dutch-medium schools only; \*\* Réseau d'Éducation Prioritaire only)**

| City      | Total of schools | Total of schools in the survey | Total of pupils in schools | Total of pupils in the survey | Age range of pupils |
|-----------|------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Brussels  | 117 *            | 110 *                          | 11,500                     | 10,300                        | 6-12                |
| Hamburg   | 231 public       | 218 public                     | 54,900                     | 46,000                        | 6-10                |
|           | 17 catholic      | 14 catholic                    |                            |                               |                     |
| Lyon      | 173 **           | 42 **                          | 60,000                     | 11,650                        | 6-11                |
| Madrid    | 708 public       | 133 public                     | 202,000                    | 30,000                        | 5-12                |
|           | 411 catholic     | 21 catholic                    | 99,000                     |                               |                     |
| The Hague | 142 primary      | 109 primary                    | 41,170                     | 27,900                        | 4-12                |
|           | 30 secondary     | 26 secondary                   | 19,000                     | 13,700                        | 12-17               |
| Göteborg  | 170              | 122                            | 36,100                     | 21,300                        | 6-12                |

### 3. Immigrant minority languages at home

On the basis of the home language profiles of all major language groups, a crosslinguistic and pseudolongitudinal comparison was made of the reported multiple dimensions of language proficiency, language choice, language dominance, and language preference. For comparative analyses, these four dimensions have been operationalized as follows:

- language proficiency: the extent to which the home language under consideration is *understood*;
- language choice: the extent to which this language is commonly spoken at home *with the mother*;
- language dominance: the extent to which this home language is spoken *best*;
- language preference: the extent to which this home language is *preferably* spoken.

The operationalization of the first and second dimensions (language proficiency and language choice) was aimed at a maximal scope for tracing language vitality. Language understanding is generally the least demanding of the four language skills involved, and the mother acts generally as the major gatekeeper for intergenerational language transmission (Clyne 2003). The final aim was the construction of a language vitality index (henceforward LVI), based on the outcomes of the four dimensions presented above. These four dimensions are compared as proportional scores in terms of the mean proportion of pupils per language group that indicated a positive response to the relevant questions. The LVI is, in turn, the mean value of these four proportional scores. This LVI is by definition an arbitrary index, in the sense that the *chosen* dimensions with the *chosen* operationalizations are *equally* weighted.

The outcomes of the local surveys were aggregated in one crossnational home language survey (HLS) data base. Two criteria were used to select 20 languages for crossnational analyses: each language should be represented by at least 3 cities, and each city should be represented in the crossnational HLS data base by at least 30 pupils in the age range of 6-11 years. Our focus on this age range was motivated by comparability considerations: this range is represented in the local HLS data bases of all participating cities. Romani/Sinte was included in the crossnational analyses because of its special status in our list of 20 languages as a language without territorium status. Two languages have an exceptional status: English 'invaded' the local HLS's as a language of international prestige, and Romani/Sinte is solidly represented in Hamburg and Göteborg only.

In the crossnational and crosslinguistic analyses, three age groups and three generations are distinguished. The age groups consist of children aged 6/7, 8/9, and 10/11 years old. The three generations have been operationalized as follows: G1: pupil + father + mother born abroad; G2: pupil born in the country of residence, father *and/or* mother born abroad; G3: pupil + father + mother born in the country of residence. On the basis of this categorization, intergenerational shift can be globally estimated. In Table 2 we present the language vitality indices (LVI) of the combined age groups (6-11 years) per language group in decreasing order.

**Table 2. LVI of combined age groups (6-11 years) per language group in decreasing order (derived from Extra & Yağmur 2004: 375)**

| Nr | Language group           | LVI | Nr | Language group | LVI |
|----|--------------------------|-----|----|----------------|-----|
| 1  | Romani/Sinte             | 70  | 11 | Polish         | 56  |
| 2  | Turkish                  | 68  | 12 | Somali         | 55  |
| 3  | Urdu                     | 68  | 13 | Portuguese     | 54  |
| 4  | Armenian                 | 63  | 14 | Berber         | 52  |
| 5  | Russian                  | 60  | 15 | Kurdish        | 51  |
| 6  | Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian | 59  | 16 | Spanish        | 48  |
| 7  | Albanian                 | 59  | 17 | French         | 44  |
| 8  | Vietnamese               | 58  | 18 | Italian        | 39  |
| 9  | Chinese                  | 58  | 19 | English        | 36  |
| 10 | Arabic                   | 58  | 20 | German         | 33  |

Romani/Sinte was found to have the highest language vitality across age groups, and English and German had the lowest. The bottom position of English was explained by the fact that this language has a higher status as *lingua franca* than as language at home. The top position of Romani/Sinte was also observed in earlier and similar research amongst children in the Netherlands, and confirmed by various other studies of this particular language community. One reason why language vitality is a core value for the Roma across Europe is the absence of source country references as alternative markers of identity –in contrast to almost all other language groups under consideration.

There are strong differences between language groups in the distribution of pupils across different generations. In most language groups, second-generation pupils are best represented and third-generation pupils least. In conformity with expectations, the obtained data finally show a stronger decrease of language vitality across generations than across age groups. The strongest intergenerational shift between first- and third-generation pupils emerges for Polish, whereas the strongest intergenerational maintenance of language vitality occurs for Romani/Sinte and Turkish.

The local language surveys have delivered a wealth of hidden evidence on the distribution and vitality of IM languages at home across European cities and nation-states. Apart from Madrid, latecomer amongst our focal cities in respect of immigration, the proportion of primary school children in whose homes other languages were used next to or instead of the mainstream language ranged per city between one third and more than a half. The total number of traced other languages ranged per city between 50 and 90; the common pattern was that few languages were often referred to by the children and that many languages were referred to only a few times. The findings show that making use of more than one language is a way of life for an increasing number of children across Europe. Mainstream and non-mainstream languages should not be conceived of in terms of competition. Rather, the data show that these languages are used as alternatives, dependent on such factors as type of context or interlocutor. The data make also clear that the use of other languages at home does not occur at the cost of competence in the mainstream language. Many children who addressed their parents in another language reported to be dominant in the mainstream language.

Amongst the major 20 languages in the participating cities, 10 languages are of European origin and 10 languages stem from abroad. These findings show that the traditional concept of language diversity in Europe should be reconsidered and extended. The outcomes of the local language surveys also demonstrate the high status of English amongst primary school children across Europe. Its intrusion in the children's homes is apparent from the position of English in the top-5 of non-national languages referred to by the children in all participating cities. This outcome cannot be explained as an effect of migration and minorization only. The children's reference to English also derives from the status of English as the international language of power and prestige. English has become the dominant *lingua franca* for cross-national communication across Europe. Moreover, children have access to English through a variety of media, and English is commonly taught in particular grades at primary schools.

#### 4. Immigrant minority languages at school

We present the major outcomes of our comparative study on the teaching of IM languages in the six EU cities and countries of the MCP under discussion. Being aware of crossnational differences in denotation, we will use the concept *community language teaching* (henceforward CLT) when referring to this type of education. Our rationale for the CLT concept rather than the concepts *mother tongue teaching* or *home language instruction* is the inclusion of a broad spectrum of potential target groups. First of all, the status of an IM language as 'native' or home language is subject to change through intergenerational processes of language shift. Moreover, in secondary education, both minority and majority pupils are often *de jure* (although seldom *de facto*) admitted to CLT.

From a historical point of view, most of the countries in the MCP show a similar chronological development in their argumentation in favour of CLT. CLT was generally introduced into primary education with a view to family remigration. This objective was also clearly expressed in Directive 77/486 of the European Community, on 25 July 1977. The Directive focused on the education of the children of 'migrant workers' with the aim 'principally to facilitate their possible reintegration into the Member-State of origin'. As is clear from this

formulation, the Directive excluded all IM children originating from non-EU countries, although these children formed the large part of IM children in European primary schools. At that time, Sweden was not a EU member-state, and CLT policies for IM children in Sweden were not directed towards remigration but modeled according to bilingual education policies for the large minority of Finnish-speaking children in Sweden.

In the 1970s, the above argumentation for CLT was increasingly abandoned. Demographic developments showed no substantial signs of families remigrating to their source countries; instead, a process of family reunion and minorization came about in the target countries. This development resulted in a conceptual shift, and CLT became primarily aimed at combating disadvantages. CLT had to bridge the gap between the home and the school environment, and to encourage school achievement in 'regular' subjects. Because such an approach tended to underappreciate ethnocultural dimensions, a number of countries began to emphasize the intrinsic importance of CLT from cultural, legal, and economic perspectives:

- in cultural respects, CLT can contribute to maintaining and advancing a pluralist society;
- in legal respects, CLT can meet the internationally recognized right to language development and language maintenance, in correspondence with the fact that many IM groups consider their own language of key value to their cultural identity;
- in economic respects, CLT can lead to an important pool of profitable knowledge in societies which are increasingly internationally oriented.

**Table 3. Status of CLT in European primary and secondary education, according to nine parameters in six countries (Sw/G/N/B/F/Sp = Sweden/Germany/Netherlands until 2004/Belgium/ France/Spain) (source: Extra & Yağmur 2004: 385)**

| CLT parameters            | Primary education   | Secondary education   |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Target groups          | IM children in a broad vs. narrow definition in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the spectrum of languages taught (Sp &lt; N B F &lt; G Sw)</li> <li>• language use and language proficiency (G N B Sp &lt; Sw F)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>de iure</i>: mostly IM pupils; sometimes all pupils (in particular N)</li> <li>• <i>de facto</i>: IM pupils in a broad vs. narrow sense (see left) (limited participation, in particular B Sp)</li> </ul> |
| 2. Arguments              | mostly in terms of a struggle against deficits, rarely in terms of multicultural policy (N B vs. other countries)   | mostly in terms of multicultural policy, rarely in terms of deficits (all countries)  |
| 3. Objectives             | rarely specified in terms of (meta)linguistic and (inter)cultural skills (Sw G Sp vs. N B F)  | specified in terms of oral and written skills to be reached at interim and final stages (all countries)   |
| 4. Evaluation             | mostly informal/subjective through teacher, rarely formal/objective through measurement and school report figures (Sw G F vs. B N Sp)   | formal/objective assessment plus school report figures (Sw G N vs. B F Sp)  |
| 5. Minimal enrolment      | specified at the level of classes, schools, or municipalities (Sw vs. G B F vs. N Sp)   | specified at the level of classes, schools, or municipalities (Sw N vs. other countries)  |
| 6. Curricular status      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• voluntary and optional</li> <li>• within vs. outside regular school hours (G N Sp vs. S B F)</li> <li>• 1-5 hours per week</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• voluntary and optional</li> <li>• within regular school hours</li> <li>• one/more lessons per week (all countries)</li> </ul>  |
| 7. Funding                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by national, regional or local educational authorities</li> <li>• by consulates/embassies of countries of origin (Sw N vs. B Sp, mixed G F)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by national, regional or local educational authorities</li> <li>• by consulates/embassies of countries of origin (Sw N F vs. B Sp, mixed G)</li> </ul>   |
| 8. Teaching materials     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from countries of residence</li> <li>• from countries of origin (Sw G N vs. B F Sp)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from countries of residence</li> <li>• from countries of origin (Sw N F vs. B Sp)</li> </ul>   |
| 9. Teacher qualifications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from countries of residence</li> <li>• from countries of origin (Sw G N vs. B F Sp)</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from countries of residence</li> <li>• from countries of origin (Sw N F vs. B Sp)</li> </ul>   |

In Table 3 we give a crossnational summary of the outcomes of our comparative study of nine parameters of CLT in primary and secondary education. A comparison of all nine parameters makes clear that CLT has gained a higher status in secondary schools than in primary schools. In primary education, CLT is generally not part of the 'regular' or 'national' curriculum, and, consequently, it tends to become a negotiable entity in a complex and often opaque interplay of forces by a variety of actors, in contrast with other curricular subjects. Another remarkable fact is that, in some countries (particularly France, Belgium, Spain, and some German federal states), CLT is funded by the consulates or embassies of the countries of origin. In these cases, the national government does not interfere in the organization of CLT, or in the requirements for, and the selection and employment of teachers. A paradoxical consequence of this phenomenon is that the earmarking of CLT budgets is often safeguarded by the above-mentioned consulates or embassies. National, regional, or local governments often fail to earmark budgets, so that funds meant for CLT may be appropriated for other educational purposes. It should be mentioned that CLT for primary school children in the Netherlands has been completely abolished in the school year 2004/2005, resulting in Dutch-only education in multicultural and multilingual primary schools.

The higher status of CLT in secondary education is largely due to the fact that instruction in one or more languages other than the national standard language is a traditional and regular component of the (optional) school curriculum, whereas primary education is highly determined by a monolingual *habitus* (Gogolin 1994). *Within* secondary education, however, CLT must compete with 'foreign' languages that have a higher status or a longer tradition.

CLT may be part of a largely centralized or decentralized educational policy. In the Netherlands, national responsibilities and educational funds are gradually being transferred to the municipal level, and even to individual schools. In France, government policy is strongly centrally controlled. Germany has devolved governmental responsibilities chiefly to its federal states, with all their mutual differences. Sweden grants far-reaching autonomy to municipal councils in dealing with educational tasks and funding. In general, comparative crossnational references to experiences with CLT in the various EU member-states are rare (Reich 1991, 1994, Reid & Reich 1992, Fase 1994, Tilmatine 1997, Broeder & Extra 1998), or they focus on particular language groups (Tilmatine 1997, Obdeijn & De Ruiters 1998).

## 5. Dealing with multilingualism at school

There is a great need for educational policies in Europe that take new realities of multilingualism into account. Processes of internationalization and globalization have brought European nation-states to the world, but they have also brought the world to European nation-states. This bipolar pattern of change has led to both convergence and divergence of multilingualism across Europe. On the one hand, English is on the rise as the *lingua franca* for international communication across the borders of European nation-states at the cost of all other national languages of Europe, including French. In spite of many objections against the hegemony of English (Phillipson 2003), this process of convergence will be enhanced by the extension of the EU in an eastward direction. Within the borders of European nation-states, however, there is an increasing divergence of home languages due to large-scale processes of migration and intergenerational minorization.

The call for differentiation of the monolingual *habitus* of primary schools across Europe originates not only *bottom-up* from IM parents or organizations, but also *top-down* from supra-national institutions which emphasize the increasing need for European citizens with a transnational and multicultural affinity and identity. Multilingual competencies are considered prerequisites for such an affinity and identity. Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe have published many policy documents in which language diversity is cherished as a key element of the multicultural identity of Europe –now and in the future. This language diversity is considered to be a prerequisite rather than an obstacle for a united European space in which all citizens are equal (not the same) and enjoy equal rights (Council of Europe 2000). The maintenance of language diversity and the promotion of language learning and multilingualism are seen as essential elements for the improvement of communication and for the reduction of intercultural misunderstanding.

The European Commission (1995) opted in a so-called *Whitebook* for trilingualism as a policy goal for all European citizens. Apart from the "mother tongue", each citizen should learn at least two "community languages". In fact, the concept of "mother tongue" referred to the national languages of particular nation-states and ignored the fact that mother tongue and national language do not coincide for many inhabitants of Europe. At the same time, the concept of "community languages" referred to the national languages of two other EU member-states. In later European Commission documents, reference was made to one foreign language with high international prestige (English was deliberately not referred to) and one so-called "neighbouring language". The latter concept related always to neighbouring countries, never to next-door neighbours.

The heads of state and government of all EU member-states called upon the European Commission to take further action to promote multilingualism across Europe, in particular by the learning and teaching of at least two foreign languages from a very young age (Nikolov & Curtain 2000). The Action Plan 2004-2006, published by the European Commission (2003) may ultimately lead to an inclusive approach in which IM languages are no longer denied access to Europe's celebration of language diversity. In particular, the plea for the learning of three languages by all EU citizens, the plea for an early start to such learning experiences, and the plea for offering a wide range of languages to choose from, open the door to such an inclusive approach. Although this may sound paradoxical, such an approach can also be advanced by accepting the role of English as *lingua franca* for intercultural communication across Europe. Against this background, the following principles are suggested for the enhancement of multilingualism at the primary school level:

1. In the primary school curriculum, three languages are introduced for all children: the standard language of the particular nation-state as a major school subject and the major language of communication for the teaching of other school subjects; English as *lingua franca* for international communication; an additional third language opted from a variable and varied set of priority languages at the national, regional, and local level of the multicultural society.
2. The teaching of all these languages is part of the regular school curriculum and subject to educational inspection.
3. Regular primary school reports contain information on the children's proficiency in each of these languages.
4. National working programmes are established for the priority languages referred to under (1) in order to develop curricula, teaching methods, and teacher training programmes.
5. Part of these priority languages may be taught at specialized language schools.

This set of principles is aimed at reconciling *bottom-up* and *top-down* pleas in Europe for multilingualism, and is inspired by large-scale and enduring experiences with the learning and teaching of English (as L1 or L2) and one Language Other Than English (LOTE) for all children in Victoria State, Australia (see Extra & Yağmur 2004: 99-105). When each of the above-mentioned languages should be introduced in the curriculum and whether or when they should be subject or medium of instruction, has to be spelled out according to particular national, regional, or local demands. Derived from an overarching conceptual and longitudinal framework, priority languages could be specified in terms of both regional and immigrant minority languages for the development of curricula, teaching methods, and teacher training programmes. Moreover, the increasing internationalization of pupil populations in European schools requires that a language policy be introduced for *all* school children in which the traditional dichotomy between foreign language instruction for indigenous majority pupils and home language instruction for IM pupils is put aside. Given the experiences abroad (e.g., the Victorian School of Languages in Australia), language schools can become expertise centers where a variety of languages are taught, if the children's demand is low and/or spread over many schools. In line with the proposed principles for primary schooling, similar ideas could be worked out for secondary schools where learning more than one language is already an established curricular practice. The above-mentioned principles would recognize multilingualism in an increasingly multicultural environment as an asset for all children and for society at large. The European Union, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO could function as leading transnational agencies in promoting such concepts. The

UNESCO Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity (last update 2002) is highly in line with the views expressed here, in particular in its plea to encourage linguistic diversity, to respect the mother tongue at all levels of education, and to foster the learning of several languages from the youngest age.

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