Language Policy and Methodology

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of a language policy is crucially associated with questions of methodology. This paper explores approaches to language policy, approaches to methodology and the impact that these have on language teaching practice. Language policies can influence decisions about teaching methodologies either directly, by making explicit recommendations about the methods to be used in classroom practice, or indirectly, through the conceptualisation of language learning which underlies the policy. It can be argued that all language policies have the potential to influence teaching methodologies indirectly and that those policies which have explicit recommendations about methodology are actually functioning of two levels. This allows for the possibility of conflict between the direct and indirect dimensions of the policy which results from an inconsistency between the explicitly recommended methodology and the underlying conceptualisation of language teaching and learning which informs the policy.

KEYWORDS: language policy, language planning, language teaching methodology: política lingüística, planificación lingüística, metodología de la enseñanza de las lenguas

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INTRODUCTION

Language policy has been defined as "the deliberate choices made by governments or other authorities with regard to the relationship between language and social life" (Djité, 1994: 63). The place and nature of language in the area of education is one key dimension of the relationship between language and social life about which governments make such deliberate choices. This aspect of language policy is conventionally known as language-in-education policy (Baldauf, 1990; Kaplan and Baldauf, 2002; Paulston and McLaughlin, 1994) or *acquisition planning* (Cooper, 1989). Some governments have produced specific comprehensive policies covering languages in education, however, it is more usually the case that language-in-education planning is embodied in a range of different documents including policy papers, curriculum and assessment documents and other official documents that affect the language teaching profession. These documents cover a wide range of issues relating to language education, of which method is only one element.

Language teaching method has always been a key concern of language educators, but has tended not to receive a great deal of attention in language planning and policy. Few language policies make explicit reference to issues of language teaching method and few studies of language policy have addressed the issue of the place of methods in such policies. This paper will begin by outlining a framework for investigating the place of language teaching method in language policy and the following sections of will examine some particular polities to study the ways in which policy about methods is formulated and articulated. The discussion will draw on language-in-education policy relating to the teaching of ESL or EFL and will examine how the relationships between methods policy and other aspects of language-in-education policy and external contextual variables interact to shape language teaching practice.

I. THE PLACE OF METHOD IN LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY

Method usually only becomes explicitly articulated in a policy when there is a perception that existing teaching approaches are problematic. For example, the movement toward explicit support for Communicative Language Teaching in China came about because of a perception that the very low standards being achieved by learners of English resulted from the widespread use of traditional grammar-oriented methods (Hu, 2002; Liao, 2000/2001). Language teaching method then is a topic for explicit attention in language policy when there is a perception that poor outcomes in language learning are the result of problematic teaching methods. Where method is included explicitly in language policies it is typically singled out as the sole — or at least most significant — factor contributing to a perceived problem in the effectiveness of language teaching in a particular polity. Method change is therefore often presented unproblematically as the solution to poor language teaching and learning, without reference to other factors which may have an impact. Where this is the case, Communicative Language Teaching has tended to be presented as the methodological choice which will overcome the

existing problems in language teaching. As such, in much policy rhetoric, Communicative Language Teaching is represented as the 'ideal' method, and methodological change is seen as fundamental to changing the quality of language teaching in a particular polity. However, as Pennycook (1989) recognises, the positivistic view that methods develop from 'traditional' to 'modern' in a linear fashion is a flawed view which does not recognise the cultural, social, economic, and political relations of power involved in the promotion of one method over another.

Innovations in method at policy level, however, often fail to reflect the complexity of change in language teaching in that they fail to give adequate attention to the context in which a language is being taught. In particular, teacher characteristics such as level of language proficiency and level of professional learning and cultural dimensions such as expected learning and teaching styles, learner and teacher roles, expected outcomes of language learning and patterns of classroom interaction may all influence the practical impact of method change at the policy level (Markee, 1994; 1997). In general, global attempts to change instructional method through language policy have had a low rate of success (see for example Brindley and Hood, 1990; Kirkpatrick, 1984; Li, 2001; Sano, Takahashi and Yoneyama, 1984; Shamin, 1996).

Even though language policy documents do make reference to questions of method, few academic studies of language planning and policy have treated method as a specific instance of language-in-education planning. A notable exception is the work of Kaplan and Baldauf (1997; 2002), who divide language-in-education policy into a number of areas of focus:

> • *access policy*: policies regarding the designation of languages to be studied and of the levels of education at which language will be studied;
> • *personnel policy:* policies regarding teacher recruitment, professional learning and standards;
> • *curriculum and community policy*: policies regarding what will be taught and how the teaching will be organised, including the specification of outcomes and assessment instruments;
> • *methods and materials policy:* policies regarding prescriptions of methodology and set texts for language study;
> • *resourcing policy:* policies regarding the level of funding to be provided for languages in the education system
> • *evaluation policy:* policies regarding how the impact of language-in-education policy will be measured and how the effectiveness of policy implementation will be gauged.

This typology of language-in-education policy is a useful starting point for considering questions of the place of method in language policy, however, limiting a study of method to the *materials and methods* component of policy is problematic. Any study of the place of method in language-in-education policy must deal with more than overt specifications about language teaching

methods as methodology is central to many other areas of language-in-education policy. Policies regarding language learning materials have a direct, and reciprocal, impact on questions of method, hence the close bracketing of these in Kaplan and Baldauf's typology. There is also a strong direct impact of curriculum policy, and especially assessment, on language teaching method. Other areas of policy development will also have an impact on questions of method, although this impact will in many cases be indirect. In particular, information about official level decision-making about methods can be found in policy documents relating to curriculum, materials and assessment, which may all imply certain methodological principles or choices. This means that for the sorts of analysis needed to deal with questions of the place of method in language-in-education policy a more finely grained typology is needed for at least part of the scope of Kaplan and Baldauf's model. Language teaching methods have the potential to be included in, to influence and to be influenced by at least four sub-components of language-in-education policy:

- Methodspolicy: policy statements dealing with questions of language teaching method;
- *Materials* policy: policy statements dealing with questions of textbooks and other resources for language learning;
- Curriculum policy: policy statements dealing with the goals and content of language leaming;
- *Assessment policy*: policy statements dealing with what is to be assessed and how.

In each of these dimensions of language-in-education policy, the question of methods is at least implicit, and even where there is no explicit methods policy. issues of method will be dealt with to some extent in other domains of policy. Any study of method which is limited solely to methods policy is likely to miss much of what is happening in the context of language teaching method at the policy level. This is because in rnany polities. language methods are not directly specified in policy documents but rather are to be inferred from or are constrained by other dimensions of policy, especially decisions made about materials, curriculum and assessment. As such, questions of method may be dealt with overtly in language policy by an overt statement of preference for one method over another or covertly through requirements for curriculum, for the use of certain materials or through the establishment of particular regimes of assessment. This means that many societies may indirectly promote certain methodological choices without having formulated an explicit statement of what those choices should be.

II. METHOD IN LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY FOR EFL IN THE PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The Peoples' Republic of China has a relatively long tradition of overtly stated methods policy, beginning with the trial English syllabus issued in 1978. The 1978 syllabus marks the emerging

of language teaching from the disruption which had **been** engendered during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) as the result of numerous prohibitions on the use and learning of foreign languages and the breakdown of the formal education system (Ross, 1992). When English teaching began to re-emerge in the latter half of the Cultural Revolution, the teaching approach adopted was subjugated to ideological demands. Textbooks of the time were politically charged and based on the politics of the Cultural Revolution rather than on **principles** of language teaching and learning (Adamson and Morris, 1997; Hu, 2002). The textbooks of the time favoured a teacher-centred grammar-translation approach, in which text comprehension was more important than language acquisition (Hu, 2002). At the time of the Cultural Revolution, there was no overt statement of methods policy, but rather a covertly assigned preferred method of language teaching inherent in the textbooks of the time and mandated by the political context.

From 1976, the introduction of the 'Four Modernisations' **restored** the learning of English in the Chinese school curriculum, and English was made a core subject in the secondary curriculum and included in the National College **Entrance** Examinations (Hu, 2002). Language-in-education policy at this time was strongly centralised with the **aim** of controlling educational content and ensuring the quality of teaching and the period is marked by the nation-wide imposition of unified curricula and textbooks, with curriculum design, syllabus production and textbook writing centrally controlled by the Ministry of Education. The 1978 trial English syllabus was the **outcome** of the early work of the Ministry.

The 1978 syllabus suggested an approach to language teaching which combined elements of grammar-translation and audiolingualism, with the aim of developing language skills and providing intellectual training through language learning (Adamson and Morris, 1997). This combined methodology was reinforced in the **officially** produced English textbook. This textbook provided for early language study based on pronunciation and intonation practice and oral **drills** supplemented at **later** levels by a written language focus involving the study of grammar, rote learning of vocabulary, reading of literary texts, and translation (Hu, 2002). By the 1980s, considerable dissatisfaction had emerged with the level of English language teaching in the Peoples' Republic of China and attention was drawn to the existing teaching method as one of the key barriers to successful language learning.

From the 1990s national curricula began to **promote** the development of 'communicative **competence'** and **the** development of **all** four language macroskills. Continuing this line of development, the current version of the national syllabus for English, which was introduced in 2000, strongly **promotes** Communicative Language Teaching as the norm in the Peoples' Republic of China. As such, at the level of method policy, Communicative Language Teaching is now centrally enshrined as the norm in Chinese language education. However, the movement towards Communicative Language Teaching at the policy level has not typically **been** reciprocated by a move to Communicative Language Teaching at the level of practice (Hu, 2002). The implementation of Communicative Language Teaching has **been** made problematic by two other **areas** of language-in-education policy, materials policy and assessment policy.

The development of new Chinese textbooks for English has still **been** strongly controlled by the government, although the dominant role has now **been** devolved to the provincial **level**. This devolution has led to a decentralised approach to textbook development which has led to the development of multiple textbooks, of which two — *Junior Englishfor China* and *Senior English for China*— **dominate** the educational landscape, being used in over 70% of Peoples' Republic of China schools (Hu, 2002). These textbooks **have** adopted an eclectic approach mixing Communicative Language Teaching with audiolingual method and the use of L1 translation (cf. Adamson and Morris, 1997). These textbooks strongly emphasise the need for professional development of Chinese teachers for Communicative Language Teaching and, in the teachers' version of the textbooks, each **lesson** is prefaced by recommendations for the organisation of teaching, instructional techniques and methods and materials. These textbooks **because** of their eclectic nature present only a **partial** communicative approach while continuing earlier approaches to language teaching. This means that the way the preferred teaching method is conceptualised in the methods policy itself and the way it is conceptualised in these textbooks is not wholly consistent and a **diverse** range of methods is actually being presented to teachers. **A** second series of textbooks for English with a more consistent communicative approach has **been** produced by Oxford **University** Press, however, these **have been** much less successful as teachers do not currently **have** appropriate training to allow them to implement the textbooks' approach and they are being used largely in programs adopting traditional grammar-translation or audiolingual methods (Lin, 2000).

While materials policy has **some** inconsistencies with methods policy, it has **been** assessment policy which has **been** a more significant problem for the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching. While methods policy was moving to a more communicative approach, the National College **Entrance** Examination, the central gate-keeping examination for entry into **higher** education, **remained** largely unchanged. The examination was centrally focused on testing explicit grammatical knowledge and until 1988, as much as 85% of the examination was made up of multiple choice or gap-fill grammar items (Lewin **and** Wang, 1991). The construction of **the** college **entrance** examination meant that successful **learners** of English required explicit gramrnatical knowledge of the **written** language rather than communicative **competence**. This in turn favoured a grammar-translation approach rather than a communicative approach and there was an inherent conflict over method between methods policy and assessment policy. Given the important gate-keeping function of the college **entrance** examination, the conflict between methods policy and assessment policy has usually **been** resolved by adopting explicit grammar teaching rather than Communicative Language Teaching in Chinese secondary English classrooms. In an environment in which discrete point grammatical knowledge is valued, Communicative Language Teaching lacks face validity as a teaching method.

The situation described **here** represents a conflict between **overt** methods policy and covert methods policy, with covert methods policy winning out **because** of its attachrnent to an

educationally important context with implications for future education and employment opportunities. The assessment policy therefore had a washback effect on methods policy and encouraged the entrenchment of earlier teaching practices which had face validity in the context of assessment (Wall, 1998). The Ministry of Education responded to the mismatch between methods policy and assessment policy by attempting to reform the National College Entrance Examination and by the late 1990s a considerable reduction had been made in the testing of discrete point grammar and a writing component and a listening and speaking sub-test have been added (Li and Wang, 2000). Hu (2002) has observed that the washback effect of the revised test has already begun to transform classroom teaching methods to some degree.

The place of method in language-in-education policy in the Peoples' Republic of China shows the impact of policy decisions at various levels on methodological choices in language classrooms and indicates that effect methods planning relies on a consistent approach to questions of method across other areas of language planning. The case of the Peoples' Republic of China also demonstrates the effect of valued practices of assessment on methods and the need to ensure congruity between method and the assessed outcomes of language programs.

III. METHOD IN LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY FOR ESL IN AUSTRALIA

Methods policy in the Australian context is very different from that in China. In Australia there is no direct statement about methods in policy documents themselves and Australian teachers are relatively free to determine their own choice of methods (Kaplan and Baldauf, 2002). However, in reality there is only limited flexibility in the choice of methods, for teachers of English as a Second or Foreign Language. This limit on methodological choices comes from the establishment of a dominant orthodoxy in language teaching framed around Communicative Language Teaching and the indirect reinforcement of this orthodoxy through language policy.

The ESL profession in Australia began in the late 1940s as a part of the adult education provision for migrant resettlement', when Australia admitted large numbers of refugees from post-World War II Europe (Martin, 1998). For Australia, this represented something of a challenge as there had been no history of ESL teaching prior to the beginnings of mass immigration and the ESL profession had to be developed quickly. The dominant grammar-translation method which existed in modern languages education at the time (Wykes, 1958) proved to be impractical in the circumstances because it presupposed teaching in the language of the students. In Australia in the late 1940s teaching in the learners' language was impossible as few Australian's spoke the languages of the main migrant groups and language classes of the time were typically made up of people from a diverse range of language backgrounds who shared no common language.

After some limited experimentation with bilingual methods, mainly in German since that was the only immigrant language taught in the Australian education system at the time (Crossley, 1948), the creators of what later became the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP)

developed an approach to language teaching using English as the medium of instruction. The impetus for this approach carne from the direct method, which had been pioneered in the teaching of modern languages, especially French in the early years of the twentieth century (Wykes, 1958). The use of the target language as the language of instruction was further supported by the audiolingual approach and much early ESL "direct method teaching in Australia relies heavily on audiolingual drills (Quill, 1978). Ellis (2003) argues that, the Australian approach to teaching ESL came about through the confluence of three key factors:

> i) the urgent practical problem posed by the arrival of large numbers of migrants speaking languages which few Australian teachers knew;
> ii) the belief that direct method teaching would enable learners to use the language taught (which, after all, was a major goal of the migrant program the intention was not to produce language scholars but to prepare migrants to enter the workforce);
> iii) behaviourist educational theory which lent research weight to the exclusion of Ll in the classroom.

The newly developed method for teaching English through the medium of English was propagated through the materials development work of the Department of Education, which culminated in the late 1960s in the textbook *Situational English for Newcomers to Australia* (Department of Education and Science, 1969). *Situational English* envisaged delivery of instruction in English, with a focus on language use for particular communicative contexts (i.e. 'situations') accompanied by drills and "immediate needs" formulae (Quill, 1978). *Situational English* became the usual textbook of AMEP and the so-called 'situational method' became the dominant and quasi-mandated method for teaching English. The effect of the adoption of *Situational English* in the 1960s and its earlier direct methods precursors led to the development of a body of consensus in Australia education on the question of method — at least in so far as it concerned the language of instruction — even though even this was not explicitly mandated or recommended in language-in-education documents. In fact, instruction in English was seen as a practical necessity rather than as pedagogically desirable and *Situational English* was expressly intended for use using the learners' languages "where possible" (Quill, 1978). However, the practical came to dominate and the uniformity of practice in multilingual classrooms in turn seems to have led to the establishment of a policy for using English as the only medium of instruction leading eventually to explicit policies of establishing mixed language classes precisely to prevent the possible use of the Ll in the classroom (Ellis, 2003).

Beyond questions of language of instruction, however, the situational method is not so much a method as an eclectic collection of language teaching approaches drawing on audiolingualism and the direct method and presented in everyday communicative contexts. In fact, the situational method varied over time and the teaching approach in *Situational English* mutated in successive editions during the decade of its existence as it gradually assimilated to

Communicative Language Teaching.

From the 1980s, ESL in Australia has been closely identified with Communicative Language Teaching, which has been seen not so much as an innovation in ESL teaching, but rather as a refinement of the established approach. Materials policy, professional development policy, and curriculum policy have all been undertaken with the assumption that language is taught communicatively.

One of the most important developments for entrenching Communicative Language Teaching in Australian ESL was the development of the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR) (Ingram and Wylie, 1979). The ASPLR is a proficiency scale based on ability to use a language for purposes of communication and very much a task oriented rating scale. The scales described communicative behaviours in the target language and focused on functional descriptions of communicative behaviour rather than on structural descriptions. The ASLPR scales, although designed for assessment, came to have a strong influence on the design of curriculum as ESL units were conceived as moving a student from one ASPLR level to another. As the outcomes of leaming were framed in terms of communicative competence, they reinforced the face validity of Communicative Language Teaching as the appropriate teaching methodology.

The evolution of method in Australia then was initially one in which a teaching approach had to be developed rapidly to deal with the practicalities of teaching English to a large number of adult immigrants from diverse language backgrounds. The development of a method, then required the development of curriculum and materials to support that method. The role of policy in Australia lay in the development of curriculum and materials, wherein the government exercised a significant role. The development of materials and curriculum began then to shape the method. For example, while *Situational English* was intended for use with the leamers' L1 as well as in English, it is written exclusively in English and it was left to individual teachers to adapt the book to other languages if they wished to do so. The additional effort involved in using the textbook in other languages further entrenched its use in English as the norm. Policy in professional development in turn followed the development of materials and teachers learned how to use the existing materials and developed the skills necessary for teaching English through English. The cumulative weight of this eventually established teaching in English as an orthodoxy in ESL (Ellis, 2003). This orthodoxy is unstated at the policy level in terms of methods policy in that no method is specified in Australian language policy documents, however, it is given power in other elements of language policy which all assume a common core method in ESL teaching. The strength of the orthodoxy comes from the coherence of the conceptualisation of method in a number of elements of policy, rather than from explicit statements about language teaching method. Australia then has a strong and coherent implicit methods policy, with no explicit methods policy. Such a methods policy appears to work to create inertia in language teaching. The development of method in the profession comes from refinement and modification of methods rather than wholesale replacement. Method

development needs to be coherent with the orthodoxy established **through** language policy and this constrains method choices to be coherent with past practice. As such, method change at the policy **level** is **likely** to be incremental rather than radical and any radical method change **would** require a different approach to methods policy, moving to an explicitly formulated methods policy.

IV. METHOD IN LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY FOR COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The key language-in-education policy document of the Council of Europe for languages education is the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe, 2001). This Framework is intended to **provide** a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, **curriculum** guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe and so differs from the other language-in-education policy documents **examined** in this paper in that it seeks to influence practices of a number of countries. The Council of Europe framework acknowledges the interrelationship between methodology, curriculum, materials and assessment and argues that questions of method are **important** within the context of language policy. However, the Council of Europe framework **does** not move towards a statement of methods, but rather **proposes** an approach to questions of method which is "comprehensive, presenting **all** options in an explicit and transparent way and avoiding advocacy or **dogmatism**" (Council of Europe, 2001: 142). This approach to methods policy represents a mid point between China's explicit statement of methods policy and Australia's ostensible **silence**. The Council of Europe in its framework seeks to influence decisions about method, but acknowledges that such decisions must be context dependent and even makes acknowledgement of the potential validity of methods not included in the text of the framework. **The** result **is** a promotion of diversity in methods rather than **the** promotion of a method or selection of methods.

In the Framework, the Council of Europe approaches methods not by making policy statements, but rather by framing questions to guide methodological choices. The end result of these questions is a sort of a checklist of possibilities which can assist in guiding rationales for practice, but without a coherent overarching framework into which choices can be integrated. As such, **while** questions of method are raised in the policy explicitly, the methods policy relies on elements **outside** methods themselves for their **fullest** articulation. In particular, the framework **ties** rnethod to the objectives of language teaching and **learning** and **sees** methods as ways of achieving objectives.

If one looks at other elements of the document, it **becomes** clear that a certain overarching framework for method emerges, and this is a variety of Communicative Language Teaching. Explicit **assumptions** about Communicative Language Teaching can be **seen** most strongly in the chapter on assessment, where, for example, the concepts of "communicative assessment" and "communicative testing" are highlighted **and** linked explicitly with "communicative language **activities**" (Council of Europe, 2001: 178). The chapter **also provides**

descriptors for communicative activities for assessing performance.

Elsewhere in the document, the methodological norrn is less explicitly marked. Nonetheless, the assumption that the default method is communicative is evident in the understanding of the nature of language leaming which **informs** the document. Throughout the Framework, language learning is located within the context of developing language use, and the leamer and user are in rnany senses recognised as being two dimensions of the same experience (cf. **Firth** and Wagner, 1997). This casts the nature of leaming as very rnuch a performance of language ability, rather than as a learning of language inforrnation and the understandings of the nature of language learning and use are very rnuch located with **specific instances** of language use, reminiscent of the notional-functional **syllabus. The** descriptions of cornpetences **also indicate** a functional approach to language competence, but one which is enlarged beyond the usual scope of rnodels of communicative competence found in **earlier** writing such as Bachman (1990) or **Canale** and **Swain (1981)** and include the *savoirs* formulated by Byram (Byram, 1997; Byram and **Zarate,** 1994) which go beyond issues of cornmunicative cornpetence and **deal** with language competence as hermeneutic and intercultural. ln this way, the framing of method is moved to **some** degree into a post-communicative dimension and into the realrn of intercultural language teaching (Crozet and Liddicoat, 1999; Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999; Liddicoat, 2003).

ln the Council of Europe's language policy, then, methods policy is multifaceted in that method is both present and absent. lt is present in that the Framework deals with questions of rnethod, but absent in that the very **diverse** approach of the document has very little to say about method choices, other than that they should be appropriate for achieving relevant learning outcomes. Method is therefore expressly addressed in the framework but the question of method is sidestepped as an explicit recomrnendation by indicating that method **is** eclectic. The methods policy **is** then not to **have** a methods policy as such, but rather a set of questions to inform rnethod choices. At the same time, other elements of language-in-education policy, notably assessment policy and curriculrn policy are used to **provide** constraints on method choices by drawing on the conceptual **tools** of comrnunicative and intercultural approaches to language teaching.

Some of the weakness found in the very **diverse** framing of methods in the Framework would seem to stem more or less directly from the political context from which the document is drawn. The Framework is intended to be applied in a **diverse** range of countnes, with a **diverse** range of educational contexts and **diverse** educational cultures. As such, any multinational language policy document is in effect a compromise between competing positions. The diversity inherent in the document allows such positions to be **taken** into account and eases the interface between the Framework and the language-in-education policies of rnernber **countries.** The **coherence** of the document in terms of its conceptualisation of the nature, role and function of language learning means that the document can **provide** an overarching construct in which language **curricula** can be planned and implemented although the inherent diversity of the

approach to questions of method may not adequately guide its operationalisation.

V. METHOD IN LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY FOR EFL IN HUNGARY

In Hungary from the 1950s, all aspects of the foreign language curriculum were rigidly controlled from the centre, with restrictions on the choice of textbooks, on the educational goals of languages learning and range of topics to be covered. The centralised curriculum had strong ideological objectives and subordinated other educational goals to the promotion of communism. The early post-World War Two period in Hungary favoured traditional — that is grammar-based — methods in language teaching and tended to subordinate communicative competence to explicit knowledge of structures and vocabulary. The 1985 Education Act provided some freedom in the choice of textbooks and other aspects of the curriculum, but a centralised curriculum was maintained until the National Core Curriculum was developed in the 1990s to cover compulsory schooling (Medyes, 1993).

All documents relating to languages education since the 1989 reform have adopted the notional functional syllabus as the basis for National Core Curriculum for languages. However, the National Core Curriculum, introduced in 1998, underwent three successive transformations — in 1990, 1992 and 1995 — each with a different underlying language policy approach — and was supplemented by the Frame Curricula in 2000 (Eurydice, 2001). As such, the post-communist period in language education has been characterised by frequent revisions of the goals and understandings of language teaching and by a rapid succession of curriculum documents. The documents, however, emphasise the development of communicative competence as a goal of languages teaching and imply, if not state, that Communicative Language Teaching is the desired method for improving the quality of language learning in Hungary.

The 1990 National Core Curriculum document for languages was a framework specifying the general aims of language education with a list of language skills and speech act functions which reflect language documents form the European Union (Medyes, 1993). Although the National Core Curriculum provides a framework for the implementation of a project-based approach for language learning, it appears to favour traditional teaching methods (Blasszauer, 2000). There seem to be two key problems which have entrenched traditional teaching methods in spite of the overall communicative approach of the NCC: teacher competencies and assessment policy.

While the NCC gives a much greater control over curriculum to teachers, an inadequate level of competence among teachers to enact such a curriculum has hampered its implementation. The introduction of communicative language teaching requires the teacher to have adequate language proficiency to teach in the target language and an understanding of the principles and practices of the teaching approach. Methodological innovation is hampered in the Hungarian context by a lack of both among a sizable body of teachers (Eurydice, 2001). In Hungary, therefore, the implementation of method change has been further hampered by what

(Kaplan and Baldauf, 1997; 2002) **call** personnel policy, as the recent **massive** expansion of teaching for English and German has led to an acute teacher shortage for these languages which has often **been** filled by employing untrained language teachers (Domyei, 1992). As such, the potential of the NCC as a curriculum policy document to affect practice is restricted and there is reliance among teachers on pre-existing methods of teaching in the absence of other alternatives. This clearly demonstrates that policy determinations about method can only **become** practice where there is support for such **innovations** through supported teacher learning directed at changes in practice. Without such support, policy statements can **have** little meaning.

The key element of assessment policy in Hungary is the State Language Examination. This language examination is an external examination which learners take **because** it confers certain advantages on those who pass the examination, including higher salaries and access to certain employment and educational opportunities (Domyei, 1992). This examination has three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced, and the two higher levels consist of written and oral tasks covering reading, listening and speaking, along with a discrete point test of lexical and grammatical knowledge and two-way translation tasks (Dornyei, 1992). As was **seen** in the examination of China's assessment policy, in Hungary too discrete point testing favours a focus on forms rather than a more communicatively oriented teaching approach and the tests undermine the face validity of communicative language teaching in the Hungarian educational context. Hungary's assessment policy therefore reinforces the conservatism of teaching. Moreover, this conservatism is **further** reflected in the materials used in language teaching: Nikolov (1999: 243) has shown that the supplementary materials used in secondary-school classes are mostly Hungarian publications, focusing on grammar and examination preparation, representing an examination washback effect.

The policy context in Hungary is made additionally complex **because,** in post-compulsory schooling, the 1978 curriculum, with very different underlying understandings of the role and nature of language education has remained in use. This means that the **outcomes** of policy reform in compulsory schooling do not articulate well with the senior secondary **level.** (Eurydice, 2001) While the NCC and the Frame Curricula **promote** the development of communicative **competence** and **assume** that the methodological norm is communicative language teaching, the 1978 curriculum **assumes** the development of metalinguistic knowledge and adopts methods which focus on the explicit teaching of linguistic forms.

Language-in-education policy represents a period of rapid and continuous change which has moved from an ideologically-driven, grammar-based approach to a communicative approach within a very short period of time, with the result that at different levels within the policy, different constructions of language teaching co-exist. As such, Hungarian language-in-education policy represents a context of uncertainty and questions of method reflect the general **level** of this uncertainty. While methodological change is **desired,** the multiple policies with different underlying constructs of language teaching and learning, the lack of skilled teachers and the continued **existence** of more traditional approaches to assessment conflict with stated goals for

methodological change.

CONCLUSION

The four **polities** examined in this **paper have all** dealt with the issue of method in their language-in-education policies in different ways. **Some** policies involve coherent articulations of methodology across various sub-components of language policy, while others display internal **conflicts** between the various components of policy. Both Australia and the Council of Europe **have** coherent approaches to method, which in Australia lead to a prevailing, but unquestioned orthodoxy about questions of method, while in Europe this **coherence** is manifested as a more *laissez faire* approach to questions of method where any methodological choices can be supported as long as they are judged appropriate to achieving specified language learning outcomes. In China and Hungary, language policy reveals internal conflicts between the ways in which language learning is understood and these conflicts present problems for methodological innovation. In both cases, a methods policy which primarily advocates **Communicative** Language Teaching is undermined by other elements of policy which favour pre-existing methods and in particular, inconsistent assessment policies **have** had a **very** strong effect on method choices in actual practice indicating the potential for a washback effect from assessment to practice.

While there is a washback effect from assessment policy, this washback effect needs to be considered carefully. Wall and Alderson (1993) **have** found that the Sri Lankan O **level** examinations affected the content rather than the methods of language teaching. The method used by the teachers was essentially the same before and **after** the introduction of a new examination system. Similar effects are reported by Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996) in their study of the impact of the TOEFL test. lt would appear, therefore, that the effect of assessment policy is likely to entrench a pre-existing method where there is **congruence** between the assessment policy and the earlier teaching method — as is the case in China and Hungary — but that it may be less likely to drive methodological imovation, at least where such imovation is not supported by other elements of language-in-education policy. It appears therefore that methods policy *per se* may **provide** conditions in which methodological imovation may occur, but that innovation itself depends on factors **outside** policy.

The **current** dominant discourse in language-in-education policy tends to **validate** the supremacy of one conceptualisation of teaching over another (c.f. Freeman and Richards, 1993) and language policy has tended to **promote** uniformity of method.as a solution to problems of language teaching, whether they be the result perceived inadequacies in learning **outcomes** or of changed leaming contexts, as in the case of Australia. In these cases a finite set of favoured methods has come to be thought of as a simple prescription to **solve** the complex problems of language teaching and which can be implemented in a mechanical way (Clarke, 1982; Clarke and Silberstein, 1988). However, such a wholesale application of a single accepted method as

a solution to perceived problems in language education has come under criticism from the field of language teaching itself. Prabhu (1990), for example, rejects the notion that methods are objectively good or bad, while Kumaravadivelu (2003) argues that development in language pedagogy is not simply the search for the best method. Such sets of beliefs call into question the very place of method in language policy. If language policy is seen as decision-making relating to the reduction of diversity in order to control future practices, then the act of specification of a method at a policy level runs counter to contemporary understandings of rnethod and reinforced what Stern (1992) has called the "narrowness and dogmatism of the rnethod concept". While the Council of Europe Framework may resist the usual language policy impetus to prornote uniforrnity, the less structured diversity of this document is equally problernatic as it may not promote the principled rationaie for practice envisaged by Kumaravadivelu (2003) and may instead provide a document which reinforces existing practice regardless of its effectiveness in meeting language teaching objectives.

This study has indicated that, while language policy has an impact on language teaching practice and can be influential in entrenching or changing language teachers' practices, the interaction between language policies and practices is complex. In part this complexity is derived from the internal complexity of methods issues in policy documents which affects the implementation of policy choices in an education system. This points to a greater need to understand the nature of issues relating to classroom practice in the language-in-education policy and how issues of practice are conceived and encoded in policy documents. However, the complexity also develops frorn the complex nature of methods, particularly as they are coming to be understood and there is a need to understand better how conceptuaily cornplex constructs, such as method, can be effectively addressed at a policy level.

NOTES:

1. ESL provision for children was initially less well developed and its developrnent largely followed models irnplernent for adult education, although modified for delivery to school children (Ozolins, 1993).

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