

**An approach from a Vygotskian viewpoint
to the teaching of poetry in German
in the Irish primary school**

An Empirical Study

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‘Immer freundlich, immer geduldig, immer ermutigend’

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Summary

This study attempts to explore an approach to the appreciation of poetry in a foreign language, in this case German, by children with a limited competency in that language. The study focuses on the child in the context of the present curriculum for Irish primary schools. Based on a socio-cultural constructivist ethos, it examines a step by step mediated approach to the appropriation of poetry in which group interaction and dialogue play an important role.

The study contains a review of the history of the introduction of foreign language learning into the primary sector, from the introduction of the Curaclam na Bunscoile (The New Curriculum) of 1971, until the release in November 2009 of the NCCA 2008 report 'Modern Languages in the Primary school curriculum Feasibilities and Futures'. The study argues against the main premise of the report, the substitution of a language awareness approach in place of language competency.

The study is based on the socio-cultural theories of consciousness of Lev Vygotsky and Piotr Gal'perin, with particular reference to Concept Formation, the Genetic Method, Mediation, Internalization, The Zone of Proximal Development and Object-Orientated Activity Theory. The theoretical and practical implications of a constructivist classroom approach are discussed and evaluated.

Theoretical assumptions on the teaching of poetry in general are discussed. There is a critical review of current literature on the uses of poetry in foreign language learning, and a clarification of the methodology proposed for the empirical study.

Based on a year's work on the appropriation of poetry with primary students, the empirical study selects six poems on which the children work in a step-by-step, mediated approach, enabling them to achieve aesthetic response and personal appropriation of the poetry. It uses teacher's notes, children's work and detailed descriptions of the methods used, to clarify, assess and evaluate qualitatively the work undertaken.

It concludes with suggestions for the further application of the methods involved and possible future research areas.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations.....	15
Introduction.....	16
Poetry and the Foreign Language.....	16
Influences.....	17
Second Language Acquisition.....	17
A Qualitative Approach.....	18
Research Areas.....	19
Chapter Content.....	20
Conclusion.....	21
Chapter One.....	22
The Introduction of Modern Languages into the Irish Primary School System 1971-2009	
1.1.1 Introduction.....	22
1.1.2 <i>Curaclam na Bunscoile, The New Curriculum 1971....</i>	22
1.1.3 The European Dimension.....	23
1.1.4 Curriculum and Examinations Board (1985).....	25
1.2.1 National Parents Council (1986).....	25
1.2.2. <i>‘The Cost of Free Education’</i>	27
1.3.1 Irish National Teachers Organisation: <i>The Harris Report 1991</i>	28
1.3.2 The Critical Years: A Question of Age.....	29

1.3.3	Findings.....	31
1.3.4.	Discussion and Conclusion.....	31
1.4.1	<i>‘Education for a Changing World’</i> (1992) A Change in Attitude.....	33
1.4.2	<i>‘Culture and Communication’</i> , N.C.C.A (1993).....	34
1.4.3	<i>‘Charting our Education Future’</i> (1995).....	36
1.5.1	The Pilot Programme on Modern Languages in the Primary School.....	37
1.5.2	Draft Curriculum Guidelines NCCA (1999).....	38
1.5.3	The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI).....	39
1.6.1.	Evaluation: <i>The Harris Conway Report 2002</i>	40
1.6.2	<i>Progress Report of the MLPSI 1998-2004</i>	43
1.6.3	<i>‘Language in the Primary School’</i> , INTO 2004.....	44
1.7.1	<i>MLPSI European Language Portfolio</i> (2004).....	48
1.7.2	<i>Report on the Feasibility of Modern Languages,</i> NCCA (2005).....	49
1.7.3	<i>The Language Education Policy Profile IRELAND</i> <i>2005-2007</i>	54
1.7.4	On the Cusp.....	56

Chapter Two..... 58

‘Jetzt wohin?’ A Response to the 2008 NCCA report:

***‘NCCA Modern Languages in the Primary School Curriculum
Feasibilities and Futures November 2008’***

2.1.1	Changing Focus.....	58
2.1.2	Executive Summary of the NCCA Report.....	59
2.1.3	Introduction to the Report.....	60
2.2.1	Report, Chapter Two: The National Context, Evaluation.....	63
2.2.2	Evaluation Conclusions.....	66
2.2.3	Pilot Projects: CLIL Language Awareness.....	67
2.3.1	Report, Chapter Three: The European Context.....	70
2.3.2	English Speaking Countries and Foreign Language Teaching.....	71
2.4.1	Report, Chapter Four: Curriculum Language Learning Potential.....	73
2.4.2	Language Awareness, Intercultural Awareness in the Curriculum	73
2.4.3	Modern Languages: Links to the Curriculum.....	78
2.4.4	Reviews of the Primary Curriculum.....	79
2.5.1	Report, Chapter Five: Issues and Feasibility.....	81
2.5.2	The Modern Language Teacher: School Based and	

Visiting.....	83
2.5.3 Curriculum Fallout.....	85
2.5.4 Continuity and Diversity Issues.....	86
2.5.5 Time Issues	88
2.5.6 Acknowledgement.....	90
2.6.1 Into the Future: CLIL.....	90
2.6.2 Into The Future: Language Awareness.....	92
2.6.3 Into The Future: Intercultural Awareness.....	92
2.6.4 Into The Future: Language Sensitisation.....	93
2.6.5 Conclusion.....	94

Chapter Three..... 97

**Constructivism, Theory and Practice, from a
Vygotskian Viewpoint**

3.1.1 Sociocultural Constructivism.....	97
3.1.2 Piaget and Vygotsky: Cognitive and Sociocultural Constructivism.....	99
3.2.1 Vygotsky and Language.....	101
3.2.2 Vygotsky and Speech Development.....	101
3.2.3 Egocentric Speech.....	103
3.2.4 Inner Speech.....	104
3.2.5 Concept Formation.....	107

3.2.6	The Formation of Complexes.....	110
3.2.7	The Pseudoconcept.....	111
3.2.8	Abstraction and Potential Concepts.....	112
3.2.9	Possible Problems in Sequential Reading of Vygotsky.....	112
3.2.10	Scientific and Spontaneous Concepts.....	113
3.2.11	The Genetic Method.....	116
3.2.12	Learning and Development.....	117
3.2.13	Formal Discipline.....	118
3.2.14	Measurement of Development.....	120
3.2.15	Interaction and Interrelation of Concepts.....	121
3.2.16	The Zone of Proximal Development.....	123
3.2.17	The Role of Mediation.....	127
3.2.18	Dialogue.....	129
3.2.19	Group /Peer Collaboration.....	131
3.2.20	Scaffolding.....	132
3.2.21	Gal'perin and Object Orientated Activity Theory.....	134
3.2.22	Verbalization or Language into Thought.....	136
3.2.23	Internalization.....	142
3.3.1	The Constructivist Classroom.....	145
3.3.2	Then and Now.....	147
3.3.3	Paolo Feire.....	148
3.3.4	Possible Dilemmas in Introducing Constructivism...	149
3.3.5	Incomplete Understandings.....	151
3.3.6	Classroom as Culture.....	153
3.3.7	The Alternative Voice.....	153
3.3.8	Viable Constructions.....	154

Chapter Four.....	156
Towards a Methodology	
4.1.1 Introduction : Four complementary aspects.....	156
Section One: ‘An Apologie for Poetrie’.....	157
4.1.2 The Teaching of Poetry: Aristotle and Poetic Probability.....	157
4.1.3 Horace: Decorum, Dulce et Utile.....	159
4.1.4 Pope: Form and Intention.....	161
4.1.5 Romantic Poetry: Individual Experience.....	161
4.1.6 Critical Theory: The Literariness of Literature.....	163
4.2.1 Poetry as Alternative Voice.....	164
4.2.2 Poetry as Liberation.....	165
4.3.1 Poetry and the More Knowledgeable Other.....	167
4.3.2 The Poem’s the Thing.....	167
4.3.3 Informing the Alternative Voice.....	168
4.3.4 Reflections on Literariness.....	168
Section Two: The Irish Primary School Child.....	169
4.4.1 The Irish Primary School Child: Curriculum	

Requirements.....	169
4.4.2 The Irish Primary School Child: Language Competency.....	171
4.4.3 The use of L1.....	171
4.4.4 The use of Gesture and Tone.....	174
4.4.5 Group Interaction and the Individual Response.....	175

Section Three: Literature Review

The uses of Poetry in Second Language

Acquisition.....	175
4.5.1 Introduction.....	175
4.5.2. Departmental Recognition: Teacher/Curriculum Guidelines.....	176
4.6.1 Poetry at Third Level: ‘Aesthetic Reading’, <i>Kinderreime für Erwachsene?</i>	178
4.6.2 <i>Aktiv und Kreativ Lernen</i> : Interaction with the Text.....	181
4.6.3 Poetry, Pronunciation, Articulation.....	182
4.6.4 Poetry as Social Discourse.....	185
4.7.1 <i>Warum? Wann? Was? Wie?</i> A Warning Against Misuse.....	187
4.7.2 Poetry and Performance: A Catalyst of Creativity...	189
4.7.3 The Richness of the Poetic Text, <i>Mehrdeutigkeit</i>	191

4.8.1	Response to Text, Dialogue, Appropriation.....	193
4.8.2	The use of Illustration.....	194
4.8.3	' <i>Tanzend</i> '	194
Section Four: A Practical Methodology.....		197
4.9.1	A Sociocultural Constructivist Approach: Vygotsky/Gal'perin.....	197
4.9.2	Scoba cards.....	200
4.9.3	Translation: <i>Nomen</i> and <i>Verbenkarten</i>	202
4.9.4	Account: <i>Meinungskarte</i>	203
4.9.5	Affective Response: <i>Affektive Karte</i>	205
4.9.6	Performance: <i>Vorstellungskarte</i>	208
4.9.7.	<i>Rollenspiel</i> and the Role of Play.....	209
4.9.8	Integration into the Curriculum.....	210
Chapter Five: Empirical Study.....		211
5.1.1	Situating the Study.....	211
5.1.2	Classroom Management.....	212
5.1.3	Aim and Content of Study	213
5.2.1	The Creation of the First Scoba Card (<i>Nomenkarte</i>)..	216
5.2.2	Presentation of Completed <i>Nomenkarte</i>	217
5.2.3	Using the <i>Nomenkarte</i> in Practice.....	218
5.2.4	Working Towards a <i>Verbenkarte</i>	220
5.2.5	Interim Conclusions.....	221

5.3.1	September 2009.....	221
5.3.2	Revision of <i>Nomenkarte</i>	222
5.3.3	<i>Verbenkarte</i>	222
5.3.4	<i>König Tinizong</i>	223
5.3.5	Presentation of Completed <i>Verbenkarte</i>	224
5.3.6	Development of Further Aspects of <i>König Tinizong</i> ...	225
5.4.1	Carpe Diem: Using Opportunities.....	226
5.4.2	<i>Weihnachtsgedichte</i> : Use of <i>Nomenkarte</i> / <i>Verbenkarte</i>	227
5.4.3	<i>König Tinizong</i> : Full Translation. <i>An Spideoigín</i> : Irish Poem.....	228
5.4.4	The use of Question Cards.....	229
5.5.1	<i>Erlkönig</i>	232
5.5.2	Group-work in Translation and Account.....	234
5.5.3	The Co-construction of a <i>Meinungskarte</i>	235
5.5.4	Presentation of Completed <i>Meinungskarte</i>	236
5.6.1	<i>Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las</i> : Account and Poetic Probability.....	237
5.6.2	Co-construction of <i>Vorstellungskarte</i>	238
5.6.3	Presentation of the Completed <i>Vorstellungskarte</i>	239
5.7.1	<i>Mehr auf Deutsch</i> : Strategies.....	241
5.7.2	Personal Involvement.....	242
5.7.3	Overall Account of <i>Erlkönig</i>	243

5.7.4	<i>Die Wörterwand: Vocabulary and Affective</i>	
	Response.....	244
5.8.1	<i>Tonkarten</i>	245
5.8.2	Working with Junior Classes: <i>Abendlied/</i>	
	<i>Rosemarie, Rosemarie</i>	246
5.8.3	<i>Wörterwand /‘Vater’</i> : Spider-web and Adjectival	
	Endings.....	247
5.8.4	<i>Meinungskarte</i> : Use of and First Account	
	<i>auf Deutsch</i>	248
5.8.5	Reprise of <i>Abendlied /Rosemarie</i> by Full Class.....	248
5.9.1	<i>Affektive Karte, Der Tantenmörder</i>	248
5.9.2	2 nd Attempt at Account Based on	
	<i>Erlkönig Wörterwand</i>	251
5.9.3	<i>Wörterwand, ‘das Gedicht’</i>	251
5.9.4	Completed <i>Affektive Karte</i> , use of Illustration.....	252
5.9.5	<i>Vorstellungskarte , Auf dem Berge Sinai,</i>	
	Appreciation.....	254
5.10.1	Final Sessions: Oral, Aural, Comparative	
	Evaluation.....	256
	Conclusion	259
6.1.1	‘Gardening in a Gale’, the Current Situation.....	259

6.1.2	Working Together: A Sociocultural Constructivist Context.....	261
6.1.3	Learner Responsibility: <i>quasi-Bedürfnisse</i>	262
6.1.4	The use of L1 in the Appropriation of Poetry.....	263
6.1.5	Scoba Cards and their uses in Foreign Language Learning	265
6.1.6	Illustration.....	266
6.1.7	Voice, Tone, Gesture: Child-Selected Performance...	267
6.2.1	Alternative Applications.....	268
6.2.2	New Strategies.....	269
6.2.3	In the Real World.....	270
	Bibliography.....	272
	List of Appendices.....	284
	Appendices.....	286

List of Illustrations

Fig.1	Sample Excerpt from My European Portfolio (MLPSI 2005).....	62
Fig.2	Table 5.2 - Types of Modern Language Teacher: Benefits.....	83
Fig.3	Table from Harris and O Leary (in press: 15).....	89
Fig.4	<i>Nomenkarte</i>	218
Fig.5	<i>Verbenkarte</i>	225
Fig.6	<i>Meinungskarte</i>	237
Fig.7	<i>Vorstellungskarte</i>	240
Fig.8	<i>Affektive Karte</i>	253

‘The creation of an imaginary situation is not a fortuitous fact in a child’s life, but it is rather the first manifestations of the child’s emancipation from situational constraints’ (Vygotsky 1978: 93).

Introduction

Poetry and the Foreign Language

Poetry might appear a daunting first line of advance into the uncharted territory of any foreign language¹ and yet it is through the poetry of *Fingerspiele*, *Kneereiter* and *Kinderreime*, each in our own language, that we first engage, albeit unconsciously, with the delight of rhythm, rhyme and word-imagery. Conversely a line, a phrase of poetry, the refrain from a song, is very often, all that remain of a forgotten, once-learned language, a remnant, an *Ohrwurm*, that refuses to go the way of subjunctive verbs, adjectival endings and other hard-earned and laboriously-learned grammatical content.

It is with this in mind that the present study was undertaken. It stems from the author’s conviction of the value and validity of poetry in the primary education system, based on his experience in teaching English and Irish poetry in primary language classes for the past 43 years. This has been consolidated by his experience as a German language teacher in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) since its inception in 1998. Poetry has always been viewed by him as an opportunity for creative aesthetic response, closely related to imagination and emotion and offering the child the opportunity for fantasy and role-play, closely linked to the world of childhood invention.

This study attempts to establish a method by which poetry can be approached in a foreign language by children with limited competency in that language. It is structured

¹ ‘Of all literary genres, poetry holds the most ambiguous position, particularly in terms of the language curriculum (Federici 612; Kramsch "Tongue"). Since poets often break rules of syntax and grammar and use rare or non-standard vocabulary, language teachers are often ambivalent about its value for beginning and intermediate language learners, wondering if their time would not be better spent teaching standard gram-mar and syntax and practical, everyday vocabulary. Poetry is perceived, moreover, as deliberately esoteric. Might not poetry prove too demanding of students' interpretative abilities, not to mention their ability to express their thoughts in a foreign language?’ (Schultz 1996: 920).

within a sociocultural constructivist context specifically informed by the theories of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) and Piotr Gal'perin (1902-1988) and is based on the present teaching curriculum in Irish primary schools. It stresses the validity of poetry in general as a subject for children in the primary school and elaborates on how children may engage with poetry in German from the very early stages of their introduction to the language. It envisages enabling the children to respond aesthetically to any given suitable poem by working on a selection of poems in different genres and of varying degrees of difficulty and sophistication.

Influences

Coming as they do from that sociocultural constructivist background mentioned above, the theories of consciousness proposed by Lev Vygotsky seemed to be a suitable basis for developing the particular approach adopted, especially when developed and refined into a more practical step-by-step process, advocated by Piotr Gal'perin. There is, as might be expected a pronounced emphasis throughout on dialogue and discourse initiatives. Group discussion and collaborative learning is actively encouraged. The contribution of the child as an active and involved agent is given value and learner autonomy is promoted. The teacher's role is that of facilitator and mediator as the *more knowledgeable other*², in developing the students 'Zone of Proximal Development' (Vygotsky 1978: 86) in a step-by step approach to the appropriation and internalization of the poetry.

Second Language Acquisition

Although the study focuses on aesthetic response to the poetry, there is a corresponding and parallel aspect of second language acquisition occurring simultaneously. This does not envisage a designated grammatical progression or a specifically ordered vocabulary extension scheme. 'Es ist nicht sinnvoll, mit Kindern einen systematischen Phonetikkurs durchzuführen' (Hirschfeld 1995: 8). The word 'incidental' although it does convey a sense of the method of acquisition, nevertheless is not sufficiently

² It is interesting to find that the actual phrase 'more knowledgeable other' or its acronym MKO, often to be found in commentaries on Vygotsky, does not in actual fact occur in his writings. It may possibly have evolved from the actual quotation 'under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky 1978: 86).

adequate to cover the wide range and positive impact of the possibilities available to it. The student in the course of responding to the text, in dialogue with her peers, in the processes of understanding, objectifying, interpreting, evaluating and processing for performance, covers a wide range of discourse activities. These activities invite a range of vocabulary, idiom, grammar, and ability to use language in a variety of different contexts. The essential aspect of this language acquisition is that it occurs as a response to actual needs in whichever process they are engaged. These needs, termed throughout the study as *quasi-Bedürfnisse* (Lewin 1926 cited in Vygotsky 1978: 37)³ play an essential role in that they are the student's own expression of their specific requirements in any given task.

A Qualitative Approach

That there is a need for such close qualitative studies, has been claimed by Hanauer (2001) when he decries the lack of concrete evidence in much of the discussion of the use of literature in foreign language teaching .

Current arguments both for and against the use of literature in the classroom are essentially theoretical and are only loosely based on empirical evidence. There is a need for more in-depth investigation of the processes involved in completing literary reading tasks in a second language. (Hanauer 2001: 297)

Dörnyei would very much advocate the qualitative approach in dealing with 'uncharted areas'. It would not seem unreasonable to claim the subject matter of this study to be an uncharted area seeing that foreign language teaching and especially the use of literature in that context, is such a recent occurrence in the Irish primary system.

Qualitative research has traditionally been seen as an effective way of exploring new uncharted areas. If very little is known about a phenomenon, the detailed study of a few cases is particularly appropriate because it does not rely on previous literature or prior empirical findings. (Eisenhardt 1989 cited in Dörnyei 2009: 39)

³ 'New motives, socially rooted and intense, provide the child with direction. K. Lewin (1926) described these motives as *quasi-Bedürfnisse* (quasi-needs) and argued that their inclusion in any given task leads to the reorganization of the child's whole affective and voluntary system' (Vygotsky 1978: 37).

Research Areas

Among the key research areas considered in the study itself are:

- The validity of a sociocultural constructivist approach in the appropriation and internalization of poetry by the child, involving the development of the child's ZPD through dialogue and mediation by teacher and more knowledgeable peers.
- The use of L1 in that appropriation and in the parallel 2nd language acquisition that occurs.
- The use of Gal'perin-inspired Scoba cards⁴ in initiating and furthering a step-by-step approach to translation, understanding and aesthetic response.

Further research areas that arose in the context of the empirical study, concerned

- The ability of the child to posit its own individual needs or *quasi-Bedürfnisse* and thus contribute significantly to her own learning process.
- The value of Illustration in the realization, deconstruction, and re-construction of the text within the consciousness of the child.
- The role of child-selected performance, voice, tone, gesture in defining the response.
- The implications of the use of the method or modifications of the method in other genres, literary excerpts, short stories, *Märchen* etc. and other languages, particularly Irish, it being one of the two required languages in the Irish primary school curriculum.
- The implications of the latest directives contained in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's, NCCA, 2008 report on the teaching of foreign languages in the primary curriculum. This, though not directly concerned with

⁴ These cards which play a major part in the methodology of the empirical study are explained in Section 3.2.20 and their co-construction and use by the children are covered in detail in the empirical study itself.

the empirical study, is of immense importance in dictating future trends in any approaches to second language acquisition, literature- based or otherwise.

Chapter Content

Following this introduction, the study contains five major chapters.

The opening chapter presents an historical review of the introduction of foreign languages into the Irish primary school system. It ranges from 1971-2009 and traces the many difficulties regarding its introduction, the initial lack of realization of the importance of the European dimension, and the valid doubts and reservations of the main teaching body concerned. It reveals the approval from the start, of the Parents Council, the influence of successive Government Papers on education, and the creation of The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI). It covers the reports, evaluations and recommendations concerning foreign language teaching in Ireland, up to the publication in 2009 of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA 2008) review of modern languages in the primary school.

The second chapter examines closely the findings of that review, relating its suggestions and recommendations to the current prescriptions and actual practice of the Teachers Guidelines and Curriculum content. It argues strongly against three of the four main projected approaches and makes a plea for a fuller recognition, encouragement and extension of the work being done in schools promoting the MLPSI.

Chapter three examines in detail the sociocultural theories of consciousness of Lev Vygotsky and of his disciple, Piotr Gal'perin, which underpin the methodological approach in this study. Among the major issues treated are Vygotsky's conclusions on Concept Formation, the Genetic Method, Mediation, Internalization, and The Zone of Proximal Development. Gal'perin's contribution to Object-Orientated Activity Theory is assessed. The practical implications of the Constructivist Classroom, the roles of teacher and student, the classroom as culture, are considered, as are the importance of

the alternative voice, acceptance of incomplete understandings, and the creation of viable constructions.

Chapter four discusses theoretical assumptions on the teaching of poetry in general, a reflection on the child in the Irish primary school context, a critical review of the literature on the uses of poetry in foreign language learning, and finally, a clarification of the actual methodology proposed for the empirical study.

The empirical study itself is contained in chapter five and practical examples of childrens' work, responses to questionnaires, elucidation of content, art examples etc. are found in the appendix. The work ranges over a period of a full school year 2009 to 2010 with the addition of the previous summer term. It uses teacher's notes, children's work and detailed descriptions of the methods used, to clarify, assess and evaluate qualitatively the work undertaken.

Conclusion

The thesis concludes with an assessment of the findings of the empirical study in the context of the present position of language learning in the Irish primary school. The findings of the empirical study are evaluated in detail and there is discussion of those findings in relation to second language learning in general, along with suggestions for further areas of development or exploration.

Chapter One: The Introduction of Modern Languages into the Irish Primary School System 1971-2009

1.1.1 Introduction

Dr. Samuel Johnson's waspish comment on women preaching, 'Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well: but you are surprised to find it done at all' (Boswell 1924: 308) might, with some justice, be applied to the introduction of foreign language teaching into the Irish Primary School System. The absence of any marked enthusiasm in the reports, the cautious provisos, the withdrawal of funding, the acknowledgement of difficulties and the guarded welcome given to the introduction of a third language make it all the more remarkable that there is material in 2008 to research a thesis not alone on the teaching of a third language but on a particular aspect of that teaching relevant to the primary school. In the context of a universal acceptance of a third language in our schools there may be a distance yet to go, but within the context of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative, things are indeed being done and the dog, while still a little wobbly, is beginning to make strides!

1.1.2 *Curaclam na Bunscoile The New Curriculum 1971*

The Introduction of the *Curaclam na Bunscoile*, The new Curriculum, in 1971, marked a watershed in Irish primary education. There was an acknowledgement of recent research in other countries in which it was shown that knowledge derived from the child's own experience and discovery was likely to be 'more meaningful and purposeful to him than information acquired at second hand'; the child was seen as 'the most active agent in his own education' and the teachers role was no longer seen as imparter of

knowledge but as that of one who facilitates and stimulates the learner (DES 1 1971: 18).

The pragma-linguistic approach was very much in evidence although the audio-visual had not by any means disappeared (as exemplified by the ‘deilbhini’ or cardboard cut-outs that were provided for each school). These were to be placed on a felt board illustrating the selected phrases to be taught. The dangers of rote-learning were, however, now acknowledged and warned against and an emphasis placed on acting out situations and re-using the vocabulary in alternative practical situations. There was far less emphasis on formal grammar. ‘Ta fianaise ar fáil nach gcabhraíonn meabhrú rialacha gramadaí mórán chun cruinnes ná ceart na gaeilge a shaothrú’. ‘There is evidence available that the memorizing of rules of grammar does not help a great deal in cultivating accuracy and precision in Irish’ (DES 1 1971: 20). This was a major change from the earlier grammar-orientated approaches and in English there was a new emphasis on oral language and dramatic activity. Language was viewed increasingly from a functional aspect.

While embracing these new and far-reaching concepts however, that of the introduction of a foreign language into the primary curriculum was not mentioned. Under the heading ‘Language’ is found the following, ‘*Language* (i.e. Irish and English. The suggestions made concerning the teaching of Language should be viewed at all times in the context of the two languages being taught and practiced)’ (DES 1 1971: 20, brackets in original).

Thus the official view of language was firmly confined to Irish and English. However there was a possibility of change. It was stated that these radical changes in content and method were not to be regarded as ‘in any way final or definitive’ (DES 1 1971: 20) and that changing conditions would necessitate research and evaluation.

This would suggest a possibility that in the next major review of the Curriculum, the concept of language might be expanded to include the introduction of a foreign language. This review did not take place until 1990. It should be noted that Ireland did not become a member of the European Economic Community until 1973 and the concepts of both language and intercultural awareness were still unfamiliar terms to both teachers and legislators. Indeed there seems to have been little evidence of any

great sense of European awareness or of the fact that we were about to embrace a new identity as Europeans.

1.1.3 The European Dimension

In the 1971 curriculum, there is a European dimension to be found in Geography and History and to a lesser degree in Music and Mathematics.

Geography in third and fourth classes refers to 'Life in other Lands' and suggests an emphasis on areas of the world 'where comparatively simple modes of life prevail' (DES 2 1971: 145). Europe is not specifically mentioned. Later in the fifth and sixth class syllabus Europe is sandwiched between Great Britain and The World. Because of our proximity to Great Britain, that country 'deserves a fairly comprehensive treatment' (DES 2 1971: 185). Europe is to be covered in general terms and detail will be provided 'by carefully selected sample studies' (DES 2 1971: 185).

History offers some insight into the European context as the 'patch studies' in third and fourth classes embrace topics like 'The Celts', 'The Northmen', 'The spread of the Early Church', 'Stories of exploration and discovery' (DES 2 1971: 91) and in the senior classes 'Life in Norman Times', 'Some Irishmen abroad, soldiers and scholars in Europe and America', 'The French revolution', 'World War 1', 'Modern Ireland and its role in the world' (DES 2 1971: 99).

Music introduces 'Folk-songs of Ireland and other countries' and 'Simple examples of the songs of great composers' (DES 2 1971: 243). In the 'listening-to-Music' section (DES 2 1971: 269), the European dimension is very evident with all the great composers mentioned but this is solely instrumental music and while there is great emphasis placed on the value of the Irish language 'Songs in Irish will be given pride of place' (DES 2 1971: 224), there is an understandable absence of any encouragement to learn European songs in the vernacular. The sole reference to any European song title is 'The Tinker (Swedish folk song)' (DES 2 1971: 254). So presumably European folk songs were to be approached through English translations.

Lastly Mathematics; it at least hints at a European future, where it is stated, although lbs and pence and gallons are still used in examples, that 'the study of metric units is

essential in view of the decision that these will be gradually adopted as the primary systems of weights and measures' (DES 1 1971: 221).

In 1971 then, although Europe did figure in the newly introduced Curriculum there was very little awareness of that European identity which the country was to embrace two years later. The question of the introduction of a third language into the primary school sector would have to wait until the next review of the Curriculum in 1990.

1.1.4 Curriculum and Examinations Board 1985

In 1985 the interim Curriculum and Examinations Board published a discussion paper '*Language in the Curriculum / a Curriculum and Examinations Board Discussion Paper*'. Although it states that the paper 'rightly draws our attention to the position of modern languages in the curriculum at first and second levels' (CEB 1985: 5), it regards the introduction of foreign languages at primary level primarily as conducive to improved achievement at post-primary level, which has consequences both cultural and economic for the country (CEB 1985: 34). There does not seem to be any awareness of the benefit of foreign language introduction in the primary section per se. The economic argument was to be contradicted (Mac Aogain 1990) but at least there was acknowledgement that modern languages were being introduced informally 'into a small number of Irish primary schools. This is a welcome development' (CEB 1985: 34).

It is noticeable that having taken one step forward in welcoming the development, the board now takes two steps back. 'The Board notes however, the implications of this for teacher training and for resources' (CEB 1985: 34). There is no development of these implications nor any indication of how difficulties might be confronted or resolved. Neither is there any further mention of the introduction of a foreign language into the primary sector in the final recommendations (CEB 1985: 36). It is difficult to reconcile the welcoming of the development (above) with this apparent lack of resolve.

1.2.1 National Parents Council 1986

In 1986 on the 9th of February in Dublin, the National Parents Council Primary was formally constituted. Within two years at the Annual Delegate Conference in May 1988, a motion was carried at the annual delegate conference ‘An introduction to a modern European language should be available in primary schools as part of the curriculum’ (NPC 1991: 2). A paper was prepared giving the background, the reasons for introducing a foreign language, trends in Europe and the particular Irish Context ; the Communicative approach was advocated and the use of song, drama and rhymes. French and German in particular, are suggested as suitable language choices, noting that ‘offering many languages may lead to fragmentation’ (NPC 1991: 2). The choice of German is linked to ‘ever increasing trade links with Germany’ (NPC 1991: 2). This economic aspect parallels the point made above by the Curriculum and Examinations Board paper (1.1.4).

An early start is recommended but as the children have already two languages, ten years of age is suggested as a favourable age to introduce a third. An extension of the school day is mooted as one of the possible options to help time constraints.

The conclusions are bulleted within the report

- ‘It is desirable that all children should be introduced to a modern European language at primary school
- The implementation of such a policy should be carefully thought out
- Language teaching should concentrate on oral and aural skills and basic conversation.
- The choice of language for each school should be made in conjunction with other local primary and post primary schools
- Special training and resources would be needed for teachers in order to carry out this policy
- The Primary Curriculum Review Body should make specific recommendations as to how a modern European language can be accommodated in the Primary School timetable and Curriculum’

(NPC 1991: 2)

The key issues enumerated here; the stress on oral and aural skills, interaction with post-primary schools, teacher –training requirements, resource needs and timetabling, were to recur again in many later reports and discussion papers. Indeed they are still as valid today as they are unresolved.

In 1990 the curriculum was reviewed. Ireland had been for many years a member state of the European Community and Modern Languages in the Primary School was given mention. Having received a number of submissions suggesting that a modern European language might be introduced in the senior classes in Primary school, the review body, ‘considered various arguments in favour of such a recommendation, especially those relating to educational, cultural and social and economic issues’ (NCCA 1990: 79).

The recommendation that issued, again sidelined the advent of foreign language teaching in the Irish primary school.

Recommendation: The Review Body decides against recommending the introduction of a modern European language into the curriculum in primary schools. The arguments relating to time and curriculum overload as well as the demands of the two languages on the present curriculum were particularly influential in reaching this decision. (NCCA 1990: 79)

The N.P.C. entered a reservation regretting ‘the Review Body’s decision not to recommend the introduction of a modern European language into the curriculum’ (NCCA 1990: 105) and referred to their commissioned report showing that ‘21 per cent of primary schools are providing foreign language classes as an extra curricular activity’ (NCCA 1990: 105) and called for a ‘recognition of Parents’ wishes with regard to a modern European language in primary schools’ (NCCA 1990: 105).

Here then for the first time we have a strong advocacy for the introduction of foreign languages and a challenge to the department’s position by a committed and capable body of opinion, that of the National Parents Council.

1.2.2 *‘The Cost of Free Education’*

The report, *‘The Cost of Free Education’* (1990) Dublin: National Parents Council, intended

- ‘To show the cost to parents of free education and
- To identify the inequalities between schools’ (NPC 1990: 1)

and was based on a total of 349 schools. It showed, inter alia, the percentage cited above for schools providing a foreign language, 21% (provision was free in 5% of these). The average cost per year for tuition in a foreign language was £25.90. The range was from a nominal £1 to £60 per annum. There was a concern expressed regarding the difference in available funding and thus ‘the curricular difference available to those who can afford to pay for these advantages’ (NPC 1990: 1).

This report showed clearly that there was already a sizeable proportion of schools providing a foreign language but not receiving any official recognition or sharing any agreed programme. The present writer can remember being cautioned by a *cigire* (school inspector) that it might not be a good idea as ‘other schools were not doing it and it might provoke comment’. A later *cigire* who approved of this new introduction in principle, was unable to advise or help in an official capacity.

Dr John Harris in a study carried out by I.T.E. and Aonad Curaclaim na Roinne in 1989, cited in ‘Foreign language Teaching in Primary Schools. Issues and Research’ (1991) that ‘79.8% of pupils agreed with the statement “I would like to learn a foreign language at school even if I didn’t have to do it” (Harris 1991:28), while 8.8% were neutral and 11% disagreed. Thus there is evidence of generally positive attitudes to the notion of learning foreign languages across a wide range of sixth grade primary school pupils and classes. He does add a caveat that most of these have had no experience of learning a foreign language and were not ‘thinking very immediately of the effort and application’ (Harris 1991:28), which might be involved. The caveat should not perhaps, be allowed to negate the fact that there is a definite recorded willingness on the part of students to learn. Few students at any level are at the outset, fully aware of the effort and application involved in any educational programme.

1.3.1 Irish National Teachers Organisation: *The Harris Report 1991*

In 1991 The Irish National Teachers Organisation, (INTO), the professional body of primary school teachers, entered the discussion for the first time. Aware of ‘The resurgence of interest in foreign language teaching in other European countries, together with the advent of the completion of the single European market’, the INTO had begun to consider the possibility of ‘access to foreign language, particularly the inclusion of a modern European language in the curriculum at primary level’ (Harris 1991:2). It commissioned its own survey and report, ‘Foreign language Teaching in Primary

Schools. Issues and Research' (1991). This was a much broader based survey than that of the NPC involving 1,834 (56.5%) responding schools out of a total of 3,247. Of the schools which responded 436 had already made provision for the teaching of a foreign language, a figure of 23.8%.

Part one of the Report contains 'a major study to ascertain the current level of foreign language provision in national schools in Ireland. The results of the questionnaire were compiled on an *INTO* district basis and the data was submitted to the Education Officer for collation and analysis' (Harris 1991: 2). So that this was, in effect, a broadly based examination of the theory and practice in foreign language teaching in the Irish primary school in 1991.

1.3.2 The Critical Years: A Question of Age

Harris begins by examining the question of age and second/foreign language learning ,

There is a consensus, however, that the question has been answered clearly enough as far as its implications for the teaching of foreign languages at primary level is concerned: younger children are not any better at learning foreign languages in a school context than older children or adults are. (Smythe, Slennet & Gardner, 1975; SternWeinrib, 1977; McLaughlin, 1985; Genesee, 1987; Singleton, 1989; and Long, 1990). (Harris 1991: 4)

Since as Harris (1991: 4) states, 'One of the most frequently quoted arguments in favour of teaching foreign languages at primary level is that the years before puberty are the best or critical years for acquiring a second language', this rebuttal is significant and weighs against one of the main arguments of the National Parents Council's document 'Modern European languages in the Primary school'.

Burstall et al's (1974) study on this topic, the most suitable age to begin learning a foreign language, has as Harris outlines, been criticized on various grounds (Bennett, 1975; Buckby, 1976; Spicer, 1980; Stern, 1982) 'What cannot be denied, however, is that neither Burstall et al's study, nor any other one, provides convincing evidence for the popular belief that younger children are better language learners than older children in a school context' (Harris 1991: 6).

Considering the reasons in favour of an early introduction of foreign languages he cites Burstall et al 1974; Doye 1979; Holmstrand 1979 and states that 'no negative effects on other school work or on native language skills have been reported in the case of primary

schools second or foreign language programmes' (Harris 1991: 9), and makes a case for an extended time period, 'One of the most important arguments has been that starting second language learning in primary school simply increases the number of hours exposure to the language and is likely in the long run, therefore, to produce a higher level of proficiency' (Harris 1991: 28).

Continuing the arguments for early introduction, Harris states that an early start 'may make children more receptive to the idea of learning foreign languages generally' (Harris 1991: 10). Another argument 'concerns the value of children developing an understanding and appreciation of different cultures from an early age' (Harris 1991: 10), and he quotes from Hawkins' (1987a) humorous but pointed understanding of teenage embarrassment

Learning a foreign language makes heavy demands on empathy: the learner must develop some interest in the foreigner and his way of life, as in a geography or history lesson, but must also learn to 'to behave like the foreigner, making the foreigner's ridiculous noises out loud for his mates to hear (Hawkins, 1987a; p. 189).

One can, as Harris states, recognize that 'the early starter clearly has an advantage here' (Harris 1991: 10). He also cites Singleton (1989) in a more general argument that all aspects of development are enhanced by early stimulation.

All of these aspects would favour early introduction and in the light of this, Harris treats of the various kinds of language programmes that might be introduced. Were a very small amount of time to be apportioned he suggests that a language awareness format might be most suitable (Harris 1991:26). If a choice of language were to be given in primary school this would also suggest the same type of programme be used, as he states that pupils arriving together into second level with 'substantially different foreign language skills is to be avoided ' (Harris 1991: 27).

One might perhaps query the word 'substantially' in the above statement as many of the learning skills and strategies that children learn in one language can be transferred to another. The fact that there would be three languages in question, English, Irish and another would lend itself to this style of programme, as comparisons could be drawn between the three. There is also the advantage that the Irish primary teacher is a qualified language teacher (of Irish). He warns against performance expectations for second and foreign languages. 'The tendency to find the learning of Irish wanting and to

have an overly positive view of the prospects for teaching foreign languages' (Harris 1991: 25) is, he suggests due to inappropriate or irrelevant comparisons with the European Schools or bilingual schools in Belgium.

Time constraints might be helped by the introduction of content-based language instruction CLIL (using the target or second foreign language to teach subject matter). The ideal approach would be 'in the context of a national language policy (O Murchu 1990) or a national foreign language plan (Ruane 1990)' and would require 'A substantial period of pilot testing and systematic evaluation' (Harris 1991: 31).

1.3.3 Findings

The findings of the survey itself show that of the total of schools which responded (56.5%) 23.8% provided for the teaching of a foreign language. The opportunity to study a foreign language was greater in larger national schools. Most foreign language teaching was done outside school hours although this was not the case in smaller schools. Foreign language teaching was usually confined to the senior classes. 65% of schools introduced it at the age of 10+, 30% at 7-10 and 5% between the ages of 4-7. Girls were in the majority, 59.4% and a foreign language was more likely to be offered in Gaelscoileanna (all-Irish-speaking schools) and Multidenominational schools (Harris 1991: 40-42). French was by far the dominant language at 74.6%. German was next at 19.7% and Spanish or other at 4.7%.

There was very little liaison with post-primary schools. Nearly half of the foreign language teaching (46.4%) was taught by an existing staff member. The remainder (36.75%) by an (Irish) external teacher or a foreign teacher (16.9%) (Harris 1991: 43-44).

The Staff attitudes to foreign language teaching revealed, as might be expected a more favourable bias in those schools where it was being implemented. 74.1% in favour as against 33.6% in favour in non-participating schools! There was a considerable 10.7% of teachers opposed to its introduction in non-participating schools against 2.1% in those schools with an active foreign language programme. The question of equal access would 'increasingly become an issue which may have to be addressed in the near future' (Harris 1991: 45-47).

1.3.4 Discussion and Conclusion

In part IV of the report under the heading 'Discussion', the arguments, utilitarian and liberal are considered for the introduction of foreign language teaching. The former approach is questioned and the reunification of Germany and subsequent loss of job opportunities is cited and a paper from the Linguistic Institute of Ireland is cited. 'that to suggest to the general population of pupils in second level schools that learning E.G. languages increases their job prospects is not only untrue, but also serves to undermine the foundations of the school language programme' (Mac Aogain 1990 cited in Harris 1991: 58).

The abandoning of emphasis on a utilitarian outcome has a beneficial result in that aspects of cultural awareness assume greater importance and the cultivation of individual self confidence and growth in personality are cited. 'It is almost universally accepted that young children derive great pleasure and satisfaction from learning and experiencing different foreign cultures' (Harris 1991:58).

A communicative approach was advocated and the importance of continuity in transition from primary to secondary was stressed. There is a telling sentence in this section.

The language associations, while prepared to accept in principle the introduction of foreign language teaching at primary level, stress the necessity for uniformity with regards to methodology and the importance of using authentic language with children from the beginning of their foreign language experiences. (Harris 1991: 59)

'Prepared to accept in principle' does not exactly conjure up a warm and welcoming appreciation of the advantages of an early introduction and the 'necessity for uniformity' would hint at an expectation of difficulties in accommodating a divergence of approaches in the teaching of languages at primary level. It is not stated but this insistence on uniformity also hints that the teaching of languages in the primary school is seen as preparatory for secondary and should as a result, fit in with secondary methodologies.

The discussion then focuses on the lack of resources and the inadequate levels of the present inservice provision and 'lack of state aid for the teaching of the Irish language' (Harris 1991: 260) This does not augur well for the introduction of a third language.

The review body's decision is again quoted and it is suggested that teaching Irish 'contributes significantly to the Child's general education in terms of the cultivation of language awareness and the preparation for future foreign language acquisition' (Harris 1991: 60). It is here that the present writer, who taught Irish at the time and according to then current methodologies, is tempted to dismiss the last statement as highly aspirational, in that the very concept of language awareness as we know it today, was unknown to many of us. Irish was taught as a very separate entity and the introduction of English into the lesson was frowned upon. This point is later referred to in the language Education Policy Profile 'The situation is somewhat more complicated in Ireland, since Irish and English, as two official languages, are strictly separated not only from foreign languages, but also from each other' (DES 2007: 37).

The question of equality is confronted, stating that 'glaring inequalities [...] are already developing in relation to the provision of foreign language teaching at primary level' (Harris 1991:61). The question of age is again raised and the N.P.C's document and the 1985 discussion paper 'Language in the Curriculum' (Curriculum and Examinations Board) cited, both of which argue for early age introduction. This is countered by 'The INTO believes that the early introduction of foreign language teaching in primary schools is a much more complex issue than these statements imply' (Harris 1991: 62). The report ends on this note 'The question of introducing similar innovations in Ireland is an extremely complex issue which requires considerable reflection and debate. This report aims to contribute towards that debate' (Harris 1991: 62).

Thus ends a far-ranging, deeply-considered and thought-provoking report but 'Considerable reflection and debate' are axiomatic with considerable apprehension and delay and there is a singular if quite understandable degree of caution from the main primary teaching body in Ireland towards the introduction of foreign languages into the Primary School.

1.4.1. '*Education for a Changing World*' (1992) A Change in Attitude

The Green paper of 1992 (Government of Ireland, *Education for a changing world* Green paper on Education. Dublin: The Government Stationary Office) hereafter referred to as (Green Paper 1992) signalled the first significant change in governmental attitude to the European dimension in education. There is the recognition that 'Until now, Irish education was concerned only with educating Irish citizens. Now as the pace

gathers towards European Union, it must educate Irish young people to be European citizens as well' (Green Paper 1992: 86).

This is a significant change and attitudes towards European languages and culture are reappraised.

Introducing a European dimension into Irish education means more than spreading a greater knowledge of European languages, vital though that is. It also involves a need to develop an awareness of the European heritage and values that we share in addition to our distinctive Irish identity and culture. (Green Paper 1992: 86)

Under the heading 'Modern European languages at primary Level' it mentions the introduction of an awareness programme. This, it is suggested, might be an introduction to the 'diversity of languages that exists in mainland Europe or a simple introduction to a selected language' (Green Paper 1992: 89). In the latter case the emphasis would focus on 'aural comprehension and simple conversation'. It acknowledged the arguments against foreign language introduction given by the Review body but noted that a number of primary schools had already provided for programmes in foreign languages and it was proposed to review the experience of these schools 'to establish to what extent it is possible to extend the practice' (Green Paper 1992: 89).

1.4.2 '*Culture and Communication*' NCCA (1993)

This positive governmental approach led to the NCCA's next discussion paper '*Culture and Communication*': *Foreign Languages in the Primary School Curriculum 1993*' where recognition was again given to the fact that foreign languages had already been introduced into many schools. It cited the 'Programme for Partnership Government 1993-1995' as 'proposing to examine the feasibility of the introduction of a third language in the last two years of schooling at primary level' (NCCA 1993: 3). The idea of the European dimension of the curriculum is stressed at the outset in terms 'of cultural awareness or language awareness or a certain communicative competence in a modern European language' (NCCA 1993: 3). It is to be noted that former ideas of economic value and preparation for second level have now been laid aside. 'Language learning in primary schools is not to be seen as a mere "softening -up" process for the more "serious" work of secondary school' (Giovanazzi 1991, cited in NCCA 1993: 11) and there is for the first time a direct reference to The Council of Europe's report on 'Innovation in Primary Education' (NCCA 1993: 6).

This is a very positive document stating that a pilot project is “both realistic and feasible” (NCCA 1993: 9). There is an examination of arguments for and against the introduction of foreign languages in the primary school. The arguments for, are summarized in that children benefit from prolonged exposure to language acquisition in terms of attitude and communicative competence if programmes are carefully planned and evaluated and co-ordinated with those of the post –primary. Foreign language learning can have a positive influence on mother-tongue learning and general cognitive development. Other European countries have introduced and are introducing foreign language schemes. The arguments against were the overloading of the curriculum, the 40% language content already in the curriculum; the fact that linguistic awareness is present in the teaching of Irish and the last, that a high level of competence is necessary to develop an awareness of other cultures. (NCCA 1993: 9). While this final point does apply were one to posit a high level of intercultural awareness, yet at Primary level the students do not require impressive communicative competence to achieve awareness of other cultures suited to their ability and understanding, e.g. the freeing of learners from stereotyped views of others, the recognition of the validity of other religious beliefs, the diversity of interests and occupations.

There is a pragmatic expectation of ability and an acknowledgement of the advances in second language pedagogy in recent years which has also influenced new approaches in the teaching of Irish. There is also the acknowledgement that ‘the aims and objectives of the modern language syllabus go beyond merely communicative aims and seek to contribute to the learners overall cognitive and social development’ (NCCA 1993: 10). This is a far broader concept of language than had been envisioned in earlier documents. Theoretical aspects of the child’s overall cognitive and social development are being seriously considered in making a case for the introduction of foreign languages.

Reference is made to the Council of Europe’s document ‘Innovation in Primary Education’ and its emphasis on a widening of children’s perception of lifestyles and customs, the promotion of tolerance and the reduction of selfishness and prejudice. It is interesting to note that one of the objectives is ‘to broaden the pupils’ horizons and take them beyond Great Britain and the dominance of Anglo Saxon culture to mainland Europe (NCCA 1993: 11). This is a sea-change from the ‘fairly comprehensive treatment’ advocated for England in the 1971 curriculum (DES 2 1971: 185).

There is an examination of the three key aspects, language awareness, cultural awareness and communicative competence. And it is suggested that ‘Any primary curriculum initiative could be based on any one or any combination of these three broad areas’ (NCCA 1993: 12). Among operational issues discussed are the necessity for liaison between primary and secondary sectors and the Scottish pilot project was cited as an example of good practice. (NCCA 1993: 16). Teacher supply for a pilot scheme would not appear to pose too great a problem as over half the existing teachers in foreign languages in primary school were existing members of staff. But the provision of teachers on a national basis would ‘pose major problems at this stage’ (NCCA 1993: 16-17). At the time of writing two of the Colleges of Education produced about 20 graduates per year with a degree level qualification in French. This in itself would indicate a need for a complete revision of aspects of teacher training to ensure a sufficient number of teachers and a diversity of language be provided.

It was suggested that data on different models of curriculum content be gathered and evaluated. These models would be ‘aimed at pupils in fifth and sixth class and be of one to one and a half hours duration per week’ (NCCA 1993: 18). Work was to begin in the school year 1993-94 with a view to implementation in September 1994. In fact this did not happen until September 1998.

1.4.3 ‘*Charting our Education Future*’ (1995)

In 1995 the Government published the definitive white paper on education, Government of Ireland (1995) *Charting our Education Future: White Paper on Education*. Dublin: The Government Stationary Office, (hereafter referred to as White Paper 1995)

It stressed the right of parents ‘to active participation in their child’s education’, ‘To be consulted and informed on all aspects of the child’s education’ and to be ‘active participants in the education system at school, regional and national levels’ (White Paper 1995: 11). This was four years after the Parents Council’s reservation and call for ‘recognition of Parents wishes with regard to a modern European language in primary schools’ (NPC 1991: 2).

There is finally, official policy-recognition of a European dimension in one of the ‘Particular aims of the revised Primary curriculum’ (White Paper 1995: 21), that of European Awareness Programmes. ‘In the context of a European awareness programme

students will be introduced to European languages, life and culture'. The programme will 'introduce students to various European languages, other than English and Irish' (White Paper 1995: 23). Here for the first time is an indication of definite purpose in the provision of the teaching of a third language in the Irish primary school. It is interesting that also in the provision of Irish there is now the acknowledgment of pragmatism 'the specification of attainable learning objectives' (White Paper 1995: 23), which would correspond with the trends introduced at least a decade earlier in foreign language teaching in the communicative competence method.

On 'Irish Education and the International dimension' the report states, 'The formation of a national education policy in a Western democracy [...] must be firmly set in an international context' (White Paper 1995: 211). As a member of the European Community Ireland subscribes to the objectives of the Maastricht Treaty and cites 'developing the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching of the languages of the Member States' (White Paper 1995: 214). This aspirational language policy would augur well for the introduction of foreign languages into the Primary system and in November 1997 the Minister for Education and Science, Micheal Mairtin, announced the formation of a national pilot programme for the teaching of foreign languages to begin in September 1998. Its official title was 'The Pilot Programme on Modern Languages in the Primary School'.

1.5.1 The Pilot Programme on Modern Languages in the Primary School

This was a pilot scheme whereby selected schools were to be funded for two years in the introduction of a foreign language into the fifth and sixth classes. The time allotted was 1.5 hours weekly. The funding came from the European Social fund. The schools, 270 in all, were chosen from an applicant list of 1300. It proved difficult to achieve an equitable distribution of schools between the four languages and the final selection resulted in 133 for French, 71 for German, 44 for Spanish and 22 for Italian. (Harris and Conway, 2002: 13). This imbalance was probably due to a preponderance of teachers qualified in the French language. As noted above (1.4.2) this was the only language in which a degree qualification could be obtained in the training colleges. Care was taken that the distribution of schools in the programme was representative. 'The selection of schools mirrors the entire primary school profile from two-teacher rural schools to large urban schools. Also included are gael scoileanna, multi-denominational schools, special

schools and disadvantaged schools' (DES 2005: 10). The writer's school was one of those chosen, in the two-teacher rural category, and has been fully involved in both the pilot project and the later modern language initiative, up to the present time.

The scheme had seven full-time Project leaders who, as well as supporting the work of the teachers and designing and delivering in-career development, were also involved in research. The National Council for Curriculum and assessment (NCCA) was responsible for the development of Curriculum Guidelines and Teacher Guidelines. The

Institiud Teangeolaiochta Eireann (ITE), (Irish Linguistics Institute- since disbanded) was appointed to evaluate the Project (Harris and Conway 2002: 14-15).

The appointment of the NCCA was a crucial one as this body, among its many responsibilities, was charged with the compiling of a report on the feasibility of modern languages in the primary school which would be instrumental in deciding whether the pilot project would be enlarged to encompass all schools in the primary sector. This did not issue until January 2005 and is treated in detail below.

It was hoped that the participating teachers as stated by Harris and Conway, (2002: 15) "would come, as far as possible from among the ranks of existing, qualified classroom practitioners" but the reality was, as stated in the Language Education Policy Profile Ireland (DES 2007a: 22), 'A significant number (close to 75%) of the teachers involved are not members of the school staff.' This has considerable implications as there is variance in teacher education, language competency, in pedagogical approach, and there is a financial consequence as the visiting teachers are paid an hourly rate while the practicing Irish qualified teachers receive their normal salary and are not specifically remunerated for language teaching. The question of teacher provision has as we have seen from the outset, been of major importance and assumes a greater importance in the consideration of a nationalization of the present initiative. Teachers were invited to attend a preliminary meeting which discussed the administration details of the project and also two in-service days. There were also in-service days provided by embassies and cultural institutes, two annually in the case of German, by the Goethe Institute in Dublin, which invited speakers on methodology, resources and best practice. These in-service and cultural institute days have proved an important influence in unifying

approaches to the project. The Goethe Institute also offered short summer courses for interested teachers and have provided month-long scholarships in Germany which have proved very beneficial in revision and further acquisition of language skills, methodology and Landeskunde.

1.5.2 Draft Curriculum Guidelines NCCA (1999)

In 1999 the NCCA issued the Draft Curriculum Guidelines (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment NCCA (1999) *Pilot Project on Modern languages in the*

Primary school). In both format and approach these mirrored the other Guidelines on subjects in the new curriculum and approached the subject through the strands of Communicative competence, Language awareness and Cultural awareness. The strand units were Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Classroom teachers would have been familiar with this approach in both the English and Irish teacher guidelines and these now develop the aims, objectives and principles for a modern language programme in primary school. These guidelines serve as a unifying structure both within the subject itself but also as a reference to other subjects, languages and cultures.

It is noted that, ‘This draft Curriculum has been developed within the framework of the revised primary curriculum’ (NCCA 1999: 14) and one of the principles states, ‘The approach will be an integrated one, where effective links can be made between language development, cultural awareness and communicative competence, and other areas of the curriculum’ (NCCA 1999: 17). The intention here does seem to be the incorporation of the teaching of foreign languages into the curriculum, even if, at present, it exists only in project form. There is a section on Language Functions (NCCA 1999: 57-87) where the basic pragmatic requirements of each language are set out clearly. The importance of assessment is also developed and the value of introducing a portfolio to indicate progress on entry into Second level is also mentioned (NCCA 1999: 51-56). Work on the development of a Languages Portfolio was undertaken by the Project leaders and piloted in 49 schools. (Harris and Conway 2002: 17-18).

1.5.3 The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI)

There were further developments in 2001. The Pilot project was renamed as The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI). A National Co-ordinator was appointed to oversee the Initiative. The NCCA issued the Teacher Guidelines for Modern languages in the Primary School. This was also based on the other teacher guidelines in the Curriculum. It covered the strands of Communicative Competence, Language awareness and Cultural Awareness. It advised on school and classroom planning for modern languages and there were chapters on approaches and methodologies and exemplar lessons in each of the four designated languages. French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Diploma courses were introduced into some of the Institutes of Technology. These were intended to give teachers a level of proficiency in teaching foreign languages in primary

school. They were evening courses and were for the first two years funded by the DES. The French and German courses were Diploma (two years) and Spanish and Italian Certificate (one year). (Harris and Conway, 2002: 19) They were held in the I.T. Colleges in Waterford, Letterkenny, Cork, Athlone, Sligo, Blanchardstown (Dublin), and others. At the conclusion of these courses, Leargas (the national agency in Ireland for the management of national and international exchange and cooperation programmes in education, youth and community work and vocational education and training) offered month-long scholarships in the target language countries to enable teachers to develop their language skills. The present writer availed of this opportunity and also other Leargas and Goethe scholarships and found them hugely beneficial. These Institute of Technology courses were a practical and efficient way by which the number of schools providing a foreign language might have been increased. Unfortunately there was a cap on the number of new schools in the year 2002 which meant that many of the newly qualified language teachers were not brought into the system. The cap was lifted in 2008. There was a total of 530 teachers enrolled in the courses in June 2001. (Harris and Conway 2002: 19). By 2004 'Over 400 teachers have completed the courses to date across the four languages'; the breakdown showed that French was very much to the fore at 61%, followed by Spanish, 20%, Italian ,13% and German, 6% (DES 2005: 30). Funding for the courses was withdrawn in 2003 and as a

result applications immediately slumped and courses were withdrawn. There is at present no course of this nature being run in any of the I.T. colleges.

1.6.1. Evaluation: *The Harris Conway Report 2002*

In 2002 '*Modern Languages in Irish Primary Schools /an evaluation of the national Pilot Project*' by Dr John Harris and Mary Conway was published. This in-depth study and evaluation of the pilot programme involved teachers, parents and children by means of detailed questionnaires and a specific 22 classes study. It provided an immense amount of critically important material. Among the subjects covered in the report were: organisation, support and inservice, teaching approaches and pupil's reactions, links to post-primary, contact with parents and parents' reaction, benefits of the Pilot projects to the school, teachers and pupils' reactions, how well the aims of the project were being promoted and a consideration of the possibility of extending the Pilot programme

(Harris and Conway 2002: 24-119). The study of the 22 classes was intensive and embraced a listening comprehension test, a test on spoken communication and a questionnaire on pupils' attitude, motivation and views on the project (Harris and Conway 2002: 127-198).

In an overview of the project's achievements, Harris and Conway comment on the improvement in teachers' skills, that the programme has a significant emphasis on communication, an experimental orientation to learning and a focus on enjoyment of the learning process. They comment on the positive attitude of pupils to learning a foreign language, the viability of foreign language teaching in disadvantaged schools and the fact that no class which they examined could be said to be failing to make significant progress in learning the language. The final point made is that 'the vast majority of the modern -language teachers feel that they personally, (93%) the school (93%) and the pupils they teach (98%) benefit from participation in the Pilot Project' (Harris and Conway 2002: 202-203).

The less successful aspects concerned use of the target language and information technology, the need for greater emphasis on communicative/experiential activities and on cultural awareness and the European dimension. Time requirements were putting

pressure on the curriculum and there seemed to be a lack of co-ordination between first and second level education. There is a continuing need to deal with pupil-learning-difficulties and the idea of a supportive classroom atmosphere and ‘providing pupils with real and timely feedback on their progress is essential’ (Harris and Conway 2002: 203-206).

Following on this very positive evaluation of progress the authors move to the issues and prospects of a modern-languages programme for all primary schools. Here Harris and Conway acknowledge that they are

faced with a long- standing problem of researchers on modern languages at primary level: how to balance the optimism which is rightly generated by a successful pilot study with the caution which the experience of other countries shows is needed in moving on to the *generalization phase* (the introduction of a modern language programme into all primary schools) Experience shows that failure to anticipate the difficulties and to fully acknowledge the scale of the task of generalization is counterproductive. (Harris and Conway 2002: 210)

It would be, as their arguments clearly show, simplistic to assume that because a pilot scheme has achieved a high degree of success, the broader national application of that scheme can be taken for granted. An extension of the existing Pilot Scheme would maintain momentum, reward the initiative of schools who had introduced foreign languages but had not as yet been included in the initiative, maximize teaching resources and increase contact, awareness and debate. There would be disadvantages in a lack of language diversity. Up to this time, applying schools that opted for the less commonly taught languages would have had an advantage. There might also be a lack of capacity to redress inequalities of access. The original pilot schools had a predetermined inclusive approach. In the opening up of the scheme to any school that could provide a member of staff or visiting teacher to teach the language there was the possibility that disadvantaged schools or small rural schools might not have the staff structures or resources and thus not be available for selection. There are also issues with continuity and discrepancies in modern language abilities and as always, there are additional costs (cf. Harris and Conway 2002: 213-216). All of these arguments serve to show the complexities and complications involved in switching from a pilot to a national scheme and while the value and intrinsic worth of the provision of foreign language teaching in primary schools might seem self-evident, the difficulties involved

must give us pause and need to be very seriously debated. In the light of these arguments the very cautious approach of the INTO would appear to be justified.

Three new Pilots are suggested which will ‘provide a crucial input into both planning and implementation at a national level’ (Harris and Conway 2002: 222).

Pilot A was to ‘develop an interim Sensitisation/ Language Awareness programme, which might be used more generally in schools that do not have a full modern language programme’ (Harris and Conway 2002: 223).

Pilot B would ‘investigate clustering of schools’, the formation of ‘a representative action group to examine transition issues’ and develop and try out ‘ways of recording and transferring information about pupils at the transition stage’ (Harris and Conway 2002: 222).

Plan C was the ‘development of an intensive, once-off, teacher-training programme in modern languages’ (Harris and Conway 2002: 222).

In conclusion it is stressed that ‘Incremental expansion of the pilot project *alone*, without research, piloting and infrastructural development is not likely to be an effective approach’ (Harris and Conway 2002: 233). The necessity for the engagement of teachers, pupils and parents in primary language learning at some level is stressed, in order to build a national consensus which is in turn ‘essential to the consolidation of political support for the enterprise’ (Harris and Conway 2002: 233).

This authoritative and comprehensive report shows clearly that the Pilot project was indeed very successful in introducing a language-competency-centered approach to the teaching of four foreign languages in the primary schools selected for the pilot. But this offers no guarantee that a national programme can or will be rolled out as a result.

1.6.2 Progress Report of the MLPSI 1998-2004

In 2004 the MLPSI issued its own ‘Progress Report of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative 1998-2004’ which gave a brief review of the pilot phase, its rationale and the aims of the project. It set the Initiative as it is now known, firmly in a European context citing the Council of Europe’s white paper on Education and Training

1995, 'Teaching and Learning-towards the Learning Society'. 'Learning languages also has another important effect: experience shows when undertaken from a very early age, it is an important factor in doing well at school' (COM 1995:47 cited in DES 2005: 9). It cites the Council of Ministers Recommendations No R (98)6 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States concerning Modern languages p.2 '[to] encourage and promote the early learning of modern languages'. It goes on to state the European Council's call at Barcelona March 2002 'to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age ' (DES 2005 : 9). The final citation is from *Promoting Language learning and Linguistic diversity: An Action Plan 2004-2006*, COM (2003) 449: 7, 'It is a priority for member states to ensure that language learning in kindergarten and primary schools is effective, for it is here that key attitudes towards other languages and cultures are formed and the foundation for future language learning is made' (cited in DES 2005: 9).

It reports on the then current status (2004) where there were almost 400 schools partaking in the scheme. An interesting aspect of this report is the generosity of the coverage given to participants in the course, pupils, teachers, past-pupils, parents, primary and second level principals. They were invited to comment and the variety of response gives a clear overall picture of the intention of the initiative.

In the section "Future Research" the report mentions the NCCA feasibility report which is treated in detail below and the "Forfas Report: Expert Group on Future Skills Needs-Demand and Supply of Modern language Skills in the Irish Economy (2004) which recommends that the 'embedding of modern languages in the primary curriculum is a hugely important foundational component of Ireland's language infrastructure and should be prioritized in terms of resource allocation' (DES 2005: 34). However its recommendation that 'the Pilot Languages Project should be integrated into the mainstream curriculum and the programme be made available to all primary schools' (DES 2005: 35) is made without reference to any of the arguments so carefully marshalled and measured by Harris and Conway . The IBEC 'Education Policy Document Education for life-the challenge of the third millennium' (2004) is also cited. 'The development of a national co-ordinated system that makes the study of a foreign language compulsory in primary schools should be put in place' (IBEC 2004: 17, cited

in DES 2005: 35). Statements such as these may seem admirable in their aspirational intent but there does not seem to be a deep and fundamental examination of all the criteria involved and there is no analysis of the actual situation or suggestions of how these schemes might be advanced. As such they do not offer practical help.

1.6.3 '*Language in the Primary School*' INTO 2004

In contrast, the INTO discussion document '*Language in the Primary School*' (INTO: 2004) shows a keen and practical awareness of the difficulties involved. Although the document concerns itself mainly with English and Irish in the primary school there is an entire chapter on Modern Languages in Primary Education. The introduction clearly defines the attitude on this subject.

A decision to introduce modern languages in the primary school can only take place in the context of an overall policy on language and education. There is no doubt that the initial

evaluation of the pilot project has shown the teaching of modern languages to be successful, but it is early days yet, and there are many questions to be answered. (INTO 2004: 2)

The stall has been set out and there is the implication that the broadening of the scope of the Initiative is by no means inevitable. The report gives a short but comprehensive account of the Pilot Programme and refers to the emphasis placed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission on the importance of enhancing the communicative competence of European citizens. It also refers to the Government White Paper on Education and the various Lingua and Comenius programmes. The recommendations of the Parents Council are acknowledged and their continuing support for the modern languages initiative acknowledged (INTO 2004:78). Then the point is made 'However, research appears to indicate that there is little conclusive proof that younger children have any greater language learning capabilities, at least in a school situation, in comparison with their older counterparts' (INTO 2004: 78).

The arguments for and against, cited by Harris in the earlier document '*Foreign language teaching in Primary schools*' are stated to 'have as much relevance in the year 2003 as they had in 1990' (INTO 2004: 79). These arguments had been treated in detail by Harris and are once again marshalled to sustain the above quotation. There is an emphasis on the arguments against introduction.

There can be little doubt that in the context of formal schooling the evidence is that older children have the advantage over younger children as far as second or foreign language is concerned. Children who start foreign languages at post-primary either catch up, more or less, with those who began earlier: or else older children perform better on evaluation tests than younger children after equivalent numbers of hours exposure to the second language. (e.g. Burstall, Jamieson, Cohen & Hargreaves, 1974; Carroll, 1975; Ekstrand, 1976; Oiler & Nagato, 1974; Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1978). (INTO 1991: 5)

In the light of the above it is not surprising to find the INTO stating ‘One might question, therefore the merit of stretching an already crowded primary curriculum further with another programme of language learning’ (INTO 2004: 79).

The interpretation of one of Singleton’s (1989) general arguments in favour of an early start based on Ekstrand (1971) and mentioned in the earlier report might be questioned. Whereas Singleton stresses the fact ‘that all aspects of development are enhanced by

early stimulation’ (INTO 1991: 10) and posits this in favour of an early start in languages, the report uses this to negate the point. ‘Then there is as good an argument for beginning early in mathematics’. (INTO 2004: 80) The point concerning mathematics is self-evident. The point concerning early language learning is dismissed. But this is not typical of the report. The main arguments revolve around the age aspect and the already crowded curriculum. It is notable that there is very little consideration given to the intrinsic value of learning a foreign language and the points made by Harris in the earlier report that the study of foreign languages creates a cultural awareness, a broadening of horizons and a degree of intercultural awareness, ‘It is almost universally accepted that young children derive great pleasure and satisfaction from learning and experiencing different foreign cultures’ (Harris 1991: 58) are not taken up or developed. This is all the more surprising as in the introduction, the opening sentence states ‘The raison d’etre for this document, “Language in the primary school”, lies in the importance of language in the process of education and development’ (INTO 2004 :7). Even within that sentence itself there is implicit recognition of the value of another foreign language to capture a precise and particular meaning!

However there is a considered examination of bilingualism ‘considered at its simplest, viz. the alternate use of two or more languages (Mackey: 1968, cited in INTO 2004: 33), and the important concession suggested that:

Ireland is very probably unique in that it gives a constitutional status of supremacy to a language that is a low-utility entity. Put another way, Irish was given de jure ascendancy while all the time it labored under de facto minority status. (INTO 2004: 33)

Reference is made to the paradoxical situation as revealed in the Committee on Irish Language Attitudes Research (CLAR 1975) where two thirds of the population agreed with the statement ‘Ireland would not really be Ireland without its Irish-speaking people’ while seventy-nine per cent believed that ‘Irish is less useful than any continental language’ and ‘most people do not care about the fate of the language’ (INTO 2004: 34). From this, the report questions the judiciousness of maintaining a national bilingual education and also the relevance of the proposed move towards multilingualism as outlined in the NCCA *“Modern languages in Primary Schools-Curriculum and Teacher guidelines”*. This questioning of the traditional bilingual

education by the INTO is unprecedented as the position of Irish in primary education had hitherto been regarded as sacrosanct.

There is a short discussion on bilingualism, intelligence and cognitive functioning and the conclusion from ‘a substantial corpus of international research that compares the abilities of monolinguals and bilinguals in divergent thinking (Anisfeld, 1964; Torrance et al, 1970; Cummins and Gullutsan, 1974; Landry 1974; Cummins, 1975; Noble and Dalton, 1976; Cummins 1977)’ (INTO 2004: 36), is that the bilingual student outperforms the monolinguals in the areas of divergent thinking.

In the light of what the report terms, the ‘full box’ nature of the revised curriculum and the difficulty of cramming more instruction time into it, the question is raised as to whether parents would opt for less time to be given to Irish and more to the introduction of a foreign language. In a memorable phrase it asks, ‘Is it time to stand up and proclaim that the language is dead, that it is really time now for a decent and respectful burial, perhaps somewhere in the groves of academe?’ (INTO 2004: 80). But lest this be construed as an invitation for foreign languages to supplant Irish, the question is posed

‘is there anything to suggest that modern languages will take hold with any greater facility?’ (INTO 2004: 80). The question is rhetorical but later in the report there is a closer examination of the requirements of such an introduction.

Acknowledging that The Language Competency/ Language Acquisition type programme is the preferred model in many European countries, the report states that such a model requires a ‘high level of teacher proficiency and requires dedicated time’ (INTO 2004 :85). It suggests a sensitization or language awareness model would be less demanding and that continuity between first and second level would not be as crucial. It would be preferable were the teacher to be the class teacher and the introduction of specialist teachers into a system where the norm was that of the generalist, might pose problems as would the probable unsustainability of the employment of part-time teachers on a national basis. Again here a language awareness program would avoid many of these difficulties.

Questions of teacher education, class levels, choice of language, time-allotment and professional development are considered (INTO 2004: 86-87) and again the more

adoptable option is that of language awareness. There is the advantage cited that the introduction of modern languages-presumably in the context of a language competence mode would provide opportunities for teachers to become proficient in a foreign language but this is countered by the probability that because of ‘the level of retraining necessary it is likely that it would have to be supported by a major salary increase’ (INTO 2004: 87).

It comes as no surprise then that the INTO Education Committee recommends the introduction of a combination language awareness/sensitization programme rather than that of language competence, to all primary schools. It bases its decision on the lack of research, experimentation and or infrastructural development so far. The experience of other countries must be viewed in relation to the Irish context. Such a programme can be integrated into existing curricular programmes and would satisfy teachers who feel overburdened and also parental demands for an early introduction of foreign language to the primary curriculum. It is suggested that the programme not be confined to fifth and sixth classes alone and that teachers who wish to develop their linguistic abilities should

be facilitated. There is also expressed a desire that the schools involved in the current initiative be facilitated 'should they so desire'. But even here there is the rub. 'However facilitating such schools perpetuates the existing inequalities, in that only some pupils have access to such programmes' (INTO 2004: 89). It is abundantly clear that in 2004 the main primary teachers' representative body is not yet in favour of the introduction of a language competence model into mainstream Irish primary Education.

1.7.1 *MLPSI European Language Portfolio (2004)*

In 2004 the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) received accreditation from the Council of Europe for its European Language Portfolio. The original source for both the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) was the Symposium: *Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe: objectives, evaluation, certification* held in Rueschlikon, Switzerland in November 1991 (TRIM 1997: 38). The framework was intended to attempt to specify 'as full a range of language knowledge, skills and use as possible [...] and that all users should be able to describe their objectives, etc. by

reference to it' (TRIM 1997: 38). The portfolio was the tool as it were, by which the aims objectives and achievement of success could be recorded and evaluated.

The Framework has proved to be a fundamental document in language teaching and acquisition. 'Its detailed analysis of language use and language competence has made an invaluable contribution to teacher training in many countries' (TRIM 1997: 41). The Council of Europe's approach differentiated itself from that of the European Union, as Trim states, in that it 'adopted the objective of *pluralisim*' (TRIM 1997: 42).

From this perspective the aim of language teaching is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. (TRIM 1997: 42)

The Portfolio is divided into a Passport, recording qualifications and assessment; a Biography describing language proficiency and progress along with cultural and linguistic experiences, strategies and checklists; and a Dossier containing samples of work attempted, items associated with the target culture, certificates etc.

By successfully producing an accredited European Language Portfolio the MLPSI succeeded in channeling the work done in Irish schools into the mainstream of modern European language education. An important additional national aspect is that the ELP is produced in both Irish and English so that it can also be used effectively in the teaching of Irish, (or indeed of English in Gaeltacht schools (those situated in areas where Irish is the mother-tongue) or in teaching children whose mother tongue is neither Irish or English.)

Another distinctive aspect of the ELP is that it is topic based. This brings it into line with the NCCA's Draft Curriculum and also the Curriculum for Irish. It is also envisaged as helping in the transition from primary to second level, where it can function as a record of language proficiency.

1.7. 2 Report on the Feasibility of Modern Languages, NCCA (2005)

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published its 'Report on the feasibility of modern languages in the primary School Curriculum' in January 2005.

As the Council's purpose is 'to advise the Minister on matters relating to the curriculum for early childhood education, primary and post primary schools' (Government of Ireland 1998: 35), this was expected to have a decisive influence on the future direction of Modern Language in the Primary School.

The report was divided into three sections, an historical overview of policy and practice, an investigation of the practicalities and processes involved in the introduction of modern languages on a national scale into the primary curriculum and the consideration of five options for the future (NCCA 2005: 1).

Much of the report's findings in the first section has already been covered above. Among the figures given are that 10% of all schools are involved. 93% of teachers involved in the initiative believed that the children benefitted from learning a modern language and 84% of the children stated that they were satisfied they had started learning a foreign language. The areas noted for development were continuity between primary and secondary level, the use of ICT (information and communication

technology), cultural awareness, the use of target language and the promotion of communicative strategies (NCCA 2005: 16)

Commenting on the European context there is a hint of possible problems ahead and a viable escape clause were the introduction of foreign languages to prove unfeasible.

While the DES may be guided by the recommendations of the Lisbon Strategy, the principle of subsidiarity provides for each member state of the EU to form its own policy directives in line with the needs of its citizens and taking into consideration the resources that are available. (NCCA 2005: 17)

This would seem to imply that were the resources unavailable, the Lisbon Strategy's recommendations might not be taken into consideration or might be interpreted in the light of circumstance.

In the summary of this section, the EU's policies on the extension of the teaching and learning of foreign languages in primary schools and the promotion of pluralism is recognized. The number of children learning a foreign language in Ireland is well below the European average. The approach to language teaching reflects that of broader European approaches. The Common European Frame of Reference and the European

Languages Portfolio are of benefit in developing and implementing foreign language curricula. (NCCA 2005: 22)

In the second section the difficulties involved in introducing the new Primary School Curriculum have been recognized as being 'more professionally demanding than originally envisaged' and that the challenges involved have implications for 'the addition of another subject' (NCCA 2005: 26). As modern languages is the only extra subject on the horizon, this does not appear to augur well for its introduction. On the positive side there is the recognition that 'Inclusion of modern language in the Primary School Curriculum is compatible with the Aims, Features and Principles of the curriculum' (NCCA 2005: 35). There is scope for integration with other subjects but there are time-constraints involved. The provision of draft Curriculum Guidelines has been designed 'to further support modern language teaching and learning' (NCCA 2005: 35).

In revisiting the question of younger students and language learning, while it is admitted that children do not necessarily learn modern languages better than adults or older students, the positive implications for their cognitive and affective development are recognized. Equality of access is noted as an important issue and again on a positive note the ability of children with special educational needs to participate in the programme given appropriate support is cited (NCCA 2005: 45).

In teaching considerations the report would consider that, in the longer term, school-based teachers 'are best placed to be the key actors in leading modern languages within classrooms (NCCA 2005: 46). In fact the majority of teachers in the initiative are visiting teachers whose costs amount to 30% of the Initiative's budget.

As mentioned above, the withdrawal of funds from the I.T Colleges led to a huge fall off in numbers attending the Two Year diploma courses. 420 teachers graduated in 2004, but only 80 in 2005 and at the time of writing the courses have been abandoned due to lack of applicants. There are Masters courses being run in Blanchardstown I.T and Waterford W.I.T. but the original courses, intended to increase the number of class teachers, are no longer in existence.

Having examined school and classroom planning, teaching materials and information technology the report deals with planning and monitoring and the role of the Project Leaders. It proposes some pilot projects in the areas of:

- An intensive professional development programme for teachers.
- Content Language Integrated Learning
- Networking of schools at local level
- Language awareness
- An earlier start (NCCA 2005: 78)

There is an irony in promoting the first of these projects, the 'intensive professional development programme for teachers', just as the other (seemingly quite successful) development programme for teachers had collapsed due to lack of funding and possibly

frustration of teachers not being allowed to put what they had learned into practice owing to a cap on the number of schools allowed in the initiative.⁵

The third and final section of the report suggests five options:

- Introducing modern languages in the Primary School immediately
- Gradually increasing the number of schools teaching modern languages
- Introducing modern languages as an option in the primary School Curriculum
- Making no changes to the current Primary school Curriculum.
- Implementing the primary School Curriculum fully before making a recommendation (NCCA 2005:79)

It would appear that the first option would involve massive investment in teacher education, school and curriculum organization, and in teaching resources. The question of inequality of provision and a perhaps haphazard manner of introduction arises in the second (NCCA 2005: 82). The idea of modern language as an option runs counter to the commitment to equity of education for all children and the optional status of one subject would ‘undermine the nature of the primary curriculum as a holistic and integrated construct’ (NCCA 2005: 83). The fourth option (which seems to contradict much of what has been stated previously concerning the value of introducing a modern language) is an acceptance of the stark realization that the current capacity is not sufficient ‘in

terms of resources and personnel’ and this would also be considered as ‘justified’, ‘in a context where there are growing concerns about the crowded nature of the curriculum and the challenges posed by its implementation’ (NCCA 2005: 84). The question of The Treaty of Lisbon and commitment to its aspirations does arise but only at the end of the paragraph, ‘Moreover, a decision not to include modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum would also make it difficult for Irish schools to attain the objectives identified in the Lisbon Treaty’ (NCCA 2005: 85).

Each of these options is treated in fuller form and the pros and cons of each option are worked out in greater detail (NCCA 2005:79-85) but the fifth has been signalled from

⁵ In the Carlow IT German class of five students only two were actually entitled to teach German in their respective schools. The other three were awaiting the admission of their schools to the Initiative.

the very beginning of the report (NCCA 2005: 2) as the preferred one. While it might appear to be a shelving of the decision to a later date there is little doubt that the full implementation of the Primary Curriculum needed to take precedence over the introduction of a new subject. The NCCA regarded the decision to act on this option as 'progressive'. 'Thus a decision to act on the fifth option acknowledges that the DES may wish to facilitate the continuation and /or expansion of the current initiative' (NCCA 2005: 86). The use of "may" is interesting as it indicates the possibility that the DES also 'may not' chose to facilitate continuation and/or expansion of the initiative.

The addition is recommended of small scale pilot projects, as mentioned earlier in the report (NCCA 2005: 78). These pilots should investigate the possibility of integrating languages into the primary curriculum, and the NCCA 'will work closely with those involved to ensure that the implications of each project for the Primary school Curriculum are comprehensively examined'(NCCA 2005: 88).

And so after an exhaustive and well researched report re the feasibility of introducing modern languages into the Primary Curriculum, the final conclusion is postponed. 'The NCCA will consider the introduction of modern languages in the primary School Curriculum once the curriculum has been fully implemented and in the light of the results and findings from the interim activities and projects recommended' (NCCA 2005: 89).

It is difficult to see how the NCCA could have come to any other conclusion since the implementation of the primary curriculum was still being facilitated. Nevertheless there

is also a sense that the problems are being shelved and that the same needs, problems and requirements will need to be re-addressed when the Curriculum will have been fully introduced. Issues of resources, teacher availability, time constraints, continuity, many of these mentioned back in the parents council document of 1993, will still remain and need to be faced. In fact the current economic downturn will surely have an adverse effect on all of these issues. Dr. Johnson's image of the dog might still be relevant, perhaps this time gnawing on an ever-diminishing and meatless bone.

1.7.3 The Language Education Policy Profile IRELAND 2005-2007

The report *The Language Education Policy Profile IRELAND 2005-2007* (hereafter referred to as DES 2007) is an analysis of language education policies of a particular country, in this case Ireland, ‘in a spirit of dialogue with Council of Europe experts and with a view to focusing on possible future developments within the country’ (DES 2007: 5). It is a very wide-ranging document and considers the involvement, implications and effects of Irish, English, Foreign languages, Immigrant languages, Irish Sign Languages and Traveller Cant in the curriculum; the latter two languages in the context of language awareness rather than competence. The following comments concentrate mainly on the report’s direct relevance to the introduction of foreign languages in Primary education (DES 2007: 46).

In a Primary School context it recognizes the necessity for the implementation of the revised primary curriculum before a policy decision can be made. It also recognizes ‘The generally positive impact of the introduction of a modern (foreign) language at primary school, underpinned by a nationally supported project and a national research-based evaluation’ (DES 2007: 13). Again the pros and cons are summarized citing the positive feedback from schools, parental demand, the introduction of the EPL and balancing that with the danger of curriculum overload, lack of continuity, the preponderance of visiting teachers (75%) and the necessity for a more integrated pedagogy (cf. DES 2007: 21-22). It refers to the INTO’s 2004 ‘very rich and well informed’ document and notes that the conclusions on the introduction of foreign languages are ‘nuanced and cautious’ (DES 2007: 22).

On the issue of a broadening and further generalization of the Initiative, the report suggests an affirmation of aims and outcomes, the recognition and implementation of common strategies for all languages, the consideration of how multilingual literacy can be developed and the often repeated requirement of supply and development of teachers. In examining continuity the report would seem to argue against the premise that language teaching and learning per se was what was involved and that a change of language between primary and secondary level was not a major disadvantage. It would also argue, due to the limitations of time in both primary and secondary, that it would be better for the students ‘to stay with their primary language during post-primary

schooling' (DES 2007: 23). This is a valid point and it would be the ideal situation but the aims, approaches and methods used in both sectors are appreciably different, the one based on appreciation and enjoyment with an emphasis on play and discovery, the other constrained by curriculum requirements and the demands of examination assessment. The primary language programme is not and should not be considered a preparation for second level but rather an engagement with foreign language at a suitable level of appreciation and understanding for the student. It has a broader based, less prescriptive content and as such should be beneficial even if, through force of circumstance, a switch to another language has to be made.

There is also the proviso that second level teachers should have training in order to build on the language gains the children have made. This would seem to recognize the value of the difference in approaches.

The report then stresses the necessity of a full integration of foreign language teaching into the curriculum.

If it remains outside the curriculum, the present good will and motivation could well eventually dissipate. Whatever the eventual decision, it is essential to avoid a policy vacuum, which would inevitably undermine the achievements of the MLPSI and the dynamic which it has created (DES 2007: 23).

In its conclusions, the defining of a clear policy position on the place of languages is noted as the first priority. The second is that of the professional development of language teachers. The third priority has particular relevance to the primary level. The report concedes that many factors have contributed to the present uncertainty regarding

modern foreign languages in the primary curriculum. Among them it notes the roll-out of the new curriculum, the large numbers of immigrant children, the pilot project, the integration of children with special educational needs and the different modes of teaching Irish. On the reception of the latest report from the NCCA, due in November 2008,⁶ the DES would be in a position to make key policy decisions regarding the role of foreign languages in the primary school. In the light of priority one above 'the

⁶ In fact the report was not released until Tuesday the 20th of October on foot of a Ceist Phairlimente (Parliamentary Question) put to the Minister by Deputy Brian Hayes.

defining of a clear policy position’, a ‘detailed planning exercise could be undertaken for language education in the primary school’ (DES 2007: 53).

The report concludes with the necessity of developing in society at large the conviction that ‘English is not enough’ that ‘the economic, cultural and European future of Ireland depends on the valorization of plurilingualism’ (DES 2007: 54).

The pivotal importance of language learning in the primary school is very forcibly expressed in the Report, as is the significance of the decisions emanating from the expected NCCA review.

Insofar as positive and fruitful learning contact between languages is concerned, the fundamental level to be considered is most likely the primary school: this is where basic skills and attitudes towards language as such, towards language learning and towards specific languages are first built or worked upon in the educational project. This is where teacher education can be both global and differentiated, teaching methodology both diversified and integrated. This would imply that the main priority remains therein and that, in this perspective, the decisions taken on the follow –up to be given to the NCCA’s current review of the Primary School Curriculum will be crucial. (DES 2007: 39, bold in the original)

1.7.4 On the Cusp

It is at this point that the future of modern languages in primary education was to be decided. The NCCA report had been with the DES since November 2008 and a response was awaited. There had been strides. Primary education had moved out from the insularity described at the beginning of this introduction to an awareness of European culture and heritage and our significant share in this. The importance of language awareness and the interrelationship between languages had been given due

prominence. The significance of language in the development of self-awareness and identity had been recognized. The particular goals, methods and theory of foreign language teaching, relevant to the primary school had been teased out and were continually developing. Over four hundred primary schools were running a successful foreign languages initiative programme in four European languages. It remained to be seen if all these considerable advances could be built upon. Since the completion of this report there has been an unprecedented and catastrophic upheaval in the financial affairs

of this country which would seem to mitigate against expenditure on an expansion of the present system or on development of teacher education. However the report was completed and delivered to the Department before the brunt of these changes had become obvious. Decisions needed to be made in order that the momentum that at present exists would not be diminished (DES 2007: 23) and that ‘the achievements of the MLPSI and the dynamic which it has created’ (DES 2007: 23) would not be undermined.

Chapter Two: ‘Jetzt wohin?’
A Response to the 2008 NCCA Report:
*‘NCCA Modern Languages in the Primary School
Curriculum Feasibilities and Futures November 2008’*

2.1.1 Changing Focus

The report, *Modern Languages in the Primary School Curriculum: Feasibility and Futures*, hereafter referred to as NCCA, 2008, was submitted to the Department of Education and Science in 2008. It was published as a result of a Dail (Paliamentary) question to the Minister of Education in November 2009. It opens with the statement that due to the ‘changing linguistic landscape’ and an ‘economic shift from European markets to global markets’⁷ there has been a shift in focus from ‘one of modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum, to one of languages in the Primary School Curriculum’ (NCCA 2008: 7). Why there should be such a marked shift in Primary language teaching as a result of the perhaps questionable and unsubstantiated claim concerning the shift from European to global markets, raises a number of questions. For many years now the value of learning a foreign language in primary school has focused on personal development and indeed economic considerations have been discredited as a driving force at second-level language learning (cf. Mac Aogain, 1990 cited in Harris 1991: 58). Its re-introduction at this stage in connection with primary language learning is disconcerting, signalling perhaps a significant change in the aims and purposes of foreign language teaching.

The issue of a changing linguistic landscape is understandable and the figure of 167 different languages occurring in our present primary system is referred to a number of times (NCCA 2008: 8, 12, 54), but without ever being examined thoroughly in order to

give an estimate of how many children are using each language, the advisability of concentrating on any of them in particular, their practical application in the classroom or in the community. It is used as a block figure to stress the necessity of giving time to developing English with a presumable resultant time loss on the side of foreign language teaching. Thus the two given reasons for a change of focus do not augur well

⁷ Over the last very difficult financial year, 2008-2009, Ireland’s dependence on Europe for financial support in crisis and indeed her survival as a viable solvent economy has proved how vital the issue of commitment to Europe remains. While the outlook is at present bleak, without EU membership it would have been catastrophic. This was acknowledged by the majority of Irish voters in the massive swing in favour of the Lisbon Treaty on October 3rd. 2009.

for the retention or promotion of the foreign language teaching prospects in the Irish Primary school.

It is curious that while the Executive summary presents four proposed ‘futures’ for the promotion of foreign languages or, to be more precise and using its own terms, ‘of languages in the Primary School Curriculum’ (NCCA 2008: 7), in the summary there is very little attention paid to the one well-developed field in modern language teaching at primary level in Ireland, that of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative. This has been a comparatively broadly based effective pilot scheme, continually evaluated, (Harris and Conway 2002), (Harris and O Leary, in press); researched, (Tynan 2000; Kiely 2002; Nelligan 2006) (unpublished theses); co-ordinated with the Primary Curriculum through the NCCA’s *Modern Languages in Primary Schools Draft Curriculum Guidelines* (1999) and *Teacher Guidelines* (2001) and successfully practised over ten years. It has also received the enthusiastic approbation of teachers, principals and parents who have experienced it in practice.

2.1.2 Executive Summary of the NCCA Report

The NCCA Report consists of an Introduction and five chapters on the theme of modern language learning. The Introduction is preceded by an Executive Summary where the results of the deliberations contained in the report are summarised and the recommendation is given ‘that modern languages do not become part of the Primary School Curriculum at present as an additional and separate subject’ (NCCA 2008: 9). The future lies in ‘a common and achievable goal for all schools through a unified approach to teaching and learning languages, namely language awareness’ (NCCA 2008: 9).

It is difficult to understand how an executive summary of Modern Languages in the Irish Primary Schools can practically ignore mentioning the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative even though it does at least acknowledge that the MLPSI has ‘provided a basis for Irish-based research on modern languages at primary level’ (NCCA 2008: 7).

In the ‘four mutually complementary futures for language in the Primary School Curriculum’ (NCCA 2008: 9), given as:

- Language Awareness
- (Inter)cultural Awareness (sic)
- Language Sensitisation
- Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

The Communicative Competency approach, so successfully promoted in the MLPSI (and acknowledged in the summary itself as the dominant model of language learning at a European level), receives very little emphasis. There is the concession to those schools which are capable of providing modern language teaching, and again there is no specific mention of MLPSI schools, ‘This does not preclude schools from facilitating modern languages where they have the capacity to do so’ (NCCA 2008: 9). ‘Does not preclude’ is hardly a ringing endorsement of what has and might yet be done in these schools and is very removed from the encouraging words of the then Minister for Education, Michael Mairtin in May 1998, as he spoke of ‘this very exciting project which will foster positive attitudes to language learning through the use of active learning approaches including drama, songs and games and by promoting an awareness of being European among the pupils’ (cited in NCCA 2008: 10).

2.1.3 Introduction to the Report

The above quotation actually heads the brief Introduction to the report. This mentions the beginnings of the pilot programme and the lifting of the cap on the number of schools in 2007. There are now 488⁸ participating schools out of a total of 3,284 in the

primary sector (NCCA 2008: 11). The full implementation of the Primary School Curriculum, the forthcoming publication of the second MLPSI evaluation report (Harris and O Leary, in press), and the data gathered through two phases of Primary Curriculum

⁸This was the figure given in the report and refers to the 2007/2008 school year. ‘In the 2008/2009 year Modern European Languages were taught in 505, or 15% of our primary schools. Minister of State, Sean Haughey-’ in answer to parliamentary question Tuesday, 20th October, 2009. The number now stands at 508. (T.Flanagan, Director MLPSI, in phone conversation, 12/2/2010.)

Review made it timely that the NCCA review the ‘feasibility of including modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum for all children’ (NCCA 2008: 11). It is somewhat disconcerting that before reading a review on feasibility, the results of any deliberation in the report have already been anticipated in the Executive Summary and the pros and cons of subsequent discussion have already been assessed and concluded upon.

The concept of 167 languages that now occur in the primary classroom is again introduced and the figure of over 20,000 children needing assistance with English ‘from a range of countries, backgrounds and educational experience’ (NCCA 2008: 12). But again there is no closer examination of that range. An extract from one child’s Language Passport in My ELP ⁹ (Fig. 1), chosen presumably to indicate the huge range of language involved, shows that at home the child speaks only one other language apart from English and at school speaks only English and Irish and, very tellingly, among friends speaks only English. The wide range of languages given in the Passport example seem to impinge very little on the child’s daily life.¹⁰

Fig.1

⁹ My ELP. The European Language Passport section from The European Portfolio devised by MLPSI ,Kildare Education Centre and accredited by the Council of Europe ,2005.

¹⁰ This use of English only when playing with friends would seem to controvert a previous claim that ‘these children bring a wealth of linguistic and cultural diversity to schools which benefits all children ‘ (NCCA 2008: 8). The actual cultural interaction needs further study before that claim can be validated.

Languages around me

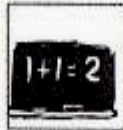
Teangacha thart orm

Le lingue attorno a me

Sprachen um mich herum

Las lenguas a mi alrededor

Les langues autour de moi



Languages	At home	At school	On holidays	With friends	On TV	In shops
Teangacha	Sá bhaile	Ar scoil	Ar saoire	Le cairde	Ar an teilifís	I siopaí
Le lingue	A casa	A scuola	In vacanza	Con gli amici	In televisione	Nei negozi
Lenguas	En casa	En la escuela	De vacaciones	Con los amigos	En la tele	En las tiendas
Sprachen	Zu Hause	In der Schule	In den Ferien	Mit Freunden	Aus Fernsehen	Im Geschäft
Langues	À la maison	À l'école	En vacances	Avec des amis	À la télé	Dans les magasins
Hindi	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Inglés	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Irlandés	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
Ordú	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Polaco jużer dbe	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Rumano	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Husa	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
georgiano	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Ruso	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

The point is then made that the pilot project was and has been *European* (italics in original) in origin and intention. The report claims that in recent years Ireland has been ‘informed by cultures and economies well beyond the borders of Europe’ and ‘that the

national and international contexts have changed' (NCCA 2008: 13). The report cites the introduction of 'Chinese language and culture to children in primary schools' as a 'trend shared across many European countries' (NCCA 2008: 13). This sweeping analysis, unsubstantiated in the report by reference, would appear to set aside the immense importance of Ireland's continued participation in the extended European Community, especially in the present difficult economic climate. It would also appear to give little weight to the difficulties that the report itself envisages in the introduction of modern language teaching throughout the primary school. If French or Italian pose insurmountable problems surely they are compounded in considering the introduction of Chinese!

Thus the two main arguments for a definite shift from the language competency model as envisaged in the MLPSI to one of language awareness seem grounded on questionable premises and run on a very contrary course to the suggestions cited in the *Language Education Policy Profile, Ireland* (DES 2007), that the primary level:

should be the keystone of language learning in the education system.[...] That the levels to be attained in the different language skills should be clearly stated in the curriculum documents.[...] Certification measures at certain key points should show the student's *individual plurilingual profile*. (DES 2007: 53, italics not in original).

And finally, 'To develop in society at large the conviction that 'English is not enough'. That is to say, to convey the message that the economic, cultural and European future of Ireland depends on the valorisation of plurilingualism' (DES 2007: 54).

2.2.1 Report, Chapter Two: The National Context. Evaluation

In Chapter 2 of the report, modern language learning is examined in the national context. Much of its content has been covered already in the present study and the new material comes mainly from the second evaluation of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI), conducted by Harris and O Leary (in press). This evaluation took place during the period 2002-2003. Principals in participating schools and class teachers in these schools whose classes are taken by other staff members or visiting foreign language teachers, were included in the survey. 93% of schools responded to the principals' survey.

Harris and O Leary (in press) note a major difference in the profile of the modern-language teacher in the primary system. In 1998 staff teachers comprised 63% of modern language teachers. This reduced to 24% in 2002. However the Report indicates a 'shift back towards the class room teacher facilitating the target language' (NCCA 2008: 27) as out of 95 new schools joining MLPSI in 2007/2008, 73 were able to provide the language teacher from their own staff. The latest estimation of staff teachers teaching modern languages is 35% (NCCA 2008: 21). It would appear, were more schools to be accepted, that this figure would rise accordingly

From the Principals' perspective there seems a very positive acceptance of the Initiative. 50% of Principals 'did not indicate any timetabling issues in facilitating the modern language in the timetable' (NCCA 2007: 23). There is not an exact source given for this figure and as will be shown later (see Fig.2 - Table 2.3) the figure is in fact 68.7%. This in itself is very striking and unexpected as timetabling and curriculum overload figure largely in any evaluation of the new curriculum. 44% of Principals had 'challenges'¹¹ with timetabling issues including overloaded curriculum. Again the report here seems to be in error as will be shown (see Fig.2 - Table 2.3). The true figure of Principals with 'challenges' is, in fact, 87% of 28.5% and averages out at 24.5%. Of the principals who responded 93% 'perceived their staff to have had a positive reaction to the MLPSI' (NCCA 2007: 23). Low levels of interaction were recorded between primary and post-primary schools even though 83% of principals stated the post- primary schools were aware of MLPSI whereas only 28% reported that these schools were aware of the specifics of the programme (NCCA 2007: 24).

The benefits recognised as accruing from the MLPSI scheme included

- Improved child self-esteem
- Improved child attitude
- Enjoyment of the learning process
- Improved learning
- *Awareness and use of different languages*

¹¹ The report continually uses the euphemism 'challenges' for what are normally termed 'difficulties' or 'problems'. While this is presumably intended to sound an encouraging and aspirational note it tends at times to take from the seriousness of the issues involved.

- Preparation for post-primary school
- Increased intercultural awareness
- Parents approval
- Enhancement of school image (NCCA 2007: 24, italics not in original)

On the question of expansion of the scheme, 54% of principals recommended it be expanded to all schools while 40% recommended an expansion to more schools. 58% were in favour of including younger children in the Initiative. This massive percentage of 94% in favour of expanding the scheme in one form or another is a significant comment on the effectiveness and efficiency of the methods used, coming as it does from the ranks of pragmatic and widely experienced educational practitioners. It is also a telling contrast to the INTO stated position seeing as all these respondents are member of that organization.

89% of the class teachers interviewed stated that the modern language had ‘a very positive/positive impact on children’ and 75% claimed that the modern language ‘had a positive impact on other curricular areas’ (NCCA 2007: 25). 24% claimed a negative impact on other curriculum areas. The report does not indicate where or why these areas of negativity occur. 54% reported a ‘positive change in pupils attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity, especially among the languages and cultures present in their classes’ (NCCA 2007: 25).

88% of class teachers stated that ‘it was *very important/important* for children to learn a modern language at primary level with 90% being *very favourable/favourable* to children in their classes learning a modern language’ (NCCA 2007: 25, italics in original). Again there seems to be overwhelming endorsement of the MLPSI Language Competency model. This extends to the ‘78% *very positive/positive* perceptions of parents to their children learning a modern language at primary level’ (NCCA 2007: 25, italics in original).

62% of class teachers, when asked whether they would teach a modern language, expressed an interest in teaching some aspect of a modern language programme. Of these 14% were interested in a programme requiring ‘minimal knowledge of a modern language’ (NCCA 2007: 26), (presumably an Intercultural awareness/language

sensitisation module) while 48% of teachers identified a need for professional development (10.1%) or already had the competency required (38.3%). This need for

development would indicate a more in-depth study of language than that envisaged by the 14% of teachers already mentioned. 37% of teachers stated a lack of interest in teaching a modern language due to curriculum overload, lack of competence and confidence, and a preference that modern language teaching be given to a specialist teacher (NCCA 2007: 26, Harris and O Leary 2009: 1).

When the question of expansion of the MLPSI was put to the class teachers, 89% of teachers recommended that this be done, 39% that '*all schools* should be involved' and 50% 'that *more schools* should be involved' (NCCA 2007: 26). These figures along with the 94% endorsement for expansion by principals previously mentioned, shows an overwhelming vote of confidence in the MLPSI and the efficacy of its approach in primary schools.

A final statistic concerning continuity, the first of the six key issues mentioned in the Executive Summary; 74% of teachers reported that their students can continue the study of their chosen language in post-primary school.

2.2.2 Evaluation Conclusions

In this second evaluation Harris and O Leary (2009: 7) have indicated clearly the 'high level of enthusiasm and approval' on the part of principals and class teachers in regard to the present MLPSI Language Competence Model. As has been demonstrated it already incorporates within itself many aspects of intercultural and language awareness mentioned in the contemplated futures for language in Primary schools and it does so within a pragmatic, activity-based, child-centred, curriculum-orientated, enjoyable model. The authors of the evaluation conclude with the recommendation that 'opportunities will have to be created for many more schools and pupils to have at least some kind of engagement with modern languages at primary level' (Harris and O Leary 2009: 12). They go on to state:

This can best be achieved by

- Extending the existing *Language Competence programme* used in the Pilot Project to include as many additional schools as are at present capable of delivering a programme of this kind and wish to do so;
- Introducing a more limited sensitisation/language awareness modern language programme in other schools which are not equipped to teach a full programme yet but would like to be involved at some level (Harris and O Leary 2009: 12, italics in original).

This specific endorsement of the Language Competency programme does not receive the same measure of emphasis in the NCCA Report which comments ‘The second evaluation report concludes with recommendations towards a generalisation (country-wide) phase for modern languages’ (NCCA 2008: 26). This difference of emphasis has already been commented on in considering the four projected futures for modern languages in the primary sector and does not seem an accurate reflection of the true importance and relevance of the Language Competency programme as suggested in the evaluation by Harris and O Leary.

2.2.3 Pilot Projects: CLIL, Language Awareness

Data collected from 103 MLPSI teachers reflecting their use of the *Draft Curriculum Guidelines* (NCCA 2001a) showed that 84% of teachers spent most time developing the strand Communicative Competence, 15%, Language Awareness and 1%, Cultural Awareness. (NCCA 2007: 27). While this does indicate an imbalance it indicates the importance of Communicative Competence in the teachers’ estimation and also that Language and Cultural Awareness is already recognised in current modern language teaching practice.

As recommended in the NCCA 2005 report, two of the projected futures for modern languages, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Language Awareness were piloted during the school year 2005/6. These pilots were on a small scale, six schools for CLIL and five for language awareness. The report recognises ‘the small sample of schools on which the report and findings are based’ but claims that ‘the focus in this instance was on depth of analysis rather than breadth’ (NCCA 2008: 29).

In the 2005 report the aims and objectives of both pilot schemes are clearly enumerated. They include identifying a cross-section of schools to participate in a small scale CLIL

project, identifying subjects and units of learning and themes in the Primary curriculum where CLIL is appropriate, developing materials for integrated learning, raising the level of learning taking place in the content area and in the modern language.

Activities proposed:

- creating learning partnerships for CLIL
- identifying subject areas
- matching the guidelines for Modern languages to the curriculum
- identifying which activities could be delivered using CLIL Strategies
- developing appropriate tools to record levels of learning in the content area as well as in the language being taught and learned (NCCA 2005: 75).

These are all acceptable and valid ways of approaching a pilot scheme and should afford answers and a depth of analysis. Instead the report furnishes a list of the successes:

- increased use of target language
- increased motivation
- potential for making links across the curriculum
- opportunities for weaker children
- enjoyment in learning
- a sense of achievement (NCCA 2008: 11).

This broad general list gives very little information on the feasibility of CLIL in the Primary Curriculum. There is also what might be termed a generic list of challenges:

- lack of resources
- necessity for guidelines for implementing CLIL
- difficulty in selecting strands and appropriate language
- differentiation and assessment
- time considerations (NCCA 2008: 12).

The successes enumerated are similar to many of the advantages perceived in the competence model. The challenges also mirror those of the MLPSI but there is the major difference that extensive curriculum-integrated guidelines are already provided for by the NCCA in the MLPSI programme, *Draft Curriculum Guidelines* (1999), and *Teacher Guidelines* (2001). In the light of the recommendations to extend the Language Competence Module to ‘include as many additional schools as are at present capable of delivering a programme of this kind’ (Harris and O Leary 2009: 12), it is difficult to see the additional benefit of the piloted CLIL approach.¹² Had the report contained information on the level of language competence required of teacher and student and a degree of actual assessment of what language acquisition had occurred, it would have been more helpful in the consideration of CLIL as a feasible future.

The Language Awareness pilot (five schools involved) also suffers from a lack of close definition or reference to the objectives and possible activities listed (NCCA 2005: 76).

The teachers note:

- a change of attitude towards Irish
- an awareness of the importance of world languages
- a greater sense of inclusion and confidence especially for those for whom English is an additional language
- an awareness of previous knowledge of language
- an acceptance of other cultures
- preparation for modern language learning (NCCA 2007: 29).

The challenges mirrored those of the CLIL approach, lack of resources, difficulties in planning, time pressure and assessment methods.

There is an enigmatic comment in the Language Awareness Pilot Scheme that ‘Many of the teachers involved also failed to use English and Irish as a starting point for teaching elements of language awareness’ (NCCA 2007: 29). This needs clarification, especially since, as will be demonstrated below, language awareness is stated to be an integral part

¹² Of the four projected futures for language in the primary school, CLIL would, of its nature, appear to demand the need of a higher level of language expertise and a level of commitment to teacher development that are cited as major obstacles to the expansion of the MLPSI. This is not to detract from the success of CLIL programmes in other countries. The report does not give any evidence of the extent or composition of these programmes.

of the curriculum in both languages. As it stands it gives no indication of how this failure occurred or how it might be improved upon. It is also stated that while the childrens' reaction to language awareness was positive, they 'failed to make the connection with English and Irish for language awareness' (NCCA 2007: 30). This begs the question of how one can react to language awareness without referring it to the two languages being taught. Most of the comments from children referred to a modern language 'only in the context of language awareness' (NCCA 2007: 30). This is again somewhat confusing as language awareness is the focus of this pilot. It may be in the context of the different advantages cited above, that the childrens' comments centered only on language similarity, as in the example given, 'Most words of Spanish are like the English words' (NCCA 2007: 30), rather than on mentioning broader aspects, e.g. 'awareness of other cultures' or 'a change of attitude towards Irish' and also that the similarities mentioned were not invoked between the Irish and English languages.

There is no mention of parental input into either the CLIL or Language Awareness programmes and this is a regrettable omission. In the light of their failure to firmly address the issues, aims and objectives proposed in the NCCA 2005 report, these pilot programmes do not appear to have that 'depth of analysis rather than breadth' mentioned above (NCCA 2008: 29), and thus very little ground on which to project them as viable futures for language teaching in Ireland.

In the summary of this chapter there does occur recognition and acknowledgment of the success of the MLPSI and this has also been underlined in both MLPSI evaluations (Harris and Conway, 2002), (Harris and O Leary, in press). It also acknowledges, as has been shown above, that there are significant challenges associated with both CLIL and Language Awareness approaches.

2.3.1 Report, Chapter Three: The European Context

Chapter three of the report gives an overview of the European Context. It examines language policy and the place of modern languages in primary school curricula across Europe. Much of the European context e.g. Barcelona European Council (2002) recommendations, the *Promoting Language Learning and Linguistic Diversity; An Action Plan 2004-2006*, *The Language Education Policy Profile IRELAND 2005-2007*, mentioned in chapter three of the report have been previously considered in this study.

In the European Commission report (2007) *Europeans and their languages*, however there are two new statistics given. Of the 44% of respondents who lacked the ability to converse in a language other than their own ‘Irish respondents ranked highest with 66% [...] reporting they did not know any other language to this level’ (cited in NCCA 2008: 35). It is also of interest, in the light of the Report Introduction’s reference to Chinese, that Irish respondents indicated that they thought French, German and Spanish should be the languages taught to children (European Commission 2006: 34 cited in NCCA 2008: 35).

The Report gives a figure of almost 50% of primary pupils across Europe learning a foreign language and the corresponding figure for Ireland is 3.5%. Under the present MLPSI the teaching of foreign languages is confined to fifth and sixth classes only.

2.3.2 English Speaking Countries and Foreign Language Teaching

The figures for English speaking countries are as follows:

Wales: One primary school in every 13 is involved. Modern languages are a core component at Key stage 3. The commitment of the Qualifications, Curriculum and Assess Authority for Wales, ACCAC, to establish ‘*principles and recommendations common to English, Welsh and foreign languages*’ (ACCAC 2003: 3) would appear very positive. However there has been a more recent announcement by the ACCAC that languages ‘will not be made compulsory for primary schools’ (NCCA 2008: 40).

Scotland: Schools moved from the pilot phase to a generalisation phase in 1993. A teacher training programme was put in place based on designated language teachers. At present approximately 98% of children in the final two years of primary receive tuition in a foreign language.

England: The Dearing Review recommended the introduction of foreign language tuition from age 7 (Key stage two). It is intended that all pupils at key stage 2 study a modern language by 2010. Following the Barcelona Agreement the study of a foreign language is now a statutory entitlement. 80% of schools at present offer some experience of foreign languages. Language learning remains compulsory in Key Stage 3, (11-14 years of age).

Northern Ireland: Modern languages are not compulsory but ‘the revised Primary Curriculum provides flexibility for languages to be introduced and *Schools are also encouraged to teach additional languages* (CCEA: 2007 cited in NCCA 2008: 42, italics in original)]. Two models were adopted in the pilot scheme, a teacher-building capacity model and a peripatetic model. Parental support was strong, 99.4% believing in the future benefit of language learning. The Education Minister in the announcement of a review on how languages are taught include the possibility that ‘all children at primary level may soon *have the opportunity to learn modern languages* (Department for Education 2006 cited in NCCA 2008: 42, italics in original). During February and March, 2009 the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) carried out an audit of provision. The two languages involved were Irish and Spanish. Some of the findings reveal:

- over one quarter of schools were participating, 231 schools in Spanish and 58 in Irish.
- there are sixty four tutors providing peripatetic tuition to more than 13,000 students.
- principals and teachers in all participating schools are very enthusiastic about the programme and about teaching modern languages generally in primary schools.
- children participating are enjoying the programme and experiencing success.
- parents are very supportive of the programme and would like it to be expanded.

(In Touch 2009: 29)

From these findings there does seem to be an impetus in English-speaking countries to extend and develop the teaching of modern languages in the primary sector. While there appears to be less commitment in Wales in 2008 than in the ACCAC 2003 report, Scotland has made impressive progress and has shown the feasibility of language competency if tackled with sufficient resources and political vision. It is also noticeable that in these examples the learning of a foreign language takes priority. Language awareness or how-to learn-language modules are not specifically mentioned.

In the section summary there is again the acknowledgement that ‘communicative competence is *the dominant model of language teaching in Europe*’ (NCCA 2008: 42, italics not in original). This might need stressing in the light of the projected ‘futures’

for language teaching as envisaged in the NCCA 2008 report. In the analysis of the content of European foreign language curricula (Eurydice 2001: 157) it is stated, ‘The main aim of teaching a foreign language is for pupils to use it as a means of communication’. And in considering methodology, the findings are that ‘The great degree of convergence observed in the general objectives manifests itself even more strongly in the approach to teaching that is generally recommended. In short, whether explicitly or implicitly, they all refer to the **communicative approach**’ (Eurydice 2001: 158, bold in original). The point is made in the NCCA report that ‘interest is growing in integrating language awareness and intercultural awareness *within this model*’ (NCCA 2008: 42, italics not in original). This latter claim is not further substantiated anywhere in the report but it does at least suggest that language awareness and intercultural awareness are best taught in an integrated language competence programme and not in isolation as recommended in the NCCA report. The importance of a specific intercultural dimension in language curricula in the European context is noted (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey 2002 cited in NCCA 2008: 38) and again this focus ‘tends to be closely allied to the learning of an additional language’ (NCCA 2008: 38) not as a stand-alone designated programme as suggested in the Executive Summary (NCCA 2008: 9).

2.4.1 Report, Chapter Four: The Curriculum: Language Learning Potential

Chapter Four ‘focuses on the Irish primary school curriculum, and the potential it offers for language learning’ (NCCA 2008: 45). Language and learning through language are stressed as key issues in the curriculum. Again the claim is made that ‘the arrival of more languages to schools [...] facilitates even greater opportunities for cultural experiences and increased linguistic awareness in all children’ (NCCA 2008: 46). In the absence of any concrete evidence or study of this phenomenon, of what exactly is occurring in schools, and in the light of the many difficulties posed by this influx of non-English speaking students, in that:

further challenges are presented by children for whom English is an additional language. English language competency, accessing the Primary school Curriculum and further differentiation were identified as challenges. (NCCA 2008: 62)

It is difficult to regard this claim as anything but aspirational.

2.4.2. Language Awareness and Intercultural Awareness in the Curriculum

Language awareness and intercultural awareness are acknowledged as being an 'integral component of the language learning experience' (NCCA 2008: 46). There is a language awareness component in both *Curaclam na Gaeilge* (the Irish Curriculum) and the English Curriculum.

However on closer examination of the four volumes *Teacher Guidelines Gaeilge* [Irish] (1999), *Teacher Guidelines English* (1999), *Primary School Curriculum Gaeilge* [Irish] (1999), and *Primary School Curriculum English* (1999), the commitment to both language and intercultural awareness is not as pronounced.

Intercultural awareness is not mentioned in the seven aims given (English Curriculum 1999: 10). Language awareness, while contained in many of the other aims, is concerned directly with the English language and makes no mention of the other language in the curriculum. The broad objectives for English, twenty eight in number (English Curriculum 1999: 11), make no reference to any other language, Irish or foreign. Thus in aims and objectives the English Curriculum does not refer to languages other than English in its language awareness programme. Neither is there any direct evidence of intercultural awareness in the English Curriculum.

The English Curriculum is then broken down into Strands and strand units for each class group. The emphasis throughout is solely on language awareness *in English* and while this is well achieved, again there are no comparisons or connections made between English and other languages in any of the classes or strand units. There is also, again, no intercultural awareness content.

In the *Teacher Guidelines for English* (Guidelines English 1999: 37) there is reference made to the influences of other languages on English. 'Much of the character and power of the English language is the result of other languages in the course of its development'. It is stressed that children should be made aware of these connections. 'The child should be enabled to discuss the meaning and origins of words, phrases and expressions with the teacher' (Guidelines English 1999: 37). This might imply an examination of the influences of French and German on English but this is not elaborated on and no examples are given. Children should 'have experience of both

poetry and prose *in translation* from Irish and other European languages’ (Guidelines English 1999: 37, italics not in original)].

The guidelines cover twenty-one sections in ‘Approaches and methodologies’ (Guidelines English 1999: 34). There are seven exemplars of teaching methods on how an approach might be made or an aspect taught. On comprehension tasks it is stated ‘There are extensive possibilities for integration with other areas of the curriculum in developing children’s comprehension skills’ (Guidelines English 1999: 65). History, geography, science, SPHE (social and personal health education), project work, maths and PE (physical education) are all suggested. Irish is not mentioned. Nor is there any emphasis placed in any of the exemplars or the twenty one sections on designated cultural awareness content. The concept of language awareness in English is fully and competently treated. There is no reference to any broader interpretation of language awareness in relation to Irish or indeed any other language. It is then difficult to see how language awareness or intercultural awareness can be seen as an ‘integral component of the language learning experience’ (NCCA 2008: 46).

In the Irish Curriculum (1999: 12) it states ‘ta an béim ar an gcumarsáid’ (the emphasis is on communication). The language is to be taught ‘mar theanga bheo chumarsáide’ (as a living communicative language) (Irish Curriculum 1999: 13). This implies a language competency model in the teaching of language. The ‘gnéithe is suntaisí’ (Irish Curriculum 1999: 8-9), the ‘principal aspects’ of this method, are listed, among them that the programme be based on the childrens’ needs, that it be child-centred and relevant and enjoyable, that realistic contexts be provided for the use of the language, situated in the school and classroom, that the children would be active, and many more, eleven in all. Themes are given and variety in methodologies are encouraged. It is suggested that Irish be used ‘I ngnéithe eile den Churaclaim’ (in other aspects of the curriculum) in a CLIL approach (Irish Curriculum 1999: 10-11). P.E, music and the arts are suggested as areas where Irish might be introduced. English or other languages are not mentioned.

In ‘Feasacht teanga’ (Language awareness) the explanation of the term given is that ‘the attention and understanding of the child be directed on the Irish language, on different patterns within the language itself and on the similarities and the differences that occur between the Irish and English languages and between Irish and other Languages’ (Irish

Curriculum 1999: 12). There is a recommendation to recognise Irish words in the English language used in other countries.¹³ It is recommended that loan words from other languages and the changes that occur when assimilated into Irish be noted.¹⁴ There are also recommendations that the students be directed to the Irish language as spoken in the Gaeltacht (parts of the country where Irish is the vernacular) and that an awareness of grammar in suitable contextual situations be cultivated (Irish Curriculum 1999: 12).

While the strong emphasis is on the understanding of Irish Cultural Inheritance, Irish music, dancing and oral and written tradition, it is recommended that different cultures, those of immigrant children attending the school and ‘cultúr cuid de na tíortha na h-Eorpa chomh maith’ (the culture of some of the European countries also) should be considered (Irish Curriculum 1999: 12).

There is a section on Bilingualism in which recognition is given that it promotes cognitive and social development. Bilingualism gives a broader outlook on the world. It helps in coming to terms with two vocabulary, grammar and phonetic systems. This helps in giving a different understanding of the world, in diversity of thinking, in development of concepts and in the later learning of other languages (Irish Curriculum 1999: 13).

As in all the curriculum statements, there is in the Irish Curriculum, a set of proposed aims and broad objectives. One of the nine aims proposes ‘feasacht teanga agus feasacht cultúir a chothú’ (the development of language awareness and cultural awareness) (Irish Curriculum 1999: 14). And in the nineteen ‘broad objectives’ enumerated there are two which address these aspects:

- ‘to understand the similarities and differences between languages through the cultivation of language awareness

¹³ The examples given are ‘galore’, ‘colleen’, ‘clan’. Apart from ‘brogue’, ‘Donneybrook’ ‘shillelagh’ ‘macushla’ ‘leprechaun’ and the more recent ‘craic’ the list does not seem exhaustive and tends towards stereotyping.

¹⁴ The relevance of this exercise might be questionable, as in the writer’s experience in the Gaeltacht, (i.e. the native Irish speaking sections of the country), loan words are imported almost exclusively from English, suffer very little change and differ only in pronunciation as in the expression ‘Ghoid se an phump ó mo Bhicycle’ ‘He robbed the pump from my bicycle’. In the more formal classroom situation the word for ‘pump’ would be ‘teannaire’ and for ‘bicycle’ would be ‘rothar’.

- to present Irish language and Irish culture side by side with the different cultures of Europe' (Irish Curriculum 1999: 15).

There is then a language and intercultural awareness content posited in the Irish Curriculum. Yet in the Curriculum as laid out for each class, (the divisions being infants, classes 1 and 2, classes 3 and 4, classes 5 and 6) in which the Strands of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are meticulously listed and subdivided into strand units with suggested content given for each, there is no mention of similarity or difference between languages except once, in the Speaking strand for classes 3 and 4, strand unit, 'creating interest' (Irish Curriculum 1999: 118). Here the child is asked to compare the names of some European countries, presumably in English, to see the similarities and to discuss the reasons for the occurrence of such foreign words as bicycle, factory, fridge, tap etc. in Irish. Apart from this one exception, language awareness seems to be confined only to the Irish language with no specific reference to the other language in the curriculum, English, or to a foreign language. This would appear to be a somewhat limiting approach to language awareness and does not open possibilities of interaction with other languages at a later stage.

In the area of intercultural awareness there are no examples in any of the strands, of situating Irish culture 'side by side with the different cultures of Europe'. (Irish Curriculum 1999: 15).

In the *Treoirilinte do Mhuinteoiri* or Teacher Guidelines (Guidelines Irish, 1999) the reference to language awareness mirrors that in the Irish Curriculum, 1999. *Feasacht cultur* (cultural awareness) here centres on Irish culture and encouraging the children to partake in games, dancing, music and drama in Irish. There is no mention of integration or comparison with other cultures.

An example is given of interaction between subjects on the theme of pets (Guidelines Irish 1999: 44) but apart from the central theme, each subject deals with it in its own sphere and there is no indication of interaction between the two languages. There is also a suggestion that the children in senior classes make a comparison between the English

versions and the Irish translations of stories or the translations from *Béaloidéas* which are stories in the native folklore (Guidelines Irish 1999: 104).¹⁵

The only single example of intercultural awareness in all of the given exemplar lessons is in a suggested theme on food where the children are asked what is eaten in America (borgairí agus scealloga, burgers and chips), in Spain (paella) and France, ‘arán bog ban’, baguettes. The latter translation might even be categorised as interfering with intercultural awareness as ‘arán bog bán’ or ‘soft white bread’ hardly conveys the essence of the French baguette!

So that despite the avowed intention of promoting language and intercultural awareness in the Primary Curriculum, the language awareness approach seems to be very much limited to the subject being taught and there is little evidence of any real designated approach to intercultural awareness. In this light it is difficult to justify the statement in the executive summary ‘The strength of language awareness as a model to include and account for linguistic and cultural diversity should be considered’ (NCCA 2008: 9). And it is also difficult to see, from the evidence given above, just how ‘The language awareness component in both Curaclam na Gaeilge (the Irish Curriculum) and the English Curriculum has the potential to promote learning links between modern languages, English, Irish and any other languages present in the classroom’ as is claimed in the report (NCCA 2008: 47).

2.4.3 Modern Languages: Links to the Curriculum

The NCCA report then concentrates on the links between the primary school curriculum and the teaching of modern languages. It mentions the NCCA documents, *Modern Languages in Primary Schools Draft Curriculum Guidelines* (1999) and *Modern Languages Teacher Guidelines* (2001) which are the documents used in the MLPSI, and mentions the emphasis on communicative competence (Modern Languages in the Primary School Draft Curriculum Guidelines 1999: 20, hereafter referred to as MLPSC Guidelines 1999), for the child to ‘develop a competence in a second and perhaps a third language at a level appropriate to his or her ability and cultural and linguistic

¹⁵ Again here the experience of forty years and more convinces the writer that this aim is aspirational. *Béaloidéas*, Irish Folklore in the Irish Language, would pose problems for an advanced student at second level and would be beyond the range of most pupils in the Primary School system except perhaps those in Gaeltacht areas.

background (Primary School Curriculum: Introduction, Government of Ireland, 1999: 36, cited in NCCA 2008: 49, italics in original). The communicative strand is the one on which ‘teachers tend to concentrate most time’ (NCCA 2008: 49). This is also the strand to which children best respond (NCCA 2008: 49).

The language awareness strand of MLPSC Guidelines 1999 is recognised as providing ‘opportunities for the teacher to lead the child into rich, rewarding and engaging investigations into how languages are related and structured’ (NCCA 2008: 50). In marked contrast to the English and Irish Curricula here is a detailed and wide ranging approach to language awareness which does attend to relationships between languages, stressing from the outset that Irish and English ‘might be used as a basis of comparison with the foreign language’ (MLPSC Guidelines 1999: 8).

Comparisons may be highlighted between these languages and the target language in various ways, for example by focusing on the alphabet, sentence structure, conventions of language, the language appropriate to particular situations and simple rules applicable in the language. The child should be made aware of the existence of contextual clues, punctuation, tone of voice and stress. Attention may also be drawn to sounds common within each individual language and common word endings. (MLPSC Guidelines 1999: 8)

Cultural awareness is also treated in detail allowing the child to learn:

of the lives and interests of children of his or her own age in other countries. Attention may be drawn to homes, schools, holidays. Food, feast days, customs and traditions [...] the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding, appreciation and tolerance of others at home and abroad is acknowledged. The investigation of stereotyping may be introduced [...] Inferences may then be drawn about the probable accuracy, or otherwise of common stereotypes of other nations and cultures. (MLPSC Guidelines 1999: 9)

These are but some of the aspects considered and in the following treatments of the strands in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, both language and intercultural awareness are developed in considerable detail and with many exemplars of how the children’s interest might be engaged (cf. MPLSC Guidelines 1999: 31-41).

This close attention to detail and development of aspects of language and intercultural awareness is paralleled in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Teacher Guidelines 2001 [hereafter referred to as MLPST Guidelines 2001]. Both of these documents, Curriculum and Teacher Guidelines for Modern languages have proved their worth in informing and supporting the teaching of modern foreign languages in the

Initiative. However times move on and it might be advisable to revisit some of their present content in the light of recent scholarship on language awareness and intercultural awareness in particular (cf. Harden/Witte, 2000).

2.4.4 Reviews of the Primary Curriculum

There have been a number of reviews of the Primary Curriculum, the first phase (NCCA 2005b) examined English, Mathematics and Visual Arts. Language awareness was reported as the second most useful strand in the English Curriculum after the Strand Competence and Confidence in Using Language (NCCA 2008: 52). At the same time as the review an Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation in Primary Schools was done on the same three subjects (DES 2005). While reading was being successfully implemented, the teaching of writing was weak in more than 50% of the classrooms examined and strikingly, only 25% of classes were ‘noted for fair practice in implementing the strands *receptiveness to language, competence and confidence in using language and developing cognitive abilities through language*’ (NCCA 2008: 52, italics in original).

In the 2004 National Assessment of English Reading carried out by the Educational Research Centre (Eivers, Shiel, Perkins and Cosgrove, 2005) questionnaires from 51 inspectors were gathered on their views of the teaching of English. The results showed that 75% felt teachers needed in-career development, 30% reporting that the teaching of oral work needed attention. Less than 50% felt that teachers had a comprehensive knowledge of the methods for teaching English (cf. NCCA 2008: 52-53). In disadvantaged schools the picture was even bleaker and in these schools the recommendation was that the time given to English be increased from 4 hours to 7.5 hours per week (cf. NCCA 2008: 54).

The arrival of 20,000¹⁶ children of varying degrees of competency into the national system is recognised as placing ‘a strain on the teaching of English in improving these children’s competency and ability to access the system’ (NCCA 2008: 54).

In the second review (2006/2007), Irish was one of the subjects examined. The writing strand was identified as the most difficult. ‘Grammar, reading, spelling and phonics

¹⁶ ‘The DES estimates that there are approximately 28,000 children in Ireland whose native language is neither English nor Irish, 20,000 at primary level and 8,00 at post primary level’ (NCCA 2008: 54)

were identified as being particularly challenging’ (NCCA 2008: 55). What is remarkable is that ‘Reference was made to teachers’ challenge (sic), especially by those in English-medium schools, to teach *two separate phonic codes* (one in English and one in Irish)’ (NCCA 2008: 55, italics not in original). This would underline the assumption already made that language awareness is not considered in either of these subjects as going beyond the language itself to link with other languages. Thus what could be used as an interesting and productive comparison between phonetic systems is rather seen as a ‘challenge’ or difficulty rather than an opportunity for language awareness.

However 72% of respondents highlighted differences and similarities between English and Irish, e.g. word order in sentences. 65% of teachers said they drew the childrens’ attention to similarities and differences between letter sounds in English and in Irish and in other languages. The smallest number of respondents 32% reported marking similarities between Irish and other languages (cf. NCCA 200: 56). This would indicate that in actual practice there is evidence of a degree of interaction between languages in the language awareness strand.

The report of the Inspectorate on Irish in the Primary school (DES 2007) found that ‘44% of classes were reported to have *failed to attain an appropriate standard of spoken Irish* (DES 2007: 52, italics in original). Only half of the classes inspected showed that Irish was ‘being taught to a *good or very good level*’ (cited in NCCA 2008: 54, italics in original).

The results of a report by Harris (2006) on data gathered in 2002 on levels of attainment in Irish throughout the primary system showed a decline in the student proficiency in Gaeltacht schools and that children in ordinary schools (English-medium schools) showed the most significant decline in ability between the two data gathering periods 1985 and 2002.

It is not surprising that the chapter ends on a slightly despondent note.

Evidence suggests that across the Primary School Curriculum and *especially in the language area*, teachers and schools are still struggling to come to terms with the breadth and scale of the Primary School Curriculum. Despite the progress that has been made in implementing the revised curriculum in English and Irish, more work is required to consolidate what has been achieved. (NCCA 2008: 61, italics not in original)

In the light of this acceptance of inherent difficulties in the teaching of these two languages, one of which is the children's mother-tongue, the question is bound to arise 'Whereto the introduction of another language, the expansion of the present foreign language teaching system, the viability of alternative approaches?' It is not surprising then that there will be an emphasis on improving language in English and Irish at the expense of foreign language time. What is surprising, in the light of these evaluations, is that there seems to be an obvious determination to accomplish all the aims of the Curriculum in English and Irish, before the introduction of a foreign language can be considered. There does not seem to be any will to examine whether the requirements imposed upon students in both these subjects can be readdressed and reconsidered in the light of the results of the evaluations. Nor is there any examination of the possible benefits of a third language in the learning of English and Irish.¹⁷

2.5.1 Report, Chapter Five: Issues and Feasibility

Chapter Five of the Report addresses the question above 'Whereto modern languages?' in 'the feasibility of modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum' (NCCA 2008: 61).

There are six issues discussed:

- Children's language learning
- The modern language teacher

- Planning and progression
- Languages to be taught
- Resourcing
- Time for teaching and learning language (NCCA 2008: 61)

The first section almost replicates the content of the earlier *Children and Modern Language Learning* (NCCA 2005: 36). The same sources are quoted, Singleton, (1989: 22), Johnston (2002), Hoffman (2001). Cenoz and Jessner (2000) have been superseded

¹⁷ In the writers experience the learning of a third language helped the children recognise and focus on the usage and necessity of grammar and grammatical terms in Irish and English.

in the 2008 report by Cenoz, Hufeizen and Jessner (2001). The conclusions and the language are identical with minute changes of phrasing.¹⁸ Cummins (1991) is quoted in both reports on learning acquisition, ‘if learning takes place in naturalistic settings’ (NCCA 2005: 36, NCCA 2008: 66). But the 2008 report does not reproduce his comment that ‘Naturalistic settings can rarely be replicated in schools’.

The section concludes with the statement:

Of note here is the extent to which rationales for L3 learning among young children relate to the development of children’s language skills in L1 and L2. The evidence suggests that questions concerning the feasibility of modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum can only be truly discussed in the broader context of children’s language learning in the Primary School Curriculum, specifically in English and in Gaeilge. (NCCA 2008: 66)

The ‘evidence’ cited in the quotation has not been developed in any detail and the emphasis is on a negation of the feasibility of modern languages. Although both reports have made use of exactly the same sources the conclusions show a different emphasis.

The earlier report had suggested that:

The rationale for learning modern languages as provided above [Johnson, 2002] should be viewed from an Irish perspective where the child may already draw on the language learning techniques that he/she has learned whilst learning of Gaeilge or English as an L2. Learning of modern languages could complement the Primary School Curriculum when there are links made through the language awareness strands of Gaeilge and aspects of the English Curriculum that

draw attention to the interrelationships between languages. Learning a foreign language should also enhance the child’s ability to gain cultural experiences which provide a European and global perspective on learning. (NCCA 2005: 37)

¹⁸This replication is clearly shown in these two examples

‘children who learn an L3 in primary schools are able to draw significantly on their L1 and L2 acquisition skills to progress the learning of the L3’ (NCCA 2005: 36). The new version is

‘children who learn a third language (L3) in primary schools are able to draw significantly on their first language (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition skills to progress their L3’ (NCCA 2008: 66)

This is a far more positive, less hesitant conclusion and implies that feasibility which the later 2008 report appears to question. The difference in emphasis between the two reports is remarkable.

2.5.2 The Modern Language Teacher: School Based and Visiting

The next section treats of the modern language teachers. They are divided into school-based and visiting teachers. The point is made that there has been a shift, from 75% of class teachers at the commencement of the pilot project to 24% in recent years (Harris and O Leary, in press: 21 cited in NCCA 2008: 66). The surplus has been taken up by visiting teachers. This data was gathered in 2002-2003 (NCCA 2007: 66). In 2005 the figure was 30%. (NCCA 2005: 46). However new requirements for schools wishing to partake in MLPSI ensure that they ‘have expertise within their own staff to facilitate the modern language’ (NCCA 2008: 66), and, as previously mentioned, this will undoubtedly have an effect in time on the increase of staff teachers.

The benefits and challenges accruing to both types of teacher are listed in Table 5.2.

Fig. 2

Table 5.2 - Types of Modern Language Teacher: Benefits

Staff Teacher can:	Visiting Teacher can:
ensure continuity in teaching style	ensure continuity between primary and post-primary schools in cases where they are also post-primary language teachers
facilitate integration and linkage across the Primary School Curriculum	use the target language as the medium of teaching as they have excellent to fluent proficiency
facilitate language awareness across the Primary School Curriculum	provide a personal insight into the culture of the target language country
respond to individual children’s learning needs and styles	encourage children to communicate in the target language by providing a real impetus for children to use the language
implement the school disciplinary code and policies	
teach literacy in all subjects of the Primary School Curriculum	
adopt a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach using Irish and/or a modern language where proficiency is sufficient	
manage teaching and learning resources for sustained usage	
incorporate knowledge and skills that have come about as a result of on-going policy changes within	

the educational sector	
reduce principal load experienced in planning for, extra administration and recruitment of visiting teachers	

(Harris and Leary, in press)

Again there is a marked difference between the two reports, 2005 and 2008. Whereas both state that the best scenario is that of the class teacher teaching the language, the earlier report strikes a more appreciative note concerning visiting teachers.

Visiting teachers perform important teaching duties in the current initiative. According to the NCCA focus group interviews with teachers and those with parents, schools that have a visiting teacher find the arrangement is valuable. Classroom teachers do not feel overburdened [...] Parents in NCCA focus group interviews expressed a desire for children to have access to native speakers of the target languages. (NCCA 2005: 46)

In the 2008 report table 5.2 lists the benefits of the Staff teacher. In the 2005 report there were seven listed. In the later report there are ten. The original seven remain and the three new ones advocate a) the facilitation of language awareness across the primary curriculum, b) the adoption of a CLIL approach where proficiency is sufficient and c) the reduction of principal load. These new introductions would appear to have the purpose of shifting the focus in the direction of language awareness rather than language competency.

However if the benefits specifically mentioned as pertaining to staff- teachers, are examined closely there are no obvious reasons why many of them cannot be achieved by visiting teachers. In the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) days, provided by the MLPSI, there is great emphasis laid on how the curriculum functions and the Initiative's project leaders on their visits confer with Principals and staff teachers as well as with visiting teachers to ensure that the programme is being integrated with the school plan. There should be no difficulty for visiting teachers, if adequately trained, in implementing for example, the school disciplinary code and policies, in facilitating language awareness, or in responding to individual children's learning needs and styles.

In the challenges for both types of teacher it is given that 20% of staff modern language teachers indicated that they did not have language competency to teach a modern language but this leaves presumably 80% who have the capacity to do so. It is stated that staff teachers can lack knowledge about language teaching methodologies including

language awareness and CLIL, this despite the fact that language awareness is claimed as being an important part of the Irish and English Curriculum. It is also stated that they can be reluctant to teach a modern language, however as has been seen 61.9% of class teachers in general are interested in teaching the modern language or some aspect of the programme (Harris and O Leary 2009: 11).

The challenges regarding visiting teachers, that they are unfamiliar with the contents of the curriculum and can experience difficulties in implementing a CLIL approach can be argued against. These teachers are, in fact, as mentioned above, through Continuing Professional Development Days¹⁹ and visits from Project leaders, well informed about the Curriculum and they are fully engaged in the present effective language competency method rather than in an as yet untried, unsupported and undefined CLIL approach.

The financial challenges in relation to visiting teachers are valid in that the staff teacher receives no extra remuneration for her teaching and there are undoubtedly extra administration, recruitment and planning challenges for principals. However for the foreseeable future the MLPSI programme will continue to need the services of these visiting teachers whose commitment and contribution to the programme has been of immense benefit. It is regrettable that the 2008 report has not fully acknowledged the debt owed to visiting teachers for their enthusiasm, expertise and continued commitment.

2.5.3 Curriculum Fallout

It would appear that the change in direction from language competency to language awareness/sensitisation programmes stems from the results of the two curriculum evaluations. The challenges posed by both subjects seem to necessitate considerable attention.

In the recent review of Curaclam na Gaeilge, teachers' priorities focused on providing a greater range of language experiences for children, balancing the focus on *meaning* with a focus on *form*, and effectively managing the use of two phonetic codes when teaching and learning reading and writing. Similarly, challenges with oral language, reading and writing, as

¹⁹ For example in the April 2009 day's programme (CPD Module 3, 2009), the main aims were:

- Integrating SESE and SPHE with the Modern Language
- Strategies to develop Intercultural/Cultural Awareness

well as grammar, spelling and phonics were identified by teachers in the review of the English Curriculum. (NCCA 2007: 70, italics in original)

This is clearly stated at the end of this section where the provision of modern languages is relegated because the content of the English and Irish Curricula have proved to be beyond the capabilities of the system.

Given the challenges associated with teaching English and Gaeilge in primary schools, it is clear that the issue concerning pre-service and in-service provision for modern language learning or L3 learning, can only be addressed in the broader context of children's language learning in primary schools, beginning with L1 and L2 in the first instance. (NCCA 2007: 70-71)

Again there does not seem to be any investigation into how a more pragmatic and less demanding approach to these subjects might enable competency and ease time constraints.²⁰

2.5.4 Continuity and Diversity Issues

In the next section on planning and progression the lack of continuity between primary and secondary school is cited as a reason for 'shifting the focus from a competency model approach to modern languages or L3 learning towards an approach which complements and builds on children's learning in L1 and L2' (NCCA 2008: 72). If there is little continuity between schools it seems even more unlikely that it would occur by following a programme with which the teachers in secondary level would be totally unfamiliar.²¹ This lack of continuity is not due to language competency approaches.

²⁰ Since the above was written, cognisance has been taken of curriculum overload in a recent February 2010 report from NCCA. *Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools. An overview of national and international experiences* (2010). In the conclusions it states 'It may be necessary to prioritise content, to make menu choices of content more explicit, to simplify the language and, perhaps to explore the extent to which our *Primary School Curriculum* is still relevant for our children of today and tomorrow (NCCA 2010: 27)

²¹ The writer's personal experience of 12 years teaching German in the primary section was that the children approached secondary level languages, very confidently. There has been constant feed back locally as to how well they were progressing due to what they had learned in primary school. There is no question but that their confidence and self esteem was hugely bolstered by their involvement with a German language competence programme in primary.

‘Numerous studies from other European nations have reported similar findings about the lack of curricular alignment and the limited contact between the two sectors in relation to modern languages’ (Harris and O Leary 2009: 10).

It has been well established that parents favour the language competency approach. There seems little evidence that they have been consulted on the suggested change of approach in schools. When consulted on ‘Your Education System’, (Kelleghan *et al.*, 2004):

- 57.1% of respondents felt that ‘too little emphasis’ was placed on teaching foreign languages in primary schools (Kelleghan *et al.*, 2004: 6, 26).
- 78.7% considered the teaching of a continental language in primary school to be ‘very important/important in achieving the objectives of schooling (Kelleghan *et al.*, 2004: 35 cited in Harris and O Leary 2009: 2).

In considering ‘languages to be taught’ the report again mentions the 167 languages and makes the claim ‘By limiting this question of feasibility to a focus on just one modern language experience for children in primary schools, we risk limiting our understanding and support for the development of linguistic diversity in Ireland’ (NCCA 2008: 73). There is no support given for this sweeping claim. Neither is there any clarification of what exactly the report considers ‘development of linguistic diversity’. No decision was made on what languages were to be taught in order to have consistency of approach and method. Far from ‘limiting’ the understanding of the child, competence in one language is the best mode of entry into another.

Gogolin (2002: 19) is cited (NCCA 2008: 73) as positing that language awareness and metalinguistic competence are not automatic skills but have to be taught, and that what is required is ‘*education which explicitly deals with linguistic and cultural complexity...no matter which language is spoken*’ (Gogolin 2002: 19, italics in original). But this is in the context of a language being learned, not as a distinct language awareness model substituting for a language competence model. And as has been stated, the actual language awareness content in the Curriculum is narrowly focused and under-emphasised in practice. To expect children to have a conceptual awareness of a foreign language without grounding it in actual language learning is a step too far. As will be seen in a later chapter, true conceptual thinking does not arrive until adolescence.

Practical experience also shows that direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless. A teacher who tries to do this usually accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, a parrotlike repetition of words by the child, simulating a knowledge of the corresponding concepts but actually covering up a vacuum. (Vygotsky 1986: 146)

Vygotsky is here commenting on a similar comment from Tolstoy on the inadequacy of teaching concepts ‘But to give the pupil new concepts deliberately [...] is, I am convinced, as impossible and futile as teaching a child to walk by the laws of equilibrium’ (Tolstoy 1903: 143).

2.5.5 Time Issues

There is a concession as a result of the two evaluations ‘that more significant work may be required to redress the *mismatch between the size and scope of the primary school curriculum and the time provided* for teaching and learning in primary schools’ (NCCA 2008: 75, italics not in original).²² However rather than being an opportunity to revise and perhaps improve time allocations, as suggested above, this is defined as an unsurmountable obstacle to the introduction of foreign language teaching. ‘In this context, the feasibility of modern languages as an extra curriculum component, with additional requirements and competencies, becomes untenable’ (NCCA 2008: 75).

The issue of time pressure and curriculum overload is always in evidence, not only in connection with foreign language teaching but throughout the entire curriculum. There is, however, in the report, a considerable statistical error concerning time-pressure that needs clarification. The report (NCCA 2008: 76) states ‘the majority of principals in schools participating in the MLPSI (87%) reported that *excessive time is devoted to the modern language*, (Harris and O Leary, in press: 15, italics in original). In fact the majority of principals, 68.7% stated that they had **no** time concerns.

Principals were also asked to indicate whether there are concerns in their school about the timetabling of the modern language, (e.g. when the lessons are held; the amount of overall time devoted to the modern language, etc.). Table 2.3 below shows that *the majority of Principals surveyed do not perceive any timetabling concerns*. This is a very positive result, considering the increasing workload of the primary school teacher as a consequence of the implementation of

²² As has been shown earlier, this process is ongoing. The NCCA report (2010) *Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools: An overview of national and international experiences*, acknowledges the need for a redrawing of boundaries. ‘our practical work with schools to explore the impact of different representations of curriculum subjects will also inform our next steps’ (NCCA 2010: 30)

the revised primary school curriculum (Harris and O Leary, in press: 15,16, italics not in original)

The following table (Fig. 3) confirms this:

Fig.3

Table 2.3
Percentage of Principals Voicing Concerns About the Timetabling of the Modern Language

Percentage of Principals

Modern language timetabling concerns n=	Type of teacher teaching the modern language			
	Staff	Non-staff	Both	Total
	77	228	18	323
Yes, there are timetabling concerns	39.0	23.7	44.4	28.5
No, there are no timetabling concerns	57.1	74.1	50.0	68.7
Non response	3.9	2.2	5.6	2.8
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

‘Where timetabling concerns arose, Principals were asked to specify what these were. For the most part, these Principals (87%) believe that excessive time is devoted to the modern language, particularly in sixth class’ (Harris and O Leary 2009 in press: 15).

The 87% then refers only to those Principals who *perceived* timetabling concerns, that is 28.5% of the total. This is a significant error in the light of the previous remarks re time pressure, so it is important that this happier perception of an *absence* of time pressure be correctly noted. This would eventually work out that 24.8% of principals regard the modern language time as excessive.

2.5.6 Acknowledgement

The report does acknowledge that ‘recognition should be given to the 488 schools in which teachers and principals make time to teach a competency model of modern

language learning to fifth and sixth class children' (NCCA 2008: 77). But instead of pursuing any possible outcome of that recognition or consideration of means of possible expansion, it immediately reverts to its base position of 'how to support schools in developing a coherent and coordinated approach to language learning [...] while also responding to the diversity of languages represented by children in primary school classrooms in Ireland today' (NCCA 2008: 77). Despite this recognition, there is no obvious input into the report from any of the 510 schools or personnel who are currently part of the Initiative, apart from the information garnered in the evaluations.

It is interesting to note that in the Language Education Policy Profile, Ireland, (2008) there does not seem to be as intense a commitment to the diversity of language or the burden of commitment to become involved with the 167 languages, as the NCCA 2008 report envisages for the primary school teacher!

Encouraging the maintenance of the languages and cultures of immigrants may be accomplished through various means which do *not necessarily imply a heavy load for schools as such*. Accepting these foreign languages as subjects for examinations (even though they are not a part of the curriculum), helping bottom-up initiatives of associations, community organizations and local authorities are some of the many ways for a multicultural society to accept itself as such and function harmoniously. (*Language Education Policy Profile, Ireland 2008: 26, 27, italics not in original*)

2.6.1 Into the Future: CLIL

The final chapter of the report 'From feasibility to futures' refers to the Working Group on Language Education Policy which is presently engaged in formulating a language education policy for Ireland. The NCCA report's conclusion is unambiguous.

In the meantime findings from two phases of Primary Curriculum review and other research based on the impact of the implementation of the Primary School Curriculum (section 4) questions the feasibility of an additional and separate subject at this time. (NCCA 2008: 80)

In mapping possible futures for languages the content of the executive summary is enlarged upon. A CLIL approach 'has considerable potential for integration of language development' (NCCA 2008: 81). There is no concrete evidence given in the report to support this. To teach children using CLIL implies, if there is to be a degree of validity

in this module, (This does not envisage a few words of command given in Irish during a P.E. lesson but a genuine interchange of language throughout the lesson), a level of competence on the part of the teacher and a corresponding competence on the part of the students is requisite. This would need to approximate to the standards required of the present literary competency module in MLPSI. Were there to be a full pilot programme involving CLIL, as all embracing as that of MLPSI, valid comparisons might be able to be made between both. As it is at present the pilot project on CLIL is severely curtailed and doesn't provide sufficient information for equitable comparison. There is also the practical consideration that most of the teaching personnel who would be capable of using the CLIL approach are already engaged in the Modern languages in Primary Schools Initiative.

It does admit that in the small pilot project of CLIL 'time remained an issue' and if 'extra resources and guidelines were provided' (NCCA 2008: 81,82) this problem could potentially be reduced. This however is in the realm of supposition rather than based on factual evidence. It is also recognized that in CLIL teacher competence 'implies a requirement for professional development' (NCCA 2008: 82). There is also stated a need for guidelines and sample activities.

There is no clear pragmatic vision in this report of what is involved in CLIL in the Irish primary school. The questions, 'In which subjects should it be implemented?', 'How should it be implemented?', 'What are the intended aims of the approach?', 'From where can the necessary expertise to design such an approach be found?', 'What resources are required?' have not been put. Without the answers to such questions, without such underpinning, without a huge input of time and resources the CLIL approach would appear to be merely aspirational. While all its implications and requirements were being evaluated e.g. 'A further pilot project, larger in scale to the previous pilot, could be conducted in schools to examine the feasibility of CLIL methods' (NCCA 2008: 82) children in schools are being deprived of the opportunity to learn a language.

2.6.2 Into The Future: Language Awareness

Language awareness approaches are next considered. Candelier is quoted in support of the report's affirmation of this approach. 'The awakening to languages, then, takes us

away from the area of teaching/learning a particular language (only so we can return better equipped) and leads us firmly into the area of general language education (Candelier 2004: 19, cited in NCCA 2008: 83). As has been shown, the present language awareness components in both Gaeilge and English are narrow in scope and meager in implementation. The report would envisage children becoming ‘young linguists who have a **greater awareness of language, how it works and how it is put together**’ (NCCA 2008: 84, bold in original). As mentioned above, a theoretical approach to language awareness with young children from the age of nine to twelve is to be avoided. Knowledge needs to be grounded in practical language work, in this case English and Gaeilge and at present these do not appear to be reaching out toward a viable awareness in L3 acquisition. As has been shown above, the most functional interpretation of language awareness occurs in the MLPSI programme (NCCA Curriculum Guidelines, 1999).

It is interesting that the present report (NCCA, 2008) appears to recognize the limitations of its present language awareness programme and advocates:

- a revised definition of language awareness
- a language awareness framework to offer a supporting structure
- a level of professional development to include language awareness approaches
- the provision of resources to support teachers in implementing a language awareness approach (NCCA 2008: 85).

All of this would seem to indicate very clearly an admission that the present language awareness content is inadequate and far from Candalier’s objective, does not ‘lead firmly into the area of general language education’.

2.6.3 Into The Future: Intercultural Awareness

Intercultural Awareness is also posited as a future approach and there is an excellent intercultural-awareness-based model provided, *Intercultural Education in The Primary School :Guidelines for Teachers* (NCCA 2005). This is a wide reaching, deeply researched pragmatic and thoroughly developed approach to intercultural awareness. As has been shown, the focus to date in the Gaeilge and English curricula has been more on cultural, i.e. the cultural background to the language in question rather than intercultural, a widening of the concept, to other cultures. This new model (NCCA

2005) is much more broadly based 'The integration of intercultural themes in the school's curriculum programme provides opportunities for children to appreciate the richness and diversity of society and to recognize and challenge prejudice and discrimination' (NCCA 2005: 30). Exemplars are given across the curriculum in all subjects and areas (NCCA 2005: 48-147). Intercultural awareness is not seen as a stand-alone subject or as a module 'It is also more likely that appropriate attitudes and values will be developed by children if these are integrated with all subjects and with the whole life of the school' (NCCA 2005: 22). It is seen as a holistic integral part of the life of the school 'not confined to a single curriculum area, nor indeed to areas within the 'formal curriculum'' (NCCA 2005: 38)

The exclusion of a language competence approach denies the pupils one hugely important avenue into intercultural awareness.

Applied linguistics as a field has an inherent interest in intercultural communication and therefore ethnographic research has been embraced by scholars who look at language learning as a profoundly social practice and see 'second language learning' 'second culture learning' and 'language socialization' as inextricably bound'. (Dörnyei 2009: 130)

The children can learn of customs, feast days, cultures, in collaboration with History, Geography, Music, Art, Drama and many more approaches but the ability to speak, listen, read and write in the actual language gives the child an unparalleled immediacy and intimacy with the culture of others. To posit intercultural awareness as a help in language acquisition at a later stage is acceptable but to infer that it is a means towards language acquisition, one of the 'futures for languages' without an element of language competency, is exaggerating its potential.

2.6.4. Into the Future: Language Sensitisation

The final approach proposed is that of Language Sensitisation. It has been described as an 'encounter programme[...] the aim is to raise the awareness of the existence of other languages through a taster experience of one foreign language or by offering an encounter with several foreign languages (Harris and Conway 2002: 224). It may not be 'particularly concerned with the development of competency in one target language rather the development of phrases in a number of target languages and language learning skills' (NCCA 2008: 87). The danger here is that the approach deteriorates into randomly diverse selection. There would need to be a strong clearly defined curricular

programme, planning guides and resources made available and perhaps some professional development. A lesser degree of teacher competence would suffice and so this approach might be introduced on a broader scale. If successful it could lead on to a language competence model. There is not at present any such model in action in our primary schools and its creation would take considerable time and particular expertise. There would need to be a more creative or developmental content than that suggested in the report where children are envisaged as obtaining ‘basic competence in formulaic phrases in a range of target languages’ (NCCA 2008: 87).

A language sensitization course is as yet in the area of supposition as no pilot programme has been attempted. Yet because it would be grounded in actual language examples and thereby engaging, albeit to a lesser degree, with language competence, it might well prove a beneficial approach in the present circumstances for those schools which cannot provide a full language competence programme. The fact that the teacher competence requirement would not be as demanding might make this programme more attractive to those teachers, 62%, who have ‘expressed an interest in teaching some aspects of a foreign language programme’ (NCCA 2008: 26).

2.6.5 Conclusion

Based on supposition and unsubstantiated evidence the four ‘futures’ envisioned, have not, apart from the small scale pilot schemes, been deeply researched, elaborated on in detail, put into practice in real classroom environments, been evaluated after trial period, ascertained parental approval, or been placed before teachers actively engaged in teaching modern languages. The report has not followed up on the findings of Harris and O Leary (2009: 12) who ask ‘Perhaps the greatest challenge, however will be how to expand the teaching of modern languages nationally and how to provide the training for those teachers whose existing linguistic competence is not adequate’ (Harris and O Leary 2009: 12). Having posed the question, they recommended as a solution that:

This can be best achieved by:

- Extending the existing programme used in the Pilot Programme to include as many additional schools as are at present capable of delivering a programme of this

kind and wish to do so.

- Introducing a more limited sensitization/language awareness *modern language*

programme in other schools which are not equipped to teach a full programme yet but

who would like to be involved at some level. (Harris and O Leary 2009: 12, italics not in original)

Note that here, the awareness programme is prefixed by ‘modern language’. This would make a telling difference between the present language awareness programmes and one that practically and pragmatically reached towards eventual language competence.

The expansion of the one fully-developed, guideline-supported, critically-evaluated, parentally-approved, continually evolving and apparently successful programme, that of the MLPSI, has not been examined in any critical sense in this report. It has been stated that schools wishing to join the MLPSI ‘could also be facilitated in schools where suitable provisions are in place’ (NCCA 2007: 91). There has been no examination of how these schools could be encouraged, how parents might be brought on board, of how suitable provisions might be created, of how obstacles of time-pressure might be overcome, of how better continuity might be established with secondary level schools. In an attempt to ‘work towards a common and achievable goal for all schools’ (NCCA 2007: 9) the report has not considered that some may strive harder and deserve more. While the desired objective would be that all schools should benefit, there should also be the practical realization that just as some schools excel in music, some in sport, some in I.T. (Information technology) skills, (much of this due to the presence of particularly committed principals and teachers), so also some may be able to achieve exceptional standards in foreign language learning. There is a danger in a laudible attempt at inclusiveness that foreign language teaching may be consigned to the lowest common denominator and that sufficient encouragement may not be given to those schools which are considering a language competence approach.

The 2007 NCCA report had been eagerly anticipated by primary language teachers. Its importance had been stressed in the *Language Education Policy Profile*, ‘**the decisions taken on the follow-up to be given to the NCCA’s current review of the Primary School Curriculum will be crucial**’ (DES 2007: 39, bold in the original) . The NCCA 2005 report had deferred its decision on the feasibility of modern languages in the Primary School until the full implementation of the Curriculum. The 2008 NCCA

Report was to be the determining factor. The decisions that have been made are indeed crucial. There is a sense that much of the work that has already been done is in the balance. There is a definite sense of loss of momentum and a curtailing of vision. The sidelining of the Language Competence approach and the change of focus from ‘modern languages in the Primary School Curriculum to one of languages in the Primary School Curriculum’ (NCCA 2008: 7) is a crucial step and may yet prove to be a retrograde one in the history of modern languages in the Irish Primary School.

Chapter Three: Constructivism, Theory and Practice, from a Vygotskian Viewpoint

3.1.1 Sociocultural Constructivism

Sociocultural constructivism, a theory of cognition that rejects many of the basic tenets of theories of Structuralism and Behaviourism, is based firmly on the principle of mediation. It sees the learner as active and reactive in her own cognitive development and while recognising the basic and innate biological preparedness of the individual, stresses rather, the mediated interaction with environmental, social and historically evolved surroundings as the main agency in that development. It is not until these innate biological factors come into contact with and are transformed by sociocultural influences that the development of the higher faculties, 'logical memory, selective attention, decision making and comprehension of language' (Vygotsky 1986: xxvii) takes place. The primary agent of this mediation is language, the principal semiotic conveyor of meaning. 'Although biological factors constitute the necessary prerequisite for elementary processes to *emerge*, sociocultural factors in contrast, constitute the necessary condition for the elementary natural processes to develop' (Lantolf and Appel 1994: 5).

The constructivist paradigm, i.e. the proposal that cognition develops as a result of interaction is based on the assumption that our world as we experience it is itself a construct. It evolves from the historical, cultural and social beliefs and mores of our continually evolving surroundings. It is in flux, dependent on a multiplicity of variables.

Burr (1995: 17) would claim that this view of our world involves 'challenging most of our commonsense knowledge of ourselves and the world we live in'. As meaning in a constructivist's world is mediated by language, the postmodernist view of language as everchanging, situation dependent, and open to limitless interpretation suggests that meaning itself cannot be pinned down and stated in absolute terms. Our concept of knowledge then becomes not so much a body of received and unchanging truths but

rather the result of the individual's interaction with her sociocultural, historically evolved environment.

If we accept the view, [...] that a multitude of alternative versions of events is potentially available through language, this means that surrounding any one object, event, person etc., there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, a different way of presenting it to the world. (Burr 1995: 48)

Phillips (1995: 8) cites Glaserfeld with a view to describing the main thrust of constructivist thinking:

This attitude is characterized by the deliberate redefinition of the concept of knowledge as an adaptive function. In simple words, this means that the results of our cognitive efforts have the purpose of helping us cope in the world of experience, rather than the traditional goal of furnishing an "objective" representation of a world as it might "exist" apart from us and our experience. (von Glasersfeld, 1991b, pp. xiv-xv)

This shift in the way we view knowledge requires a corresponding shift in attitudes to the way we acquire it. The metaphors by which we attempt to describe theories of knowledge, the stimulus-response pattern of behaviouristic theory or the cognitivist idea of input-output processing of information, need to give ground to a dialogic collaborative developmental imagery which better reflects the sociocultural paradigm of knowledge acquisition. There is a greater responsibility on the part of the learner who plays an active part in the construction of her own cognitive awareness.

It may be of use at this stage, to clarify the difference between social constructionism and sociocultural constructivism. Social constructionism is the evolving of a communally accepted world view deriving from the culture and mores of those who inhabit it. This construction of a world view is termed social because it is in and through society that these attitudes, beliefs are evolved. Sociocultural constructivism is concerned with how the individual *reacts to and is acted upon* by this world. It concerns itself with the ability of the individual to develop her own cognitive awareness by interaction with her surroundings. In social constructionism, those very surroundings, social, cultural, historic, are grounded in and emerge from the constructs of the society in which they are found. It functions therefore as the backdrop against which, or the environment within which, the action of sociocultural constructivism plays its role. Sociocultural constructivism might be considered as one among many forms of 'applied' constructionism. The social constructivist paradigm assumes greater significance in considering theories of knowledge acquisition and learning and development.

3.1.2 Piaget and Vygotsky: Cognitive and Sociocultural Constructivism

Although Gordon (2009: 40) argues that there are many different types of constructivism, some with common elements and some with significant differences ‘individual, social, psychological, cognitive, radical, critical and trivial constructivism among others’ and advocates yet another, ‘pragmatic constructivism’, he does allow for the special significance of the contributions of Piaget and Vygotsky to the constructivist paradigm. ‘Constructivist teaching in particular, has adapted Piaget’s notion of knowledge as a process of enquiry and reasoning’ (Gordon 2009: 51) and on Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, ‘such a conception of cognitive development went against the conventional wisdom of the time, which assumed that what children can do by themselves is the only accurate indication of their mental development level’ (Gordon 2009: 52).

Phillips makes a similar point re the importance of both theoreticians and sets them apart as constructivists from the advocates of social constructionism.

Some constructivists-Piaget and Vygotsky would be quintessential figures here-have been concerned with how the individual learner goes about the construction of knowledge in his or her own cognitive apparatus; for other constructivists, however, the individual learner is of little interest, and what is the focus of concern is the construction of human knowledge in general. (Phillips 1995: 7)

Indeed Vygotsky himself was generous in his acknowledgement of Piaget’s contribution:

Psychology owes a great deal to Jean Piaget. It is not an exaggeration to say that he revolutionized the study of the child’s speech and thought. He developed the clinical method for exploring children’s ideas that has since been widely used. He was the first to investigate the child’s perception and logic systematically; moreover, he brought to his subject a fresh approach of unusual amplitude and boldness. (Vygotsky 1986: 12)

And he adds in a typically colourful phrase, ‘An avalanche of facts, great and small, opening up new vistas or adding to previous ones, tumbles down on child psychology from the pages of Piaget’ (Vygotsky 1986: 14).

But Vygotsky is very capable of assessing the work of others and formulating his own contradictory suggestions. Speaking of Piaget’s theory of thought and language he states ‘Although we consider this theory as the best of its kind, we developed our own theoretical position in exactly an opposite direction’ (Vygotsky 1986: 11). He disagrees

with Piaget on the value of egocentric speech (Vygotsky 1978: 24, 1986: 29-36) and vigorously opposes Piaget's theory of socialization.

He quotes from the preface to the Russian edition of Piaget's works to show how sociocultural influence plays a major role in Piaget's approach to the child's formation.

The child's thought cannot be derived from the inborn psychobiological factors and the factors of the physical environment alone. This does not mean we assert a child merely reflects ideas and opinions of his milieu, which would be trivial. What I wish to say is that the very structure of thought depends upon the social milieu. (Piaget 1932: 55-56, cited in Vygotsky 1986: 43)

But Piaget goes on to elaborate in the next paragraph that 'Egocentrism, coercion and cooperation are, thus, the three axes between which the developing thought of a child is in continuous oscillation' (Piaget 1932: 56, cited in Vygotsky 1986: 44). On this Vygotsky comments 'coercion is the notion that reflects Piaget's understanding of the mechanism through which social factors enter the child's mind' (Vygotsky 1986: 44). And later he states that, 'Piaget, thus suggests a very peculiar theory of socialization indeed. For one thing socialization is a force that is alien to the child's nature. Socialization occurs when the child's egocentrism is overridden' (Vygotsky 1986: 47).

Both authors also differed on the role of language in development. 'Piaget saw language as a symbol system that could be used to express knowledge acquired through interaction with the physical world. For Vygotsky, thought was essentially internalized speech, and speech emerged in social interaction' (Lightbown and Spada 2006: 20). Vygotsky argued for a vastly more important role for language as an instigator and producer of thought. 'Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them' (Vygotsky 1986: 218).

As one who believed that 'the true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social but from the social to the individual' (Vygotsky 1986: 36), it is understandable why Vygotsky would not concur with Piaget's concept of 'the developing child as a lone, inventive young scientist struggling to make independent sense of the surrounding world' (Phillips 1995: 9). This difference is commented upon by his editors, John-Steiner and Souberman, 'While Piaget stresses biologically supported universal signs of development, Vygotsky's emphasis is on the interaction between changing social conditions and the biological substrata of behavior' (Vygotsky 1978: 123). But they are also intent on showing that Vygotsky uses these differences in

order to clarify his own thinking. ‘Although he is clearly committed to a theoretical position distinct from those of his influential contemporaries-Thorndike, Piaget, Koffka- he constantly returns to and analyzes their thinking in order to enrich and sharpen his own’ (Vygotsky 1978: 122).

Constructivism then can be viewed from a Piagetian perspective of cognitive constructivism where the child, as ‘little scientist’ is the active agent, developing through universal biological stages or periods, putting its own observances and presuppositions to the test against the order and structures of the adult world and both restructuring and constructing its development as a result of this interaction with its social surroundings. The alternative is that view of Constructivism based on Vygotskian theory which emphasizes the role of social, cultural and historically evolved environment in the development of the child, and a corresponding emphasis on the role of language and mediation, commonly termed social-constructivism. It is that version of constructivism which principally informs this study.

3.2.1 Vygotsky and Language

In Vygotskian theory, as has been mentioned above, the primacy of language is stressed as the principal semiotic bearer of meaning. But language is also recognized as organizing and developing thought itself. Thus the significance of the Vygotsky’s title ‘Myshlenie i rech’ or as we know it today, ‘Thought and Language’. His editor, Koulin, states that, ‘Although Vygotsky’s theory embraced all higher mental functions, Vygotsky himself was primarily interested in the development of language in its relation to thought’ (Vygotsky 1986: xxx). The corollary also applies, the development of thought in its relation to language. ‘Schematically we may imagine thought and speech as two intersecting circles. In their overlapping parts thought and speech coincide to produce what is called verbal thought’ (Vygotsky 1986: 88). Language is also inextricably mixed with two further developmental areas posited by Vygotsky that of mediation and internalization.

3.2.2 Vygotsky and Speech Development

Speech development according to Vygotsky follows four stages. The initial stage ‘the primitive or natural stage, corresponding to preintellectual speech and preverbal thought, when these operations appear in their original form, as they were evolved at the

primitive level of behavior'(Vygotsky 1986: 87). Next comes the use of correct grammatical forms but this is not a conscious use. 'The child may operate with subordinate clauses, with words like *because, if, when* and *but*, long before he really grasps casual, conditional, or temporal relations. He masters syntax of speech before syntax of thought' (Vygotsky 1986: 87). The third stage sees the onset of egocentric speech, the use of mnemonic aids and 'external signs, external operations that are used as aids in the solution of internal problems' (Vygotsky 1986: 87). The fourth stage has to do with the internalization of the child's knowledge and the gradual development of inner speech. 'The external operation turns inward and undergoes a profound change in the process. The child begins to count in his head, to use "logical memory," that is, to operate with inherent relations and inner signs. In speech development this is the final stage of inner soundless speech' (Vygotsky 1986: 87).

The above would suggest that cognitive awareness and the development of concepts cannot proceed until speech itself develops sufficiently to underpin and support this activity. Vygotsky is mainly concerned then with these third and fourth stages in the development of speech and consequently or perhaps simultaneously, the development of thought. Egocentric speech is for Vygotsky, the beginning of the child's ability to organize a response to posited difficulties. 'The most significant moment in the course of intellectual development, which gives birth to the purely human forms of practical and abstract intelligence, occurs when speech and practical activity, two previously completely independent lines of development, converge' (Vygotsky 1978: 24). In this he disagreed with Piaget's concept of ego-centric speech. 'He did not attribute an important role to speech in the organization of the child's activities, nor did he stress its communicative functions, although he was obliged to admit its practical importance '(Vygotsky 1978: 24). By contrast, Vygotsky saw speech equally as important as action in finding solutions to difficulties. 'Children not only speak about what they are doing; their speech and action are part of one and the same complex psychological function, directed towards the solutions of the problems at hand' (Vygotsky 1978: 25).

Once the child can begin to direct her speech not only to the adults and others surrounding her but to herself, to ask questions and seek solutions not only of others but also of herself while in the process of performing an action, then ego-centric speech comes into play and the basis of inner speech is being laid. It comes as no surprise to

learn that this is not a smooth and continuous development. One of Vygotsky's basic tenets is

that child development is a complex dialectical process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and adaptive processes which overcome impediments that the child encounters. (Vygotsky 1978: 73)

And he writes of 'those spasmodic and revolutionary changes that are so frequent in the history of child development' (Vygotsky 1978: 73). He distinguishes between the early stage when 'speech *accompanies* the child's actions and reflects the vicissitudes of problem solving in a disrupted and chaotic form' (Vygotsky 1978: 28), and those later stages when speech moves more towards the starting point of the process, presumably as inner speech and the development of levels of generalization frees the mind from a dependence on the actual and concrete.

3.2.3 Egocentric Speech

Although it comes first in the ontogenic development of the child, the function of egocentric speech is similar to that of inner speech. It is not a mere accompaniment of the child's activity but 'it serves mental orientation, conscious understanding; it helps in overcoming difficulties; it is speech for oneself, intimately and usefully connected with the child's thinking [...]. In the end, it becomes inner speech' (Vygotsky 1986: 228).

McCafferty (1994: 421), writing on Vygotsky's approach to cognition, 'a fundamentally different approach than information processing theory' uses the term 'speech for the self or *private speech*'. This speech is used in the transformation of 'interpersonal experience into interpersonal functions' and appears to be synonymous with ego-centric speech as it develops into inner speech. McCafferty mentions other self-regulatory functions for the use of private speech as noted by John-Steiner and Tatter:

who suggest that it serves emotional as well as cognitive purposes : 'Private speech does not have a unitary function: it serves both cognitive and affective purposes...its functional categories include children's wordplay and repetitions, remarks to nonhuman subjects and descriptions of one's own activities, self-guiding comments and expressions of relief and pleasure, such as ,I did it" (p.92) (McCafferty 1994: 423).

He also cites Wertch on *object-regulation* in the early use of private speech. ‘It is more concerned with describing and naming certain aspects of the action and environment than with planning or directing action (p.93)’ (McCafferty 1994:424). This would agree with the observation above (Vygotsky 1978: 28) concerning the ‘disruptive and chaotic form’ of problem solving in that at this early stage the child has not obtained a sufficient level of planning control. The more advanced forms of other-regulation and finally self-regulation arrive much later with the support of inner speech and the ability to fully realize concepts.

3.2.4 Inner Speech

The processes of inner speech, according to Vygotsky, develop and become stabilized ‘approximately at the beginning of school age ’ and as a result of this there is a corresponding ‘quick drop in the egocentric speech observed at this stage’(Vygotsky 1986: 33). This does not imply that inner speech does not continue to develop nor that egocentric speech does not later reoccur. Both Vygotsky and Bakhtin stress the immense importance of inner speech. ‘For both thinkers, inner speech functions to organize and make sense of a person’s experience of the world’ For Vygotsky “inner speech is semantically dense [...] personal meaning”. For Bakhtin “it is a private dialogue in which the self simultaneously plays the role of speaker and listener” (Wertsch 1991, cited in Pavlenko and Lantolf 2000: 165).

Vygotsky is at pains to stress the difference between speech and thought structures. The thought itself is formed by speech processes. External or social speech is not simply a reflection of the thought within. There is a continual interplay at work.

The structure of speech does not simply mirror the structure of thought; that is why words cannot be put on by thought like a ready-made garment. Thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form. (Vygotsky 1986: 219)

And later he claims that behind words, lies an ‘independent grammar of thought, the syntax of word meanings. The simplest utterance, far from reflecting a constant rigid correspondence between sound and meaning, is really a process. Verbal expressions cannot emerge fully formed but must develop gradually’ (Vygotsky 1986: 222).

This idea of utterance as process is echoed by Bakhtin:

‘The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogised heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance’ (Bakhtin 2000: 272).²³

Our thought then is conditioned and structured by our surroundings, historical, social, environmental, and language and inner speech plays a complementary role in this. It is from this inner dialogue that the thought takes eventual shape, emerges and is enabled to be expressed as social speech. Lantolf and Thorne (2006: 48) claim that ‘Vygotsky’s position essentially rejects the expressive function of speech (ie. The conduit metaphor) and argues instead that “Speech does not merely serve as the expression of developed thought. Thought is restructured as it is transformed in speech. It is not expressed but completed in the word” (Vygotsky 1987: 150)’.

In seeking to define inner speech, Vygotsky (1986: 244-247) focuses on its ‘three main semantic peculiarities’. The first concerns ‘the preponderance of the *sense* [smyl] of a word over its *meaning* [znachenie]’. The second is analogous to agglutination, the combining of words to create new ones. The third is concerned with the way in which the *senses* of words combine which is not the same as the combinations of meanings in agglutination.

The distinction between sense and meaning is credited to Frederic Paulhan. ‘The sense of a word, according to him, is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word’ (Vygotsky 1986: 244). A word’s sense, then, is a changeable dynamic, depending on many different factors, context, recipient, intention, genre. The meaning is constant and can be defined but once it is used, once externalized in speech, and surrounded then by all the concomitants, cultural, social, historical, the potential senses of the word are limitless. This sense of a word is the prevailing aspect in inner speech.

The use of agglutination is used more and more by the child as ego-centric speech approaches inner speech. Not alone do the words combine to form a new word but the word, a new complex idea, also contains the separate elements that go to make up the idea. The third peculiarity concerns the way the senses of different words combine and

²³ Dialogised heteroglossia: that the utterance is capable of multiple interpretation and variation depending on speaker, recipient, register, intention, context etc.

influence one another. The example chosen is Gogol's 'Dead Souls', where the title acquires an infinitely broader sense than its original reference. Vygotsky suggests that the title of a literary work expresses its content and completes its sense to a much greater degree than, for example, a painting or piece of music. The title, and he also suggests as examples 'Don Quixote', 'Hamlet' and 'Anna Karenina' becomes a concentration of the essence of the substance of these novels. This phenomenon of concentration, Vygotsky suggests, reaches its peak in inner speech. 'A single word becomes so saturated with sense that it becomes a concentrate of sense. To unfold it into overt speech would require a multitude of words' (Vygotsky 1986: 247).

These 'semantic peculiarities' serve to bear out Vygotsky's earlier assumption that 'inner speech is speech for oneself; external speech is for others. It would be surprising indeed if such a basic difference in function did not affect the structure of the two kinds of speech' (Vygotsky 1986: 225-226). Inner speech is the closest we come, before engaging in pure thought. Words are still involved but as has been shown, they are used in a totally different manner. 'But while in external speech thought is embodied in words, inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. It is a dynamic shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought, the two more or less stable, more or less firmly delineated components of verbal thought (Vygotsky 1986: 249). Predication, abbreviation, condensation, agglutination transform the structures of normal concepts of speech. Ideas are processed at a phenomenally faster rate, the thought so in advance of the word, that were one to express formally the thought content, an abundance of words is required. 'The flow of thought is not accompanied by a simultaneous unfolding of speech. The two processes are not identical, and there is no rigid correspondence between the units of thought and speech' (Vygotsky 1986: 249).

In a striking image which clearly delineates the distinction between thought and word Vygotsky speaks of 'a barefoot boy in a blue shirt running down the street' (Vygotsky 1986: 251). He does not conceive all of these things separately. The thought unifies the image. It is a whole. To express it he must use words. The elements that in thought are unified and complete, need separation and individual expression in order to convey the meaning externally. And in a final image he compares a thought 'to a cloud shedding a shower of words' (Vygotsky 1986: 251). Again the emphasis is on the plurality of words as opposed to the unity of thought structures. The continual interaction and interdependence of word and thought is summarized in the following quotation

‘Experience teaches us that thought does not express itself in words but rather realizes itself in them’ (Vygotsky 1986: 251).²⁴ Even while speech is attempting to express the thought, thought in its turn is evolving and developing as a result of that speech. Appel and Lantolf cite O Connell (1998) in making the same point:

According to O Connell, the essence of speaking cannot be disclosed if the act of speaking is primarily regarded as the transformation or translation of “something inner” into “something outer”; that is, the encoding of information into linguistic form. He concludes that speaking “is not the process of giving linguistic form to the message nor translating thoughts into sentences...it is a process of finding the message by speaking. (Appel and Lantolf 1994: 441)

And they would claim not only that planning can ‘exist simultaneously with speech but that the very activity of speaking can, in fact be planning, or more precisely, thinking, externalized as self-directed private speech, the goal of which is planning what to say about a particular topic’ (Appel and Lantolf 1994: 441).

3.2.5 Concept Formation

Before going on to examine Vygotskian perspectives on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Mediation and Internalization, it is necessary to investigate in considerable detail his theories of concept formation, without which there can surely be no internalization and without which mediation would seem to have very limited, if any application. ‘Vygotsky’s insistence on using genetic analysis when examining human mental functioning meant that for him the major route to understanding mind is to specify the origins and genetic transformations it has undergone’ (Wertsch 1990: 113). The importance of concept formation is reflected in the fact that Vygotsky devotes two complete chapters of *Thought and Language* to the subject, ‘An Experimental Study of the development of Concepts’ and ‘The Developments of Scientific Concepts in Childhood’. It is here that we encounter for the first time his crucial theory of the zone of proximal development. This was to be developed later (Vygotsky 1978: 84-91) in his posthumously published collection of essays entitled ‘Mental development of Children and the Process of learning’ (1935) incorporated into *Mind in Society* (Vygotsky 1978: ix).

²⁴ Mirroring the same idea quoted above, ‘Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them’ (Vygotsky 1986: 218).

In his introductory remarks concerning the development of concepts Vygotsky dismisses the two traditional methods in their study: definition of content, 'a mere reproduction of verbal knowledge' which fails to take into account 'the perception and mental elaboration of the sensory material that give birth to the concept' (Vygotsky 1986: 96) and the study of abstraction. 'The child is required to discover some common trait in a series of discrete impressions, abstracting from it all the other traits with which it is perceptually fused' (Vygotsky 1986: 96). In these methods he saw a separation of word from perceptual material and a concentration on one or the other. A big advance was the introduction by Ach (1921) of nonsense words which removed the subjective element of 'previous experience or knowledge on the part of the subject' (Vygotsky 1986: 98). By using this method there is a concentration on the functional formation of the concept. This recognizes the concept as actively engaged, problem solving, understanding, and not as a static, completed finite objective or as he himself states 'an isolated, ossified and changeless formation' (Vygotsky 1986: 98).

Both Asch and Rimat's conclusions are cited to support that real concept formation appears only at the adolescent stage and to disprove that associative connections alone are insufficient for the establishment of concepts. Uznadze (1966: 76) is cited as having singled out 'one particular function moment whose importance has been shown by Asch namely the communicative aspect of speech' (Vygotsky 1986: 100) and Vygotsky elaborates on this.

In the course of mutual comprehension between people a group of sounds acquires certain meaning, thus becoming a word or concept. Without this functional moment of mutual understanding, no group of sounds would ever become a bearer of meaning, and no concept would ever appear (Uznadze 1966: 76, cited in Vygotsky 1986: 100)

Uznadze is also cited on the use of these words in communication with adults where they appear to be acting as concepts but are not in fact doing so, a point which Vygotsky (1986: 121) will later develop.

At the same time, children start using words and establish a mutual understanding with adults rather early. This implies that words take over the function of concepts and may serve as means of communication long before they reach the level of concepts characteristic of fully developed thought (Uznadze 1966: 77, cited in Vygotsky 1986: 101)

Having rigorously examined the approaches of Asch and Rimat and finding that the ‘very process of the development of concepts remains obscure’ (Vygotsky 1986: 103), he now turns to Sakharov’s ‘method of double stimulation’ in order to study the process of development. This test consisted of the use of twenty two wooden blocks varying in colour shape, height and size. Underneath the blocks regardless of colour or shape are written one of the four nonsense words *lag bik mur* and *cev*. The subject must attempt to group the blocks correctly according to the nonsense words. As choices are made, the examiner indicates with the nonsense word whether the right move has been made. Gradually the subject realizes the particular characteristics needed to conform to the group. Very often the subject would proceed to use colour or shape but this was corrected by the word symbol. This method enabled Sakarov and Vygotsky and others to see the process of concept formation as it occurred and to break it into concomitant parts.

As a result, Vygotsky was able to claim the significance of the word (albeit an artificial one) in concept formation. ‘Our experimental study proved that it is a functional use of the word, or any other sign, as a means of focusing one’s attention, selecting distinctive features and analyzing and synthesizing them, that plays a central role in concept formation’ (Vygotsky 1986: 106). He stresses this point asserting that neither the growth of associations, the strengthening of attention, the accumulation of images nor determining tendencies can lead to concept formation. ‘Real concepts are impossible without words, and thinking in concepts does not exist beyond verbal thinking. That is why the central movement in concept formation, and its generative cause, is a specific use of words as functional “tools”’ (Vygotsky 1986: 107).

It is this new use of word according to Vygotsky that prompts the radical change that occurs in the process of thought in the adolescent. He concurs in the idea that the tasks with which society confronts the adolescent ‘as he enters the cultural, professional, and civic world of adults’ do play an important part in the emergence of conceptual thinking but they cannot be the cause. It is not a new function, this use of the word but it takes on a new extension. ‘Learning to direct one’s own mental processes with the aid of words or signs is an integral part of the process of concept formation. The ability to regulate one’s actions by using auxiliary means reaches its full development only in

adolescence' (Vygotsky 1986: 108). To use a later terminology, (Wertsch: 1979)²⁵ one can see this activity as the process where object and other-regulation move into the beginnings of self-regulation and the adolescents' consciousness of their own learning processes begins to develop.

Using Sakharov's 'double stimulation' enables Vygotsky to develop his hypothesis of concept formation. The first phase where the child puts together a number of objects without any basis for selection, Claparede's 'syncretism', results only in the assembling of heaps. The next phase, thinking in complexes, results in a partial overcoming of the child's egocentrism and a grouping of objects that are related. This constitutes 'a decisive step away from syncretism towards objective thinking' (Vygotsky 1986: 112). Complexes differ from concepts in that the underlying bonds are concrete and factual rather than abstract and logical.

3.2.6 The Formation of Complexes

Vygotsky names and considers in some detail five types of complex. The first type, *associative*, recognises a similarity in colour, shape etc. The second type gathers objects into *collections*, and contrast rather than similarity is the principle of the association. The third is the *chain complex*, what Vygotsky terms 'the purest form of thinking in complexes' (Vygotsky 1986: 117). This seems to be a sequence of objects and the selective criteria changes at will. A child may select triangle shapes and then switch from a blue triangle to other blue shapes. Each link has its own importance and the final link may have no bearing on the beginning. In the next complex, the *diffuse complex*, 'Perceptually concrete groups of objects or images are formed by means of diffuse, indeterminate bonds' (Vygotsky 1986: 117). There would appear to be, as the name suggests, a more diffuse quality to the choice of links than in the previous concepts. This would account for the 'surprising transitions, of startling association and generalizations when his thought ventures beyond the boundaries of the small tangible world of his experience' (Vygotsky 1986: 119). Although not suggested by Vygotsky,

²⁵ The terminology used by Wertsch (1979: 93) and cited by McCafferty (his italics) on *object – regulation* in the early use of private speech. 'It is more concerned with describing and naming certain aspects of the action and environment than with planning and directing action'. The guidance by environmental stimuli and also adults or capable others is termed *other-regulation* and finally comes *self-regulation* (McCafferty 1994: 424)

this diffuse concept might also account for the child's easy acceptance of the haphazard, incredible links made between reality and fiction in fairy stories, poetry, and fantasy literature.

3.2.7 The Pseudoconcept

The final or bridging concept is that called *the pseudoconcept*. This can be confused with the concept proper because it may appear to have been based on abstract reasoning but is in fact based rather on concrete visible likenesses. Vygotsky states that a complex develops along lines which are 'predetermined by the meaning a given word already has in the language of adults' (Vygotsky 1986: 120). He then touches on mediation but does not develop the zone of proximal development until much later in the next chapter. His point here is that adults 'through their verbal communication with the child, are able to predetermine the path of the development of generalizations and its final point-a fully formed concept' (Vygotsky 1986: 120). But the adult cannot pass on his mode of thinking and merely supplies the ready-made meanings of the words from which the child builds complexes. The fact that pseudocomplexes resemble concepts so closely, contributes enormously to the interaction between child and adult. 'Without such functional understanding, says Uznadze, no group of words would ever become a bearer of meaning and no concept would ever come to being' (Vygotsky 1986: 123). However in this dialogue between child and adult, word meanings differ as the child is coming to the word from a situated factual concrete base whereas the adult base is abstract and conceptual.²⁶ This does not infer that an adult's word meaning is always conceptual as it can often revert to complexes but by and large there is that factual/conceptual difference of approach.

A third aspect of concept formation, following on the syncretic image and the complex is the ability to abstract and single out elements. There is a danger here that one might regard this as a final developing phase in concept formation due to its position following on the other two phases. But in fact, Vygotsky is here considering the process of abstraction throughout the child's development and has gone back to reconsider this in parallel with the other aspects of concept formation already treated.

²⁶ Piaget is in agreement on this diversion in viewpoint. (cf. Confrey 1990: 108-109)

In reality the new formations do not necessarily appear only after complex thinking has run the full course of its development. In a rudimentary shape they can be observed long before the child begins to think in pseudoconcepts. Essentially however they belong in the third division of our schema of concept formation. If complex thinking is one root of concept formation, the forms we are about to describe are a second, independent root. They have a distinct genetic function, different from that of complexes, in the child's mental development. (Vygotsky 1986: 135)

3.2.8 Abstraction and Potential Concepts

Abstraction involves a consideration of the many elements involved and a concentration on the similar aspects. In the test the children made the first move towards abstraction by picking out objects that were *maximally similar*. E.g. they might have two corresponding similarities, small and round or tall and blue. In concentrating on these similarities other aspects are abstracted and Vygotsky claims that the first words of the child closely resemble potential concepts because a) they are practically connected with a certain group of objects and b) appear as a product of isolating abstraction (Vygotsky 1986: 138). Function plays an important role as a source of potential concepts in that in attempting to explain a word the child will often tell what the designated object can do or what can be done with it and Vygotsky cites an example from Messer showing how this applies even to abstract concepts '*Reasonable* means when I am hot and don't stand in a draft' (Vygotsky 1986: 138).

There is a relationship between potential concepts and complexes in that abstraction plays a major role but it is not until there is mastery in allowing these abstracted traits to be 'synthesized anew and the resulting abstract synthesis becomes the main instrument of thought' that the new concept emerges (Vygotsky 1986: 139). Vygotsky concludes that the processes leading to concept formation are twofold, complex formation and the formation of potential concepts. The use of the word is an 'integral part' of both these developing processes and in the 'formation of genuine concepts to which these processes lead' (Vygotsky 1986: 145).

3.2.9 Possible Problems in Sequential Reading of Vygotsky

One of the problems reading Vygotsky is that although his editors have given us the incalculable benefit of his thinking and theory, the two most easily available works in English are collections from the main body of his works. He published a great deal between 1915 and 1935, but the fact that editors have made a selection of his essays

may at times give a false impression of continuity. It is important to keep this in mind and to realize that a chapter does not necessarily follow on in order from the previous one. They may have been written with a gap of years between. The life history, illness, the necessity of dictation, ‘a practice which resulted in repetitions and dense or elliptical prose’ (Vygotsky 1978: x) would also explain why there are so many repetitions and different treatment of similar topics. Thus the chapters five and six in *Thought and Language*, (the former written in the early 1930s the latter probably in 1934), treat of the themes of concept formation, as Wertsch (1990: 113) claims, from quite different aspects. In chapter five, he states that Vygotsky treats concept development ‘primarily from the perspective of individual psychology’ whereas in chapter six ‘he now approached concept development from the perspective of how it emerges in institutionally situated activity’ and there is now a focus on ‘the forms of teacher-child interpsychological functioning [...] rather than on the child’s intrapsychological functioning alone’ (Wertsch 1990: 113-114). Thus although both chapters treat of concept formation, chapter six is not, as one might imagine, a further development of chapter five but an exploration of concept formation from a different aspect. If anything, chapter six is itself a forerunner of the chapter ‘Interaction between learning and development’ in *Mind and Society*, which was itself taken from the posthumously published collection of essays entitled *Mental Development of Children and the Process of Learning (1935)* (Vygotsky 1978: ix).

3.2.10 Scientific and Spontaneous Concepts

Having tackled the development of concepts in chapter 5 of *Thought and Language*, Vygotsky in chapter six is concerned with the development of scientific concepts in childhood. He claims that ‘as long as the curriculum supplies the necessary material *the development of scientific concepts runs ahead of the development of spontaneous concepts*’ (Vygotsky 1986: 146, italics in the original). To distinguish between both concepts he claims that, in scientific thinking,

the primary role is played by *initial verbal definition*, which being applied systematically, gradually comes down to concrete phenomena. The development of spontaneous concepts knows no systematicity and goes from the phenonema upward towards generalizations. The scientific concepts evolve under the conditions of systematic cooperation between the child and teacher. (Vygotsky 1986: 148, italics in original)

Vygotsky challenges the then contemporary view that scientific concepts do not undergo development but are absorbed 'ready-made through a process of understanding and assimilation' (Vygotsky 1986: 149). He has already argued earlier throughout chapter five that a concept is more than 'certain associative bonds formed by memory, more than a mere mental habit' (Vygotsky 1986: 149). The primacy of the word is acknowledged in concept formation, maintaining 'its guiding function in the formation of genuine concepts' (Vygotsky 1986: 145). And as word meanings evolve so must the generalizations provided by those word meanings and also the development of the necessary intellectual functions to cope with this expansion, 'deliberate attention, logical memory abstraction, the ability to compare and differentiate' None of this can be mastered 'through the initial learning alone' (Vygotsky 1986:151).

Tolstoy is cited to show the impossibility of teaching concepts directly 'But to give the pupil new concepts deliberately [...] is, I am convinced, as impossible and futile as teaching a child to walk by the laws of equilibrium' (Tolstoy 1903: 143). Vygotsky is equally positive

Practical experience also shows that direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless. A teacher who tries to do this usually accomplishes nothing but empty verbalism, a parrotlike repetition of words by the child, simulating a knowledge of the corresponding concepts but actually covering up a vacuum. (Vygotsky 1986: 146)

Vygotsky also concurs with Tolstoy in the idea that the path from the first encounter with a new concept to its full appropriation is 'long and complex' (Vygotsky 1986: 152). Believing that Tolstoy underplays the role of learning and instruction he claims that it is possible not alone to teach students to use concepts but that this 'interference' may favourably influence the development of concepts formed by the students themselves. The introduction of a concept is just the start of its appropriation and does not preclude spontaneous development but 'rather charts new paths for it' (Vygotsky 1986: 152).

The other accepted opinion on scientific concepts does not deny the developmental process in their formation but puts them on the same footing as spontaneous or

'everyday' concepts. To counter this Vygotsky refers to Piaget's terminology of spontaneous and nonspontaneous concepts. Spontaneous concepts are those developed by the child's own mental efforts and nonspontaneous are those 'decisively influenced by adults' (Vygotsky 1986: 153). But in adopting Piaget's terminology Vygotsky strongly argues against Piaget's reasoning summarizing it as 'Throughout childhood there is a ceaseless conflict between two mutually antagonistic forms of thinking, with a series of compromises at each successive developmental level, until adult thought wins out' (Vygotsky 1986: 155). Vygotsky, on the other hand, sees both concepts as complementing one another, 'a unitary process, not a conflict of antagonistic, mutually exclusive forms of thinking' (Vygotsky 1986: 157).

In differentiating between spontaneous and nonspontaneous, or scientific concepts he suggests that, as their inceptions are so different, the one based on the everyday environment, the other on specific instruction, so also should their developmental paths differ. A child when asked to define what she knows as an everyday concept, the example given is 'brother', has far greater difficulty than in defining the scientific concept²⁷. One might question the choice of the word 'brother' as being a relatively easy concept and substitute a word such as 'home' or even 'happiness'. The point concerning the difference of the developmental paths of both types of concept, still holds. That of the scientific concept as has been mentioned above precedes that of the spontaneous.

Vygotsky posits an analogy with foreign language learning, the spontaneous with the native the scientific with the foreign. 'It has been shown that a child's understanding of his native language is enhanced by learning a foreign one' (Vygotsky 1986: 160). In a typical Vygotskian expansion of metaphor he goes on to make the crucial point that the scientific concept frees the child from a dependence on the concrete and actual and leads on to abstraction and generalized thought. 'As algebra liberates the child from the domination of concrete figures and elevates him to the level of generalizations, the acquisition of foreign language -in its own peculiar way- liberates him from the dependence on concrete linguistic forms and expressions' (Vygotsky 1986:160). He stresses that in the formation of both concepts as in that of both languages 'the demarcation line is drawn between spontaneous development and systematic

²⁷ Here Vygotsky rather challengingly suggests 'Archimedean law'! but any concept from a learned/instructed situation would suffice.

instruction' (Vygotsky 1986: 161). This then enables him to make the further analogy that just as the foreign language uses the semantics of the native language to develop, so the process of acquiring further scientific concepts is mediated by already acquired spontaneous concepts.

3.2.11 The Genetic Method

One of the main methodological problems confronting Vygotsky was to find a way of studying '*real* concepts in *depth*' (Vygotsky 1986: 161). Up to this the two main methods were verbal definition and artificially constructed experimental tests. He sees the study of scientific concepts as an answer in that they are real concepts but are developed 'under our eyes' (Vygotsky 1986: 161). This study of developing concepts in situ forms one of the main planks of the Vygotskian approach, the genetic method.

In an exploration of how a child reaches awareness and mastery of his own thought processes Vygotsky turns again to Piaget and his citing of Claparede's law of awareness. This awareness of difference before similarity results in our becoming more aware of what we do according to the level of difficulty involved. Again following an antagonistic interpretation, Piaget posits that the painful experiences endured in coming to terms with superior adult logic creates a need for awareness in the mind of the developing adolescent (Vygotsky 1986: 163). He adds to this the law of shift or displacement, the need to recreate in the imagination the action so that it can be expressed in words. Not surprisingly Vygotsky questions both theories. He questions the 'series of failures' being the 'sole teacher of the child' and the 'inadequacy of the child's thought' being 'the only real source of higher forms of generalization' (Vygotsky 1986: 165). The law of shift does not take into account that the repeated patterns take place 'on a higher developmental level' (Vygotsky 1986: 165). He also suggests a reason for the earlier recognition of difference in that recognition of similarity requires 'a more advanced structure of generalization and conceptualization than awareness of dissimilarity (Vygotsky 1986: 164).

3.2.12 Learning and Development

Vygotsky continues to stress the ‘idea that consciousness is a holistic system’ and ‘not a product of changes occurring in separate mental functions’ (Vygotsky 1986: 167). He is at pains to clarify what he means by consciousness and lack of consciousness. It is not the Freudian sense of unconscious resulting from repression. It is ‘awareness of the activity of the mind-the consciousness of being conscious’ (Vygotsky 1986: 170) what we would now probably term ‘meta-cognitive awareness’. He claims that this growing awareness of mental processes leads to their mastery. School instruction is largely instrumental in ‘inducing the generalizing kind of perception’ and scientific concepts are the medium in which ‘awareness and mastery first develop’ (Vygotsky 1986: 171). This in turn leads him to claim that ‘reflective consciousness comes to the child through the portals of scientific concepts’ (Vygotsky 1986: 171).

It is at this point in the discussion, when Vygotsky treats of the interaction between learning and development that we become aware of the tendency to repetition mentioned by his editors in Vygotsky’s writings. One encounters a striking parallel in theme and material and indeed in phraseology between chapter 6 of *Mind in Society* and Part 111 of chapter 6 in *Thought and Language*.

‘The first and still most widely held theory considers instruction and development to be mutually independent’ (Vygotsky 1986: 174).

‘The first [theory] centres on the assumption that processes of child development are independent of learning’ (Vygotsky 1978: 79).

‘Education is seen as a kind of superstructure erected over maturation’ (Vygotsky 1986: 175).

‘Learning forms a superstructure over development’ (Vygotsky 1978: 80).

It is as if he is using the same basic notes for both chapters. The zone of proximal development is first mentioned in *Thought and Language* but it receives a more intensive scrutiny and further development in *Mind in Society*. Both books consider formal discipline in some detail and also the function of imitation. *Thought and Language* then reverts to further consideration of scientific concepts. Faced with this parallelism perhaps the best approach would be to tease out

the similarities in both books and then develop and comment on the divergences between them. It is not that there are contrasting or opposing views posited but rather a difference in focus with the earlier work concentrating on scientific concepts and the later focusing on the interaction and internalization that occurs in the school situation.

In the relationship between learning and development, Vygotsky reviews the three then current theoretical positions. The first considers that development and learning are mutually independent. The higher forms of thinking develop without the aid of instruction. Vygotsky disagrees with this. Development must always precede learning or as he pictures it, 'instruction hobbles behind development' (Vygotsky 1986: 175). He would agree that a minimum level of development is necessary before instruction can be effective but disagrees with the separation or as he claims, the opposition, being carried to the extreme.

The second theory based on conditioned reflexes and elaborated by James,²⁸ bases both learning and development on association and habit formation. This makes both processes practically identical and coincidental. James is cited also in *Mind and Society*, 'Education in short cannot be better described than by calling it the organization of acquired habits of conduct and tendencies to behavior' (Vygotsky 1978: 81).

For the third theory Vygotsky cites Koffka who attempted to reconcile the previous theories claiming that 'maturation of an organ is contingent on its functioning, which improves through learning and practice' (Vygotsky 1986: 177). This inclusion of learning with development is important²⁹ in that it liberates instruction from the old sequencing pattern so that now 'It may not only follow maturing or keep in step with it but also precede it and further its progress' (Vygotsky 1986: 177). This will later have an important bearing on the formation of ZPD (zone of proximal development) theory.

3.2.13 Formal Discipline

Vygotsky resurrects the 'almost forgotten theory' (Vygotsky 1986: 177) of formal discipline in an attempt to discover whether instruction in one subject might develop the

²⁸ James, W., (1958) *Talks to Teachers* New York: Norton

²⁹ 'We have given him a pennyworth of instruction, and he has gained a small fortune in development' (Vygotsky 1986: 177).

mental faculties in general. This leads on directly from the above conclusions on the relationship between instruction and development. The theory of formal discipline had resulted in the Russian and German 'classical gymnasiums' but had been discarded in time, principally on pragmatic grounds. In dismissing Thorndyke's discrediting of formal discipline, Vygotsky recognizes that it is likely that there are two types of instruction 'narrow specialized training [...] and the kind of instruction given schoolchildren which activates larger areas of consciousness' (Vygotsky 1986: 179). In a series of studies of development and instruction and their interrelations, Vygotsky found that at the beginning of instruction, the developing functions 'could not be considered mature' (Vygotsky 1986: 180). By contrasting oral and written speech, the one spontaneous, involuntary and unconscious, the other abstract, voluntary and conscious, he concludes that 'the psychological functions on which written speech is based have not even begun to develop in the proper sense when instruction in writing starts. It must build on barely emerging, immature processes' (Vygotsky 1986: 183).

Grammar, at first mastered unconsciously, later becomes something that is remastered consciously through instruction. The child becomes gradually more consciously aware of what she is doing. The spelling of a word realizes the concept of letter sounds and their relation to words. Grammar and writing then play a part in the conscious development of speech. The importance of these findings shows that the psychological foundation does not precede instruction but 'unfolds in a continuous interaction with the contributions of instruction' (Vygotsky 1986: 184).

In his second series of investigations Vygotsky found 'that instruction usually precedes development' (Vygotsky 1986: 184). There is no parallelism between them. They both work at different stages and it may take a number of stages of instruction before a general principle, as it were, 'clicks in'. He concludes that when the child learns a new scientific concept, the development of that concept is only beginning.

In contrast to Thorndike's atomistic model, Vygotsky claims that intellectual development is a unitary process. While there is variety in the subjects studied, 'the main psychic functions involved' are 'interdependent- their common bases are consciousness and deliberate mastery' (Vygotsky 1986: 187). He argues that as a result, instruction in one subject influences the development of the higher faculties in far more

than that subject alone. In this way ‘all the basic school subjects act as formal discipline’ (Vygotsky 1986: 186). The development of voluntary attention, logical memory, analytical action, abstraction, synthesization, learned in mastering one subject, helps in the mastery of others. ‘the psychological functions stimulated by them develop in one complex process’ (Vygotsky 1986: 186). This point is also made in *Mind in Society*:

Once a child has learned to perform an operation, he thus assimilates some structural principle whose sphere of application is other than just the operations of the type on whose basis the principle was assimilated. Consequently in making one step in learning, a child makes two steps in development, that is learning and development do not coincide. (Vygotsky 1978: 84)

3.2.14 Measurement of Development

Having discussed development in relation to instruction, their interdependence and their relatively different ‘rhythms’ of evolution, it is not surprising that Vygotsky seeks for a means by which to measure development. In his day, the level of mental development was determined by giving the child certain standardized problems to solve. What could be solved unaided was the measure of the child’s development at the time. Vygotsky famously posited that, were the child to be given assistance, a higher level of development could be ascertained. ‘The discrepancy between a child’s actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance indicates the zone of his proximal development’ (Vygotsky 1986: 187). He claimed that the child with the greater zone of proximal development would do much better in school and that ‘*This measure gives a more helpful clue than mental age does to the dynamics of intellectual progress*’ (Vygotsky 1986: 187, italics in the original).

Since imitation plays such an important role in instruction Vygotsky is intent on distinguishing ‘intelligent conscious imitation’ from ‘automatic copying’. The first requires insight rather than repetition. ‘It involves understanding the field structure and relations between objects’ (Vygotsky 1986: 188). The other is drill imitation which does not involve conscious comprehension.

The child benefits most from assistance in those problems a little in advance of the ones she can solve independently. If the problems posed are too far in advance of her

development she will be unable to solve them no matter what assistance is given. Imitation i.e. ‘the intelligent conscious imitation’ mentioned above, and instruction, **play a major role in development. While it is necessary to have a basic level of** development to begin with, Vygotsky claims ‘the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions’ (Vygotsky 1986: 188).

It is noteworthy that Vygotsky, at this stage, is more interested in developing the idea of the interrelation of concepts than in further examining the role of ZPD.³⁰ In *Thought and Language* his intention is to clarify the development of concept and to contrast spontaneous and scientific concepts in their role in the child’s development. What he terms his ‘key point’ is that from the very beginning both these concepts ‘*develop in reverse directions*’ (Vygotsky 1986: 192, italics in original). Consciousness of spontaneous concepts develops much later whereas scientific concepts are from the beginning, grounded in definition and require conscious attention. The comparison between oral and written speech could be used here to illustrate. The spontaneous concept slowly emerges from the concrete situation while the scientific is mediated and requires conscious awareness. Thus he suggests that ‘*the development of the child’s spontaneous concepts proceeds upward, and the development of his scientific concepts downward*’ (Vygotsky 1986: 193, italics in original)³¹. But these two forms are not separate and they interact. A child’s spontaneous concept must have sufficiently developed before a related scientific concept can be appropriated. The scientific concept provides structures for the development of the spontaneous concept and this is where the zone of proximal development plays its role. ‘Spontaneous concepts that confront a deficit of conscious and volitional control find this control in the zone of proximal development, in the cooperation of the child with adults’ (Vygotsky 1986: 194).

3.2.15 Interaction and Interrelation of Concepts

Vygotsky’s final area of attention, having examined the gestation and development of concepts, concerns their interaction and interrelation, what he terms ‘the focal problem

³⁰This occurs later in *Mind in Society* (1978: 84-90) where Vygotsky examines the applied aspects of ZPD in both diagnostics and mediated instruction. Cf. below 1.2.15 The Zone of Proximal Development.

³¹ Here again the similarity to the earlier quotation (Vygotsky 1986: 148) but in this case the emphasis is now on the child’s development.

of our analysis' (Vygotsky 1986: 197). Without this interaction between concepts no intellectual operation would be possible. In studying concepts Vygotsky concludes that the 'degree of generality', (the example he gives is that of plant, flower, rose,) is the basic psychological variable in their construction. He attempts in his study to define the 'relation of generality' that exists between concepts. He suggests that the development of a concept does not follow 'the logical way from a particular to more general' (Vygotsky 1986: 197). 'Flower' and 'rose' may both exist or interchange at the level of complex thinking. The child at the early stage of development is unable to move from words that define objects to words that define concepts, 'furniture' or 'clothes' are the examples cited. Vygotsky claims that the appearance of the first generalized concept is as 'significant a symptom of progress as the first meaningful word' (Vygotsky 1986: 199).

As word meanings develop,³² they are governed by what he terms 'the law of equivalence of concepts'. According to the law '*any concept can be formulated in terms of other concepts in a countless number of ways* (Vygotsky 1986: 199, italics in original). Early concepts are limited and lacking in generality. Later more highly developed concepts have a far greater degree of generality. The measure of generality determines not only the equivalence of concepts, the possibility of their being expressed in a number of different ways, but also all the intellectual operations, comparisons, judgments, conclusions, residing in the formation of the concept. The concept brings with it corresponding layers of generality. As higher levels of concept develop, the generalizations necessary are built on the generalizations from the previous level. Nothing is lost. This would again be distanced from the Piagetian notion of the child's intellectual development becoming valid by the negation of its own activity and the increasingly formulative effect of the adult consciousness. Vygotsky's is a more holistic view.

To illustrate this higher concept developing from the lower he uses concepts in Mathematics. The adolescent who has mastered algebraic concepts has gained a vantage point from which he sees concepts of arithmetic in a broader perspective.

We saw this especially clearly in experimenting with shifts from the decimal to other numerical systems. As long as the child operates with the decimal system without having become

³² This idea of the development of word meanings was at the time revolutionary, disregarded by 'all the psychological schools and trends' (Vygotsky 1986: 217).

conscious of it as such, he has not mastered the system, but is on the contrary bound by it. When he becomes able to view it as a particular instance of the wider concept of a scale of notation, he can operate deliberately with this or any other numerical system. (Vygotsky 1986: 202-203)

Here we see the concept of numeracy being extended and its relations of generality being expanded. The lower concepts of number develop into the more abstract ones of number systems, decimal, binary etc. and the adolescent can grasp the fundamentals of algebra at a remove from the notation of numbers. These higher levels of generalization do not require the child to restructure all the earlier concepts separately. The new higher concept draws them into itself and as mentioned above, nothing is lost, 'it is superseded, i.e., saved as a necessary premise for the higher intellectual activity' (Vygotsky 1986: 203).

These arguments concerning the development of higher concepts, their ability to interact and interrelate based on their measure of generality, consistently underpins the ideas stated much earlier at the very beginning of *Thought and Language*

'Communication presupposes generalization and development of word meaning; generalization, thus becomes possible in the course of communication. The higher, specifically human forms of psychological communication are possible because man's reflection of reality is carried out in generalized concepts. (Vygotsky 1986: 7-8)

3.2.16 The Zone of Proximal Development

The four main contributions in Vygotskian theory, the Genetic Method, the Zone of Proximal Development, Mediation and Internalization are inextricably interwoven and complementary. Were one to choose the central concept however, the most likely candidate would seem to be the zone of proximal development or ZPD. It is certainly the phrase most associated with Vygotsky. From one point of view this is understandable. The Genetic Method which 'differs from current research on language learning strategies by documenting strategic development in situ' (Donato and McCormick 1994: 454), focuses on the zone of development when providing tests to ascertain development and provide necessary assistance. Mediation is the underlying action in the zone.

Discovering the potential developmental level of the novice and providing appropriate help accordingly is at its core a *dialogic* activity that unfolds between more capable and less capable

individuals. Dialogue is an essential component of Vygotskian theory and hence of the ZPD. (Aljaafreeh and Lantolf 1994: 468, italics in original)

And Internalization is the anticipated outcome of the mediation. The child develops meta-cognitive awareness and is able to free herself from her previous limited grounded-in actuality ideas. ‘*An interpersonal process is transformed onto an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice; first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)*’. (Vygotsky 1978: 57, italics in original)

The zone of personal development then is at the very heart of Vygotskian theory but although it plays such a central role, its recognition as such was not immediate, especially outside of Russia.

As Bruner points out [...] the zone of proximal development was mentioned in the 1962 English translation of *Thinking and Speech* (1934). This provided the foundation for the notion of “scaffolding” that he and his colleagues subsequently developed.[...] however it was not until Cole, John- Steiner, Scribner and Souberman edited and published Vygotsky’s *Mind in Society* that the implications about the zone of proximal development became apparent. (Wertsch 1985: 11)

The zone of proximal development received its first mention only 15 months before his death in a lecture at the Epstein Experimental Defectological Institute. It is interesting that he stated clearly that the original idea of establishing a zone of proximal development was not his but stemmed from the work of American authors and Meumann and others (van de Veer and Valsiner 1991: 331). As already noted above it was mentioned but not developed at any length in *Thought and Language*. It is in *Mind and Society* that we find its most elaborate explanation and practical application.

Vygotsky begins with a series of given facts; the childrens’ ability to learn begins long before they attend school; learning and development are linked from the first stages; learning should be matched in some manner with development. He then suggests that development be measured on two levels.

Over a decade even the profoundest thinkers never questioned the assumption; they never entertained the notion that what children can do with the assistance of others might be in some sense more indicative of their mental development than what they can do alone. (Vygotsky 1986: 85)

From this he argues that, with assistance some children can solve problems at a higher level than others and that their future development could be expected to reflect this. He then gives the much quoted definition of ZPD.

It is the difference between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky 1978: 86, italics in original)

The zone of proximal development ‘defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state’(Vygotsky 1978: 86). He terms them the ‘buds’ or ‘flowers’ rather than the ‘fruits’ of development. Using examples from research by Mc Carthy (1930) he argues that, ‘what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow’ (Vygotsky 1978: 87). He foresees ZPD as playing a major role in the effectiveness of applying ‘diagnostics of mental development to educational problems’ (Vygotsky 1978: 87). This is one of the major applications of the ZPD. The other has to do with its efficacy in improving our attitudes and knowledge of instruction. Brown and Roberta (1985: 301) acknowledge the potential of ZPD as ‘particularly promising for the early identification of mild learning problems’ while also acknowledging that ‘by concentrating on the level a student can reach with aid, the student is led to levels of success previously not envisaged by either the student or the teacher’.

On the question of imitation Vygotsky uses the experiments of Koehler to distinguish between primate imitation and human. Children can imitate well beyond the limits of their own capabilities. ‘Using imitation, children are capable of doing much more in collective activity or under the guidance of adults’ (Vygotsky 1978: 88). It is tantalizing that he does not further develop here the collective activity aspect. He concentrates on the instructional and propounds ‘a new formula, namely that the only “good learning” is that which is in advance of development’ (Vygotsky 1978: 89). This must have been a radical departure at the time. Using language as an example Vygotsky shows how at first it is a means of communication. Then it is internalized and helps to organize thought, becoming an ‘internal mental function’ (Vygotsky 1978: 89). From this Vygotsky proposes a ‘general developmental law for the higher mental functions’ (Vygotsky 1978: 90) so that through interaction with the people in her environment the

child is able to learn and eventually internalize the knowledge gained from this interaction.

He concludes by summarizing that development and learning processes do not coincide; that development lags behind the learning process. This totally alters the traditional view that once the initial meaning of a word or process is assimilated the 'developmental processes are basically completed' (Vygotsky 1978: 90). Initial mastery, as Vygotsky proposed above when dealing with the idea of concept, is only the beginning of subsequent development.

Vygotsky had not the time to further develop his theory or to give practical examples of the work of ZPD in action. 'He did relatively little in the way of specifying how his approach would apply to concrete settings' (Wertsch 1990: 113). This absence of practical application has, as Offord (2005) comments, given rise to a multiplicity of interpretations and applications.

Probably because he died so soon afterward, later work does not elaborate in much detail as to how Vygotsky saw the ZPD working, suggesting he had not yet fully developed his thinking on it (Meira, & Lerman 2001). Consequently, the theory of ZPD has been variously interpreted and re-interpreted throughout the years since 1934 causing Newman and Holzman (1993) to suggest that this may be why so many have incorporated this notion into the paradigms within which they work (cognitive science, interactionist perspectives etc.). (Offord 2005) <http://vygotsky.afraid.org/>.

The variety of this applicability is strikingly clear in the examples given by Michael Cole (1985) which although removed from classroom instruction, show clear representation of ZPD in action. Cole suggests treating 'the idea of a zone of proximal development in terms of its general conception as the structure of joint activity in any context where there are participants who exercise differential responsibility by virtue of differential expertise' (Cole 1985: 156). He goes on to give examples from Alfred Kuhla's study of the 'use of proverbs in the formal and informal rhetorical discussions of the Kpelle elders of Liberia' (Cole 1985:156). He was interested in how the young Kpelle children learn the meaning of the proverbs. They are not taught, they are 'arranged for'. Certain games involving riddles and suited to the age of the children are introduced. The riddles have two parts, question and answer. The children learn these and challenge one another as teams. These riddles are key parts in the structure of adult proverb use. In the beginning the children are unable to combine riddle relationships but

as their understanding develops they learn to use them as a rhetorical resource. The parallel between this and Vygotsky's comments on the development of concepts is striking. Cole also cites a study of Childs and Greenfield (1982) of descriptions of learning among Zinacantan weavers of south central Mexico in which there are clearly defined stages, each accompanied by adult guidance and a gradual diminishing of the guiding role of the adult as the learner acquires proficiency. Yet another study, by Lave (1978) of tailoring in Liberia shows the steps and guidance needed to achieve proficiency. All are cited as examples of the zone of proximal development in action in instruction in real life situations (cf. Cole 1985: 156-157).

3.2.17 The Role of Mediation

Mediation is central to Vygotskian theory. Wertsch argues that although one finds strong similarities to other authors in the fields of 'genetic analysis and the social origins of individual mental functioning', Vygotsky's way of extending other's ideas and particularly his integration of notions about mediation with the above themes meant that 'they were transformed into something different from what they were in other author's hands' (Wertsch 1990: 113). Lantolf (2001: 1) claims 'The most fundamental concept of sociocultural theory is that the human mind is *mediated*' (his italics). The concept of mediation is wide, ranging, from the surrounding historical, cultural and environmental influences to the more concentrated use of semiotic resources, principally language as collaborative discourse but incorporating gesture, media, print materials etc. It can be viewed in the context of classroom discourse or as above in Michael Cole's examples of practical activities. It can be the gradual almost imperceptible assimilation and appropriation of sociocultural influences, patterns and behavior in which the child develops her spontaneous concepts, or the more directed conscious mediation of instruction through which the scientific concepts principally arise. Mediation is embedded in the theory and practice of the zone of proximal development and its sensitive deployment is what brings this development to fruition. 'Mediators, in the form of objects, symbols, and persons, transform natural, spontaneous impulses into higher mental processes, including strategic orientations to problem solving [...] Mediation is thus, the instrument of cognitive change' (Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 454).

Vygotsky differentiates strongly from Piaget in how the child's thinking is mediated. Piaget, according to Vygotsky, posits an individual adversarial stance between the child and the influences that affect her. He 'does not put the specificity of a child's thinking in such a relation to logical thinking as to show how the latter is evolving in the child's psyche. On the contrary Piaget tries to show how logic penetrates the child's thinking, deforms and finally dislodges it' (Vygotsky 1986: 53). The use of 'deforms' here designates change of form and has not a derogatory implication. Piaget, in fact, denies this adversarial aspect in his comments in the supplement to the 1962 edition of *Thought and Language*. 'Vygotsky in fact misunderstands me when he thinks that from my point of view the child's spontaneous thought must be known, to be fought successfully. In all of my pedagogical writings[...] I have, on the contrary insisted that formal education could gain a great deal [...] from a systematic utilization of the child's spontaneous development' (Vygotsky 1986: 270).

The difference of opinion stems from the different approaches to the child's structuring of its knowledge, the one stressing a mainly cognitive approach and based on the child's activity and reaction to outside influences; the other a mainly social approach based on interaction and mediation between the child and the surrounding social and peer influences.

Windschitl (2002) clarifies these differences between both approaches. In Piaget's version, that of cognitive constructivism

learners actively restructure knowledge in highly individual ways, basing fluid intellectual configurations on existing knowledge, formal instructional experiences, and a host of other influences that mediate understanding. Cognitive constructivism posits that meaningful learning is rooted in and indexed by personal experience. (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989, cited in Windschitl 2002:140)

On the other hand, social constructivism, developing from Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, stresses rather the importance of mediation and sees knowledge as a product of social interaction.

Knowledge is shaped by micro- and macro-cultural influences and evolves through increasing participation within different communities of practice (Cole, 1990; Scribner, 1985). Whereas cognitive constructivism focuses on the internal structure of concepts, social constructivism focuses on the context of their acquisition (Panofsky, John-Steiner, & Blackwell, 1990). (Windschitl 2002:141)

Moll (1990: 12) is cited, on Vygotsky's view of thinking 'as a characteristic not only of the child but of the "child -in-social-activities"', (Windschitl 2002: 141) and this idea of interaction with others is related to the child's learning situation, in particular that of organized instruction or schooling. It is here that mediation occurs between the child and more knowledgeable others and it is through this interaction that the child is eventually lead on to mastery and internalization.

From the social -constructivist perspective, a major role of schooling is to create the social contexts (zones of proximal development) for mastery and the conscious awareness of cultural tools (e.g. language and technologies of representation and communication) so that individuals can acquire the capacity for higher-order intellectual activities (Olson 1986, cited in Windschitl 2002:141)

3.2.18 Dialogue

As language is the principal semiotic tool it is not surprising that dialogue is given a pre-eminent role in mediation. Lantolf (1994: 419) states 'Thus at the outset of ontogenesis, conscious mental activity is distributed and jointly constructed in the dialogic interactions that arise between children and representatives of the culture'. He also writes of the 'core principle of linguistically mediated cognition' (Lantolf 1994: 419). This dialogue occurs between two active participants, the learner and the more knowledgeable other, and is not so much concerned with a simple passing over of information as in the conduit metaphor model. 'Within the [sociocultural] theory, imitation does not carry any of the behaviourist baggage the concept has in some circles in modern psychology' (Lantolf and Thorne 2006:167). The learner is enabled to consciously appropriate the information so that it can be used by the learner herself to solve problems and discover further concepts. 'It is not the carrying out of a specific task that is the important feature of *interpersonal* activity, but the higher cognitive process that emerges as a result of the interaction' (Lantolf and Appel 1994:10, italics in the original). Donato and Mc Cormick (1994: 455) would also appear to be in agreement that it is not alone the solution of the problem but even more so, the resulting development of cognition that results. 'Within sociocultural theory and particularly within Vygotskian theory, the concept of mediation plays a critical role in the construct of activity and generation of higher mental processes.' The purpose of mediation is 'not simply to have the child complete the task, but to instruct the child in how to solve the task strategically' (Lantolf and Appel 1994: 13).

In order that mediation be effective, Vygotsky posits that, ‘a person can imitate only that which is within her developmental level’ (Vygotsky 1978: 88). Once one goes well beyond this, no amount of mediation can succeed in raising the child’s consciousness to the new level. Neither is it of any benefit, he argues, to confine instruction ‘toward developmental levels that have already been reached’ (Vygotsky 1978: 89). Any practitioner in any field of learning would agree that to remain on the same level of development for too long a time period is boredom- inducing and an invitation to distraction. Vygotsky then proposes that the ‘only “good learning” is that which is in advance of development’ (Vygotsky 1978: 89), a concept already posited in *Thought and Language* as ‘The only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it’ (Vygotsky 1986: 188). The negotiation of just how far in advance of development, the interaction between learner and instructor can go, can only be ascertained in the process of mediation itself. It is in collaborative dialogue that assessment can be made and further assistance offered.

The process [of discovering ZPD] is thus one of continuous *assessment* of the novice’s needs and abilities and the *tailoring* of help to those conditions. This process can be accomplished only through the collaborative interaction of the expert and the novice [...] Discovering the potential developmental level of the novice and providing appropriate help accordingly is at its core a *dialogic* activity that unfolds between more capable and less capable individuals. Dialogue is an essential component of Vygotskian theory and hence of the ZPD (40, 41). Without dialogic negotiations, it is virtually impossible to discover the novice’s ZPD (42). (Aljafreeh and Lantolf 1994: 468, italics in original)

Aljafreeh and Lantolf (1994: 468) are wary of an imbalance or unnecessary input from the expert and suggest that ‘intervention should be *graduated*’. This would entail discovering the ‘minimal level of guidance required by the novice to successfully perform a given task’. They also suggest that help should be ‘contingent’, that it should be offered only when needed and withdrawn as soon as the novice ‘shows signs of self-control and ability to function independently’ (Aljafreeh and Lantolf 1994: 468). They cite van Lier (1988: 211), ‘that too much guidance, or in his words “other repair,” might inhibit or at least retard, the development of self-repair, which he views as an “important learning activity”’ (Aljafreeh and Lantolf 1994: 480).

While much of the preceding discussion on mediation has centered on expert/novice, learner/ instructor dyad, Vygotsky’s idea of mediation also embraces the concept of

peer and group interaction. His first definition of ZPD mentions the level the child reaches ‘in solving problems with assistance’ but in the more developed statement in *Mind and Society* we encounter ‘through problem solving under adult guidance or *in collaboration with more capable peers*’ (Vygotsky 1978: 86, italics not in original). This broadens the application of ZPD and reflects his conviction that ‘*human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them*’ (Vygotsky 1978: 89, italics in original). Having posited that by using imitation ‘children are capable of doing much more in collective activity or under the guidance of adults’ (Vygotsky 1978: 88), he then proposes that learning creates the zone of proximal development, that it ‘awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers’ (Vygotsky 1978: 90).

3.2.19 Group/Peer Collaboration

The idea of peer or group collaboration has been taken up by Donato (1994) in relation to second language learning. ‘The psycholinguistic rationale (Long and Porter: 1985) for classroom group work is derived, therefore from the theory that negotiating meanings provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for acquisition and mastery of a second language’ (Donato 1994: 34). In this negotiation of meanings there is implied the inter-peer collaboration mentioned by Vygotsky. Donato goes further and indicates that the notion of interaction between expert and novice may be reclassified as interaction between individuals of different abilities. ‘The dialogically constituted interpsychological event between individuals of unequal abilities is a way for the novice to extend current competence’ (Donato 1994:34). Johnson (2004) comments concerning a later study by Donato (1998) ‘Collective Scaffolding in second language learning’

The findings of his study reveal that, contrary to the accepted view of scaffolded help, in which help is provided by a more capable individual such as an expert, parent, or an adult native speaker, learners at the same level of second or foreign language proficiency appear quite capable of providing guided support to one another (Johnson 2004: 130).

McCafferty commenting on Donato’s use of ‘a Vygotskian perspective’ in his examination of L2 learners involved in group interaction, states ‘He contends that unlike in two- way interaction, in which one participant usually emerges as the “expert”, in group problem-solving activities there can be a truly collective effort to set goals and

come to an understanding of the nature of a problem.’ (McCafferty 1994 : 429-430). Two Russian researchers, Lomov (1978) and Kol,tsova (1978), and two Japanese investigators, Inagaki and Hatano (Inagaki,1981;

Inagaki and Hatano, 1968, 1977) have according to Forman and Cazden (1985: 330) reached similar conclusions-‘that peer interaction helps individuals acknowledge and integrate a variety of perspectives on a problem and that this process of co-ordination, in turn, produces superior intellectual results’ (Forman and Cazden 1985: 330).

This expansion of ZPD to embrace not only expert/novice interaction but also inter-peer collaboration has many practical implications in the classroom, providing a sound theoretical underpinning of the use of dyad and group formations in achieving cognitive development.

In this view, the ‘dynamic edge’ of development consists of interactive processes that take place between the child and others. This is an important contrast to many other developmental theories that have considered the child as a self-enclosed unit of analysis and have not made interactive processes an *inherent* part of the developmental process. (Hickman 1985: 237, italics in original)

3.2.20 Scaffolding

Concurrent with the concept of mediation is that of ‘scaffolding’ in the interaction between expert and novice.

The ‘scaffolding interpretation’ involves an interesting reciprocal formulation of the ZPD, where ostensibly the focus is on the learner, but in actual fact, and certainly as an entailment of the scaffolding metaphor, control and power resides primarily in the teacher or expert until such a time as the learner is capable of accepting responsibility for the task or competency at hand (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 274).

The term ‘scaffolding’ was first introduced by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976: 90) and defined as ‘the adult “controlling” those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner’s capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence.’ (Ferreira 2008:11). Although the concept was first introduced in a study of parental help it is clear that there are clear implications for formal instruction. The central idea of mediation based on interaction between expert and novice parallels much of Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development and scaffolding appeared to develop the interactionist aspect of ZPD. Citing Newman and Holzman (1993: 70) on this, Ferreira (2008: 11) states that

scaffolding 'became a tool to move the learner in the zone'. Scaffolding would then appear to offer a practical and useful means of implementing ZPD theory, all the more welcome for practitioners as Vygotsky does not elaborate on the practical application of ZPD theory in any great detail.

The features that characterize good scaffolding according to Wood et al., (1976) and cited by Ferreira (2008: 11) are the following; recruitment, reduction, direction maintenance, marking critical features, frustration control and demonstration. They would see recruitment as engaging the interest of the novice. Reduction or reduction in the degrees of freedom refers to the simplification of the task and presumably the avoidance of syncretism. Direction involves the keeping of the less capable person's focus on the task. Frustration control is simply the keeping of frustration at bay during the task and demonstration is the modeling of an explanation or performance in order to instruct the novice (Ferreira 2008: 11). These steps or stages have been adopted by many commentators. Ferreira (2008: 12) mentions Bruner (1978) who 'also conceives scaffolding as an interaction between an expert (usually an adult) and a novice (often a child) with the expert being aware of his/her responsibilities to scaffold the novice', and Stone (1993), who stresses 'the semiotic mechanisms', the other aspects of communication such as gesture, eye gazes pauses etc. and the 'interpersonal dimensions', the sharing of perspectives, mutual acceptance and the meaningfulness of the task to the participants.

Bruner (1985: 24) is cited in Edwards and Mercer (1987: 23) on seeing the 'tutor or the aiding peer, as serving the learner as 'a vicarious form of consciousness until such a time as the learner is able to master his own action through his own consciousness and control'. Donato (1994) was the first 'to reconceptualise the term' as he recognized that mediation and interaction can occur successfully between peers as has already been mentioned above (Johnson 2004: 130). Since then as Ferreira acknowledges, 'several studies in the Literature (ANTON,1999;DICAMILLA and ANTON,1997; GUERRERO and VILLAMIL, 2000; OHTA, 1995,2000,2001; VILLAMIL and GUERRERO, 1996) have remarked the beneficial aspects of mutual scaffolding to learning' (Ferreira2008: 9, capitals in original). These have been concerned mainly with students at university level. Ferreira (2008: 9) cites Donato (2004) as noting the lack of younger participants as one of the gaps in studies on interaction. The present study intends using primary students from age eight to age twelve as its focus.

While the preceding stages of scaffolding have been set out in step form it is important to stress that in practice, they are not separate and individual and can be interchanged, combined or even omitted if necessary.³³ Scaffolding if inexpertly used, is in danger of becoming a controlling device and this tends toward a reversion to direct instruction. ‘Analysing a number of limitations of the scaffolding metaphor, Stone referred to a study of Searle [...] who expressed the concern that too literal an adherence to a scaffolding metaphor, especially in the hands of insensitive teachers, could result in "the imposition of a structure on the student" (Stone 1998, p.349)’ cited in Verenikina (2003: 3). The structural aspect should not mitigate against or ignore the fact that mediation in the ZPD is an ongoing dialogic process and not a controlling one. There should not be a set procedure to be followed but rather a response to the needs revealed in the dialogic process that are necessary to complete successfully the task in hand.

3.2.21 Gal’perin and Object Orientated Activity Theory

Piotr Gal’perin, the last surviving contemporary of Vygotsky and member of the Kharkov school of Psychology, a colleague of Leontiev and Luria and along with them, a major contributor to Cultural History Activity Theory (CHAT), developed his own concept of object- orientated activity. His approach has not according to Gindis (1998) ‘received as much attention as Leontiev’s and Vygotsky’s theories because it has been largely associated with “concrete educational procedures”’ (Rambusch 2006: 1999). However Arievisch and Stetsenko (2000) describe Gal’perin’s theory ‘as an advanced account of cognitive development in relation to learning as it placed the origin of thinking in the concrete observable activities of the child’ (cited in Rambusch 2006: 1999). Vygotsky conceived of mediation as dialogic interaction between adult and child or child and peer with language as the basic semiotic tool. Gal’perin focuses on the child’s activity and the use of psychological tools in order to bring about internalization. ‘Gal’perin strongly believed that practical human activity constitutes the basis for the development of semiotic means and described learning in terms of an *internalization of action to thought.*’ (Rambusch 2006: 2000, italics in original). Haenen (2001: 158) makes the same point concerning Gal’perin as a follower of Vygotsky but attributing an additional crucial role to human activity. ‘The development of semiotic means has its

³³ e.g. If the novice is making good progress, the expert should know when direction maintenance is no longer necessary.

basis in the specific content of practical, human activity. Gal'perin linked the Kharkovian approach to activity with the Vygotskian terms “mediation” and “internalization” (Haenen 2001: 158).

Gal'perin uses two classifications of an action in his consideration of activity theory. These are cited by Haenen (2001: 160) as ‘the level of abstraction and the quality of an action.’ The action may be performed on four basic levels, the material, where models, pictures etc. are used; the perceptual, where the concepts of the material objects are used; the verbal, where the action is discussed and finally the mental, where the action has been internalized and there is no longer need for external objects or audible speech. The quality of an action is according to Gal'perin ‘determined by three indicators: generalization, abbreviation and mastery’ (Haenen 2001: 160). Generalization involves the isolation of the necessary properties to perform the action and the distinguishing from non-essential components. It would appear comparable with aspects of reduction in scaffolding. Abbreviation involves what Haenen terms a joining together or telescoping of some of the operations as the learner becomes more adept. And finally mastery is achieved, where the learner is self-sufficient. These classifications are not to be taken as independent. They inform each other and help to analyze the structure and goals of the action as well as giving us ‘the necessary information about how to outline the teaching-learning process and the teachers’ and learners’ involvement in it’ (Haenen 2001: 160).

In an approach not totally dissimilar from scaffolding, Gal'perin posits six steps from the original orientation of the learner to the final step of internalization of the task or material in hand. The sequence of these steps can be altered and steps can be omitted depending on a number of factors, previous knowledge, experience, the learning task itself. In fact Gal'perin eventually abandoned the six step idea ‘the term *stage-by-stage formation* is by now somewhat conventional[...] but now it no longer reflects the whole content of the method’ (Gal'perin 1992: 61) and particularly emphasized ‘four distinctive phases (steps) of the teaching-learning process: (1) Orientation, (2) communicated thinking, (3) dialogical thinking, and (4) acting mentally’ (Rambusch 2006: 2000). In the orientation stage which combines the original first and second step, the learner is presented with the task and receives a ‘scheme of a complete orienting basis of the action’ or SCOBA, also referred to as an orienting chart or ‘cheat chart’ (Rambusch 2006: 2000). This corresponds to Vygotsky’s claim that in scientific

thinking ‘the primary role is played by *initial verbal definition* applied systematically and coming down gradually to concrete phenomena’ (Vygotsky 1986: 148, italics in original). ‘According to Gal’perin (1989c), a SCOPA includes the intended output, means and objects of the action’ (Haenen 2001: 162). It gives detailed information on how to perform the task and is presented as a model or prescriptions written on a card.

This corresponds to Vygotsk’s ‘psychological tool’ and should ideally be internalized by the learner, forming the ‘orienting basis of the action’ (Gindis 1998). Gal’perin himself speaks of an ‘orienting part’, the card, and ‘the executing part’, which ‘realises the content of the orienting card in the process of performing the action’ (Gal’perin 1992: 62). The student then uses the SCOPA to perform the task. The next two stages are based on verbalization. The students are encouraged ‘to communicate about the action and to think aloud as they perform it without any direct dependence on the tangible objects or their materialized representations’ (Haenen 2001: 163). By so doing the student is encouraged to ‘establish a dialogue with him/herself ’ (Rambusch 2006: 2000) concerning the action. This self-clarification or reflectivity can be fostered by the use of diaries or log books. If this proved too difficult for junior students it might be feasible to incorporate illustration or gesture to convey meaning. The final stage is when the task can be performed mentally, without the aid of material objects. ‘As more and more of these tasks are accomplished, these parts become increasingly united; and by the time the entire schema of the orienting part shifts to the mental level they are so fused into a single process that they are almost indistinguishable by the “naked eye”’ (Gal’perin 1992: 62). Very often at this stage the by now self-regulated student can abbreviate and telescope or even omit many of the procedures. ‘The action has been transformed into a mental phenomenon and has become a chain of images and concepts. The learner “just knows that’s how it is” (Gal’perin 1957:221, cited in Haenen 2001: 164).

3.2.22 Verbalization or Language into Thought

In the socioculturally-based theories encountered so far, the importance of language as a semiotic tool has been a constant.

By placing centre-stage the everyday interactions between people and seeing these as actively producing the forms of knowledge we take for granted and their associated social phenomena, it

follows too that language has to be more than simply a way of expressing ourselves. When people talk to each other the world gets constructed. (Burr 1995: 7)

Burr goes on to suggest that our experience of the world, and especially ‘of our own internal states is undifferentiated and intangible without the framework of language to give it structure and meaning’ (Burr 1995: 34-35).

Our postmodern poststructuralist world recognizes language as eternally fluid, changeable, open to interpretation and dependent on an immense number of possible variables. We have moved away from regarding language as a Saussurian system of acknowledged and fixed meanings and regard it as situated in social interaction and hugely influenced by cultural and historical factors. ‘I live in a world of other’s words. And my entire life is an orientation in this world, a reaction to others’ words (an infinitely diverse reaction)’ (Bakhtin 1986: 143).

Language, whether as in the transformation from ego-centric to inner speech, or as the principal semiotic means in ZPD, as an essential element in scaffolding or underlying the transition from materialization to internalization in Gal’perin’s activity theory, is seen as critical for the development of thought. ‘Vygotsky’s fundamental theoretical insight is that language, in addition to fulfilling its communicative function, serves as a means of organizing mental activities’ (Johnson 2004: 111). This organization of mental activity can take place within the person herself where the use of self directed ego-centric or private speech can be used to posit, clarify and answer problems. Ego-centric speech is in effect thought being activated. The child uses words not only to express thought but also to formulate it. It is in this mulling over internally that the thought is realized. One can apply both meanings of realization here. The thought process is both completed and recognized. Acknowledging that at the early stage ‘speech *accompanies* the child’s actions and reflects the vicissitudes of problem solving in a disruptive and chaotic form’, (later, preceding action and presumably removing much of the disruption and chaos,) Vygotsky makes a strong claim that ‘just as a mould gives shape to a substance, words can shape an activity into a structure’ (Vygotsky 1978: 28).

This ability to, as it were, talk oneself into thought is not a new discovery. Appel and Lantolf (1994: 438) cite O’Connell’s translation from Heinrich von Kleist’s ‘ Die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden’. However a fuller quotation from the original makes the point perhaps more forcibly and with greater humour.

Wenn du etwas wissen willst und es durch Meditation nicht finden kannst, so rate ich dir, mein lieber sinnreicher Freund, mit dem nächsten Bekannten, der dir aufstößt, darüber zu sprechen. Es braucht nicht eben ein scharfdenkender Kopf zu sein, auch meine ich es nicht so, als ob du ihn darum befragen solltest: nein! Viel mehr sollst du es ihm selber allererst erzählen. Ich sehe dich zwar große Augen machen und mir antworten, man habe dir in frühern Jahren den Rat gegeben, von nichts zu sprechen als von Dingen die du bereits verstehst. Damals aber sprachst du warscheinlich mit dem Vorwitz, andere, ich will, daß du aus der verständigen Absicht sprechest, dich zu belehren, und so könnten, für verschiedene Fälle verschieden, beide Klugheitsregeln vielleicht gut nebeneinander bestehen. Der Franzose sagt 'l'appetit vient en mangeant', und dieser Erfahrungssatz bleibt wahr, wenn man ihn parodiert und sagt 'l'idee vient en parlant'. (Kleist 1959: 784)

It is, as O'Connell claims, not 'the process of giving linguistic form to the message nor translating thoughts into sentences[...] it is a process of finding the message by speaking' cited in Appel and Lantolf (1994:441). This secondary aspect of speech, '*intrapersonal and cognitive*' is secondary to the primary function, communicative and interpersonal, 'only because it is ontogenetically later and derivative from the primary function and not because it is less important' (Lantolf and Appel 1994: 14, italics in original).

The awareness of this function of ego-centric speech should lead to a recognition of its manifestation in the young learner and the realization of the role it should be allowed to play. Donato (1994: 48) expresses it as 'speech to oneself, which overtly expresses the requisite actions to successfully complete the task [...] is a means of self guidance in carrying out an activity beyond one's current competence'. Mc Cafferty (1994: 433) cites Ahmed (1988) on a relative and relevant issue here, specifically referring to Language teaching but the point is universally applicable. In the event of ego-centric speech being used by students, Ahmed states:

that L2 instructors should recognize that language learners engage in self-regulatory private speech for which they should not be "corrected". If a student is in the process of responding to a question, for example, he or she should be allowed the time to formulate a response and not be "cut off" because initial utterances seem "odd" or unrelated to the question. (Ahmed: 1988)

It would seem to be essential that if, as Vygotsky claims 'Experience teaches us that thought does not express itself in words, but rather realizes itself in them' (Vygotsky 1986: 251), that time should be afforded and allowance made for ego-centric, self-regulatory speech in the classroom. Bivens and Berk (1990) in their longitudinal study

of elementary school student use of task-relevant private speech, found significant links between the use of private speech and eventual academic achievement. ‘The production of task-related subvocal forms (“mutterings”) by students identified as higher achievers from the beginning of the study was also found to be positively correlated with long-term gains in academic achievement’ cited in Mc Cafferty (1994: 120).

The idea of talking oneself into thought, the developing of cognition by speech, whether internally as ego-centric or inner speech or externally in dialogue between expert and learner can also apply in dyad and group interaction where collaborative dialogue can build a consensus and construct original ideas. Mc Cafferty speaks of ‘a Vygotskian perspective’ in Donato’s study of L2 learners involved in group interaction. Donato claims that in one-to- one interaction there is usually the acknowledgement of one participant as ‘expert’, but that,

in group problem-solving activities there can be a truly collective effort to set goals and come to an understanding of the nature of a problem (p.278). He argues that this is largely accomplished through a collective externalization of metacognitive strategies that takes place in the presence of others involved in the same task. Thus the individual in the group situation is speaking for the self as well as for others in attempting to orchestrate the course of activity (pp.280-281). (Mc Cafferty 1994: 429-430)

Donato and Mc Cormick (1994: 454) writing on mediation and seeing classroom as ‘understood like all cultures-a social arena in which learning is constructed as gradually increasing participation in the values, beliefs and behaviours of a “community of practice”, posit that ‘In the case of language learning, initially unfocused learning actions may become adjusted and modified based on how the learning of the language is mediated’ (Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 456). Among the methods mentioned are classroom discourse patterns and opportunities for second language use. In commenting on the use of portfolios they state that it was an ‘an attempt to create a community of language learning practice in which students had frequent opportunity to externalize in discourse to their instructor and themselves their own learning’(Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 456). This externalization or verbalization, according to the authors, was helpful both to the instructor and to the learners themselves in pinpointing levels of ability and in ‘the development of strategic approaches to language learning over time’(Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 456).

One of the more striking results in his study seeking ‘to answer the question of whether learners can exert a developmental influence on each others interlanguage system in observable ways’ (Donato 1994: 39) was the conclusion that, ‘It also appears that the collective scaffold is built on negative evidence. That is, correct knowledge is subsequently secured from incomplete and incorrect knowledge’ (Donato 1994: 45). Verbalization in the group dynamic is apparently capable of supplementing what is lacking in individual competence.

It is necessary here to advert to the fact that the students referred to above, were all at university level. At primary school the level of self-awareness and the ability to dispassionately review their own work is limited by the children’s lack of advanced conceptual ability and they are, as yet, at a considerable remove from self-regulation but the importance of verbalization in their interaction with peers is still extremely relevant.

Neguerela (2008: 192) considers verbalization activities in his ‘revolutionary approach to L2 conceptual development’, a ‘fundamentally tool-and-result’ approach. The term stems from Newman and Holzman’s (1993) distinction between tool-for-result and tool-as-result.

As we will see, the very tool that students use to help them internalize the concept of modality in a Spanish L2 classroom, *talking to themselves to explain their own use of the concept* is indeed the result of development since as a result of applying the concept, the concept develops. (Neguerela 2008: 193, italics not in original)

Swain (2006) uses the term ‘Languaging’ instead of verbalization but its function is similar. ‘The act of producing spoken or written language is thinking in progress and is key to our understanding of complex concepts’ (Lapkin, Swain and Knoussi 2008: 228). In their study of university students learning the grammatical concept of voice in French, these authors found that, although some participants struggled with the concept and some reverted to the use of rules-of thumb, the pilot data suggest that

self-explaining helped the students engage with the conceptual explanation text. Not only did we note instances of ‘insight’/a-ha moments as the participants ‘talked their way through the text’, but we also recorded clear evidence of learning in the posttests (sic). (Lapkin, Swain and Knoussi 2008: 244)

It is also interesting from a scaffolding point of view that the research assistants were permitted to provide, if necessary, ‘four “pushing” prompts’ at strategic points and if these were not correctly interpreted, the assistants were allowed to provide assistance.

This procedure, the authors claim is ‘in line with Swain’s (e.g.,1995) output hypothesis that stipulates that language learners need to be pushed beyond their current level of expertise’(Lapkin, Swain and Knoussi 2008: 244). This latter point would also be supported in Vygotskian ZPD theory, ‘aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions’ (Vygotsky 1986: 188).

Much that is relevant on verbalization has already been referred to in the earlier section on mediation in group work, including the findings of Donato and McCormick (1994), and those of Lomov (1978) and Koltsova(1978) Inaki and Hatano (Inaki, 1981; Inaki and Hatano 1968,1977) cited in Forman and Cazden (1985: 330). It may be helpful however to give a focus to these by stressing that it is through verbalization that mediation is accomplished and the group dynamic achieves a result that may not be fulfilled by the individual learner. In verbalizing, the learner clarifies, refines and objectifies her concept and by appropriating what is relevant from the verbalization of others in the group, that concept can be enriched and further developed.

This is not to claim that verbalization in itself will always encourage and develop mediation. This would represent a simplistic view far removed from the practicalities of that ‘social arena in which learning is constructed’ (Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 454), i.e. the classroom. The teacher practitioner is aware of the difference in merit and usefulness of contributions and how easily the quality of interaction can deteriorate. In this case, to use a phrase from Windschitl (2002: 146) teachers ‘can play a critical role in mediating learning by seeding students’ conversations with new ideas or alternatives that push their thinking’. He recognizes the value of discourse in collaborative activities in helping students ‘make ideas explicit, share ideas publicly, and co-construct knowledge with others’ (Windschitl 2002: 146). He allows that ‘studies of discourse generally are supportive of the benefits of instructional conversation’ but cautions that the benefits depend ‘on the type of talk produced (Di Bello and Orlich, 1987)’. He cites Palincsar (1998) who contends that ‘talk that is interpretive-generated in the service of analysis or explanations is associated with more significant learning gains than talk that is merely descriptive’ (Windschitl 2002: 146). These slight caveats should not detract from the immense importance of verbalization which plays such a major role in the development of mediation and finally in the achieving of the ultimate cognitive goal of internalization.

3.2.23 Internalization

Mediation in the zone of proximal development involves interaction between the child and the surrounding cultural environment and specifically adult and peer groups, using dialogic language as the principal semiotic sign. In so doing, ‘once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child’s independent developmental achievement’ (Vygotsky 1978: 90). This then remains, the final constituent of Vygotskian and also of Gal’perin’s theory, the anticipated outcome of mediation within the zone of proximal development, the concept of Internalization. It is, as it were, the final block in what Zinchenko (1985:106) has termed ‘the bridge between external and internal activity’ (cited in Aljaafreeh and Lantolf 1994: 467). Wertsch and Stone (1985:164) use an identical metaphor ‘The overall developmental scheme begins with external social activity and ends with internal individual activity. Vygotsky’s account of semiotic mechanisms provide the bridge that connects the external with the internal and the social with the individual’. This preoccupation with the relationship between external and internal activity has according to Wertsch and Stone (1985:163) been very much associated with Russian rather than Western Psychology. They cite as examples, Gal’perin, 1969, 1976; Leontev’ 1972, 1972, 1981; Luria, 1981; Rubinshtein,1957; Vygotsky 1960, 1962, 1978, 1981a., and they impute it to the ‘Marxist-Leninist philosophical foundation with its ‘central concern’ for ‘the relationship between material reality and human consciousness’ (Wertsch and Stone 1985: 163). Vygotsky himself speaks of ‘my belief based upon a dialectical materialist approach to the analysis of human history’ (Vygotsky 1978: 60).

Although it could be argued that internalization is dependent on input, the concept of internalization in sociocultural theory is not to be confused with aspects of Behaviourism.’ A stimulus-response framework for constructing experimental observations *cannot* serve as the basis for the adequate study of the higher, specifically human forms of behavior (Vygotsky 1978: 60). Donato (1994: 38) is at pains to stress that the sociocultural view of co-construction

differs fundamentally from the current view that maintains that social interaction provides opportunities to supply linguistic input to learners who develop solely on the basis of their internal language processing mechanisms. In contrast the Vygotskian position assigns to social interaction a developmental status; that is, development is situated activity. (Donato 1994: 38)

It is not a question of internal replication of input but rather the transformation of external, social, cultural and historical influences into an internal personal concept. There is a requirement of definite cognitive activity on the part of the learner and the variety of social cultural and historic influences ensure the intrinsic individuality of the internalization. ‘internalization transforms the process itself and changes its structure and functions’ (Vygotsky 1981: 163, cited in Johnson 2004: 109).

Vygotsky in his approach to internalization gives a basic, almost dictionary-like definition, ‘we call the internal reconstruction of an external operation *internalization*’ but goes on to clarify in detail the ‘series of transformations’ that occur during it.

- (a) *An operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed and begins to occur internally. An interpersonal process is transformed onto an intrapersonal one.*
- (b) Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice; first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, *between people (interpsychological)*, and then *inside the child (intrapsychological)*.
- (c) *The transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one is the result of a long series of developmental events.* (Vygotsky 1978: 57, italics in original)

The examples that may be given to show internalization in action can be varied. Vygotsky (1978: 56) gives an example from the very early pre-oral stage. The child’s pointing is ‘originally an unsuccessful attempt to grasp something’. It is at this stage just an activity. When however the mother realizes the significance of the action, the activity becomes ‘a gesture for others’. The reaction is not from the object but from another person. From the response the child begins to realize the meaning of pointing and ‘*the grasping movement changes to the act of pointing*’ (italics in original). One can see how the three points above are reflected in the example. The basic activity through the social intervention of others is transformed into the elementary beginnings of the concept.

Wertsch (1998) cited by Lantolf (2000:14) in a very practical observation, discusses internalization in the difference between ‘the expert and novice pool player’. The novice in order to determine the results of a shot must try it out using the materials to hand, cue stick, balls and table. The expert on the other hand can ‘visualise’ the shot mentally and can predict the outcome even before taking up the cue. Although the point is not

mentioned here, this internalization has come about from the practical experience of thousands of actual shots, observations and reflection, the ‘long series of developmental effects’ as mentioned above.

A third example stems from the writer’s own practical teaching experience. The child when first confronted with the German word for a weekday, ‘Mittwoch’ for example, sees it as the translation of the English word ‘Wednesday’. She may use the English word as a stimulus or ‘pivot’ to conjure up the German. She may count up the days on a pre-learned list. ‘Montag, Dienstag...’ But eventually there comes a time when the concept of Wednesday and the German words coincide and there is no longer need for these psychological tools to jog the memory. Internalization is achieved if not completed. The caveat is that the concept is always capable of being further developed and so never really arrives at complete finite realization.

The benefit of internalization is that the learner is freed from material object-regulated thinking, that ‘dependence on concrete linguistic forms’ mentioned by Vygotsky (1986: 160). ‘The whole point of internalization is that through the idealization of social-material activity, the person progressively gains independence from specific concrete circumstances’ (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 159). The learner develops the ability to think in abstract terms which opens the avenue for the further accumulation of concepts. The learner goes from the stage of object-regulation, through other-regulation to the ultimate desired state of self-regulation.

As the child begins to exercise increasing degrees of control over both the internal and external planes of existence, he or she becomes *self-regulated*, in other words less dependent on others for mediation, eventually becoming able to function in a largely autonomous manner, to meet the everyday demands of living in a particular culture and society. (McCafferty 1994: 421, italics in original)

The fact that concepts are continually deepening and developing as the learner encounters further stimuli from her social, cultural, instructional environment, underlines the fact that concept formation is a process. One speaks of the ‘a-ha’ moment when realization dawns but there is no limit to the expansion of the concept after the initial ‘a-ha’, as long as the learner continues to receive input which can be internalized and transformed. The idea of this recognizing moment also contains, however, the notion that there is a long period of preparation before the onset of realization. The points made above concerning development, a ‘complex dialectical process

characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors' (Vygotsky 1978: 73) can equally be applied to internalization in describing the ever-shifting, process-like formation of its realization. This is not surprising as the development of concept and the effecting of internalization are inextricably interdependent. Lantolf and Thorne (2006: 153) cite Frawley (1997) on Vygotsky's original Russian word *vrashchivanie* which is rendered as 'interiorization' in English as meaning something like 'ingrowing' and implying the emergence of 'active, nurturing transformation of externals into personally meaningful experience' (Frawley 1997: 95). Just as a concept is never absolutely definable or definitive so the process of internalization is never a finite and completed activity. It is, of its nature, always in flux, open to new approaches, new stimuli and further development.

3.3.1 The Constructivist Classroom

Although according to Confrey (1990: 107) 'There has recently appeared an increasing amount of evidence that direct instruction may not provide an adequate base for students' development and for student use of higher cognitive skills', there does not appear to be a corresponding increase in the application of constructive principles in mainstream education. Indeed Johnson (2004: 129) describes one of sociocultural constructivism's most respected theorists, James P Lantolf, as 'a voice calling in the wilderness when the mainstream SLA research community was mainly concerned with building information processing models'.

Acknowledging this lack of constructivist approaches in schools Gordon (2009: 41) argues that up to now, most constructivist theories have been descriptive rather than prescriptive, lacking directives or practical advice. He cites Davis and Sumara (2002: 409-428) as maintaining that much of constructivist theory is concerned with opposing contrasting methods rather than developing its own integral identity, 'most constructivist discourses function as critiques of current educational practice' (Gordon 2009: 42). He also cites the "wide range of constructivist discourses, which tend to be fragmented and loosely defined' (Gordon 2009: 42). He notes the divergence between theorists and practitioners, the former viewed by many teachers as purveyors of ideal and abstract philosophies that are very different, to say the least, from the reality of

schools and classrooms; the latter viewed as technicians or managers incapable of producing theory. This appears again in Kumaravadivelu (2003: 9) who writing of some teachers as ‘passive technicians’, refers to a view that ‘is traditional and is still in vogue in many parts of the world [...] Theorists conceive and construct knowledge, teachers understand and implement knowledge’ and also in Witte (2008: 3),

Theory is often perceived by practitioners as providing conflicting explanations, being highly abstract and largely irrelevant for the immediate classroom practice of mediating foreign languages, whereas teaching practice in the classroom is seen by many students and teachers as dreary, repetitive, uninspiring and largely ignorant of theoretical developments. (Witte 2008: 3)

There is the factor that ‘quite a few teachers who rely on constructivist teaching methods are not fully aware of the epistemological and ontological assumptions of constructivism’ (Gordon 2009: 42). There is a particular irony here in Gordon’s comment that ‘many teachers who use constructivist teaching practices have not fully internalized the concepts of this theory’ (Gordon 2009: 42). Not to internalize a theory that posits the prime importance of internalization would not bode well for its consequent working in practice! There is also the issue ‘that constructivist teaching is much more complex and unpredictable than traditional teacher-directed instruction’ (Gordon 2009: 42). And finally the school culture may mitigate against its introduction.

Having enumerated the existence of ‘quite a few different types of constructivism’ with common elements but also significant differences ‘individual, social, psychological, cognitive, radical, critical and trivial, among others’ (Gordon 2009: 40), he then lays claim for ‘a pragmatic constructivist discourse’ (Gordon 2009: 40) thus adding another title to his list. One could argue that he has here a somewhat tautological description as constructivism is based on the construction of knowledge on an activity centered premise. The implication is also there that constructivist theory does not in itself contain sufficient pragmatic content but must be supplemented in this new title.

It is true, as has been mentioned earlier above, that Vygotsky’s theorizing did not extend to the practicalities of executing that theory, which led to Leontiev and Gal’perin’s explorations of activity in sociocultural theory. But it is surely of the essence of theory that a hypothesis be made that can be applicable to many variables. The pragmatics of the theory are worked out, tested and evaluated in the classroom experience. The theorist cannot be expected to enunciate every pedagogical aspect and

method of approach needed to actualize the theory. The practicing teacher, albeit reflective and open to innovation, cannot be expected to also take on the role of theorist. She has not the luxury of sustained intense academic consideration. Instead of the adversarial stance alluded to above, between Theorists and Practitioners, a more holistic approach wherein both benefit might be far more beneficial. In the situated ‘community of practice’, (Donato and Mc Cormick 1994:454) theory can inform and be informed by practice. ‘It is therefore important to change the dynamics between researchers and practitioners by empowering teachers and students to get actively involved in research with a view of changing their-and others’ classroom practice’ (Witte: 2008: 3). In the case of sociocultural theory as outlined so far above in chapter three of this study, the way is open for teachers, or rather teachers and learners together to develop their own pragmatic epistemology. The later chapters of the study will attempt to show how this practical application can be achieved.

3.3.2 Then and Now

Dewey, at the very beginning of the twentieth century fully realized the importance of societal influence on development. ‘At present the tendency is to conceive individual mind as a function of social life - as not capable of operating or developing by itself, but as requiring continual stimulus from social agencies and finding its nutrition in social supplies’ (Dewey 1971: 98-99). He gives an amusing practical example of his difficulty in locating suitable furniture for his ideal classroom which pinpoints the difference between the constructivist and traditional approach.

We had a great deal of difficulty in finding what we needed, and finally one dealer, more intelligent than the rest made this remark: ‘I am afraid we have not what you want. You want something at which the children may work; these are all for listening’. (Dewey 1971: 31)

Commenting that ‘That tells the story of the traditional education.’ Dewey continues and describes in detail the ‘traditional’ classroom ‘rows of ugly desks placed in geometrical order [...] as little moving room as possible, [...] just enough space to hold books, pencils and paper...’ and concludes that it is easy to construct the only possible educational activity that can occur in such a situation. ‘It is all made ‘for listening’ – because simply studying lessons out of a book is only another kind of listening; it marks the dependency of one mind upon another’ (Dewey 1971: 31-32).

With hindsight it is tempting to sympathise with his views on conditions over a hundred years ago but in more recent times, the findings of Gordon (2009: 42) and Oakes et al (2000) cited in Windschitl (2002) indicates that the constructivist paradigm has yet to be universally or indeed even widely accepted.

More recently, in a study of middle schools undergoing reforms, Oakes et al. (2000) found that most teachers, administrators, and parents expected an educative classroom to be quiet and orderly, with students seated and not talking to each other. Engagement meant that students were attentive but without speaking, gesturing, building things, or moving about. Heterogeneous grouping was heavily resisted. From these studies and from common experience, it is not difficult to infer that the dominant culture in schools is one of coping and compliance, where teachers control the intellectual activity to ensure uniform "exposure" to the curriculum and to maintain discipline. In response, students over time grow into the role of passive observers rather than active participants in their own education. (Windschitl 2000: 150-151)

3.3.3 Paolo Freire

Written for a different culture and under radically different social circumstances, nevertheless many of Freire's prescriptions for educators have a particular resonance in the context of the constructivist classroom; not least his much quoted 'banking' concept of education 'in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits' (Freire 1996: 53). He speaks of education suffering from 'narration sickness' in that the only speaker is the teacher and the duty of the learner is to receive the narrated content. Windschitl (2002: 142) humourously cites the medieval Benedictine Rule as summing up 'the instructional philosophy stemming from objectivism (which has contributed heavily to classroom practices throughout the 20th century), 'It belongeth to the master to speak and to teach; it becometh the disciple to be silent and listen (Benedict 1987: 11)'. Both Windschitl and Freire concur in viewing objectivism 'the default epistemology of Western schooling' (Roth and Roychoudry: 1994 cited in Windschitl (2002: 142), as a way of regarding existence as static, comprehensible, definable, 'an unchanging object' that can be transferred from 'the minds of teachers to the minds of learners'(Windschitl 2002: 142). 'The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable' (Freire 1996: 52).

Perhaps the above paragraphs on Dewey and objectivism underpin the comments of Davis and Sumara (2002: 409-428) referred to above, that most constructivist

discourses function as critiques of current educational practice. But Freire does not only isolate and decry the ‘banking’ concept of Education, he proposes a more positive constructivist based concept, that of ‘problem-posing education’. He claims in opposition to the fixed unchangeable objectivity of the ‘banking’ system that ‘The unfinished character of human beings and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity’, and that ‘Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis’ (Freire 1996: 64). Central to this remaking of education is the concept of dialogue. In dialogue, the old roles of teacher of the students and students of the teacher are transformed in the interaction and each shares aspects of the other, the ‘teacher-student with students-teachers’ (Freire 1996: 74). Freire’s concept of dialogue has almost a mystical intensity (Freire 1996: 68-73) and yet can be as precise and focused and practicably applicable as in his definition ‘Authentic education is not carried on by “A” *for* “B” or by “A” *about* “B” but rather by “A” *with* “B” mediated by the world -a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it’ (Freire 1996: 74). Dialogue is an essential component in the constructivist classroom, whether as an informing agent in the ZPD process, (informing is here used in both senses, as in revealing the present abilities and possible future attainments of the learner and in the sense of guiding and helping to advance the learner’s appropriation of further knowledge) or in the interaction between peers, verbalizing and thus clarifying their thought processes. Dialogue introduces and maintains activity on the part of the learner so that the creation of knowledge is interdependent rather than dependent, a questioning process rather than a passive acceptance.

3.3.4 Possible Dilemmas in Introducing Constructivism

Windschitl (2002:132) posits four possible dilemmas facing the introduction of constructivism into classroom practice; conceptual, pedagogical, cultural and political.

The conceptual dilemma results from the teacher’s grasp of the full implications of the constructivist approach. As has been seen above in Gordon (2009: 42) there are many and varied concepts of constructivism. These according to Windschitl (2003: 136-137) might be broadly designated as deriving from cognitive constructivism or social constructivism, the one ‘a system of explanations of how learners, as individuals, impose intellectual structure on their worlds’ (Piaget, 1971), the other viewing

knowledge 'as having both individual and social components' and maintaining that 'these cannot be viewed as separate in any way' (Cobb,1994; Cobb, Wood and Yacke, 1990; Saxe, 1992). It is necessary for the teacher to be as aware as possible of the pedagogical implications of whatever form of constructivism with which she aligns herself because when difficulties arise she needs to contest any doubts and queries with the necessary theoretical underpinning of her chosen construct. Otherwise she may fall back on 'tried and trusted' methods that were used in her own education. 'The implied precepts for instruction break radically from the traditional educational model in which teachers themselves were schooled, making it especially difficult for them to visualize constructive pedagogy' (Windschitl 2003: 138).

The pedagogical dilemma results from the difficulty of designing courses and learning approaches based on a dialogic, interactive, co-constructive paradigm. This involves a major change for teachers as has been indicated in the previous paragraph but also a completely new dynamic for the learners. They now assume far greater responsibility for their own learning and are expected to be actively involved in the co-construction of learning. 'Sie werden auch als aktive Gestalter des Lernprozesses verstanden, die die Lerninhalte letztlich selbst im Prozess der Informationsverarbeitung strukturieren und rekonstruieren' (Witte, 2008b). This is a major shift in attitude and expectation and one that will not be achieved easily or without setbacks. In the framing of pedagogical approaches there is sometimes the danger that the teacher may pick and chose, using selected aspects of constructivism without fully understanding their implication.

Huberman uses the term "bricolage" and "tinkering" (1993,1995) to describe many teacher's ways of changing their practice[...] and claims that this type of tinkering is quite practical but also quite conservative. It enables a teacher to adopt apparently novel dimensions in instruction while preserving fundamental ideas about subject matter, teaching, and learning. (Windschitl 2003: 138)

Negueruela (2008) uses Freire's terms 'empty verbalism' and 'mindless activism' for the practice of 'word' rather than 'world' changing and 'adopting new practices without much reflection' both of which pose challenges for 'teachers, who are often confronted with the task of adopting new practices without having much time for reflection' (Negueruela 2008: 189). As a result of this time-pressure and lack of resultant maturation, he concludes 'we in the teaching profession often maintain sedimented

practices but adopt more fashionable and sophisticated discourse to explicate them' (Negueruela 2008: 189).

The cultural dilemma again involves the question of role and a revisualization of older views on hierarchy and aspects of leadership, sharing rather than transmission of knowledge, acceptance and valuation of difference, co-construction rather than instruction, openness to innovation rather than conformity, process rather than content. 'The fundamental changes in worldviews required for constructivist teaching are not easily realized; they are akin to conversions or gestalt shifts' (Nespor, 1987, cited in Windschitl 2003: 143).

The political dilemma stems from the onlookers' unfamiliarity with the theory, aims and practice of constructivism. Parents who have been educated under a different system may doubt the benefit of these new classroom practices. Because mainstream teaching is evaluated by standardized testing and the results in state examinations there is a tendency to avoid teaching methods that do not appear to conform to the requirements of these methods of evaluation.³⁴ Less innovative colleagues may decry unfamiliar methods and stress the importance of 'basics' implying a degree of frivolity and lack of substance in the new approaches. The constructivist teacher needs to be convinced of the values of her approach in the face of such understandable, if not fully informed, opposition.

3.3.5 Incomplete Understandings

A considerable challenge in the constructionist classroom once it is accepted that new knowledge must be constructed from existing knowledge, is the fact that,

teachers need to pay attention to the incomplete understandings, the false beliefs, and the naive renditions of concepts that learners bring with them to a given subject. Teachers then need to build on these ideas in ways that help each student achieve a more mature understanding. (National Research Council 2000: 10)

Windschitl (2000: 145) cites Heath (1983) as suggesting that 'when children are involved in active exploration they move toward systematization of their knowledge but according to the parameters of their own conceptions-conceptions that are not well

³⁴ Fortunately, in the Irish context, this examination-orientation, while very much in evidence at secondary, has not, to date, achieved any great degree of relevance at the primary level.

defined even in the mind of the child'. There is acknowledgement that the concept formation of the child is at a very early stage but there needs to be a genuine respect and valuing of these concepts.

It is equally important, however, for the teacher to honor student's efforts at meaning-making, even when it reflects immature understanding. As teachers try to strike a balance between their obligation to the discipline and their obligation to the learner, they must frequently settle for partial understandings on the part of learners. (Windschitl 2000: 149)

And yet as is argued by Confrey (1990: 110), constructivism is not in any sense a relativistic-orientated method where every child's construction has equal validity and where a cavalier 'anything goes' policy functions. Nor is the fact that the learners are active in itself sufficient, activity must be goal directed and developmental. Rather, the teacher, having got 'a sense of students' conceptions, frames of reference, and rules for organizing the world ' (Windschitl 2002: 144), then applies a range of strategies in order to facilitate the childrens' attempts at problem solving. Examples are cited (Choi and Hannafin, 1995) of these facilitating exercises, gradual approximation of practice, modeling, coaching, guiding, advising, providing heuristics or conceptual structures, helping learners select, organize and represent information and ideas. This also negates the notion that the learner is an undirected autonomous agent or that direct instruction has no place in the constructivist classroom. The notion of autonomy, self-regulation, as a goal to be realized and the predominance of deduction over instruction underlie the constructivist aspiration. However it is based upon a situated actual existence and its realization is a slow and gradual, ever- changing and sometimes turbulent process. It is a process where reflection and adaptability play a major part and where admission of lack of success can be seen not as failure but as opportunity to explore alternatives. It is a process where the arrival at the 'right answer' or indeed at any answer may not be as important as the realization of the means whereby one arrived there. The consciousness of one's knowing something may be as important as the knowledge itself, because in the awareness of how one attained the knowledge lie the seeds of further investigation. This insight as Witte (2008b) claims, 'verhilft dem Lernenden dann zur Durchführung der notwendigen Handlungsschritte zur Problemlösung, die später auf andere, ähnlich strukturierte Problemsituationen transferiert werden können'. This awareness of one's ability to know frames a qualitative rather than quantitative approach to learning. It is not a question of finishing the text or even perhaps of fully completing the programme but

rather in the student's awareness of what she is doing and why she is doing it, that real success lies. 'The compulsion to cover material is antithetical to one of the primary aims of constructivist instruction-the deep and elaborate understanding of selected core ideas' (Windschitl 2000: 154).

3.3.6 Classroom as Culture

The culture of the classroom itself is of vital importance. 'Teaching is more than addressing content, it is about bringing all students to a shared understanding of what a lesson "is" and how to participate in it' (Florio, 1978, Jackson, 1968, cited in Windschitl 2000: 150). If the parameters are established clearly enough the learner knows and is able to realize her role as group-member, verbalizer, co-constructor, questioner, debater. The classroom community learns to define itself, its responsibilities its requirements. Newcomers can be inducted into the culture by responding to and imitating the behavior of the group. 'As in any cultural group, the culture of the classroom plays an important part in fostering strategic learning' (Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 462). The very positioning of the classroom furniture can be a clue as to the dialogic nature of this learning space. The validation given to the representation of that dialogue in chart, illustration or summary plays an important role. Respect need not necessarily be voiced, importance can be given to the learners' conclusions in the means by which they are used in discussion, recorded, stored, displayed, thus the constructivist classroom may reflect the respect for and acknowledgement of alternative voices in many ways.

3.3.7 The Alternative Voice

The awareness and acceptance of the alternative voice is one of the major differences between instructive and constructivist approaches. Unlike the Benedictine Master/Disciple dyad mentioned above, there must always be an openness to the other's point of view. 'The most basic skill a constructivist educator must learn is to approach a foreign or unexpected response with a genuine interest in learning its character, its origins, its story and its simplifications' (Confrey 1990: 108). Confrey refers to Piaget's demonstration that a child may see a mathematical or scientific idea in a different way than it is viewed by an adult and that this does not imply 'missing pieces or absent techniques or methods' but that they possess a 'different form of argument' and are based on different experiences. This may mean that sometimes they make sense only

within the framework of the child's conception or again they may be 'genuinely alternative'. In the first case they may be to the child 'wonderfully viable and pleasing' and it will not be sufficient to give a 'correct method' or 'right answer' in order to displace the limited and limiting concept. But as mentioned above (Choi and Hannafin, 1995) a range of strategies must be introduced to 'assist the student in restructuring those views to be more adequate from the students' and from the teacher's perspective' (cf. Confrey 1990: 109). But it is stressed, before assisting the student 'the teacher must form an adequate model of the student's ways of viewing an idea' (Confrey 1990: 109). Real dialogue depends on mutual respect.

3.3.8 Viable Constructions

Although Confrey is specifically writing on a constructivist approach to the teaching of mathematics, her findings are equally applicable to the other sciences, to art and literature.

Thus, as a constructivist, when I teach mathematics I am not teaching students about the mathematical structures which underlie objects in the world; I am teaching them how to develop their cognition, how to see the world through a set of quantitative lenses which I believe provide a powerful way of making sense of the world, how to reflect on those lenses to create more and more powerful lenses and how to appreciate the role these lenses play in the development of their culture. I am trying to teach them to use one tool of the intellect, mathematics. (Confrey 1990: 109-110)

The aim is ever the formation of viable constructions which in themselves are a reflection of the learners experience and can be utilized to form further future constructions. There should be a commensurate element of consciousness of and reflection on what is involved. Confrey suggests three assumptions. Teachers as has been stated above, must build models of the student's understanding of concepts. Secondly instruction must be interactive, prepared to be open to alternative approaches but yet able to signal 'firmly' if 'the students position lacks legitimacy.' Thirdly , 'Ultimately the student must decide on the adequacy of his or her construction' (Confrey 1990: 112). It may be on this final point that the success or failure of a constructivist approach in the classroom rests. It is ultimately when the validity of a construction is established by the learner, as credible, useful and worthwhile that the way is open for appropriation, internalization and the consolidation of further cognitive development. An acceptance of this, a willingness to see everything that is on offer,

needs courage on the teacher's part, standing as it does in stark contrast to that perception and expectation of a school's obligation to measure progress by examination results and conformity to received opinion; but by opening out the classroom to alternative voices, to co-construction of method and approach, to genuine discourse and mutual respect, the perceptions and expectation of a school's obligations may in time, be reconsidered and re-evaluated in the light of the pupils' response to an approach that is quite other than 'all for listening'.

Chapter Four: Towards a Methodology

4.1.1 Introduction: Four Complementary Aspects

The methodology of this study has four important mutually complementary aspects or divisions, some veering towards the philosophical, some towards the pragmatic. It concerns itself first of all with the teaching of poetry. This requires an examination of poetry itself. It needs definition, validation, clarification of expectation. It needs to give reasons as to why poetry should be taught and studied, with particular reference to the intended primary standard students, to what purpose we wish them to be involved and how best to achieve that purpose³⁵. The actual benefits of the teaching and learning of poetry need to be articulated clearly and simply without recourse to general assumptions and received and perhaps hackneyed, perceptions of poetry as simply an accepted and unquestioned part of the Curriculum.

The second aspect is that of the teaching of poetry in a foreign language, in this case German, and the inherent difficulties that are involved as a result of initial lack of understanding, inadequacy of vocabulary, syntax, lack of alternative experience, inability to reference situations or to respond to poetic convention. The emphasis in this study is not on the acquisition of language per se but on the teaching of poetry in a foreign language. It will also examine the feasibility of using the target language and the validity of using L1 in the evaluation and appropriation of the poems. Again the focus will be on the ability level of the students in question and valid expectation of results. The study concerns itself with children in the primary school whose prior experience of poetry and the German language is significantly limited. It is concerned with the needs, interests and abilities of children in the 9-12 age bracket, in whom conceptual thinking

³⁵ 'In my view it will not suffice to rely on sharing moderately successful teaching strategies without formulating the ends they serve or the visions of poetry that define the qualities they foreground'. (Altieri 2001: 259)

is far from being fully developed and whose thinking consequently, needs grounding in actuality and concrete instance.

Although the emphasis, as has been said above, is not on the acquisition of language per se, this aspect is inextricably bound into the processes of translation evaluation and appropriation. Thus the third section of this chapter focuses on the uses of poetry in second language acquisition. Much can be learned from third-level theory and practice and many of the approaches and methods used can be productively adapted at primary level.

The final aspect involves the realization of constructivist principles, and particularly those sociocultural principles of Vygotsky and Gal'perin expounded upon in Chapter Three and the formulation of a practical methodology which incorporates them in the situated classroom experience of the primary school.

All of these aspects inform, underlie, interact upon and support each other so that it is difficult to isolate particular aspects. However in an attempt to construct a workable and valid methodology it is proposed to examine each aspect on an individual basis.

Section One: 'An Apologie for Poetrie'

4.1.2 The Teaching of Poetry: Aristotle and Poetic Probability

The validity of poetry as a subject has been in question ever since Plato banned it from his ideal Republic. 'My dear Adeimantus, you and I are not writing stories but founding a state' (Plato 1972: 116). And because Plato envisages poetry as undermining the calibre of the citizens he gives as examples, a long list of unsuitable themes and subjects which should find no place in the education of the young. 'If our young men take passages like these seriously and don't laugh at their absurdity [...] they will feel no shame and show no endurance but break into complaints and laments at the slightest provocation' (Plato 1972: 125). Poets produce representations 'at the third remove from reality' (Plato 1972: 374) and so, according to Plato, are questionable purveyors of truth. In fact one of the issues he poses is of what practical use is poetry in creating an ideal state 'tell us any state whose constitution you have reformed' (Plato 1972:376).

Many centuries later Heaney partially allows this, ‘In one sense the efficacy of poetry is nil--no lyric has ever stopped a tank’ (Heaney 1989:107). Heaney does however argue for another sense in which ‘it is unlimited’ (Heaney 1989:107). Auden would also concur with the result of a totally pragmatic expectation of poetry:

‘For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its making where executives
Would never want to tamper.’ (Auden 1976: 197)

Plato reserves his gravest charge until Book ten of the *Republic* where he fulminates against poetry’s ‘terrible power to corrupt even the best characters’ (Plato 1972: 383). This original attack on poetry has had a profound influence on attitudes towards, and more particularly in the defences of poetry, written to counteract the lack-of-usefulness argument. ‘Poets have been on the run since Plato announced in the *Republic* (fourth century B.C.) that “there is an ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry”’ (Parini 2008: 2, brackets in the original). Parini’s phrase, while colourful, does not convey the resilience of advocates of poetry and their ability to justify poetry’s existence down through the ages.

Aristotle in the *Ars Poetica* countered the Platonic pragmatism with an alternative view of mimesis or imitation. He saw the poet’s work not as a third- hand and distantly removed representations of the ideal but rather as the ‘representations of life; necessarily therefore he [the poet] must represent things in one of three ways either as they were or are, or as they are said to be or seem to be or as they ought to be’ (Poetics 1965: 69, brackets not in original). Here Aristotle slices through the Gordian knot of pragmatic worth and gives the poet the gift of imaginative probability. His argument against Plato’s insistence on practicalities is implied in ‘We must remember, too, that there are not the same standards of correctness in poetry as in political theory or any other art’ (Poetics 1965: 69-70). He also states that the “impossible” has to be justified on grounds either of poetic effect, or of an attempt to improve on reality, or of accepted tradition’ (Poetics 1965: 73). He has prepared his readers for this step into acceptance of fiction in Chapter Nine where he claims ‘It is not the poet’s function to describe what has actually happened, but the kind of thing that might happen, that is, that could

happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary' (Poetics 1965: 43) and he goes on to distinguish between historian and poet claiming a pre-eminence for poetry in that it is concerned with truths that are universal rather than particular.

The difference is that one tells of what has happened, the other of the kinds of thing that might happen. For this reason poetry is sometimes more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts. (Poetics 1965: 43-44)

Aristotle's findings may appear at first to be a considerable way removed from the primary school classroom but his championing of the primacy of the imagination and the conviction that the credibility of a work of art exists within its own parameters of probability form and unity, gives us the opportunity of regarding art and poetry in particular, from an alternative viewpoint.

As soon as one denies that the poet is a passive imitator and proceeds to raise the whole question of formal probability, literary criticism is on another level [...] we can develop a view of the cognitive aspects of the artistic imagination and so regard art as a means of exploring the nature of reality, (Daiches 1971: 38)

Thus the child may be brought to realize that poetic probability exists and that in literature the bounds of probability can extend far beyond what passes for reality into fields of fantasy, conjecture, and even delightful and amusing nonsense, without compromising truth. A much later writer, Emily Dickinson in a typically succinct stanza comments:

'I dwell in Possibility—
A fairer House than Prose—
More numerous of Windows—
Superior—for Doors— ' (Dickinson 1987: 327)

4.1.3 Horace: Decorum, Dulce et Utile

Another influential classical writer Horace, is not so much concerned with a defence of poetry or a philosophical discussion of the essence of literature, but rather the clarifying of literary propriety and decorum. This is done in a humorous urbane manner which

suggests that imaginative literature at this juncture is an accepted phenomenon. ‘The main thing assumed in the criticism of Horace is the normative value of the literary ‘species,’ the genre, kind, or type, and of the companion principle designated by the term ‘propriety’ –*to prepon* in Aristotelian criticism, *decorum* in Latin ’ (Wimsatt and Brooks 1970: 80). His many aphorisms contain much that is relevant to appreciating poetry. Long before Wordsworth he argued ‘It has always been accepted, and always will be, that words stamped with the mint-mark of the day should be brought into currency’ (Horace 1965: 80). He is attentive to context, ‘you will make an excellent impression if you use care and subtlety in placing your words and, by the skilful choice of setting, give fresh meaning to a familiar word’ (Horace 1965: 81). But perhaps his most notable contribution and one that again resonates when the subject of teaching poetry at primary as well as other levels is introduced, is his dictum , ‘Poets aim at giving either profit or delight or at combining the giving of pleasure with some useful precepts for life’ (Horace 1970: 90). Dr Johnson echoed this in his *Preface to Shakespeare*. ‘The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing’ (Johnson 1971: 267). This combination of *dulce* and *utile* can be useful in considering why there is merit in introducing children to poetry at an early stage.

Although it will be argued that the enjoyment of poetry is one of the principle aims in the teaching of it, the appreciation of poetry or what might be termed poetic awareness has an important cognitive function that contributes by focusing on the those elements that help to create this enjoyment. The awareness of rhythm, rhyme, image efficacy, metaphor, metre enhances the enjoyment and so Horace’s two prescriptions for excellence in poetry have a direct relevance to the approach to the subject at every level of education, primary not excepted. It is necessary in the methodology, to develop the child’s awareness in the context of her conceptual development but as will be shown, analysis need not be a dry scholastic exercise. Moreover, when combined with activity, and sensitively mediated through dialogue, in this, as in many other spheres, the child’s zone of proximal development can be shown to expand and develop in accordance with her capabilities. This study would hope to show the validity of what might be termed ‘analysis through activity’ and ‘analysis through enjoyment’. Both terms incorporate the original Horatian dictums of *dulce* and *utile* in a child-centered and graspable methodology.

Dulce or the pleasure principle can be seen to revolve around the pleasing aspects of poetry, to which the child is naturally attracted: enjoyment of rhythm, rhyme, juxtapositioning of imagery, sound, metaphor, role-play, and especially presentation.

Utile, on the other hand concerns itself more with metacognitive awareness, the underlying reasons for effectiveness, the translation and recognition of textual content, language acquisition, recognition of form and genre, and in presentation, selection of approaches, awareness and appreciation of function of metre, rhythm, tone, voice, mood, genre. All of these need to be approached in relevance to the poem being studied and not as abstract concepts.

4.1.4 Pope: Form and Intention

Alexander Pope's contribution to poetic awareness reflects much of Horace's concerns with an urbane and civilized outlook and a preoccupation with decorum and elegant style and is best summarized in his much-quoted lines from *An Essay on Criticism*:

'True Wit is Nature to advantage dressed

What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed' (Pope 1972: 76, ll. 297-8).

And though this high expression of the Augustan literary ideal might also seem removed from the primary classroom it does relate to the poetic ability to express succinctly, forcibly and individually a universal concept. There is also the recognition of the importance of poetic form in this expression of content. It also might be understood as hinting at that reassurance that results in our recognizing the clarification of our own perhaps unexpressed experience in the work of others.

And Pope is very much an advocate of discovering the writer's intention:

'A perfect Judge will read each work of Wit

With the same spirit that its author writ' (Pope 1972: 74, ll. 223-4).

This constitutes a valuable point in reading any literary work and is one that has been much expounded upon in more recent critical readings. Again here there is no great remove from the primary classroom as, will later be demonstrated, discovering the writer's intention forms an important part of the children's appropriation of the poem.

4.1.5 Romantic Poetry: Individual Experience

The Romantics championed emotional life and the individual experience whether in the sense of rebellion against the norms of society as in Shelley and Byron or in the more introspective distillation and qualification of experience in the writings of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Daiches (1972: 875) somewhat unexpectedly claims that Wordsworth's:

objections to an overstylized poetic diction, his attitude to Nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects for his poetry are but minor aspects of his revolutionary achievement. Poetry for him was primarily the record of a certain state of mind, and the value of poetry for him lay in the value of the state of mind which the poem recorded. (Daiches 1972: 875)

Individual experience is seen to have a universal applicability. This contribution by the romantics regarding the value of individual experience can help as will be shown below in the recognition of the child's self-identity as she relates her own experiences to those revealed in the poems being addressed.

In Poetry the children can vicariously experience many situations and compare and contrast their own existence with what they read and enact. Grief, love, hate, terror, laughter, pride, cowardice, are not adult prerogatives. In many cases the intensity of feeling in the child is greater because they are unable to rationalize their emotion. In poetry they can recognize their own human elements, vicariously experience and deepen their own awareness of feeling and emotion, not metacognitively perhaps, but intuitively. In the recognition of their own experience being realized in a poem, the child can be led to a heightened sense of self-identity. Thus Heaney commenting on Elizabeth Bishop's poem 'At the Fishhouses' states,

The lines are inhabited by profoundly true tones [...] and they do what poetry most essentially does; they fortify our inclination to credit promptings of our intuitive being. They help us to say in the first recesses of ourselves, in the shyest, pre-social part of our nature, 'Yes, I know something like that too. Yes that's right; thank you for putting words on it and making it more or less official'. (Heaney 1989: 93)

Hirsch (1999) in writing of his teenage encounters with poetry also describes this sense of self-realization and identification with experience. 'I found it consoling but also liberating to come across lyrics that articulated my own sense of distress better than I

could. These poems valorized human feelings. They seemed to know me better than I knew myself” (Hirsch 1999: 162).

4.1.6 Critical Theory: The Literariness of Literature

The effects of later literary movements, Russian Formalism, The New Criticism, Structuralism, Post Structuralism, Deconstructionism and all the branches of modern Theory, Feminist, Post Colonial, Minority Discourse, Queer Theory, would not appear to have a great deal of significance for the primary school student. The emphasis in modern criticism seems to have shifted from poetry to the Novel and indeed to many aspects of culture that do not appear to align themselves with hitherto accepted concepts of the literary. ‘Theory in literary studies is not an account of the nature of literature or methods for its study (though such matters are part of theory) [...]. It’s a body of thinking and writing whose limits are exceedingly hard to define’ (Culler 2000: 3, brackets in original).

There is, however, a unifying principle among the earlier movements that can usefully be employed in the appropriation of poetry in the primary sector. There is a preoccupation with text and intention, with effect and affect, with ‘the literariness of literature: the verbal strategies that make it literary, the foregrounding of language itself, and the “making strange” of experiences that they accomplish’ (Culler 2000: 122). This deconstruction of text and evaluation of literary device can be employed by primary school pupils as can the relationship between effect and affect and as already been mentioned above, a recognition of voice and an evaluation of literary intention is not beyond their compass.

These concepts of Aristotelian plausibility, Horatian decorum. Romantic individualism, Structuralist questioning of the ‘relation between meaning and the non-semantic features of language, such as sound and rhythm’ (Culler 2009: 74), as have been mentioned, can be seen to feed into poetic appreciation in the primary sector but only through the mediation of the teacher as the more knowledgeable other and only when directly related to particular poems or parts of poems, not as concepts in themselves. Thus a poem such as “Ich habe meine Tante geschlachtet” may involve a close

examination of the function of voice but the context is firmly rooted in the examples given in the poem, e.g. the voice of the perpetrator assumes the voice of the victimized having already alienated the reader by his obvious callousness and indifference to his awful crime. The same poem shows how a character can be made to reveal himself unwittingly and there is also contrast between the flippant tone and the shocking violence involved. These are quite advanced issues in literary criticism³⁶, but can be appropriated in primary education by concrete evidencing of their presence in the text and by careful dialogic mediation by and interaction with the informed and more knowledgeable Teacher .

These concepts underlie and support the justification of teaching poetry to children. This is what the teacher needs to know so that this information underpins her teaching, informs her choice of poem, directs her approach to poetry and facilitates her interaction with the children. She is not here concerned with descriptive accounts of what another teacher did or how a class responded (Koch 1973), she is looking rather for grounded principles, for a philosophy of poetry as it were. This is not something that the child will ever need to know or approach, but it is from the conviction of its value and validity that the teacher as ‘more knowledgeable other’ will be able to help, effect, and affect the child’s appropriation of poetry

4.2.1 Poetry as Alternative Voice

Poetry can be considered an alternative but valid voice in expressing attitudes, beliefs, observations, concerning existence itself. There are Scientific, Philosophical, Religious, Artistic, Commercial, Cultural, and many more voices, all expressing a particular view and approach to existence. People define existence by their own experience.

Works of literature explore the settings or categories of habitual ways of thinking and frequently attempt to bend or reshape them, showing us how to think something that our language had not

³⁶[It is one thing] ‘To understand a given text as the author himself understood it. But our understanding can and should be better. Powerful and profound creativity is largely unconscious and polysemic. Through understanding it is supplemented by consciousness, and the multiplicity of its meanings is revealed’ (Bakhtin 1986: 141-142).

previously anticipated, forcing us to attend to the categories through which we unthinkingly view the world. (Culler 2002: 59-60)

The poetic voice is one of man's most natural expressions and is found universally whether in the dust bowls of the Australian Bush or in the cadences of the Book of Common Prayer. Poetry takes experience and considers it using a particular language, imagery, sound system, frame of reference. The experience differs from that evoked by the other approaches mentioned above. There is a pronounced reference to emotion, to sentiment. There is a required coincidence between content and expression. There may be a fantastical imagination at work but there also has to be artistic integrity. One may suspend disbelief in the Coleridgean sense³⁷ but one does so in order to allow the mind to encompass the incredible, to go beyond the literal, the concrete, the rational reality, into the exercise of the imaginative faculties.

4.2.2 Poetry as Liberation

Poetry is an escape from the literal. '...our nature's safety demands the rescue of things from mere objectness' (Heidegger 1971: 130). In the world of poetry one's vision is no longer object regulated. The "doginess" of dog is open to far more than the prosaic acceptance of the word. A dog can be of monstrous size, can be of any colour, can speak with a human voice, can metamorphise into Pirate or Astronaut at the whim of the creator. This escape from the literal, this poetic probability referred to above when discussing Aristotle, is a vital factor in the creation and development of conceptual thinking in the child. 'The acquisition of foreign language-- in its own peculiar way-- liberates him from that dependence on concrete linguistic forms and expressions (Vygotsky 1986: 160). The knowledge of poetry, in a sense itself a foreign language, or as Culler terms it 'a second-order semiotic system' (Culler 1975: 113) can liberate the child from object regulated vision, can introduce ambiguity, metaphor, allusion, implication, juxtaposition of reality, into her consciousness. She can deconstruct and reform images in her mind enabling her to play with sound, image, contrast, selection, thus opening her mind to ever-increasing possibilities of creativity.

³⁷ 'That willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith' (Coleridge 1971: 169).

The attractions of Poetry are many and varied. Some are pre-oral. The youngest children respond to rhythm and repetitive Rhymes. ‘There is pleasure to be reaped from repetition; small children tend to go on repeating well beyond the point that most adults find tolerable. In its predictability, repetition may yield us a sense of security’ (Eagleton 2008: 131). Their thinking is based on image rather than concept, concrete rather than abstract. The fantastical poses no problem to young minds which daily make the leap from the literal to the imagined. ‘Wait there for the present’³⁸ has two distinct referential points for the child and adult.

It is well known that the child is capable of surprising transitions, of startling associations and generalizations, when his thought ventures beyond the boundaries of the small tangible world of his experience. Outside it he often constructs limitless complexes amazing in the universality of the bonds they encompass. (Vygotsky 1986: 118)

Humour and paradox are often intertwined in children’s poetry and the anarchic behavior of tailors building houses on Mount Sinai ³⁹and the credibility of legs being sewn back on again by Herr Doktor’s Nadel prove very amusing and thus attractive to young minds.

To the child who has had a meaningful encounter with poetry, Fantasy becomes an acceptable and valuable addition to her conceptual development. There can be an adventurous attitude and a willingness to encounter the alternative. This can inform the child’s appreciation of the other arts, Painting, Music, Drama and possible later interaction with other peoples and other ideas.

Apart from the recognition of fantasy, there is a very definite cognitive element in appreciating how and why we are affected by poetry. As the child learns, (through examination of the poem’s content and form, and learning from dialogue with others, be they peers or teacher), aspects of poetry, rhythm, rhyme, imagery, tone, mood, metaphor etc. her metacognitive abilities are developed and furthered and she is enabled to encounter other poems with increased ability and awareness.

³⁸ The phrase has a personal significance for the writer. On one occasion he asked his very young son to ‘wait there for the present’ only to return some time later to a very disappointed child, the expected ‘present’ not having materialised.

³⁹ C.f. the poem *Auf dem Berge Sinai* used in the empirical study, Chapter five, 9.5.

4.3.1 Poetry and the ‘More Knowledgeable Other’⁴⁰

The role of the teacher in the constructivist classroom has been treated of in some detail in Chapter three. However in order to furnish a viable practical methodology it is necessary to reconsider the role of the teacher in the context of teaching poetry. There is a particular relevance now to be seen in the statement by Confrey (1990: 109) ‘When one applies constructivism to the issue of teaching, one must reject the assumption that one can simply pass on information to a set of learners and expect that understanding will result’. The teacher is not the custodian of the text, the arbiter of response. The child is not to be *gifted* with the teacher’s conception of the poem. It is vital that the child herself should experience the poem as fully and as richly as possible and that she does not vicariously inherit the teacher’s response. This is not to say that the teacher cannot direct and further the child’s appreciation. As teacher and more knowledgeable other she has a wealth of experience, training and appreciation of poetry. It is up to her then, to devise ways by which the child is enabled to appropriate the poem and create her own individual response. A suggested approach is proposed later in this chapter based on the principles examined in chapter two and the ideas of social constructivism and activity theory as realised in the writings of Vygotsky and Gal’perin.

4.3.2 The Poem’s the Thing

As in the preceding chapter and as mentioned already in these pages we are not in the business of teaching concepts, and in this case, concepts of poetry, but rather teaching poems. We are creating attitudes towards individual poems and examining them in depth to further realize their potential. To approach poetry in any other way is to conceptualise it. Rhythm, tone, register, atmosphere, are not abstractions but rather essential commodities in making a poem work and it is the teacher’s job to direct the attention of the students as to how they work, successfully or otherwise in the poem.

⁴⁰ The phrase itself, or the use of the acronym MKO is often found in Vygotskian commentators. It does not occur in Vygotsk’s writings themselves but seems to have been extrapolated from comments such as ‘through problem solving *under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*’ (Vygotsky 1978: 86, italics not in original)

But the emphasis is not on the *recognition* of rhythmic facility or the aptness of a rhetorical figure but rather its effectiveness in so far as the poem is *enhanced* by and *benefits* from it. The emphasis is not on recognition but on appreciation. ‘But poetics does not require that we know the meaning of a work; its task is to account for whatever effects we can attest to’ (Culler 2002: 62). Even though it is stressed that it is on the concrete consideration of particular poems that the methodology of this study is based, there are, of necessity, underlying concepts of literature and literariness that should inform the methodology.

4.3.3 Informing the Alternative Voice

Seeing that she is the mediator between the child and the text, it is of utmost importance that the teacher has a fully informed sense of the value and validity of literature and in the case of this study, the teaching of poetry. It is only when this is the case that alternative voices can be listened to and appraised. ‘A poem does not come complete with a ready-made context for making sense of its words. Instead we have to bring such a context to it, and there is always a repertoire of different possibilities here. This is not to say that poems can mean just anything you like’ (Eagleton 2008: 32). The teacher needs an approach to poetry that embraces all of what has been discussed above. In answer to what Culler (2002: 56) terms as ‘the meanings or provocations of a text’, there is a need for an educated and informed appreciation of form and content and how one influences the other. Eagleton makes the point that ‘form is *constitutive* of content and not just a reflection of it, [and that] Tone, rhythm, rhyme, syntax, assonance, grammar, punctuation and so on are actually *generators of meaning, not just containers of it*. To modify any of them is to modify meaning itself’ (Eagleton 2008: 67, brackets and italics not in original text). The teacher needs to have the confidence of her own reading of the poem and the openness to the value of variant readings that arise in group discussion and classroom interaction.

4.3.4 Reflections on Literariness

This openness to interpretation should be allowed for in any methodology that proposes an approach to the appropriation and internalization of poetry. It has been mentioned above that there is no preconceived consensus, no defined conclusion on any work of literature. Heaney (1989: 92) alludes to this open-ended perusal of poetry when he

claims ‘The poem does not disdain intellect, yet poetry, having to do with feelings and emotions must not submit to the intellect’s eagerness to foreclose’. In saying that the poem does not disdain intellect, Heaney acknowledges that there is a definite cognitive element in the appreciation of poetry but he is also allowing for a wide range of interpretative variance and implication. Eagleton invokes the Russian semiotician, Lotman (1922-1993) on this complexity ‘Poems are thus both systemic and non-predictable at the same time, and this in Lotman’s eyes means that they generate well-nigh inexhaustible possibilities of information’ (Eagleton 2008: 54). Culler sums up many of the aspects treated above, the idea of discourse, the necessity of training, the openness to interpretation, the relevance of form and the eventual goal of enjoyment when he states:

To reflect on literariness is to keep before us, as resources for analyzing these discourses, reading practices elicited by literature: the suspension of the demand for immediate intelligibility, reflection on the implications of means of expression, and attention to how meaning is made and pleasure produced. (Culler 2002: 41)

This reflection on literariness and its inculcation into the strategic thinking of the child is primarily the responsibility of the teacher, and dialogue and interaction should be set at a level commensurate with the child’s development so that the child is enabled to recognize and acknowledge the experiencing of the poem’s effect. An analogy might be drawn between a child’s illustration of a poem and her ‘reflection on literariness’. To the uninformed onlooker the illustration may appear gauche, unstructured, simplistic. The child however has created her own very real, vibrant, complex rendering of the experience in this picture and when the child observes it, it triggers a recognition and response to the ideas that originally informed the picture. The child’s ‘reflection on literariness’ may appear to be simplistic, banal, derivative but it is a reflection of thought and appreciation and assimilation of the poem and should be so recognized as in the dialogic interaction between child and teacher.

Section Two: The Irish Primary School Child

4.4.1 The Irish Primary School Child: Curriculum Requirements

‘Because of the QUAL objective to describe social phenomena as they occur naturally, qualitative research takes place in the *natural setting*, without any attempts to manipulate the situation under study. In order to capture a sufficient level of detail about the natural context,

such investigations are usually conducted through an intense and prolonged contact with, or immersion in, the research setting'. (Dörnyei 2009: 38, italics in original)

This study concerns itself with children in the primary school whose prior experience of poetry and the German language is limited. It is concerned, as has been mentioned in the introduction to this chapter with the needs, interests and abilities of children in the 9-12 age bracket. Their conceptual thinking is far from fully developed and their thinking consequently, needs grounding in actuality.

The pupils involved in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI)⁴¹, are in fifth and sixth classes. Their age- range averages from ten to twelve years. The programme for foreign languages in the Irish primary school, (NCCA 1999) envisages a communicative approach and there are three strands, communicative competence, language awareness and cultural awareness. The four strand units are 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Reading' and 'Writing'. The curriculum recognizes that:

in practice, however, there will be much overlap, in particular between the *Communicative competence* and the *Language awareness* strands [and that] the four language skills-*listening, speaking, reading* and *writing*-will be integrated in exploring and developing the content of the three strands' (NCCA 1999: 7, italics in original).⁴²

The aims of this study would appear to fulfil all of the requirements of the curriculum while being based firmly on sociocultural constructivist principles. It involves a great deal of interaction in group, dyad and teacher/class formations. Communicative competence is central to dialogue and the discussion of the poems is an intrinsic part of the approach suggested. Language awareness is involved to a very high degree as many aspects of language, rhythm, rhyme, metaphor, imagery come within the ambit of this study and it also embraces concepts of literariness, effect and affect, questions of tone, writer's intention, voice, implication and interpretation. The cultural awareness aspect is covered by the subject matter, original authentic poems from the target culture that range over Nursery Rhymes, Nonsense poems, Narrative ballad, *Moritaten*, Love Songs. In content and form they give the child an insight into another world inhabited by *Hexen*, the demonic *Erlkönig*, desperate lovers, murderous relatives and tailors' wives with a propensity for falling from balconies! *Märchenland* is not the only

⁴¹ cf. Chapter one, 5.1.

⁴² cf. Chapter one, 5.2.

different world to which they travel but also that of the worlds of love, nonsense, terror, despair, humour, the list is a long one.

4.4.2 The Irish Primary School Child: Language Competency

There arises one significant hurdle to be overcome. Many of the concepts approached in the appreciative process are relatively unknown to the child and more importantly this work is to be done in a foreign language over which the child has as yet very little mastery. The standard of foreign language competence for the average student is encapsulated in the *My European Language Portfolio* (2005), the MLPSI model of the *European Language Portfolio*, developed specifically for Irish primary pupils. It states that 'A1 is the level aimed for in the Modern Language classroom in primary school'. This would envisage:

- Listening: I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.
- Reading: I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.
- Spoken interaction: I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate and help me formulate what I am trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics
- Spoken production: I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.
- Writing: I can write a short simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example, entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form. (*My European Language Portfolio* 2005: 8-10)

From this it is not surprising that the tasks involved in all five aspects of language acquisition should pose problems for the student in the assimilation of poetry in that foreign language. However this study proposes that by the use of sociocultural based techniques, dialogue, mediation, group interaction, student participation in creating the

Scoba cards and their subsequent use, that the childrens' Zone of Proximal Development can be considerably broadened and advanced in their ability to discuss, recognize, write about and finally portray the poems in the study by completing all the steps necessary for their individual internalization and appropriation.

4.4.3 The use of L1

The question of the use of L1 is important. It has been clarified that the study is concerned with the teaching of poetry in a foreign language not the use of poetry in teaching a foreign language. True dialogue presupposes understanding, so in the appropriation of the poem. L1 should be used if necessary, especially if the use of L3⁴³ gives the child the idea that the poem is unattainable. Appreciation rather than actual language acquisition is what is involved. If this approach is followed there should be, through dialogue, group interaction, framing of *quasi-Bedürfnisse* in the Scoba cards and all the other aspects involved, a great deal of language acquisition, but this, while very much to be desired, is incidental to the main thrust of the study which is, as stated above, the appropriation and internalization of poetry in a foreign language.

While some studies show that L2 learners are able to deploy L2 forms to regulate themselves in difficult tasks, only some L2 learners appear able to reorganize their conceptual systems in accordance with the L2. In other words they cannot mediate themselves through the second language. (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 84)

If we ask the child to speak in a language in which she is not capable or comfortable then we are hindering the development of the child's thought. We are doubly tasking her as she has to think and translate. The importance of the activity of speaking cannot be overestimated. 'The very activity of speaking can, in fact be planning, or more precisely, thinking, externalized as self-directed private speech, the goal of which is planning what to say about a particular topic' (Appel and Lantolf 1994: 443).

Lantolf and Thorne (2006: 294) stress the importance of L1 in the foreign language classroom '

Pedagogies that seek to avoid reliance on learner's first language are, in our view, misguided [...] Certainly, communicative activities whether oral or written should be carried out in the L2

⁴³ As English and Irish are taught in every primary school, the foreign language German is here referred to as L3.

[in this study's case, L3] but it does mean that learners must be allowed to use their L1 when needed to regulate their own learning. To proscribe this process is not only folly but it can subvert the learning process itself. (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 294, brackets not in original)

And they cite Holmes (2004: 209) to further illustrate the necessity of allowing for the use of L1 in the foreign language class.

'Language provides us with the means to think about language. To deny this is to limit our semiotic capability. A first language allows us an opportunity consciously to represent the meanings of a second. To deny ourselves this semiotic opportunity is to deny ourselves the possibilities that language affords us' (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 295).

While these authors are speaking generally, a case can be made for the particular application of their comments to the study in question which uses L1 as an approach to further development of thought and expression in L3. From the five aspects of language listed above in My European Language Portfolio at A1 level, it is clear a proportion of the work needs to be done through L1. This will alleviate the burden of double-tasking. If some of the preparatory work is done in English then the ideas are created and it becomes a question only of translating them into L3. Also if avenues are first explored through English there is further clarification for both teacher and class of the exact words and phrases required to explore the same avenues through L3. The childrens' interaction with the teacher then allows them to recognize the *quasi-Bedürfnisse* required for whatever task they are engaged in, thus allowing a degree of learner autonomy and learner responsibility to inform their approach. This should prove a more productive method than one in which the teacher as 'banker' and 'fount of all knowledge' decides on what would be the most profitable avenue of approach or what words or phrases would best suit the pupils (But without involving their own active participation). Also by allowing the children to express themselves in L1 the teacher has a greater opportunity of observing the thought-processes of the children and can thus model her response on these perceived needs. 'In ethnographic studies the participants' subjective interpretation of their own behaviours and customs is seen as crucial to understanding the specific culture. Therefore, a central aspect of ethnography is to find ways of looking at events through the eyes of an insider' (Dörnyei 2009: 130). Without the use of L1 there is very little chance of the teacher receiving that insider's view.

The study will attempt to estimate the amount of L1 necessary for the various actions performed by the children, their ability to translate or use the translated forms of approach and their ability, as they re-use the approach in other verses and differing poems, to finally be in a position to use far more of L3 terminology at the expense of the original L1. Thus as will be shown below, the term *Vorwissen* would eventually supersede ‘foreknowledge’, *Dieses Gedicht handelt von...* would replace ‘This poem is about...’, and *Meiner Meinung nach* would be used instead of ‘I think ‘ or ‘In my opinion’. The continuous use of these phrases in German, which have in the first place been posited by the children themselves to answer their needs, would enable them to be eventually assimilated and become one of those psychological tools mentioned by Vygotsky as essential to the process of internalization.⁴⁴

4.4.4 The use of Gesture and Tone

An important contribution to translation can be made if one recognizes the importance of gesture and indeed tone of voice in projecting meaning.

From the perspective of Vygotskian theory, [...] it is not unreasonable to assume that gestures can serve both a cognitive and a communicative function, given that the mental function of speech is grounded in its communicative (i.e. social) function . (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 96-97, brackets in original)

That importance of gesture and tone can be furthered by inviting the children to create appropriate voices and gestures to indicate meaning e.g. in ‘*Der Hase, der gern Bücher las*’, *las* might be indicated by upturned palms holding an imaginary book and *ein dickes Buch* portrayed as a palm-facing-palm measurement of width. As with every step so far it is advisable that the gestures and voices come from the children themselves and not from the teacher. (Which is not to say that the teacher may not advise or suggest improvements).

There is a very useful strategy whereby the children suggest, in English if necessary, the tone to be employed. Using a short phrase such as ‘*Hast du nicht gehört, meine Katze*

⁴⁴ ‘The central characteristic of elementary functions is that they are totally and directly determined by stimulation from the environment. For higher functions, the central feature is self-generated stimulation, that is, *the creation and use of artificial stimuli which become the immediate causes of behaviour*’ (Vygotsky 1978: 30, italics not in original).

ist gestorben?’ (better still if it is one suggested by the children themselves) the children try out a variety of tones and name them. A collection of these tones are then translated and made into tone cards or *Tonkarten*, each bearing one significant word e.g. *flüsternd, leise, traurig, mutig, furchterregend, frech, ängstlich*, etc. A line from the poem could be read according to each one of these words and the children then decide *was passt gut dem Gedicht* or *dem Charakter* or even *der Linie*. This is again helping to overcome the inherent difficulties caused by having only a limited ability in L3. And it is giving enjoyable repeated practice of lines and phrases which helps towards internalization.

4.4.5 Group Interaction and the Individual Response

It would be a sign of inexperience on the teacher’s part to expect at primary level, a wide informed range of varied response to a particular poem. Group interaction, while helping to clarify ideas and suggesting alternatives also induces a similarity of response but by going from the individual to the group as in the formation of a consensus account, the child is enabled to consider and use her own response and she will see the reflection of her contribution in the group account. ‘Thus the individual in the group situation is speaking for the self as well as for others in attempting to orchestrate the course of activity’ (McCafferty 1994: 429-430). The individual written account just like the individual illustration may not obviously reflect the richness of the experience that triggered it but in the child’s mind it encapsulates exactly what the child feels and means. The group consensus is also but a part of the process of assimilation, and the construction and putting into practice of the account summary and especially the later examination of affective influences and presentation approaches, should provide a strong stimulus for eventual individual internalization of the poem.⁴⁵

Section Three: Literature Review

The uses of Poetry in Second Language Acquisition

4.5.1 Introduction

⁴⁵ These aspects, account summary, affective influences and presentation approaches are treated in more practical detail later in this chapter under the Scoba card titles of *Meinung, Affektive* and *Vorstellungskarten*.

Although the main thrust of this study is the appreciation and personal appropriation of Poetry in a foreign language, German, by primary students with a limited competency in that language, it becomes more and more evident, that in helping the students to appreciate the poetry there is a parallel appropriation of language, grammar and culture in the target language. Thus one may speak of the uses of poetry in the teaching of German and its validity, practicality and effectiveness in this area.

4.5.2 Departmental Recognition: Teacher/Curriculum Guidelines

The importance of the use of poetry in language acquisition is given recognition in both the Draft Curriculum Guidelines (NCCA 1999) and the later Teacher Guidelines (NCCA 2001). In fact out of nine exemplar lessons in the *Deutsch* section of the Guidelines (NCCA 2001: 191-212) three of them are devoted to poetry (commented on below).

The Draft Curriculum Guidelines, rather surprisingly, makes no mention of poetry in the cultural awareness strand (NCCAb 1999: 9) unless its reference to ‘traditional music, songs and folk dances’ implies also the exploration of poetry, but it does state later in the listening strand unit ‘Stories, poems, rhymes, songs, jazz chants and recorded material on cassette and video can be used to ensure a lively and stimulating atmosphere’ (NCCAb 1999: 10).

In the objectives⁴⁶ stated, there is almost a complete clarification of how Poetry can be used in the teaching of a foreign language, an unintended *Plädoyer für Poesie!* In the

⁴⁶ **Objectives for the Teaching of a Modern Language in Primary**

School:

The objectives of the modern language curriculum are that the child should be enabled to

- experience enjoyment and fulfilment in language activities
- explore, experiment with and enjoy all the playful aspects of language
- take part in language-learning activities with self-confidence, thereby enhancing the child’s self-esteem
- develop the skill of listening actively through a variety of activities, including story, poetry, songs, games, suitable audio and audiovisual materials, and computer software
- be aware of how inflection, stress, accent and word order affect the meaning of what is being said
- appreciate the significance of tone of voice, facial expression and gesture

empirical study it is hoped to show how the vast majority of these objectives are achieved.

Poetry is recognised as a valid approach in treating the list of suggested topics given in the Teacher Guidelines. It is stated ‘these topics are merely suggestions [...] the list is not exhaustive, and other topics suitable for the age and interest level of the learners and considered relevant to the class involved may be included’ (NCCA 2001: 31). And it goes on to advise that these topics be explored in a variety of contexts ‘games, talk, story, *poetry and song, role-playing and simulation*’ (NCCA 2001: 31, italics not in original). As will be seen, role-playing and simulation play a major part in the appropriation of poetry. In the section on classroom planning there is again an encouragement of the use of poetry in language teaching.

Children in general enjoy taking part in activities that are creative and require the use of the imagination. Activities could include *acting out extracts* from stories, *reciting poems, rhymes, tongue-twisters, raps, jazz chants, singing and role-playing, using a variety of tones of voice, facial expressions, and gestures*. (NCCA 2001: 44, italics not in original)

All of the activities italicised play a major role in poetry appropriation and it is hoped to demonstrate this clearly in the empirical study.

In assessment of language learning, the four principal assessment tools mentioned, teacher observation, teacher-designed tests and tasks, teacher-pupil discussion, and work samples, portfolios and projects can all be easily and validly accommodated in the approaches to poetry envisioned in the methodology and realised successfully in the empirical study.

In the section on developing listening skills there is a stress on sound that dovetails neatly into the use of poetry in foreign language teaching. ‘Children need the time and opportunity to listen to the sound of the target language. Through an emphasis on

-
- attain confidence in talking about his or her ideas and experiences
 - develop accurate pronunciation through exposure to authentic audio/listening materials
 - develop and extend his or her vocabulary
 - develop an appropriate mastery of grammar in order to communicate simply and effectively
 - begin to read and write the language as his or her oral competence grows
 - develop an appreciation of the relationship between languages through an awareness of similarities and differences
 - enhance his or her language learning through an awareness of variety in grammar and sentence construction
 - learn about the cultural aspects of other countries, such as lifestyle, customs, traditions, music, art and literature
 - appreciate and respect identity and cultural diversity’ (NCCA 1999: 16).

particular sounds the child's attention is focused on sounds peculiar to the language' (NCCA. 2001: 58). Poetry would appear to be intrinsically effective in focusing on sound, from both its repetitive and rhyming aspects.

Poetry, rhyme, song and jazz chants are also effective methods of practising correct pronunciation. The need to repeat certain phrases and structures throughout the piece provides the child with many opportunities to use the language enjoyably and also reinforces correct pronunciation. (NCCA 2001: 75)

Poetry, rhyme and song are also cited as providing opportunities 'for practising sentence structures in context' (NCCA 2001: 75) but lest this appear to be too pragmatic an approach it is acknowledged that the practising of sentence structures is an offshoot of 'the enjoyment associated with engaging in poetry, rhyme and song' (NCCA 2001: 75). Opportunities for role-playing are suggested, giving the children 'the opportunity to see the language learnt in a practical way [they] are encouraged to act out a story, a rhyme a poem or a song' (NCCA 2001: 78).

In the three exemplar lessons given for *Deutsch*, the poems are short, simple and suitable for the children's standard of attainment. Although they are each assigned to designated strands, *Kompetenz* and *Sprachsensibilisierung* and designated Strand-units, *Lesen*, *Schreiben*, *Hoerverständnis*, *Grammatik*, each poem is quite capable of being used for any of these purposes. In the introductory phase, *Einführungsphase*, there is an emphasis on the role of the *Lehrer* and throughout the lessons there does not seem to be evidence of interchange of ideas between *Lehrer* and *Schüler/innen* or among the *Schüler/innen* themselves⁴⁷. The *Lernziele* centre on the reading and understanding of the poem. There is in the guidelines no real opportunity for role-play, voice, emotional response and further engagement with the poem in a variety of performance opportunities. Unfortunately this limits the effectiveness and scope in the use of poetry in teaching German and it is hoped that the methodology proposed and the results of the empirical study may help to extend the possibilities in this area.

4.6.1 Poetry at Third Level:

'Aesthetic Reading', Kinderreime für Erwachsene?

⁴⁷ The empirical study reveals the importance of close and continuous interaction between teacher and students, and students themselves, as a valuable source of information and extremely important in the creation of 'quasi-Bedürfnisse', the expressed needs of the students for completing each individual task.

Most, if not all of the literature on the use of poetry in foreign language teaching focuses on third level education (Kramersch 1985, Kramersch, Nolden 1994, Bredella 1987, Sonesson, 1991, Schultz 1996). This is understandable as it may be taken for granted that the junior student lacks literary and emotional competency to confront poetry, in and of itself, almost a 'foreign language', 'Gedichte, diese fremde Sprache in der Fremdsprache' (Kirsch 1996: 3), with its own particular styles, patterns, logic, language, and contexts.. The present study would hope to show otherwise and that a surprising degree of literary competence and emotional response can be invoked by careful dialogue and measured steps of progression. However there are aspects of third level experience that can inform instruction at primary level and so these studies are of value in considering the use of poetry in even the early stages of foreign language learning. Bredella (1987: 166-184) criticises approaches to literary texts that identify only the content and neglect the reader's response to and interaction with the text and its implications.

Viel zu oft sind unsere Methoden bei der Interpretation literarischer Texte darauf ausgerichtet, daß wir die Studenten nur wiederholen lassen, was im Text steht. Wir regen sie nicht an, über das Gesagte hinauszugehen und auf ihre Erfahrung mit dem Text zu achten. (Bredella 1987: 166)

While the present study acknowledges the importance of translation and understanding, in its use of the *Meinungs-* and *Vorstellungskarten*, emphasis is placed strongly on reader's response to and interaction with the text. Bredella cites Rosenblatt's (1978: 25) terms to distinguish between two forms of reading "efferent" and "aesthetic reading". The former is reading for information and textual understanding and is seen as absolutely necessary and practical; the latter concentrates on interaction and response 'Bei diesem Lesen achte ich darauf, was der Text auslöst und wie ich auf ihn antworte' (Bredella 1987: 166).

It is this *Art des Lesens*, the 'aesthetic reading', that is significant in the use of literary texts in foreign language teaching. 'Literarische Texte haben den Vorteil, daß sie die Studenten zu mannigfachen Tätigkeiten und zum Sprechen im Fremdsprachenunterricht anregen' (Bredella 1987: 166-167). Literary texts provoke the reader, 'Literarische Texte haben den Vorteil, das sie aufgrund ihrer Unbestimmtheit und Verfremdung selbst Fragen aufwerfen und damit Interesse wecken' (Bredella 1987: 170). This provocation has often the advantageous result of stimulating the reader, 'Der Text kann der Leser anregen, Gedanken zu denken und Gefuehle zu erfahren, von denen er selbst

nicht wusste, dass er sie besitzt' (Bredella 1987: 171). And though this idea of 'aesthetic reading' may appear far removed from more practical and pragmatic uses of poetry in learning a foreign language, e.g. vocabulary, syntax, grammar, the present study hopes to show that it can be used extremely effectively through the use of measured steps and interactive dialogue and what Bredella terms 'gelenktes Schaffen', taking the term in turn from Sartre's 'creation dirigée' (cited in Bredella 1987: 171), even with students who are just beginning to learn the language.

It has been mentioned above that there is much of value and use to be learned by primary teachers from the suggestions on poetry and literary texts made for senior and third level students. There is a sense of turnaround in Whiteman's (2002) article on the use of Kindergedichte in the instruction of more senior students. 'Ich arbeitete damals mit 16-24-jährigen Lernenden, die ungefähr 75 Unterrichtsstunden hinter sich [...] haben.' (Whiteman 2002: 19). Indeed the editors of 'Fremdsprache Deutsch' acknowledge in a foreword, that, 'Dieser Beitrag wurde kontrovers diskutiert' (Whiteman 2002: 18), and invite comment on it from their readers. Whiteman is convinced of the value of working 'mit leicht verständlichen literarischen Texten' (Whiteman 2002: 18), in adult foreign language education and justifies her choice in five major points, summarised below.

- a) These texts bring 'eine ästhetische Komponente' in an otherwise pragmatically orientated subject. They act as foil to the usual Menu -card, Timetabling, Advertising content, and lead to playful activity with the language and help to promote a positive picture of the German Language and culture.
- b) They address 'die Emotionen der Lernenden'. The readers interact with the text leading to the expression and exchange of ideas, and resulting in the natural 'Integration der vier Sprachfertigkeiten'.
- c) They are a source of 'echte Kommunikation' because the students are expressing their own individual responses and interpretations rather than playing 'Lehrbuchrollen'.
- d) They allay the learners' fear of a new language and the learning processes, encourage 'Sprachfreude und weckt das Interesse an und die Liebe zu Literatur'.

- e) They encourage 'Lernerautonomie und beruecksichtigt unterschiedliche Lerntypen' (cf. Whiteman 2002:18)

There is a further irony in the fact that all of these points made concerning much older students are equally applicable to their younger fellow students *im Primarbereich*.⁴⁸

4.6.2 *Aktiv und Kreativ Lernen: Interaction with the Text*

Wicke (2008:105) claims that lyric 'im DaF-Unterricht stiefmütterlich behandelt wird'. This he considers regrettable as ballads and lyric poetry are eminently suitable for project and productive work. The introduction of poetry, he claims, puts the expression of emotion centre-stage and encourages the affective response (as in Bredella above). He also suggests that it has great benefits in the approach to written work. 'Balladen und Gedichte sind hervorragend für den projekt- und produktionsorientierten Unterricht geeignet. Einerseits ermöglichen sie es, Gefühlsäußerungen [...] in den Mittelpunkt der Arbeit zu stellen, andererseits werden bei der Arbeit mit Gedichten affektive Lernziele berücksichtigt' (Wicke 2008: 105). He uses Bern Lunghard's tongue-in-cheek poem *Gedichtbehandlung* to indicate how poems should not be taught

- *Dem Vorlesen durch den Lehrer*
- *Dem Nachlesen durch mehrere Schüler*
- *Dem Nacherzählen des Inhaltes durch die Schüler*
- *Der detaillierten Besprechung jeder einzelnen Strophe*
- *Dem Abschreiben des Gedichtes und*
- *Dem Auswendiglernen* (Wicke 2008: 106).

⁴⁸ While agreeing strongly in principle with the arguments of Whiteman (2002) one might question the choice of one of the two poems in the article, Friedl Hofbauer's 'Was die Waschmaschine sagt' because of the preponderance of nonsense words. Eight of the twenty lines are given to onomatopoeic invention and while these lines might appeal strongly to younger children there is the danger that adults, intent on learning real words might find them irritating,

Although he satirises their misuse, many of these techniques are in fact useful and are actually incorporated in many of Wicke's later *Hinweise*. This occurs, for example, when he recognizes the usefulness of 'Einzel-, Partner-, oder Gruppenarbeit', in his reconstruction of the text, (Wicke 2008: 107). Repeated readings of the verse helps towards the logical restructuring of the sequence so that 'der Ablauf logisch und stimmig ist' (Wicke 2008: 107). Many of the points above are used to good effect in the empirical study and it would be indefensible to condemn out of hand, for example, *Vorlesen durch den Lehrer* or *durch mehrere Schüler*, seeing as how a good, lively and sensitive reading can be a stimulus to appropriation.⁴⁹

In defence of some of his suggested techniques in both deconstructing and reconstructing the poem, Wicke cites Brecht (1977: 123) 'Dem Gegenüber muss gesagt werden, das nicht einmal Blumen verwelken, wenn man in sie hinein sticht. Gedichte sind, wenn sie überhaft lebensfähig sind, ganz besonders lebensfähig und können die eingreifendsten Operationen überstehen' (Wicke 2008: 108). He encourages many methods of approach to the poem. 'eine individuelle Arbeit anzufertigen, die die Stimmung des Gedichtes wiedergibt' (Wicke 2008: 109). The de-construction of the poem can be seen in many aspects of the empirical study and also the realization of the affective qualities of the poem by use of illustration which was found to be extremely effective and helped to refute the argument 'Zeichnen hat nichts mit Sprache zu tun' mentioned by Wicke (2008: 111), an argument which he strongly opposes.

Referring to Bredella he stresses the importance of the student's personal involvement and response. 'Daher sollen die verwendeten Methoden nicht nur das alleinige Verstehen eines Textes ermöglichen, sondern sie sollen vielmehr auch die Imagination und das fantasievolle Kombinieren der Schüler anregen' (Wicke 2008: 12). The empirical study while giving translation and understanding their due, places a great deal more emphasis on the individual response to the text and articulation of that response through the use of the *Meinungs-*, and *Vorstellungs- and Affektive Karten*.

4.6.3 Poetry, Pronunciation, Articulation

⁴⁹ In the final stages of the empirical study, the final request of the pupils to hear again Johann Gottfried Herder's 'Edward' is a testament to the power of a well articulated sensitive reading.(the voice in question is that of Ben Becke).

Among the more pragmatic and necessary aspects of second language acquisition is that of pronunciation. Woore (2007) argues ‘that the ability to read L2 words aloud with the correct pronunciation is more than simply ‘icing on the cake of L2 acquisition’ (Woore 2007: 177). He states that at higher levels this lack of ability results in failure to generate correct phonological forms for new words. Learner autonomy is also affected, resulting in an over-reliance on the teacher. Thirdly the resulting lack of self-confidence mitigates against further acquisition (cf. Woore 2007: 177).

His approach to the problem was to use a series of short German poems, written and illustrated by himself and ‘designed to appeal to the learner’s sense of fun’ (Woore 2007: 178). He used 57 examples of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and found ‘the advantage of using poems over a simple list of words lies in their motivational power [...]. The use of poems and rhymes is also advocated in other practical guides to MFL teaching (see Swarbrick, 1990; Skarbek, 1998)’ (Woore 2007: 178).

Poetry in its form and structure, using both repetition and rhyme, should serve as a stimulus to correct pronunciation. Hirschfeld (1995: 5) poses the questions ‘Was kann deshalb der frühe Fremdsprachenunterricht zur Ausspracheschulung beitragen? Wie kann dieses Ziel spielerisch erreicht werden? Wie können Ausspracheübungen harmonisch in den Unterricht integriert werden?’ It is realised that a formal academic approach to pronunciation is to be avoided ‘Übungsmonotonie und Druck zu vermeiden’ (Hirschfeld 1995: 11). Poetry is recognised as a formidable ally in answering the above questions and avoiding monotony and stress. ‘Auch Reime und kleine Gedichte eignen sich durch ihre ausgeprägte rhythmische Struktur sehr gut, sie sind mit einem hohen Behaltenseffekt verbunden und leichter reproduzierbar, auch in ihrer phonetischen Gestalt’ (Hirschfeld 1995: 15).

In the exemplars given, these *Reime und kleine Gedichte* play a major part.

Abzählreime, Kinderreime figure largely, *Eins, zwei Polizei, Hoppe hoppe Reiter,*

Morgens früh um sechs etc. Hirschfeld anticipates the objection that these may be too childish ‘wir glauben, daß sie für deutschlernende Kinder, die über dieses Alter hinaus sind, immer noch von Reiz sein können, und zwar wegen des Klanges und wegen der

Sprache, zum Teil auch wegen des Inhaltes' (Hirschfeld 1995: 5).⁵⁰ It is anticipated that through the medium of these verses and physical activities the students become familiarised with the intended aspects of *Aussprache*. The comments on the suitability of these verses even for older children have been borne out in the empirical study where the children enjoyed learning and performing simple verses e.g. *Auf dem Berge Sinai* and *Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las* and the teacher was able to concentrate on *Aussprache* in the context of these and other poems. Hirschfeld stresses a number of times that a complete designated course of phonetics is not what is envisioned but rather that one uses the materials to hand to develop competency. 'Sehr viele Übungen, auch nicht für die Aussprache konzipierte, eignen sich, wenn man sie entsprechend einsetzt' (Hirschfeld 1995: 17). It seems quite clear from the above, that poetry figures largely in the formation of proper pronunciation and that *Aussprache* is another of the uses of poetry in language acquisition.⁵¹

A further development is suggested by Losener, Siebaur (2009) who lay a very positive stress on listening aspects and of interpretation through articulation. 'Durch den Umgang mit Sprechgestaltungen lernen die Schülerinnen und Schüler, Gedichte hörend zu lesen. Sie erfahren, wie man beim Lesen Sprechvorstellungen entwickeln und am Text begründen kann' (Losener, Siebaur 2009: 23). The listening process assumes significant importance in the appropriation of the poem. When the text is read either quietly for oneself or aloud for the listener, a 'Gesamtklanggestalt' (Glinz 1997: 68) is created which then 'den geschriebenen Text als gesprochenen Äußerungsakt erfahrbar macht' (Losener, Siebaur 2009: 23).

The reading realizes the interpretation of the text, particularly in poetry, so that particular attention must be paid to this aspect. The authors characterise three levels of

⁵⁰ The point made may be relevant to Whiteman's (2002) already cited argument for the use of simple poetry texts in teaching adult learners.

⁵¹ One interesting and valid observation is made concerning tongue-twisters. 'Zungenbrecher sind nicht das geeignetste Material, sie sind auch für Muttersprachler schwierig und sollten nur ab und zu zur Auflockerung eingesetzt werden'. (Hirschfeld 1995:14) However the authors seem to have a soft spot for these traditional classroom fun- providers as they include two pages ((Hirschfeld 1995: 40-41) *zur Auflockerung!*

articulation, 'Das Gesagte klingt traurig oder fröhlich, der Sprecher spricht laut oder leise, seine Worte sind aufmunternd, provokativ, überzeugend' (Losener, Siebaur 2009: 23). Working from these three level the authors develop them into *Sprechformen*, words like *laut, leise, langsam, schnell* ; *Sprechstimmungen*, words like *traurig, fröhlich, ängstlich*; and *Sprechhaltungen*, words similar to *ermutigend, tadelnd, bedrohlich* (cf. Losener, Siebaur 2009: 24). All of these oral aspects need not be clearly distinguished from each other and indeed they are intermingled in the accompanying tables given in the example. The purpose of all these descriptions is to further a better articulation of the text thus revealing as many of its implications as is possible. The students, (5.- 6. Schuljahr) are given a short simple poem, Ende's *Die Kaulquappe* and are asked to place cards from the list of words in the abovementioned tables which will best suit the articulation of that line or phrase. Discussion follows on the suitability of these words and the effect of this articulation and the different interpretations are discussed. 'In den Diskussionen konnten die Schüler die Erfahrung machen, dass das jeweilige Verständnis des Gedichts von der Art und Weise abhängt, wie man es spricht bzw. innerlich hört' (Losener, Siebaur 2009: 25).

This would appear to be a very productive, affective-based approach to listening skills affording scope for dialogue, enhancement of vocabulary, and also appreciation. There is a somewhat similar approach in the empirical study in the use of *Wörterwände*, e.g. *das Gedicht* (appendix 19) and *der Vater* (appendix 13) and others. These help to focus on vocabulary acquisition, sentence-structure and affective response and play a strong role in second language acquisition.

4.6.4 Poetry as Social Discourse

An overview of the role of literature in language study (Kramsch, Kramsch, 2000) is based on the articles published in the *Modern Language Journal* (MLJ) between 1916 and 1999. It is based on the American pedagogical experience and indicates how the use of literature in foreign language learning has been viewed down through the years,

for the aesthetic education of the few (1910s), for the literacy of the many (1920s), for moral and vocational uplift (1930s-1940s), for ideational content (1950s), for humanistic inspiration (1960s-1970s), and for providing an 'authentic' experience of the target culture (1980s-1990s). (Kramsch, Kramsch 2000: 553).

An earlier study, Kramsch (1985) is mentioned which showed ‘ how whole-class brainstorming, small group work, and pair work could help students construct and negotiate the appropriate schemata of understanding, on the basis of which they could then interpret the text in its discursive and aesthetic structure’ (Kramsch, Kramsch 2000: 567). These forms of activity seem to approximate quite closely to the work done in the empirical study albeit at a very preliminary level.

In the same study (Kramsch 1985), the author outlines an approach to literary texts in the classroom grounded on ‘the teaching of language as social discourse’ (Kramsch 1985: 356). Although the exemplar chosen is not a poem but rather the Grimms’ literary version of Hänsel and Gretel, the approach appears to validate that taken in the empirical study. The empirical study concerns itself with the individual personal appropriation of the poem through dialogue with others. Kramsch cites Ricoeur, ‘interpretation is a dialectic dynamic process by which the reader surpasses both explanation and understanding and “appropriates” the text for himself’ (Kramsch 1985: 357). Although Kramsch is dealing with older students in the third or fourth semester of college instruction, there are many parallels between her method and that of the empirical study. There is an awareness of the need for techniques to involve the students personally in the interpretation and evaluation of texts, there is a respect for the student’s contribution, there is a strong emphasis on dialogue and negotiation of meaning, there is a recognition of the ambiguity of interpretation, there is space for interpretive role-playing and exploring discourse forms and especially the importance of group interaction. ‘A discourse perspective can help build the social reality of the student group and at the same time sensitize each student to the esthetic [sic], game-like quality of all language interaction’ (Kramsch 1985: 364). This would imply that our achievements in thus appropriating literary texts, for Kramch’s students ,Hänsel and Gretel, for the empirical study’s younger- age students, the designated poems, augurs well for broader second language acquisition.

Bordin Mathieu (1968) gives a striking example of the use of poetry in engaging younger students’ interaction with the text and the development of their *Sprachfähigkeit*. The designated class consisted of twelve-to-fifteen year old high school students and the interaction between teacher and class was observed by forty-two selected college students. Their observations were collated to give an extremely detailed

account of the lesson. Mathieu clarifies his intentions in a series of *Leitzätze* of which number four states

Durch genaues Lesen, durch sorgfältig formulierte Fragen, durch Diskussion und Erläuterung, in denen auch der Meinung des Lernenden Rechnung getragen wird, soll versucht werden, die Lese-, Hör-, und Verständnisfähigkeit, ja, und auch den Geschmack, für die Dichtung als geistig-aesthetisches Erlebnis zu wecken und zu entwickeln. (Bordin Mathieu 1968: 712)

The techniques used in questioning are all enumerated in the account and serve as a guide for enabling students to extend the boundaries of their knowledge and practice. Among these techniques are ‘Reference to Known’ (*Vorwissen* in the empirical study), ‘Prompts and Cues’, ‘Synonyms (*Vergleichen* in empirical study), Visualization (*Abbildungen* in empirical study), ‘Enumeration’, ‘Derivation’, ‘Expansion’, ‘Multiple Choice’. The account states, ‘T. [teacher] continues to explain vocabulary by these techniques often combining several together. Except for the meaning of *sanft*, only German is used during the entire twenty minutes devoted to the poem’ (Bordin Mathieu 1968: 715). Over the next two lessons he goes further into the implications of the poem and develops the pupils’ appreciation of the content.

It is a masterful example of productive questioning and obviously very effective in stimulating the students’ *Sprachfähigkeit* and their response to the poem. It might be suggested however, that the Teacher/Student role is the traditional one, with the teacher as guide leading the students to a designated conclusion. There is an absence of inter-group participation and a lack of initiatory dialogue from the students. There is also little connection made with form, rhythm or presentation and the poem, although read a number of times, is regarded more as something to be read than to be spoken and enjoyed. There is not a great deal of engagement with that ‘literariness’ mentioned in Kramersch (2000: 569) ‘But the poetic function of language [...] namely, its literariness- has remained largely invisible up to now’. While there is much to be learned from the techniques of questioning shown in Bordin- Mathieu (1968), the empirical study develops this further, suggesting that that deeper engagement with ‘literariness’, even with junior students, is both possible and productive.

4.7.1 Warum? Wann? Was? Wie? A Warning Against Misuse

Writing on ‘Literature im Anfaengerunterricht’ (by which he means ‘mit älteren Schülern der High School oder mit Studenten im College’) Lotze (1975: 8) puts the four questions *Warum? Wann? Was? and Wie?* concerning the introduction of literature

into the study programme. In a gentle reminder in the face of the then very much advocated Communicative Competence approach he asks ‘warum neben der Besprechung von Kinobesuchen, Dialogen am Post- und Bankschalter oder Fahrtenkauf auch dem Gedicht oder einem anderen Literaturwerk ein Platz eingeräumt werden sollte’. (Lotze 1975: 5). In its favour he claims ‘Mit dem dichterischen Kunstwerk wird dem Lernenden die höchste Form sprachlicher Gestaltung geboten, und er erkennt, dass Sprache mehr als nur Mittel trivialer Kommunikation ist’ (Lotze 1975:5). The second half of the quotation might be questionable in that *Sprache* does not deserve the ‘nur Mittel trivialer Kommunikation’ comment although of course one would agree that Literature can provoke, as we have mentioned, the most intense *Kommunikationen* between reader and text.

On the subject of *Wann?* Lotze shows how the most minimalist poem, Ernst Jandl’s *Kriegsgedicht*, consisting of two words *Krieg* and *Mai* and the two dates 1944 and 1945, can be used. ‘Dabei wird deutlich, wie man selbst bei äusserst beschränktem Vokabular ein Gefühl für sprachkünstlerischen Ausdruck zu wecken vermag’ (Lotze 1975: 5).⁵² He claims ‘Ein Sprachkunstwerk kann hier in Kapselform Wesentliches aussagen [and can give] einen Einblick in die Kultur der Zielsprache‘ (Lotze 1975: 6, brackets not in original). Piedmont (1970) is also an advocate for the introduction of *Konkrete Gedichte* in the elementary classes. ‘Ich bin [...] zu der Überzeugung gelangt, dass konkrete Poesie wertvolle Hilfe im Anfangsunterricht leisten kann’ (Piedmont 1970: 126). Thus poetry can be introduced even when the students have a very limited competency in the second language

Lotze cites Hester (1972: 291) ‘The capacity to assimilate the art of literature in the foreign language begins in the elementary class’ (Lotze 1975: 7) thus helping to validate the approach in the empirical study where poetry plays a role within the first elementary lessons. He cites Holby’s (1968: 477) five general criteria for when the student is ready to engage with literary texts.⁵³ These five criteria although intended for

⁵² Jandl’s poem is also cited as a Laut-Gedicht in Piedmont (1970: 127) and Bredella (1987: 175) states ‘Da literarischen Texte viel von dem Leser an Tätigkeiten und Ergänzungen verlangen, kommen sie oft auch mit wenigen Worten aus, was für den Fremdsprachenunterricht nicht unwichtig ist.’

⁵³ (a) ‘Wenn er mit Wortschatz und Satzbau der Zielsprache genügend vertraut ist, um das gewählte Beispiel zu verstehen, (b) wenn er den Text mit Genuss lesen kann, (c) wenn er fähig ist, die Aussage des Dichters zu begreifen, (d) wenn er mit Verständnis ausgewählte Werke englischer oder amerikanischer Autoren gelesen hat, die er zum Vergleich heranziehen kann und (e) wenn er wenigstens eine gewisse

more senior students are equally valid and applicable to the younger students on whom the present empirical study is grounded.

Although Lotze claims ‘Das sprachliche Kunstwerk kann oft zur Erweiterung des Wortschatzes herangezogen werden und dazu beitragen, gewisse Eigenheiten von Grammatik oder Struktur zu verdeutlichen‘ (Lotze 1975: 9), he warns against, ‘eine gewisse Gefahr: Der Lehrende muß sich davor hüten, das Literaturwerk zum bloß sprachlichen Übungsmaterial zu degradieren. Pattern drills haben kaum einen Platz im Rilke-Gedicht‘ (Lotze 1975: 9). So that, while we are grateful for this *Bereicherung* in language acquisition we should not allow it to take over from our appropriation of the poetry.

Kramsch and Nolden (1994) also warn against this tendency to use literature merely as grammatical example when ‘Brechts parable “Wenn die Haifische Menschen waeren” becomes reduced to a pool of subjunctives’ (Kramsch and Nolden 1994: 29). Although they allow that ‘Culture and literature are making a comeback in language instruction’⁵⁴ (Kramsch and Nolden 1994: 28), they maintain that the traditional literature/language dichotomy still remains. ‘Literary texts are hardly ever approached as stylistic processes of negotiated meaning between a foreign cultural text and its reader’ (Kramsch and Nolden 1994: 29). They advocate the use of ‘Oppositional Practice’ and in the example given they use the prose narrative *Deutsche Kastanien* by Yueksel Pazarkaya. The students are asked to reconstruct the story giving their own interpretation of the events and the implications involved. Despite the limitations of the students, the authors claim for the two examples of students’ work given, that they ‘show how the discourse ability of foreign writers [i.e. here American students approaching a German text] can sometimes *far exceed their linguistic abilities*’ (Kramsch and Nolden 1994: 33, italics not in original).

This reconstruction and re-evaluation in terms of the values of the individual, can be seen in the Meinungs- and Affektive Karten aspects of the empirical study. Were one to

Vorstellung davon hat, was es mit literarischer Gestaltung auf sich hat‘ (cited in Lotze 1975: 7, bracketed letters not in original)

⁵⁴ Schultz, Jean-Marie (1996) agrees ‘After a considerable period of uncertainty about the appropriateness of literary texts for lower-division college language curricula (ACTFL Guidelines, Kramsch “Texts” 356, Barnett “Language” 10, Rice 13), teachers are again turning to literature as a useful tool for language acquisition at the beginning and intermediate levels (Rice)’ (Schultz 1996: 920)

chose the most striking example, it might be the re-evocation of the *Erlkönigs Töchter* scene by one young student using the illustration technique (cf. appendix 29, and also Chapter five, 9.4, footnote 81.)

4.7.2 Poetry and Performance: A Catalyst of Creativity

The *performance* of poetry can figure largely in second language acquisition. Although Elting and Firkins (2006) are concerned mainly with English Language Learners (ELL), their findings have relevance for the learners of any foreign language, in this case *Deutsch*. They consider poetry as an important pedagogical resource in its own right. ‘The importance of verbal art in extending the semantic resources of a community has been a central focus of literary scholarship’ (Elting and Firkins 2006: 128). Seen in this light they suggest poetry has ‘not only the ability to develop a feeling for language [...] but also considerable benefits in language learning such as increased fluency in the language and greater confidence for using English as a tool for communication’ (Elting and Firkins 2006: 128). They speak of the desired reaction of the student as ‘response’ rather than ‘criticism’ and regard the poem as ‘a catalyst of creativity rather than an object for deconstruction’ (Elting and Firkins 2006: 129).

Much of their methodology, use of group, dramatized reading, division of poem into parts, exploration of characters, use of gesture and tone are paralleled in the empirical study, especially in the use of *Vorstellungs-* and *Affektive-Karten*. They categorise the language outcomes of this activity, the uses of poetry as it were, as ‘co-operative learning, [...] pronunciation benefits, the honing of listening skills and the development of writing skills through scriptwriting, all of which are centered in a goal oriented activity’ (Elting and Firkins 2006: 134). The empirical study would hope to display evidence of an increase in these skills and in addition show an advance in communicative- and self-confidence by giving prominence to poetry and its performance in the language classroom.

In introducing the technique of *Fantasiereise* (cf. below) Czerny (2006) brings another potentially creative aspect to the child’s response. Although the poem chosen, Karl Krowlows’ *Kurzes Unwetter* is perhaps a little too sophisticated for the Irish primary school student in both *Bildlichkeit* and *Inhalt*, the variety of approach and especially the link with *Musikalitaet* which he later develops would serve equally well in addressing a

slightly simpler lyric piece. There is first a ‘Fantasiereise zur Einstimmung in die Beschaeftigung mit dem Gedicht’ (Czerny 2006: 34) where the students close their eyes and the teacher creates the scene and setting of the poem in imaginative prose. As an alternative or perhaps additional input the storm sequence of Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony could be played and the students invited to sketch a response to the music heard-this can be done in very simple form lines, strokes, dashes. After which they discuss their shared results. The children go on to discuss the metaphors contained in the verses. The apocalyptic visions contained in the poem ‘liegen nicht im unmittelbaren Erfahrungsbereich der Schüler’(Czerny 2000: 35) so it is suggested that they be introduced to a corresponding picture, in this case the ‘Apokalyptische Landschaft von Ludwig Meidner’ included as an overhead transparency (Czerny 2000: 35). This is somewhat akin to Cordes (2009) use of Balhaus’ illustrations (cf. below 4.8.2). But it is in the final suggestions for appropriating the rhythm of the poem that a totally different approach to *Musikalitaet* is posited.

Rhythmus ist ein fundamental körperliches Erlebnis, weshalb sich hier „body-percussion“ als Ausdrucksmittel anbietet. Die Schüler sollen jede Strophe mit „körpereigenen“ Instrumenten wie Klatschen, Klopfen, Streichen, Stampfen rhythmisch begleiten (Czerny 2000: 35).

This is a striking method of developing rhythmic awareness and added to the already mentioned techniques of *Fantasiereise* and the frequently recurring uses of drawings, illustrations and ensuing dialogue should help in the personal appropriation of the poem. It would also seem a useful addition to the theories on articulation in paragraph 4.6.3. (Losener, Siebaur 2009: 25). It is interesting to note that in the children’s suggestions for the *Vorstellungskarte* (empirical study, chapter 5: 7.3) these aspects are particularly mentioned.

Male oder zeichne ein Bild

Klatsche oder klopfe den Rythmus.

4.7.3 The Richness of the Poetic Text, *Mehrdeutigkeit*

Schultz (1996) suggests that researchers are now ‘interested in the potential of literature to enhance grammar and vocabulary acquisition, to serve as a catalyst for oral discussion and written expression, to foster cultural understanding, and *ultimately to increase the benefits of studying a foreign language*’ (Schultz 1996: 920, italics not in original). Apart from the obvious benefits for pronunciation (discussed above, 4.6.3), it

is stated that the potential of poetry goes far beyond this. 'The syntactic manipulations of poetry and its specialized vocabulary can contribute to the language acquisition process, providing students with intense lessons in grammar and vocabulary' (Schultz 1996: 921). The decoding of a poetic text and the interpretative reasoning involved hones analytical skills. Some teachers might be wary of introducing poetry, or as Schultz, citing Lotman and Riffaterre, terms it, 'a multipli-coded, secondary modelling system' (Schultz 1996: 922) but it is argued that it is 'precisely the richness of the poetic text, however, that makes it so positive a vehicle for language acquisition and the encouragement of higher-level cognitive skills' (Schultz 1996: 922).

Rosenblatt is again referred to here, 'aesthetic' versus 'efferent' readings, and the importance of the reader's participation in the text. The use of 'bottom- up' strategies in dealing with poetic texts, it is suggested, helps guard against faulty interpretation and perhaps intensifies the interaction with the text.⁵⁵ Schultz claims that 'many of us in fact, have no doubt noted that an individual responding to a text written in a foreign language will often have more acute insights than a native speaker responding to the same text' (Schultz 1996: 924)

Schultz then goes into the methodology used in teaching poetry (in this case in French) and involves the students' experiences in preparing to engage with the text. The next step 'explication de texte' centres not so much on 'what the poem says but on how the poem says it' (Schultz 1996: 928). This rather advanced method is paralleled in the empirical study at a more suitable level for primary students, by the *Meinungs-* and *Affektive Karten*. In both the 'explication de texte' and these *Karten* there is a definite structure designed to help the student interact with the text. Schultz then proceeds to develop creative writing with the students. This has not been attempted in the empirical study but the creativity of the students is channelled into the various interpretations, illustrative or performance-based using the *Hinweise* contained in the *Vorstellungskarten*.

⁵⁵ The present writer has had his own experience of this when reading the Harry Potter novels *auf Deutsch*. The inherent difficulties of close engagement with the text leads to a slower surer reading and a deeper appreciation of the invention and skilful story-telling that might not have been as obvious had he read the books in English. In fact he started the first book in English and found it uninteresting. *Aber auf Deutsch war die Stimmung ganz anders!*

The designated 213 edition of *Praxis Deutsch, Zeitschrift für den Deutschunterricht* in its editorial ‘stellt deshalb verschiedene Möglichkeiten vor-, wie Schüler (und Lehrende) ein fundiertes Verständnis von Gedichten entwickeln können’(Praxis Deutsch 2009: 1). Kammler (2009) in defining the characteristics of lyric poetry⁵⁶ also shows their efficacy in posing ‘eine besondere Herausforderung an die Verstehenskompetenz’ (Kammler 2009: 5). He argues that the playful interactions of speech in poetry and its very variety offer the student an opportunity to avoid definite unequivocal interpretation. This is one of the dangers mentioned in Lyrikunterricht ‘daß es eine richtige und von den Probanden möglichst zu erreichende Interpretation gibt’ (Fingerhut 2007:165, cited in Kammler 2009: 4). Far from the one rigid interpretation, the experience of poetry in its multiplicity of effect, invites variety of response ‘und dass aus diesem Zusammenspiel Mehrdeutigkeit resultiert’ (Kammler 2009: 5). He does caution ‘ohne sie mit Beliebigkeit zu verwechseln oder auf Eindeutigkeit zu reduzieren’ (Kammler 2009: 5), yet maintains that this multi-dimensional aspect is an important goal in *Deutschunterricht*. This willingness to listen and be open to valid alternative approaches is a hallmark of the constructivist approach adopted in the empirical study.

Lyric poetry furthers ‘Begegnung mit uns selbst’. The quotation comes from the lyric poet Domin who states that the lyric serves as a ‘*magischen Gebrauchsartikel, ein Lebens-Mittel, das uns dem Alltag entreißen könne und zur Begegnung mit uns selbst einlade*’ (Domin 1993: 26, cited in Kammler 2009: 5, italics in original). This aspect has been covered earlier and extensively in 4.1.5. Kammler claims that this self -awareness intensifies with puberty.’So haben Kinder im Grundschulalter noch ein starkes Interesse an klanglichen und rhythmischen Figuren, das in der Sekundarstufe I dem Interesse an einer “interessanten Aussage” weicht’ (Kammler 2009: 5). As Sekundarstufe I is not within the remit of the empirical study, the concentration remained firmly ‘an klanglichen und rhythmischen Figuren’.

4.8.1. Response to Text, Dialogue, Appropriation

57

- ‘die relative Kürze
- die Abweichung von der Alltagssprache (z.B. durch Reim, metrum, Lautmalerei, Inversion, Rhythmisierung)
- die besondere Verdichtung durch leitmotivische Wiederholungen und gezielte Variation
- die besondere Häufigkeit und Bedeutung bildlicher Rede
- und schließlich die Nähe zur Musik, die schon im Begriff der Lyric anklingt’ (Kammler 2009: 5).
-

Although some of what has been treated above, as previously stated, is posited for university students and third level education, a great deal of the theoretical underpinning and indeed some of the practical application, is relevant to *Anfangsunterricht*. Thus Sorenson (1991)

To expect students in their third year of German to have a firm grasp on the refinements of the text, including specific connotations, associations, and allusions, is hardly realistic. At this level of introduction to lyric texts it is more reasonable to encourage students to experience the poem, to consider their own response to the text and to use this response as the basis for discussion, analysis, and understanding of the work. (Sorenson 1991: 31)

This is very close to the approach adopted in the empirical study in which the *Karten* and Dialogue are used to guide and encourage the younger students to experience the poem as indicated above for the third year students. Sorenson calls for an interactive approach which ‘leads students away from a dependence on the authority of the teacher’ (Sorenson 1991: 32). There is also emphasis given to the oral component of lyrical poetry ‘Rhythm and sound are present even if cognitive understanding is incomplete’ (Sorenson 1991: 32). And the performance aspect, with gestures and facial expression, is also stressed as helping toward comprehension. Somewhat surprisingly at this level, the value of illustration is recognized. ‘Sometimes it is effective to draw a picture, at other times to try to express a visual image verbally’ (Sorenson 1991: 32). The emphasis throughout is not so much on formal analysis as the aesthetic response to the text. This is also prefigured in Kramersch (1985).

There can be no classroom dialogue on the level of stylistic, lexical, or grammatical facts, only on the level of the students' construction of them for an interpretation of the text. Since values and beliefs cannot be made explicit by direct questioning, the teacher's responsibility is to find a discourse context within which the readers' schemata can be discussed in a non-threatening manner. (Kramersch 1985: 361)

The importance of dialogue figures again in Kramersch's discussion of the interplay of intentionalities. Ricoeur (1976) is cited on the difference between explaining a text and understanding it. ‘Explanation is more directed towards the analytic structure of the text, understanding is more directed to the intentional unity of discourse’ (Ricoeur 1976: 74). The necessity of open discussion and negotiation of meaning is essential in achieving an understanding of the values, intentions and beliefs embedded in the text. Kramersch agrees with Ricoeur in claiming that interpretation ‘is a dialectic dynamic process by which the reader surpasses both explanation and understanding and “appropriates” the text for himself’ (Kramersch 1985: 357) This is, in a nutshell, the

premise of the empirical study in which the student, through dialogue and ongoing evaluation both explains and understands the text and then in the final stages of internalisation appropriates the poem individually.

4.8.2 The use of Illustration

A variation on the use of illustration in appropriating poetry is suggested by Cordes (2009) in which the children are encouraged to make their individual selection of verses from Goethe's *Gefunden*. These are illustrated and then intended to be exchanged and commented upon by the class members. This method of developing communicative competence has been used in the empirical study and the use of illustration is highly recommended. The variation mentioned above is based on comparison. Pictures from the *Bilderbuch, Gefunden* (2003) created by Verena Ballhaus are introduced. The children then compare their pictures with those of Ballhaus. 'Schnell bemerkten die Schüler, dass Verena Ballhaus' Interpretation sehr individuelle Züge zeigt' (Cordes 2009: 20) and this motivated some children to adopt a more abstract yet equally effective interpretation. The quality of the discourse involved is not that of *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* and would be beyond the target range of the Irish Primary School but a modification of the language used and questioned posed, could certainly be used to good effect in second language acquisition. This underlines the vital role that illustration plays in motivating dialogue and justifies its use in the empirical study in connection with the childrens' own illustrations of *Erlkönig*, *Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet*, and *Auf dem Berge Sinai*.

Lencová (2002) is in agreement on the importance of illustration, 'Bei der Übertragung des Textes in eine Zeichnung kommt es zu einem tieferen Verständnis, der Text findet den Weg zum Schüler, der auf diese Weise mit ihm "ins Gespräch" kommt' (Lencová 2002: 13). Lencová uses the poem principally as discourse initiation. There is no close examination of the text, Heinz Janische's *Auf der Schaukel*. It serves rather as the encouragement of the children to realise their visions of *Traumland* in sketches. These serve for discussion and explanation. 'Warum hast du dein Traumland als Blumenland gezeichnet?' 'Mich faszinieren die Blumen und die ganze Pflanzenwelt' (Lencová 2002: 13). The children themselves note 'Alle Zeichnungen fanden sie interessant, weil sie Verrchiedenes über ihre Mitschüler und Mitschülerinnen erfahren konnten' (Lencová 2002: 13 italics not in original). Janisch's *Das Kopftuch meiner Großmutter* is treated in

a similar fashion with the children drawing the content of the poem and discussion ensuing. In the *Zielsetzung* one can also use the drawings in a broader context e.g. 'Menschliche Beziehungen', 'Liebe zu den Großeltern', 'Leben auf dem Lande', 'Tiere' (Lencová 2002: 17). Lencová suggests that as a result of these uniquely independent drawings the students take the content of the individual words, and give them their own personal impression and in so doing manage to retain them much longer in their memory (Lencová 2002: 13). There is also the advantage for the less able student

Die Lernenden sind oft in der Lage, auch das zu zeichnen, was sie sprachlich nicht voellig beherrschen; der interpretatorische Wert der Zeichnung kann eine Bruecke zum selbststaendigen Sprechen darstellen, die Zeichnungen dienen als Grundlage fuer freie Äußerungen. (Lencová 2002: 17)

Illustration is not necessarily confined to sketching or colouring. Baurmann (2009) uses the action of a bouncing ball to enhance the imagery in Josef Guggenmos' poem, *Mein Ball*. This poem, he claims, 'behandelt ein vertrautes Thema und besitzt eine einfache Sprache und gleichförmige Struktur, eine ideale Ausgangslage für gestalterisch Verfahren, die auf Textverstehen zielen' (Baurmann 2009: 12). The bouncing ball image and the rhyming end-words suit the younger children who recognise (albeit unconsciously) 'Muster der vertrauten Abzählverse und Fingerspiele' (Baurmann 2009: 12). A ball is introduced and the bouncing action, mirrored in the poem, is clear to be seen. As the ball reaches the heights mentioned in the poem *hoch wie ein Mann, hoch wie eine Kuh, hoch wie ein Kalb*, the children perform suitable gestures to indicate the heights. The involvement with physical movement is paralleled by the intonation of each line. 'Wie mein Ball springt – das kann ich auch im Sprechen ausdrücken' (Baurmann 2009: 14), presumably using loudest intonation as the ball is bounced hard and diminishing in vocal strength as the ball *ruht er sich aus*. Writing is introduced as the children are asked to write *Mann, Maus, Laus, Kuh, Kalb* in the order they follow in the poem. They are also asked to write each line in such a way as to reflect the diminishing bounce of the ball 'Der Ball springt immer weniger hoch. Zeige das durch deine schrift' (Baurmann 2009: 15).

Thus one simple poem is approached through a variety of form, physical movement, intonation, repetition and end-rhyme, script⁵⁷, to ensure the appropriation of the poem by the children. Each approach is suitable for the age-group envisioned (Ab1. Schuljahr)

⁵⁷ Specifically script rather than writing as the children are encouraged to write the lines concerning the biggest bounce in very large letters and the other lines in diminishing size to reflect the lessening height of the bounce.

and suitable poems are suggested for comparison. ‘Die gleiche “fallende Bewegung” findet sich etwa auch in der letzten Strophe des Gedichts *Das Feuer* von James Krüss’ (Baurmann 2009:16). This poem reflecting the dying down of the fire might be more suitable for a more senior class as the vocabulary is considerably more difficult. A more suitable poem for this junior standard might be the other title suggested, Alfred Könner’s *Ein Stückchen noch...* which is much shorter and has a much easier vocabulary. Bauerman’s contribution is to make much more aware the multiplicity of ways in which a poem may be appropriated.

4.8.3 ‘*Tanzend*’

While there are many practical advantages and ways in which poetry contributes significantly to second language acquisition we are reminded that it is not the pragmatic, measurable, schematic contribution that is its greatest value. ‘Ein Gedicht hat nicht unbedingt die Funktion, den Wortschatz zu erweitern oder ein grammatikalisches Problem zu bearbeiten’ (Jonen-Dittmar 1996: 4). This would be to disregard the intrinsic power and variability of language itself, language at its most intense expression. ‘Lyrikstunden koennen durch wenige Mittel das ganz Besondere der gedichteten Sprache vermitteln’ (Jonen-Dittmar 1996: 4). It is not a question of learning new words, of appreciating structure, of pronouncing properly but of being seduced, as Kirsch (1996) has it ‘Gedichte zeigen aber auch die Magie der Sprache, unsere Verführbarkeit durch sie’ (Kirsch: 1996).

Poetry’s inclusion in *Fremdsprachenunterricht* should not be pleaded for on the basis of grammatical usefulness, but rather should be regarded as a celebration of language, a joyful *spielerisch* appreciation of its many and varied possibilities. Language acquisition should be realised, not in the extraction of formal rules and grammatical examples from the text but rather in the *Äußerung* of individual response to it, in the diversity in interpretation and presentation and in the social interaction of discussion and exchange. The empirical study attempts to show how this can be done, with relatively simple but suitable poems, under helpful direction, by children with limited competence in the foreign language.

There is a particularly apt expression in the statement from Jonen-Dittmar, ‘Da können dann die Gedichte zu Brücken in die fremde Kultur werden, Brücken, die vertrauensvoll

betreten werden, über die man sich tanzend bewegt' (Jonen-Dittmar 1996: 4). 'Tanzend' captures exactly the enjoyable, appreciative, expressive approach to language acquisition that is involved in the empirical study's approach to the inclusion of poetry as an essential component in *Fremdsprachenunterricht*.

Section Four: A Practical Methodology

4.9.1 A Sociocultural Constructivist Approach: Vygotsky/ Gal'perin

The methodology proposed for the following qualitative empirical research is based on a sociocultural constructivist approach and particularly on the findings of Lev Vygotsky and Piotr Gal'perin. It may be of value to reprise the main points that one might expect to find in such a methodology.

Vygotsky principles informing the methodology:

- The idea of social interaction/ that we learn from our environment and from other people.
- The idea of the word. The importance of the word in formulating and developing thought. Expression of ideas can lead to the reconsideration and evaluation of them.
- The importance of dialogue, group interaction.
- The continuing examination and assessment of the task in hand (genetic method).
- Ideas on conceptual formation, not expecting the children to appropriate adult concepts.
- Realization that concepts are gradual and the appropriation of a concept

is an ongoing process. In the case of poetry, the importance of the poem itself rather than concepts of poetry.

- Recognition of role of teacher or more knowledgeable other in the extending of the child's Z.P.D.
- The importance of Mediation whether in teacher dyad or group interaction. Also the importance of knowing when mediation is not necessary.
- The importance of Internalization when the poem is appropriated and that it is the child's individualized version of the poem that results.

One might add to the above, the following aspects of constructivist principles that also inform the methodology in this study:

- Reappraisal of the roles of teacher and student, that students are 'only listening' and concepts of teacher informant, pupil recipient as 'pouring from pitcher into empty vessel' are no longer tenable.
- Active involvement and owning of responsibility by the learner.
- Problem-posing education rather than 'banking'. Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis.
- Major emphasis on dialogue.
- Building from what is already known.
- Recognition of value of child's input resulting in
- Openness to alternative voice, respect for expression of this, recognition of particular child's contribution, i.e. referring to 'John's very good idea' or 'Maria's helpful suggestion' and incorporating the children's

suggestions in posters, cards etc. thus giving them validation.

- The recognition that the importance lies not so much in the correct carrying out of the task but the higher cognitive process that emerges from the interaction.
- Ability to redirect patently invalid assumptions
- Danger of 'bricolage' and 'tinkering' (Windschitl 2003: 138) i.e. the selecting of particular aspects of constructivist theory but in a superficial use. One might invoke the children's aid in creating the cards and yet totally dominate their usage.
- Acceptance of 'incomplete understandings' i.e. that the teacher should not rush in with her own solution and perhaps not give the child enough freedom to comment.
- Acceptance of incomplete appropriations; each receives what they can from the poem in the measure of their ability to appropriate it.
- Direct instruction also has a definite role based on the teacher's considerable expertise and understanding.
- Classroom culture- what it means, the importance of participation, role realisation in both senses, extending even the layout of the furniture in facilitating group work, but also routines and habits, group and dyad formation, working methods.
- Cultivation of consciousness and self-evaluation. The necessity for reflection.

The final aspects relating to the methodology are related specifically to Gal'perin's Object Orientated Activity Theory, already treated in greater detail earlier in chapter three (Section 2.21):

- The importance of the child's activity.
- The use of psychological tools as pivot between activity and internalisation.
- The ideas of Generalization, Abbreviation, Mastery.
- Orientation, communicated thinking, dialogical thinking, acting mentally.
- SCOBA (scheme of complete orientating basis of the action)
- Knowing eventually. The child 'just knows that's how it is'

(Gal'perin 1957: 221, cited in Haenen 2001: 164).

4.9.2 Scoba cards

Central to the methodology proposed is the co-construction and use of the Scoba card. The cards are created by positing needs, what Lewin (1926) describes as 'quasi-*Bedürfnisse*' (Vygotsky 1978: 37). Lewin was describing how the child with the help of speech differs from the ape in motivation to achieve mastery of a goal. 'New motives, socially rooted and intense, provide the child with direction' (Vygotsky 1978: 37). Lewin's argument is that 'Because he is able to form quasi-needs, the child is capable of breaking the operation into its separate parts, each of which becomes an independent problem that he formulates for himself with the help of speech' (Vygotsky 1978: 37). This general theory of cognition is used in this study in a more particular application, that of an approach to the appropriation of poetry by the individual child in conjunction with the activity theory of Piotr Gal'perin. Gal'perin, as has been shown, advocated the use of Scoba cards in helping the child to master an activity. The Scoba cards help create a series of 'quasi-*Bedürfnisse*', a variety of requirements to be answered using the Scoba cards as guides. It is in the realization of these needs that the child is enabled to appropriate and internalize the poem. By repeated use of these cards it is hoped that

the procedures contained in them will be internalized and later used in the appropriation of further poems and perhaps other literary genres.

It is intended to create a series of Scoba cards:

1. *Verbenkarte*
2. *Nomenkarte*
3. *Meinungskarte*
4. *Affektive Karte*
5. *Vorstellungskarte*

Before beginning the construction of the Scoba cards it is necessary that the children be made aware of their purpose and function. Later use of the cards will deepen and clarify their understanding but even at the outset the children should be informed, as is implied in the name Scoba (scheme of complete orientating basis of the action). This corresponds to the orientation step (Rambusch 2006: 2000) or Vygotsky's 'initial verbal definition' (Vygotsky 1986: 148).

The Scoba cards are created from interaction between the class and the teacher and the interaction within the group formations. The Scoba card incorporates the necessary tools to accomplish the actions needed to perform the relevant task. The first Scoba card (on the recognition of *Nomen* in the German language) posits what the children need to know in order to recognize *Nomen*. This knowledge is accessed by self-reflection on work already done on particular texts.⁵⁸ This individual knowledge is introduced into the group format and mediated by the Teacher. A number of helpful hints are recognized, for example:

- the capitalization of Nouns,

⁵⁸ Translation point: It would be improbable that even the best of 5th and sixth primary children could fluently discuss in German, the means by which they discover how to recognize these nouns and verbs and so they are allowed to discuss them in English. Later the terms are translated into German and by dint of usage become internalized so that the German form becomes the appropriated one. An example of this is 'Foreknowledge'. The child meets a word previously encountered and knows it. 'Vorwissen' becomes the label for such words and the supplanted 'Foreknowledge' is relegated to the brain's 'recycle bin'.

- the association with the definite and indefinite article,
- the use of illustrations,
- inference from the title etc. (c.f. example of complete *Nomenkarte* Fig. 3, Chapter Five, Section 2.2)

When a sufficient number of hints have been elucidated they are put into the *Nomenkarte* in translated form. Scoba cards are devised for the use of a particular designated group and it is important that the group (in this case 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th classes Ballymurphy N.S.) is involved in the creation of its own *Nomenkarte*. The *Nomenkarte* is not then, a fixed universal entity but must be recreated with each new class and take account of each new circumstance, The *Verbenkarte* would be formed in the same manner, deriving from the childrens' interaction with verbs, again in a simple translation piece. Hints might be derived from

- verb endings: the infinitive en, and the personal endings : e, st, t,t,t, en, en, en, t,
- position in sentence,
- sound similarity to other languages,
- context etc. (c.f. example of full *Verbenkarte* in Fig.4 Chapter Five, Section 3.3)

These cards as they are created, are printed out and given to the child as prompts or aide-memoirs or as stated above, aids to the resolution of the created *quasi-Bedürfnisse*. The *quasi-Bedürfnisse* in question are the recognition and translation of *Nomen* and *Verben* in a line, a verse or a short poem⁵⁹. The card content, through use will eventually become internalized. Much of the use of the Scoba card as a pivotal tool, is to give some form of scaffolding and to instill confidence that there is a way around the problem of appropriating a poem, that there is a method that can be used. But hopefully later on, as the Scoba card content becomes internalized, the child will automatically use those structures without adverting to the fact that she is using them. Thus while the child may depend at the beginning very much on Scoba card content, in the later stages, as

⁵⁹ All of the above actions can be performed using a line, a verse or a short poem. In order to avoid the rather clumsy use of all three terms in the text it may be helpful to substitute just 'verse' bearing in mind that the applications also apply to line and poem. There may also occur a situation where the account might be better held over until the entire poem has been translated, verse by verse.

Gal'perin suggested, the steps are generalised, abbreviated and mastery ensues (Haenen 2001: 160). With the help of these two initial cards the children are enabled to take the first step in approaching the poem, that of translation.

4.9.3 Translation: *Nomen* and *Verbenkarten*

Using both cards the child should be able to attempt the translation into English of the designated verse. Depending on the difficulty of the content this can be done individually or can be a dyad or group task. The requirement is to clarify the verse's content. It also helps clarify whether or not the basic content is understood. As a verse is a relatively short piece, it is possible to set word recognition tests with a limited number of words and thus pinpoint any particular or general difficulties that are encountered. The test element can be converted into a game by using various formats, circles, coloured squares, spider-webs etc. rather than the stereotyped word lists. Group challenges also provide stimuli for learning. The aim is to ensure that each child has grasped the meaning of the words or phrases and can give an approximate translation of the verse before going on to the next step, that of the account. There is also the distinct possibility that a child may not need to translate every word in the line or phrase but that she can instinctively 'jump' to a correct conclusion once she masters part of a phrase.

4.5.4 Account: *Meinungskarte*

This next step, the account of the verse, might also be considered as releasing its meaning or implication, 'What it is actually about'. By so doing, one encourages close reading but also an element of abstraction.⁶⁰ An important issue here is that of language and the study undertakes to examine whether the account section could be done *auf Deutsch*. To do this we use the *Meinungskarte* which, along with the vocabulary encountered already in the first two cards may enable the individual child to complete her own simple account of the content.

As with the *Nomen* and *Verbenkarte*, the *Meinungskarte* is formed by interaction with the individual and group. A sample verse is selected and phrases are elicited from the

⁶⁰ It would be desirable, for example, in the short poem 'Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las' that the child would not alone give content, but would recognise the joke element of the poem's repeating pattern.

children that would help them in writing an account of the verse. One or two are suggested but the majority of the phrases should come from the children themselves. Here again they are creating the *quasi- Bedürfnisse* that they will require to perform a particular action i.e. create their own account of the verse. The children themselves are instigators in their own development. ‘The systematic act of documenting and thinking about performance is the catalyst and mediator for developing and sharpening one’s strategies’ (Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 462). Thus the teacher is not as ‘banker’, giving them a prescriptive list of requirements but rather one based on their own self-discovered, co-constructed needs. This work will probably need to be approached in L1 at first and then later translated into German (L3). It is important that all suggestions be treated with respect and improbable or ineffective strategies be deflected with tact. Confrey (1990: 111) writes from the point of view of a mathematics instructor but her findings are equally relevant to our constructions in the field of literary analysis, albeit our constructions are indeed very simple and our literary analysis is pitched at the level of the primary school student.

From a more knowledgeable vantage point, we can claim that these constructions of our students are weak; they both lack internal consistency and explain only a limited range of phenomena. As mathematics educators, we must thereby promote in our students the development of more powerful and effective constructions. To do this, we must define what is meant by a more powerful and effective construction and attend to how the promotion of these constructions might be achieved. (Confrey 1990: 111)

It is envisaged that the *Meinungskarte* will eventually comprise ten to twelve suitable phrases by the use of which, and in tandem with the vocabulary translations from the two previous Nomen and Verben cards, an account of the verse can be constructed *auf Deutsch*. Phrases such as ‘*Dieses Gedicht handelt von...*’, ‘*In der ersten Strophe...*’, ‘*Am Ende des Gedichts ...*’ may prove useful but it is for the children themselves to construct the phrases they most need to convey their intention.

From the perspective of emergent grammar, then, learning an additional language is about enhancing one’s repertoire of fragments and patterns that enables participation in a wider range of communicative activities. It is not about building up a complete and perfect grammar in order to produce well formed sentences. *Speakers are able to regularly shape their communicative artifacts to fit their own meaning making needs.* Grammar is at their service and not the other way around. (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 17, italics not in original)

It should be stressed that the effectiveness of these Scoba cards depends on their repeated use in performing the action required, e.g. recognition of *Nomen*, recognition

of *Verben*, rendering an account of the content etc. It is not a question of memorization but of internalization through repeated use.

Memorization of the definition of the concept is insufficient knowledge to promote language development. Full mastery of a concept progresses through a series of concrete activities that results in its internalization. These activities normally include verbalization of the concept to oneself and to others and materialization of the concept in a form that can be used by students to guide their understanding and performance. [...] Finally the concept must be connected to specific communicative (spoken or written) activity in order to be fully proceduralised. (Lantolf and Poehner 2008: 22)

The group dynamic is then used to create an acceptable group account of the verse. The account is intended to objectify the content and to add a note of abstraction from the material. If the subject appears to be too complex for the childrens' German they should be allowed, as mentioned above, to express their opinions in L1 and compile a group account which can later be translated with the assistance of the more knowledgeable peers and mediation by the teacher. The study intends to ascertain the competence of the individual child and the interactive group in furnishing an account of the poem's content and the extent to which L3 can be used by both in the furtherance of the same.

4.9.5 Affective Response: *Affektive Karte*

Having translated the verse and given the account, the next step would involve the affective response to the poem. This might be achieved by the creation of an *Affektive Karte* on the same principle as the earlier ones, i.e. dialogue, the recognition of needs, the creation of 'quasi-Bedürfnisse' phrases to answer those needs and the later internalization of the Scoba card's content by repeated use.

The purpose of the *Affektive Karte* is to help express the affect of the poem on the reader and also to consider exactly how the affect is achieved. Thus it should clarify response and investigate literary effects such as rhythm, imagery, tone, voice, tempo etc. As has been mentioned, this activity is set in the concrete instance of the poem itself and the affective nature of its content. It is not concerned with generalities except in that what applies to one poem may be used later in the perusal of another. It is in this section that the role of the teacher as mediator and the positing of process and metaprocess questions rather than those of choice or product is of utmost importance.⁶¹ The teacher,

⁶¹ Hugh Mehan (1979) has identified four types of questions that normally occur in a classroom setting:

- *Choice* questions that call upon the learners to agree or disagree with the teacher's statement and/or choose a yes or no response from a list provided by the teacher;

as more knowledgeable other, must take on the responsibility of guiding the students into the affective heart of the poem. This is not an instinctive reflex in the young or indeed the older reader 'It should not be assumed that appreciating literature as literature is an innate or natural aptitude, for which training is superfluous, any more than appreciation of any art form is merely intuitive' (Lamarque, Olsen 2004: 210). This is also what Culler (1975) speaks of when he remarks:

In order to understand literary texts a reader also needs 'literary competence' [...] to read a text as literature is not to make one's mind a *tabula rasa* and approach it without preconception; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for. (Culler 1975: 113-14)

'Literary competence' and 'Operations of literary discourse' may appear slightly grand definitions of what the children are about in this study and yet that is exactly the kernel of what they are learning, of how to approach the verse in a consciously aware manner.

The *Affektive Karte* should, as suggested above, be concerned mainly with process and metaprocess type questions and suggestions, the first very often followed by the second in attempting a deeper consideration of the verse in question. Thus the process question '*Was für ein Gedicht haben wir hier?*' on being answered as perhaps '*Das ist ein trauriges/lustiges/entspannendes Gedicht*' can be followed by the metaprocess question, '*Warum ist es den, ein trauriges Gedicht?*' Likewise, the question, '*Was für ein Mensch ist der Schneider?*' will also afford the opportunity to the children of elaborating on this in answer to, '*Warum sagst du es so?*' The intention in the *Affektive Karte* is to clarify the effect the poem has on the child (or how the child is affected by the poem) and also to analyse the reason for this affective action in the text. It is hoped in the study also to ascertain to what degree the children can utilize L3 in working with the *Affektive Karte* and if it is necessary to prepare the action by first using English and realizing the necessary vocabulary to enable the work to be done in L3. Were the children not capable of answering the questions in German, a decision would have to be made as to the validity of using English in the analysis aspect of the work.

-
- *Product* questions that ask the learners to provide a factual response such as a name, a place, etc.;
 - *Process* questions that ask for the learner's opinions or interpretations; and
 - *Metaprocess* questions that ask the learners to formulate the grounds for their reasoning, or to produce the rule or procedure by which they arrived at or remembered answers. (cited in Kumaravadivelu 2003: 49)

The teacher as more knowledgeable other, has a major role to play here as the children may not be familiar with the concepts of rhythm, rhyme, metaphor, imagery, voice, etc. even in English poetry, and it is by judicious suggestion and questioning that they may be brought to a recognition of their presence and their role in the verse being studied. The concepts are only available through the concrete instances of these aspects as revealed in the poem itself.⁶²

The children might by now have assimilated useful phrases from the *Meinungskarte* 'Meiner Meinung nach ist...' and 'Ich finde das...' which may help to personalize their findings. Perhaps 'denn' rather than 'weil' might be an easier choice, 'Es ist traurig, denn das Kind stirbt am Ende des Gedichts' (although the children might be able to manage the inversion involved in 'weil' if it is incorporated into the 'Hinweise' or suggestions on the *Affektive Karte*). '...passt gut dem Gedicht' is a generic term and could be very useful. Other terms that might be helpful, 'Wie verläuft das Gedicht?', 'Was für einen Rythmus hat das Gedicht?', 'Wie spricht der Erlkönig?', 'Warum spricht er so?', 'Was für Bilder hat diese Strophe?', 'Passen sie gut dem Gedicht?', 'Ist das Gedicht unsinnig?' While these questions are intended to help during the dialogue, the actual suggestions on the *Affektive Karte* might be more usefully couched as statements, 'Das Gedicht verläuft ziemlich....', 'Der Charakter spricht sehr', 'Der König Tizong sieht sehr.....aus', as, in writing the account, the children will be using statement rather than question. It is also desirable that the suggestions develop from the 'quasi-Bedürfnisse' posed by the children as they attempt the account.

The idea of *suitability* is one that might be developed; the suitability of the imagery to convey the emotion, the tone of voice employed, the rhythm of the line or beat of the metre. It might help to concretise the response if one first considers the people in the poem. 'In thinking about lyric it is crucial to *begin* with a distinction between the voice that speaks and the poet who made the poem, thus creating this figure of voice' (Culler 2000: 74, italics in original). If it is a nonsense poem their actions should reflect this, if a threatening poem, likewise. The idea of the love-sick protester in the poem

⁶² As, for example, the suitability of the rhythm (beat) in Erlkönig in conveying the sense of galloping, or in the adoption of a particular voice for the Erlkönig to convey menace or danger.

Abendlied/Rose Marie enjoying the sight of his love in his dream and then waking up ‘wieder alleine’ may strike one as sad, another as comical.

It is in this sector where appreciation finds its core expression, that sympathetic interaction between student and group and student and teacher is essential. It is also here that the greatest variety of response will be encountered and the need for the teacher to be open to that variety and channel it productively while at the same time deflecting constructions that are in themselves fallible or are based outside a textual context. Windschitl considers as one of the common pseudo-principles of constructivist teaching, ‘that all ideas, conjectures, and interpretations by students are equally legitimate; and that there are no rigorous assessment strategies associated with constructivist teaching’ (Windschitl 2002: 139) and so the teacher should not accept, on the pretext of not discouraging the pupil, incorrect and unsubstantiated assertions.

4.9.6 Performance: *Vorstellungskarte*

There will be a definite link between the *Affektive Karte* and the *Vorstellungskarte* as the former concentrates on the affective nature of the content and the latter on the expression of that in the performance. The actual working out of the performance feeds back into the affective appreciation of the poem while the affective aspects, in their turn, inform the performance. Performance here does not imply stage performance. It can refer to intergroup recitation, mime, dialogue in question and answer form, tone differentiation, even, hopefully, the child reciting the poem outside of the classroom for parental approval or even better, for her own enjoyment. It is simply how the poems affect on the reader can be best expressed. The best possible posited audience would perhaps be the child herself, enjoying her own expression of the poem.

In the *Vorstellungskarte* there is a place for ‘How would that best be spoken?’, ‘How would that idea be best put across?’. There is huge range here for tone and dramatic presentation. The aspect of voice assumes importance. Whereas in the earlier *Meinungskarte* a salient question was ‘Wer spricht hier?’ in the *Affektive* and *Vorstellungskarten* the principal question becomes ‘Wie spricht man hier?’ What does

the tone convey to the reader/listener and how is that best conveyed in performance, reflecting the character or the action in which the character is involved? The child in *Erlkönig*, for example, how does one best express his grief and anxiety? The voice of the father, is he brusque, gentle, caring, terrified? Can this be shown? The murderer in *Ich habe meine Tante geschlachtet*, has he an air of grievance at the ‘injustice’ of his sentencing? The longing of the lover in *Abendlied/Rose Marie*, is there a place here for burlesque or should it be more simply expressed? In the simpler poems, what are the words that need emphasis to enable the meaning or to increase the fun; what significant gestures might add to the expression; at what pace should it be taken, fast or slow, lugubrious or con brio? This is analysis but it is analysis with a purpose, that of best expressing the content of the poem. In the *quasi-Bedürfnisse* that are posed in order to realize the poem’s content, the children are once again introduced to those concepts mentioned above, of rhythm, rhyme, voice, tone etc. this time as relating to performance but grounded in activity. One might term this activity ‘analysis through activity’ and hopefully it could be further extended to ‘analysis through *enjoyable* activity’.

The *Vorstellungskarte*, as is the case with the other Scoba cards is best created from the suggestions of the groups and individuals. A selection of generic statements and questions applicable to the poems and concerned with performance would be incorporated. ‘*Wie spricht der Vater?*’ has been mentioned, but much of the content of the *Affektive Karte* might be brought into play. ‘*Es ist wirklich ein trauriges Gedicht, also müssen wir es traurig aussprechen*’, ‘*Was für eine Stimme hat der Vater in dieser Strophe?*’ ‘*Das Kind ist ängstlich*’, ‘*Wie können wir das am besten zeigen?*’, ‘*Was für Requisiten brauchen wir?*’, ‘*Wie zeigen wir das?*’, ‘*Welches Tempo passt am besten?*’ The most effective hints and suggestions should emerge from the childrens’ interaction with the poems themselves where the posited *quasi-Bedürfnisse* will be based on the practicalities of presentation and performance.

4.9.7. *Rollenspiel* and the Role of Play

Play is a major part of the child’s development and in this presentation of the poetry there is a demand on many of the child’s play skills to achieve a credible and valid performance of the verse. Vygotsky (1978: 93) writes of the creation of an imaginary situation as ‘the first manifestation of the child’s emancipation from situational

constraints' and in a later statement he recognizes the power of play in extending the child's development.

In play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all development tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development.

(Vygotsky 1978: 102)

This last could perhaps be taken as a validation and vindication of the value of the performative role and of the use of the final *Vorstellungskarte* in the child's internalization of poetry.

It is the repeated and varied performances of the poem that allows the internalization to occur. There is a myriad of choices in presentation suggested by and selected by the children themselves, single voice recitation, voice per character, choral speaking, question and answer, full dramatization, accompanied mime. Each poem will allow of its own interpretation and rendering. Again the importance of dialogue is apparent and in the group interaction the individual contribution should be valued. The questions of layout, action, props would hopefully also prove to be an involving and active process.

4.9.8 Integration into the Curriculum

The Primary School curriculum emphasizes the importance of 'the integrated nature of the curriculum' among its 'principles of learning' (DES 1999: 8). 'The curriculum envisages an integrated learning experience for children' (DES 1999: 11). The above methodology is one that could be easily integrated into other areas of the curriculum. The methods evolved regarding translation and appreciation could be applicable to texts other than poetry and could prove useful when teaching both Irish and English language. When dealing with the particular topic of poetry, aspects of performance or *Vorstellung* might involve the other arts in the making of simple props, the illustration in the art class of a copy of the poem or of a particular verse, the selection and depiction of scenes from the poem. There is scope for the relation of the poem to similar poems in other languages e.g. Yeats's poem 'The Fairy Child' which would have affinities with *Erlkönig*. The nonsense verse of children's nursery rhymes would parallel the *Unsinn* of tailors building houses on Mount Sinai. The murder ballad of 'There was an old woman who lived in the wood' would echo the macabre *Ich habe meine Tante geschlachtet*.

The music class could also be involved as many of the poems have a musical setting, In those poems chosen for this study, *Erlkönig* has a great number of musical settings ranging from the classical Schubert and Loewe to the modern versions of ‘Two Men One Poster Band’ and Achim Reichel’s in ‘*Regenballade*’ (Tangram, 20080). ‘Rose Marie’ and ‘*Der Tantenmörder*’ both receive a humorous musical interpretation from the *Ensembles Deutsches Theater Berlin* and *Frank Wedekind* respectively (Patmos, 2004). In this way there would be an appeal to the many intelligences, interests and skills of the primary student and the poems would be seen to have an even broader relevance to other subjects and to many other and varied forms of expression.

Chapter Five: Empirical Study

In describing the main characteristics of qualitative research, most research texts start with highlighting its *emergent* nature. This means that no aspect of the research design is tightly prefigured and a study is kept open and fluid so that it can respond in a flexible way to new details or openings that may emerge during the process of investigation. (Dörnyei 2009: 37)

5.1.1 Situating the Study

St. Patrick’s National School, Ballymurphy, Borris, Co. Carlow

This mixed two-teacher national school is situated in the south-east of Co. Carlow in the village of Ballymurphy. The children come from a predominantly rural background. The school has participated in the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative since 1998 and has had the same teacher for German throughout this period. Although the norm in the MLPSI (Modern Languages in Primary School Initiative) is that only fifth and sixth class receive foreign language tuition, in Ballymurphy N.S. because of class divisions, fourth and third classes have been included in the class group. Thus the foreign language class is comprised of four classes, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th and has to cater

for a considerable variation in the range of competence in both age and development. The ages of the children range from eight to twelve years.

The school building was erected in 1962 and at present, space is at a premium and there is little opportunity for free movement about the classroom and classroom tables are crowded with texts and copies. There is also at present little opportunity to use computer-assisted technology in the classroom but this is due to change in 2010/2011 with the introduction of interactive whiteboards to the classrooms.

Initial work began on the study with the 2008/2009 grouping. This happened in the two months prior to the summer break. The sixth class at the time was comprised of six girls and three boys. The classes this year are sixth, five pupils, all girls, one of whom is a complete beginner at German. In fifth class there are four girls and one boy. In fourth class there are three boys and in third class there are two girls and three boys. The study

uses coded letters to indicate particular students and the Code letter is followed by a number e.g. A4, which indicates that student A is in her fourth year of German, S1 would indicate that the student S is in her first year.

The Principal of the school is extremely welcoming and helpful, and is very willing that German be available in the school. Irish and English are taught as part of the Curriculum so German throughout this study is labeled as L3. The parents have indicated their full support for the Initiative. The students may and do continue with German at second level (100% take -up) and have been very successful in achieving a high rate of success in state examinations in this subject.

The German teacher is the former principal of the school (1969-2007). He is self-taught in German and in 2003 completed the postgraduate diploma in teaching German as a foreign language in the Primary School. On retiring in 2007 he continues to teach German in Ballymurphy as a visiting teacher.

There is an hour and a half allotted to German in the weekly timetable and this is used as a block of two lessons on Tuesday morning from 9.30 until 11.00. Apart from this the children have no contact with the target language apart from homework.

5.1.2 Classroom Management

The class is treated as a unit. The students are divided into five colour-coded groupings. Colour-coding was the childrens' choice. The members of each group are chosen by the teacher in order to have a range of age and ability within each one. Each group has its own leader and may make a range of decisions among themselves as to allocations of jobs, choices of approach, assumptions of roles etc. Dialogue and discussion are welcomed as promoting the interchange of ideas, development of action plans and evolution of concepts. This would concur with sociocultural approaches as evidenced in the previous chapters and the following quotation.

We contend that not only can planning occur simultaneously with speech, but that the very activity of speaking can, in fact be planning, or more precisely, thinking, externalized as self-directed private speech, the goal of which is planning what to say about a particular topic'. (Appel and Lantolf 1994: 443)

While the disparity in age and ability involves close attention to differentiation in the teaching approach, the group formation has proved a successful alternative to teacher /full class interaction and while the younger children benefit from the more knowledgeable seniors, the older pupils benefit from having to reformulate and rephrase concepts in order to engage the ability of the juniors. The teacher will also confer with the leaders of each group before an exercise to ensure that they are aware of what is required. At other times the teacher will interact with class group as a whole or the children will work in pairs.

There are no formal set texts used in the class. The children have two writing copies, a *Deutschheft* and a *Denkheft*. The *Deutschheft* is for the more formal grammatical elements of the class. The *Denkheft* contains the individual efforts of the child in translation, retelling of content, affective response, illustration of content, planning of presentation etc. The *Denkheft* is also a record of the child's progression through the various poems selected and of her ability to assimilate and use the Scoba cards.

The children receive homework based on the work done in school in order that they may revise and evaluate the work. This is corrected and revised and also used in assessment of the pupils' progression.

The teacher keeps a reflective diary of the work intended and the work completed.⁶³ There is a post-class written evaluation of each lesson where successes and failures are considered and improvements are suggested.

5.1.3 Aim and Content of Study

Empirical Research: The purpose of the study was to evaluate an approach to the teaching of poetry based on the use of co-constructed Scoba cards. A selection of six poems was made ranging from a simple action poem *König Tinizong*, two nursery

rhymes, *Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las*, and *Auf dem Berge Sinai*, to a love lyric, *Abendlied/Rose Marie, Rose Marie*; a Moritat, *Der Tantenmörder /Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet* and the Goethe ballad *Erkönig*. Reference is also made to the Christmas-themed *Advent Advent* and to *Herr Ribbeck von Ribbeck im Havelland*. The choice of poem depended on the variety of interpretation and response that that they offered to the children.

- Thus *Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las* had a simple vocabulary, a strong sense of rhythm and rhyme, a comical image of the book-reading hare and an enjoyable joke element in its repetitive aspect.
- *Auf dem Berge Sinai* also had the easily-mastered vocabulary, strong rhythm and rhyme, a succession of vivid, enjoyable, nonsense images, opportunity to engage in tone-variation, gesture and role-play.
- *König Tinizong* involved the use of percussion. It was suitable for simple

⁶³ The teacher's notes used in this study were kept over a period from May 2009 to the end of June 2010. They consist of preparatory work on lesson content and intention followed by a report on the actual work completed. It was decided to use them in this qualitative study as, 'in qualitative research almost anything can be perceived as potential data, and there is no reason why the researcher's field notes, real-time comments, memos, and annotations would be exceptions. Personal agency is an important part of qualitative enquiries and the 'meta-data' generated by the researcher offer valuable insights into the project'. (Dörnyei 2009:160)

dramatic presentation and the children were able to integrate their own suggestions as to the commands issued by the tyrannical King.

- *Abendlied/ Rosemarie, Rosemarie*, while posing more difficulty in the vocabulary, was capable of being understood, had a good deal of repetition and offered itself to a variety of interpretation. There was a engaging melody accompanying the poem and the imagery in the poem lent itself to easy representation. There was also a vigorous and amusing rendering of the song by the Ensemble Deutsches Theater Berlin (Patmos 2004) available.
- Frank Wedekind's *Der Tantenmörder/ Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet* appealed very much to the children, especially in its bloodcurdling aspects (cf. comments below, Chapter five, Sections 4.1. and 10.1, and also Chapter five, 9.1. footnote78) The story fascinated them and role play offered great scope. There was also opportunity for discussion and above all for an examination of the voice of the murderer as he unwittingly revealed the callousness of his nature. The contrast between the accompanying melody and the grisly content also provided interesting areas for comment.
- *Erlkönig's* inherent fascination has been proved down through the centuries and it was a chance for the children to engage with one of the great ballads of German Literature. The vocabulary obstacles were overcome by the pace and interest of the story. The underlying metre and rhythm added to the recital. There was the inherent excitement of what

would occur at the end and a variety of clearly definable differing characters. That of the Erlkönig himself proved a compelling figure. The poem had an exciting story, gave discussion opportunities, lent itself to illustration, afforded a variety of vocal interpretation and presentation models, and surely helped an appreciation of a significant example of German culture.

- The *Advent* poem and the excerpt from *Herr Ribbeck von Ribbeck im Havelland* were used in a more limited sense in familiarizing the children with the use of the *Nomen-* and *Verbenkarten* in translation only and were not, due to time constraints, developed into aesthetic response or presentation.

The first step in the appropriation and internalization of a poem in a foreign language is the understanding of the poem in translation. Two of the Scoba cards, the *Nomenkarte* and the *Verbenkarte* play a significant role in achieving this. The intention was to evaluate the usefulness of the Scoba⁶⁴ card in the recognition and translation of nouns and verbs. These initial Scoba cards were created in answer to specific needs revealed in task work, and refined by dialogue and interaction among group members. They are based on the Object Orientated Activity Theory of Piotr Gal'perin discussed in detail above.⁶⁵ They are used as psychological tools in approaching any poem and are intended as a pivot by which the child may be helped to focus on particular aspects of the critical approach to the poem. The first of these cards, the *Nomenkarte* evolved from work with last year's students, among whom were numbered the present sixth, fifth and fourth classes.

⁶⁴ Scoba, 'scheme of a complete orienting basis of the action' (Rambusch 2006: 2000) mentioned above in Chapter Three, Section 2.1.

⁶⁵ Cf. Chapter Three, Section 2.1.

5.2.1 The Creation of the First Scoba Card (*Nomenkarte*)

Because of the necessity of fully understanding the process on which we were engaged L1 was mainly used. The idea of a *Nomenkarte* was proposed- a *Karte* which would be a great help in recognizing and translating nouns from German to English. The children were asked to discuss in their groups how they might recognize or translate German nouns. They suggested capital letters as an obvious marker, ‘words we know already’ e.g. *Tag, Nacht, Sonne*’, words that were similar to English or Irish words e.g. ‘*Haus, house*’ ‘*Kaninchen, coinín* (Irish for rabbit)’. Other suggestions involved using *das Wörterbuch*, asking the teacher or group member, and guessing. The teacher explained that considering the title of the text might help in elucidation and with a little help, students offered ‘illustration’ as an aid. The teacher suggested breaking up words, *trennen* and also that nouns were often preceded by *die, der, das, ein, and eine*.

The students were then encouraged to examine the first four lines of *Herr Ribbeck von Ribbeck im Havelland* to test the new guides. They discovered that names of people and places also had capitals. (They didn’t make the connection that all nouns had capitals anyway but that was left in, as being part of their contribution). Each suggestion was worded as succinctly as possible in order to facilitate translation into L3 and the creation of the Scoba card.

During the next session we translated the suggestions and asked the groups to give back in Deutsch or English as many of the methods as they could remember. There were five groups L, H, A, J and T⁶⁶ and they returned the methods as follows

- *Nomen auf Deutsch beginnen immer mit Großbuchstaben* LHAJT
- *Die der das, ein eine ein, vor den Nomen* LHAJT
- *Trennen* LHAJT
- *Abbildungen , Illustration* LHAJT

⁶⁶ The children in this earlier class grouping had suggested the use of animal names for their groups so they chose, *Löwe, Affe, Jaguar, Tiger and Haifisch*, thus the use of these initials.

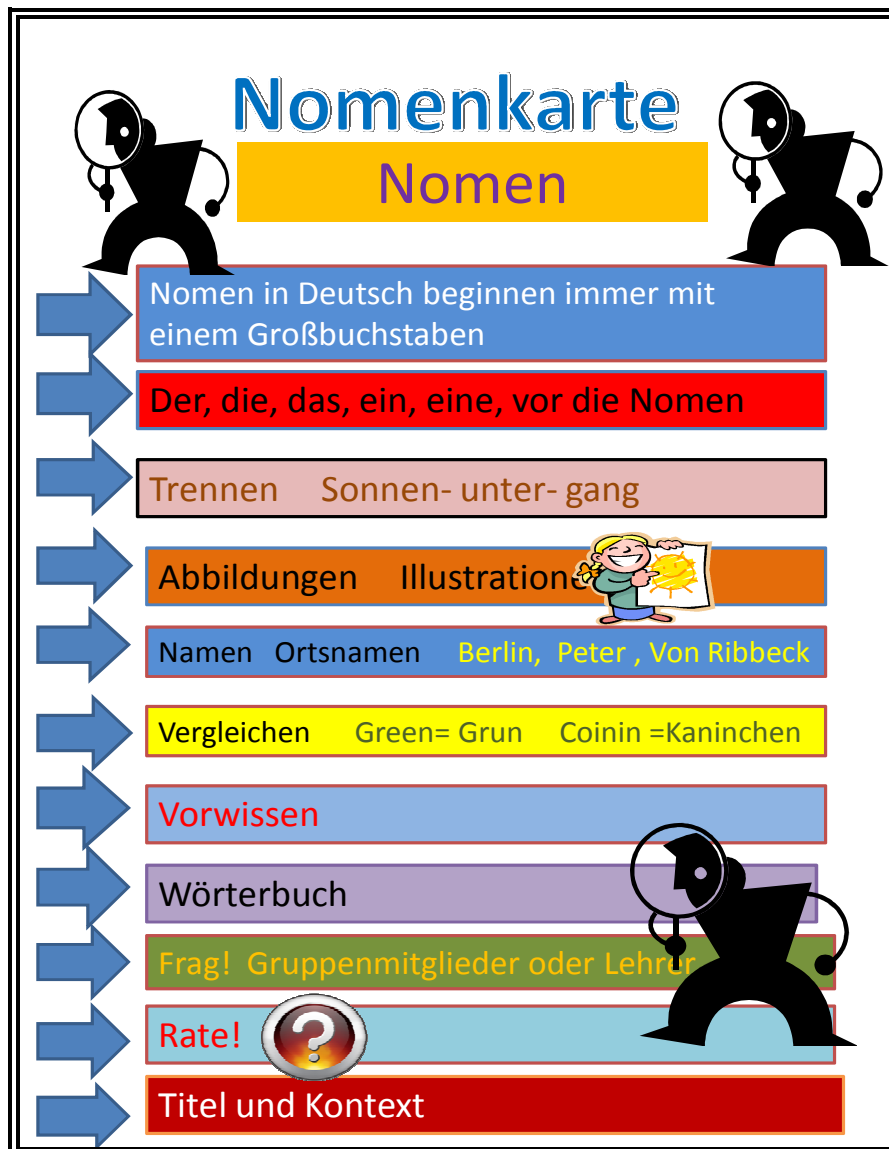
- *Kontext* HAJT
- *Wörterbuch* LHJT
- *Namen Ortsnamen* LHJ
- *Frag!* LJT
- *Vergleichen* LAJ
- *Namen Ortsnamen* LHJ
- *Vorwissen* AJ
- *Rate!* HA
- *Titel* ---

This was a very encouraging result and also gave the teacher the opportunity to stress the less remembered guides. It is of interest that it was a teacher suggestion that scored nil on the scale!

5.2.2 Presentation of Completed *Nomenkarte*

In the next session the completed (i.e. prepared on Powerpoint and laminated) cards, Fig.4 on the following page, were given to the students. The children were requested to clarify any difficulties of understanding or interpretation in the cards and these were explained in group interaction or by the teacher.

Fig.4



5.2.3 Using the *Nomenkarte* in Practice

The verse of *Herr Von Ribbeck auf Ribbeck im Havelland* was then worked on in groups in order to pick out the *Nomen*. And as each word was recognized as a *Nomen*, the corresponding recognition method that was used was named. This was intended to develop a metacognitive awareness of what they were doing and clarified the exact process they were *using*.

*‘Herr von Ribbeck auf Ribbeck im Havelland,
Ein Birnbaum in seinem Garten stand,

Und kam die goldene Herbsteszeit
Und die Birnen leuchteten weit und breit,
Da stopfte, wenn's Mittag vom Turme scholl,
Der von Ribbeck sich beide Taschen voll,
Und kam in Pantinen ein Junge daher,
So rief er: ‚Junge, wiste 'ne Beer?‘
Und kam ein Mädle, so rief er: ‚Lütt Dirn,
Kumm man röwer, ick hebb 'ne Birn’.*

(Fontane 2004: 462-463)

Großbuchstabe i.e. capital letter, was naturally the generic clue for all nouns.

Ribbeck and Havelland = Ortsnamen

Birnbaum = trennen oder Illustration

Garten = vergleichen + Vorwissen

Herbstezeit = trennen + Vorwissen

Birne = Vorwissen oder Wörterbuch

Mittag = Vorwissen oder trennen

Turme = Illustration oder Wörterbuch

Taschen = Lehrer, er zeigt seine Taschen, auch Illustration

Pantinen = Woerterbuch

Junge = Vorwissen

Beer = Rate! oder frag den Lehrer

Mädel = Kontext oder Illustration

It is expected that with practice the various strategies will become automatic and eventually there will be no need to reference the *Nomenkarte*. The children managed to identify successfully most of the above methods as they worked.

5.2.4 Working Towards a *Verbenkarte*

In the last session with the 2008/2009 grouping a beginning was made in creating a *Verbenkarte*. In collaboration with group and teacher interaction, the endings of the present tense were noted as *e, st, t, t, t, en, en, en, t*. For the more advanced children the preterite endings are also given *te, test, te, te, te, ten, ten, ten, tet*. The position of the verb was noted as being normally in the second place but the children were cautioned that in poetry this is not always the case. Also noted was the fact that the verb usually followed the noun or was often preceded by the pronoun *Ich, du, sie, er, es, wir, Sie, sie, ihr*. Irregular verbs were touched on as having a change in the 2nd and 3rd person and the examples in the poem of *rief* and *kam* were pointed out by the teacher. The children commented on the fact that they had already encountered ‘irregular verbs’ in Irish and directed the teachers attention to the relevant wall posters. The previous strategies of *vergleichen, Vorwissen, Wörterbuch, Frag!, Rate!, Abbildungen, Titel and Kontext* from the *Nomenkarte* were noted by the children as being equally relevant to the recognition of *Verben* and the following examples were given from the first verse.

Stand = vergleichen

kam = vergleichen

leuchteten = Endung

scholl, schollen = this proved too difficult and the teacher explained as past tense of ‘*schallen*’

rief er =Verbindung mit 'er', und auch Kontext

wiste =Frag! oder Kontext

kumm =vergleichen

heb =verbindung mit ich

Again the children were able to recognize and translate most of the verbs. A particular help to them in elucidating meaning from *Kontext* is an animated reading by the Lehrer. Tone and gesture are vital aids to comprehension.

One of the less able students made the unsolicited comment 'That's very helpful to know that way of knowing verbs' with specific reference to the second place positioning. This indicated that she had appropriated the strategy and was well on the way to the internalization of it.

5.2.5 Interim Conclusions

This was the final interaction with the 2008/9 group and the sixth class went on to second level school in September, all of them opting to continue with German. The approach so far had clarified

- The importance of group interaction.
- The necessity of dialogue, mostly in L1.
- The ability of the children to construct Scoba cards.
- The ability of the children to use the strategies contained in the cards.
- The sense of achievement in translation.
- The importance of positing *quasi-Bedürfnisse* in each of the strategies.

5.3.1 September 2009

The September 2009 term saw the introduction of a new third class, two girls and three boys who had no previous experience of German and also a new girl in sixth class who

was also beginning German for the first time. With the exception of these children the remainder, the majority, were those who had been in the 2008/2009 German class. Along with the work specifically related to this study it was also necessary to cover the MLPSI programme for foreign languages in the primary school and enumerated in the School Plan. There was also the necessity to introduce the beginners to the methods we had initiated in the previous term. New groupings were formed and one beginner placed in each group in order that they might benefit from the others' expertise⁶⁷.

5.3.2 Revision of *Nomenkarte*

We began to revise the *Nomenkarte* using the short poem below:

Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las,

Fand ein dickes Buch im Gras

Er setzte sich ins Gras und las

Das dicke Buch, im Buch stand das:

Ein Hase der gern Bücher...

(Guggenmos 2002: 45)

We would hope to return to this poem for later cards, *Verbenkarten*, *Meinungskarten*, *Affektive Karten* and *Vorstellungskarten* but being short and simple, it suited our revisionary purposes and served as a simple introduction for the new students. For the more advanced students we took the opening of the Brothers Grimm tale '*Das Eselein*' (Grimm 2008: 252) and used the *Nomenkarten* to elucidate the nouns.

5.3.3 *Verbenkarte*

⁶⁷ Dörnyei (2009: 189) cites O'Connor and Sharkey (2004: 338) on classroom research experience, 'Although we anticipated that sick days, snow days, school holidays, and parent-teacher conferences would crowd our schedules, we did not and perhaps could not have foreseen the series of well-meaning events that disrupted our process and project'. While the present study was very fortunate in having the fullest co-operation from School and Parents, the necessity of fulfilling the curriculum programme, the need to formulate a modern languages plan for the school and the arrival of various visitors, meant that at times the study had to be fitted around necessary interruptions and this involved at times a shelving of some aspects and a return to poems previously visited to observe other aspects of their appropriation. An example would be the inclusion of aspects of Christmas in the programme which interrupted the work on *König Tinizong*. (c.f. below).

As a prelude to completion of the *Verbenkarte* the class concentrated again on the endings. This was transformed into a simple ‘Rap’-style chant with a ‘One, Two, One-Two –Three, One, Two, Three, Four,’ beat.

E (uh)

St(stuh)

T (tuh)

T (tuh)

T (tuh)

En (en)

En (en)

En (en)

T (tuh)

The rhythm of the ‘rap’ effect serves as a good aide-memoire for word endings. The children were able to give back the endings. The children were given a written test. Sixth and Fifth were mainly correct to perfectly correct. Fourth reproduced the ‘rap’ quite correctly with one or two mistakes and the new third made a reasonable attempt at reproducing it with the more able getting most of the endings correct.

5.3.4 *König Tinizong*

A new action poem was then introduced, *König Tinizong*:

Großer König Tinizong

Mit dem grossen Zaubergong

Ach so sag uns bitte nun.

Was sollen wir heut’ für Dich

König Tinizong.

(Bächli, 2010)

Again this is a very simple poem in content. Its value will later be seen in its use as a subject for dialogue and the individual extension of the poem’s content by the children’s own creation of the commands which are to be given by *König Tinizong*. Apart from the

encouragement of dialogue, its main value lies in the variation of speaking voice, clarification of emotion and the emphasis on rhythm and stress in the spoken line.

The children were set a translation test and using their *Nomenkarten* were easily able to translate *König* = *Vorwissen*, *Tinizong*=*Name*, *Zaubergong*=*trennen*. This was done by the individual pupils in each class group rather than in the mixed work groups in order to ascertain the individual development of each child and to see if there would be a decided difference between classes. The test consisted of all the words contained in the poem. These were written under one another as a word list so that each word was considered in isolation.

- Sixth class proved very capable and had most of the words correctly translated.
- Fifth had fewer correct words than sixth but had many correct.
- Fourth had again fewer words correct and some identical answers showed that there had been a degree of collaboration. (As dialogue is encouraged in the classroom, this was not treated as a fault but the teacher explained that in this particular case an individual response was what was required)
- Third hadn't understood what they were to do and had very little idea of any of the meanings.

There was an obvious variation in development from class to class. The following week the children were put back into groups and discussed the *Wortschatz* and repeated the test. All classes improved especially third and fourth, some of whom scored very well. This underlines the value of group-work and the ability of the children to learn from more knowledgeable peers. Two comments from the children indicated that at times they were able to grasp the sense of a sentence without understanding all the words. 'I

know what the sentences mean but I don't know what the words mean' (E 4).⁶⁸ They were also becoming aware of syntactical differences, 'Sometimes they [German people] have the words backwards' (A4) which led to a discussion on the positioning of words in the three languages *Deutsch*, English and Irish.

5.3.5 Presentation of Completed *Verbenkarte*

The completed *Verbenkarte* (Fig.5 on the following page) was then given to the children and the suggestions or *Hinweise* were revised.

Fig.5

⁶⁸ 'Poetry allows for these quick shifts of imaginative logic, in which language works more by compression and association than by fully spelled out connections' (Eagleton 2008: 42)



5.3.6 Development of Further Aspects of *König Tinizong*

In the *Tinizong* poem it was decided to further develop the translation aspect, in a way that would tie in with later presentation or *Vorstellung*. Each child was asked to formulate a command from *König Tinizong* that could later be incorporated into the presentation of the poem and acted out. This proved to be too difficult as the children were not familiar with the imperative form. This should obviously have been taught beforehand and the commands exceeded the limits of their German vocabulary. It was decided that the teacher would translate the commands and if they could recognise their own command in translation then they would ‘own’ them. This proved very interesting for the children and *they were able to recognise, not alone their own commands, but those of the other children in the class*. The cards were then printed and placed on a coloured background and laminated for future reference (cf. appendix 1). The poem was

then presented by each group using the suggestions on the cards. Time constraints meant that we only got two examples presented and at this point it was impossible to see whether the extra command had been appropriated by the other members of the group and by the other class members. The importance of gesture e.g. low bowing before the King, outstretched palms in solicitation, simple props '*Kron und Thron*' and positioning of the king on a higher level, was revealed in the interest the children took in performing. However the excitement and fun involved mitigated a little against actual dialogue and interaction but as this was the first attempt, this was just noted so that provision would be made at later stages for more use of language opportunities.

5.4.1 Carpe Diem: Using Opportunities

Although the Scoba cards lend themselves to a steady progression in approaching the poem there should always remain the possibility of rearranging sequence, as in the introduction above in König Tinizong of early aspects of *Vorstellung* or as follows, in the exploring of attitudes towards the depiction of violence when the opportunity presented itself. This latter would be quite relevant to the childrens' later encounter with the *Moritat*, '*Ich habe meine Tante geschlachtet*'. The classroom teacher had recently shown them the film 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas'⁶⁹ which concerns a friendship between the son of the *Kommandant* of a concentration camp and a young Jewish internee. The following notes recorded the results:

20/11/09. The children had viewed 'the Boy in the Striped Pyjamas' and I was curious to see whether they had been extremely shocked by its content or whether, 'because 'it was just a film', it had not unduly affected them. The older children took it well in their stride and were able to contrast it with the book. We discussed how overt the worst scenes were and they were able to convey that there was no dwelling on the horror. Much was implied. The younger children seemed also to have understood the implications of the story but had not been overwhelmed. 'Would they think about it a lot?', 'Would it upset them?', 'Not really' or 'a bit'. I was particularly interested in the light of doing 'Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet' but I think they are well able to distinguish reality from übertreibendes Entsetzen and our examination of the poem, how badness is shown etc., will further distance 'the deed'. The emphasis in this poem is on

⁶⁹ 'The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas', (2008) Director: Mark Herman. Distributor: Miramax Films.

the utter selfishness and self-righteous self-vindication of the villain!' (Teacher's notes: 20/11/09).

This might appear as a digression but it serves as a salient example of responding, 'in a flexible way to new details or openings that may emerge during the process of investigation' (Dörnyei 2009: 36) as mentioned in the opening quotation of this chapter. Steps may be interchanged to facilitate different approaches and this seemed to be a useful remote preparation for later discussion of *Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet*.

5.4.2 *Weihnachtsgedichte*: Use of *Nomenkarte* / *Verbenkarte*

Christmas preparations intervened and the short *Weihnachtsgedicht* below was introduced:

Advent, Advent,

Ein Lichtlein brennt.

Erst eins, dann zwei

Dann drei, dann vier

Dann steht das Christkind vor der Tür.

(Volksgut 2010)

This provided the opportunity to use the *Nomen* and *Verbenkarten*. The *Nomen* proved very easy. *Advent*= *vergleichen*, *Vorwissen*=*Advent*. *Lichtlein* = *trennen*= *Licht*+*lein*. *Christkind* = *trennen* = *Christ*+ *Kind*. *Tür* = *Vorwissen*, *vergleichen* oder *Kontext*. The *Verben* were recognised from *Kontext* and *Endungen*. Some attempted to recognise *Erst* as a verb from the 'st' ending but the teacher's reading helped clarify its meaning.

The translations were uniformly good in all classes and were done individually. For such a straightforward simple poem it was interesting to see the variety of expression contained e.g.

Advent Advent	Advent Advent	Advent Advent
one light burns	One little light burns	The little lights flame
first one the[n] two	First one then two	first one, then two
then three then four then	then three then four	then three, then four
five the Christchild [...]	then stand[s] the Christchild	then comes the Christchild
before door. (S1)	for the door. (C4)	at the door (H3)

The next step was to move toward the creation of the account of the poem and again these showed the individuality of detail and difference of emphasis in their consideration of the poem. This was done in English. It also showed that there was an ability to separate the account from the translation.

Unfortunately this was as far as the children got with the poem due to time constraints and other aspects of Christmas to be covered. It would have been useful to see how far the children could go in translating their accounts or in creating one group account in German. But this would have involved treating the poem out of season which was not acceptable. However there was an indication already of some of the simple but necessary phrases that needed to be incorporated into the *Meinungskarte*. ‘This poem is about’, ‘It shows’, ‘There is / are’. They were already formulating the *quasi-Bedürfnisse* themselves.

5.4.3 *König Tinizong*: Full Translation.

An Spideoigín: Irish poem

König Tinizong was then reintroduced and an individual attempt at translation was encouraged. This differed from the earlier word-list translation and the full translation was rendered very well by practically all the pupils.

A number of new words relating to the poem were covered that might be useful, *Demütig, deutlich, klar, tapfer, mutig, sanft, tosend, behutsam, lässig, unterwürfig*. In giving these words the teacher had not kept to the principle of first evoking the necessary words from the children themselves. He had also wanted to try if the children could decipher the words from his miming. Although quite skilled in miming, he found this was not the best approach as there was a confused response.

‘The mime idea was not good as it led to wild guesses and a veering away from adverbs to phrases. Better I think to ‘suchen ins Buch’ and let them use their Wörterbuch.’ (Teacher’s notes: 2/2/2010).

By so doing, i.e. using the *Wörterbuch*, the child who succeeds in finding and translating the word, ‘owns’ it so that there is some degree of personal appropriation which should help in assimilation. The children were also given adjectives that might be helpful in describing *König Tinizong*, *furchterregend, beäutigend, heftig, mächtig, stark*,

tyrannisch, herrschsüchtig, despotisch, grausam, gemein, anspruchsvoll. There was a tiny simple sketch beside each word to help remind the children of the meaning and using these they were able to reproduce the meaning but again these words came from the teacher and it would have been better had the children first decided what words they needed in L1 and thus established a personal claim on particular words. A later and more useful development commented on below in our investigation of *Erlkönig* involved the use of ‘spider-web’ charts in which the children themselves posited the words and got the translations from the *Wörterbuch*. (An alternative method would be for the Teacher to provide a broad collection of suitable words and that the children might make their own selection from them, depending on what they saw as relevant. This was realized later by the creation of a *Wörterwand*, (cf. Appendix 14, 20), a ‘wall’, built from a wide selection of words which were later incorporated into the ‘spider web’ charts by the children themselves. When this was done there was a saving in time, a greater selection of words provided and it led to the children being more involved in the process and gave them a degree of autonomy.

An interesting opportunity arose when the writer substituted for the Principal for a full school day and had the chance to try out the *Nomen* and *Verbenkarten* approach, in the translation of an Irish poem ‘An Spideoigín’ (The little robin). Using the same techniques as we had used in King Tinizong, circling of known, *Vorwissen*, words, using context, and searching the dictionary, the children were enabled to translate and comment on the poem quite successfully. This would seem to indicate that the method could be extended to other areas, e.g. simple prose and to other language subjects.

5.4.4 The use of Question Cards

In order to prepare the children for giving an account of the poem *auf Deutsch*, the idea of a question card was posed. This, it was hoped, might give an individual assessment of each child’s attainment and assist in evaluating the process so far. It was also intended as a practice of vocabulary and an introduction of suitable phrases for the later account. Time did not allow of giving each class a different and possibly more suitable set of questions so a great degree of variation in competence was allowed for and it was stressed that if the questions were too difficult that that could be used to help improve the teachers ability to teach! thus taking away any sense of failure on their part.

The question card was as follows:

Handelt dieses Gedicht von einer Prinzessin?

Wer spricht im Gedicht, der König Tinizong oder die Höflinge?

Was für Menschen sind die Höflinge?

Sind die Höflinge tapfer? Warum sagst du so?

Kennen wir den Namen des Königs?

Wie heißt er?

Woran sitzt der König?

Sitzt er auf einem Bett?

The teacher's notes were as follows:

'I think the question format worked far better than giving them phrases because it is task-involving. It creates its own 'quasi-Bedürfnisse'. Have corrected. Third made a good stab at it. Two in Fourth did not commit at all. Fifth gave in good work and Sixth gave in good capable work.' (Teacher's notes: 8/2/2010).⁷⁰

However in the creation of the *Meinungskarte* as will be shown below, the use of statement rather than question format proved to be the more useful option in allowing the children to create their account.

Having succeeded with the questions to a satisfying degree it was expected that the account might be similarly successful. As we had not as yet formulated a proper *Meinungskarte* it was felt that the account would be too difficult to do in German. Instead some questions were posed in English that would show how prepared the children were to discuss the poem objectively. The questions were as follows:

Q1. What sort of a poem is *König Tinizong*?

Q2. How would you say it?

⁷⁰ Cf. Appendix 2, for an example of an answer from a sixth class student with only nine month's experience of German.

Q3. How would you act it out?

Q4. Is it a serious poem?

Q5. Do you like the poem?

Apart from viewing the poem objectively some of the questions touch on the *Affektive* and *Vorstellung* aspects. As might have been expected, the younger children tend to confuse fiction with reality and occasionally read more into the text than is there. Thus C 4, a senior student states re Q.1, 'I think it is a funny poem because the people have to do whatever he says and it is funny to watch them' which does capture the essence of the poem. She also states 'No, I don't think it is a serious poem. I think it is a poem to enjoy and have fun [with]'. The younger student (N 2) worked the poem into his own imaginative world. 'I think it's an exciting poem because the villagers are dying and some try to kill him back.' This colours his assessment of the poem in answering Q. 3. 'I think it must be a serious poem for the villagers'. This involvement is echoed in P 1's comment on Q.3. 'Yes, because if there [were] anything wrong or go [sic] against the king they could be killed'. This confusion between fact and fiction, *Wahrheit* und *Dichtung*, can also occur in the senior classes but theirs is a more sophisticated appraisal of the poem as in F 3's evaluation 'I do like the poem because it rymths [rhymes] and that King Tinizong has [a] gong. I like that idea because it shows how powerful and magical he is'.

The major benefit of allowing the children to write their answers in English was that it gives considerable insight into their thinking and response to the poem. Their limited competence in L3 would not allow of this valuable interchange of ideas. By writing in English, dialogue can be established and enhanced and the flow of information can be directed from pupil to teacher, informing her of their abilities and their *quasi-Bedürfnisse* suited to performing the task, i.e. here, the account of the poem. An additional benefit is the growth in self-confidence as they express themselves. An insistence at this stage that the account be written *auf Deutsch* would probably prove counter-productive as the children are not as yet sufficiently familiar with vocabulary or method of approach.

5.5.1 *Erlkönig*

Der Erlkönig

*Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?
Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind.
Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,
Er faßt ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.*

*Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?
Siehst Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht!
Den Erkenkönig mit Kron' und Schweif?
Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif.*

*Du liebes Kind, komm geh' mit mir!
Gar schöne Spiele, spiel ich mit dir,
Manch bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand,
Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand.*

*Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,
Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht?
Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind,
In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind.*

*Willst feiner Knabe du mit mir geh'n?
Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön,
Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn
Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein.*

*Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am düsteren Ort?
Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh'es genau:
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau.*

*Ich lieb dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt,
Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt!
Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an,
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan.*

*Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind,
Er hält in den Armen das ächzende Kind,
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not,
In seinen Armen das Kind war tot*

(Goethe 2004: 114)

The children were given a choice between Goethe's *Erlkönig*, Theodore Fontane's *John Maynard* and his *Herr Von Ribbeck auf Ribbeck im Havelland*⁷¹. The teacher gave them a resumé of the content of each and *Erlkönig* was chosen. It is necessary to advert to the fact that the study, i.e. the feasibility of teaching poetry in German, had to be carried out while teaching all the other aspects of the German language programme. It was not until the last eight weeks of term that designated time was allowed specifically for the study. This meant that the poetry aspect had to be fitted in piecemeal during the year and that there was not an abundance of time to be spent on it. Thus it was decided to take a verse for each lesson and at the same time attempt to co-construct a *Meinungskarte* as we went along. The approach was to use the *Nomen* and *Verbenkarten* and by translating the nouns and verbs and by using tone and gesture on the teacher's part and using the *Wörterbuch* for difficult words, the children would translate each verse. They began on verse one by selecting all the nouns they knew, (*Vorwissen*), so that *Nacht*, *Wind*, *Kind*, *Vater*, *Arm* posed little problem. The verbs proved easy as *reitet* was easily translated (*vergleichen*) and *faßt* and *halt* were easily shown by gesture. The children were encouraged by this success and those in 4th 5th and 6th classes were able to translate the verse individually as *Hausaufgaben*.

An example from fourth class:

Who riding [sic] so late through night and wind

It is the Father with his Kid⁷²

He has the boy tight in his arm

He holds him securely he hold[s] him warm. (L 2)

There was a discussion in English on the reasons for the ride late at night and aspects of 'escaping' 'going home' 'rescuing' were raised. Although the discussion was of necessity in English it involved the children in a personal *Affektive* response to the imagery in the poem.

⁷¹ All three poems are contained in the Patmos 2004 recording *Die schönsten deutschen Balladen*. They are recorded by Otto Sander. While this recording is a very valuable asset it would not be introduced until the children have created their own version of *Erlkönig*. This would also apply to the many fine recordings of *Erlkönig* available on Youtube.

⁷² Far from questioning the colloquial use of 'Kid' here, its use indicates that the student is relating closely to the poem and using everyday language rather than the more formal 'child'.

As earlier in *König Tinizong* an individual word-list test was given to evaluate the students' appropriation of vocabulary (cf. appendices 3, 4). It proved quite satisfactory with a predictable higher rate of success among the senior pupils

5.5.2 Group-work in Translation and Account

In order to clarify the working of group rather than individual translation the class took the verse beginning *Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?* Although this had already been done individually it was felt that the actual group method needed to be clarified and that rather than double-tasking them with organization and translation, by doing a verse with which they were familiar, they could concentrate on the process.

We then did group translation. They appointed writer, searchers etc. Gruppe Gelb's comment "We read one line each in German. Then we translated it into English and rotated it until everybody read every line and knew it in English and German" (A4). Other groups translated the verse together. I went from group to group as facilitator. Once the verse was translated they were asked to write what it was about. (Teacher's notes: 2/3/2010).

In the account of the verse two groups, *Rosa* and *Gelb*, gave back the content verbatim, although in straight narrative form. *Gruppe Schwarz* and *Gruppe Blau* give slightly more objective accounts.

Schwarz: 'This verse is about [...]. The boy has his head down and he sees the Erlkönig but his father doesn't and he says it is just a strip of mist'.

Blau: 'In this verse the son is bending his head and he is scared. The father asks why are you so scared? 'Can't you see the Erlkoenig with his crown and cape?' The father says it is just a strip of mist (fog)'.

These two accounts show the beginning of distancing from the actual text itself.

Gruppe Orange went on to translate their account.

'Der Vater fragt den Sohn warum ist dein Gesicht [] siehst Vater deunt (sic) du sehen das Erlkönig mit dem Kron und Schweif. Den (sic) der Vater sagen dem es ist nur ein Nebelstreif (Gruppe Orange).

While there are obviously many limitations in competency, the teacher's comment is perhaps justified. *'This is encouraging for a preliminary effort and with each further verse we may anticipate advancement. Especially if they can internalize the Meinungskarte* (Teacher's notes: 2/3/2010).

Each verse was then taken in turn over the next few weeks. We were able to introduce aspects of *Affektive* and *Vorstellung* by dramatizing the speech of the characters. The children enjoyed the menace and also the cajoling aspects of *Erlkönig* and the frightened tones of the child. Discussion of content was still held in English and showed a surprising independence at times.

In the discussion M2 queried the clothes reference [Meine Mutter hat gulden Gewand]⁷³ - 'a boy wouldn't be interested in clothes'. A4 made the valid point concerning the mother that she would seem to be a reassurance for the child. This is the discussion I'd like to encourage (Teacher's notes: 9/3/2010).

5.5.3 The Co-construction of a *Meinungskarte*

The teacher explained to the *Leiterinnen* of the groups how they might formulate a *Meinungskarte* that would be useful in writing an account of the poem *auf Deutsch*. This seemed to work very well as they enjoyed having the teacher's confidence and returned to their groups quite determined to put the suggestions into practice. This setting out of objectives would be in harmony with Gal'perin's ideas on orientation and while not yet a 'scheme of a complete orienting basis of the action' (Rambusch 2006: 2000) or SCOPA, would be a valid approach in its creation. It was only as this study progressed that it became clearer how important a role the child is expected to play in the positing of *quasi-Bedürfnisse* and how exact and relevant is the information that the child gives to the teacher, relevant to the task expected of her. As might be expected of a constructivist approach, the importance and effectiveness of the child's evaluation of her own needs and requirements should not be underestimated.

Children were asked to suggest words and phrases suitable for talking about the poems- the idea was to find phrases of a generic nature (obviously this word was not used),

⁷³ Klimt's wonderfully sumptuous paintings of Emilie Flöge were an ideal illustration of golden magnificence.

phrases we could use about any poem were we to talk about it. (Teacher's notes: 2/3/2010).

There was a wide-ranging and practical response. The following phrases were put forward. One interesting point is that the suggestions came from across the range of classes so that the idea of co-construction was validated.

'This poem has..... verses' (J3).	'In this poem...' (B1)
'The first line is about...' (F3)	'The poem is about old times.' (I3)
'There is, there are...' (G3)	'The main people, the detail ' (N2)
'The names of the characters are...' (I3)	'It is set in the old days.' (R1) (P1)
'... wrote this Poem' (Q1)	'Easy? Difficult ? ' (P1)
'What happens...?' (E4)	'Old fashioned' (Q1)
'Is it an action poem or a thinking poem?' (D4)	'The title of the poem...' (N2)
'At the beginning/end of the poem...' (G3)	'Imaginative or factual' (Q1)

5.5.4 Presentation of Completed *Meinungskarte*

We began by mentioning Scoba cards and the way we used them to discover nouns and verbs and do the translation. A4, here interjected with 'übersetzen'.⁷⁴ Then we said we would do a new one that would 'tell us about' or give us an account of the poem. This is stepping back a bit and having a look at it. We had gathered some suggestions in English, teacher read them out, and then class and teacher went down through suggestions (stressing they came from children themselves) until we were fairly sure they were understood 'auf Deutsch'. Examples were solicited, 'Dieses Gedicht handelt von einem König' etc. 'Das Gedicht heißt [...] 'Meiner Meinung nach' etc. (Teacher's notes: 15/4/2010)

The provisional *Meinungskarte* (Fig. 6) was given to the children, incorporating as many of their suggestions as possible. The content of the *Karte* was revised so that they could see how this had been done.

⁷⁴ Although this single word comment might not appear important, it does show that A4 has begun the process of adopting the vocabulary *auf Deutsch* rather than remaining with the English version of the word.

Fig. 6



5.6.1 *Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las*: Account and Poetic Probability

In an attempt to clarify the account aspect, the simple nursery rhyme, *Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las* was re-introduced. The intention was to differentiate between the translation and the essence of the poem, which lies in the fact that the last line leads one back into a repeat of the same verse. The translation was done very swiftly. When asked

for an account the children were at first inclined to only paraphrase but eventually C4 clarified the joke aspect.

This poem was also used to discuss poetic probability⁷⁵. Hares cannot read so is the poem nonsensical? It was decided after discussion in English that, in fiction, things can be imagined in such a way as to be believable. Many of the comments showed that the children grasped the concept.

- ‘If you hadn’t imagination you couldn’t really be a child’ C4.
- M2 cited the film *Avatar* and the ‘people who were blue’.
- H3 concluded that ‘most stories and pictures [films] are made up’.

The teacher had, on *Google image* the previous night, downloaded three different pictures of hares reading books, *Ein Hase, der gern Bücher las*, so these were shown as different ways of imagining something that was not in reality possible. The concept of *Märchenland* or *Traumland* was introduced where the miraculous and the mundane freely and validly intermingled.

5.6.2 Co-construction of *Vorstellungskarte*

As the poem was very short, consisting of but one stanza, an approach to creating a *Vorstellungskarte* was attempted. The discussion was in English with a view to amassing suitable material for using *auf Deutsch* in the *Karte*. The teacher suggested using a hand-clapping accompaniment with which they were familiar from the playground and from earlier musical experiences that year. This was tried with success. Then the children’s suggestions were encouraged among which were the following:

- Act the poem out. D4
- Mime the poem. A4, O1

⁷⁵ Cf. Chapter Four, Section 1.2.

- Sing the poem (A number of the poems we did, have tunes). G3
- Dance it. This suggestion referred back to Erlkönig’ ‘Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein’. I3
- March while saying it. This referred to König Tinizong. H3
- Use pictures as flash cards. J3
- Use gestures. I3
- Get into/ be/ the character (‘be bouncy in *Ein Hase*’). C4
- Say lines alternately. A4
- Read as out of a book. F3
- Mime combined with recitation. B1
- Go from whisper to crescendo. C4
- Clap or tap the beat. N2
- Illustrate the poem in a picture. Q1 (Teachers notes: 15/4/2010)

To these the teacher added:

- Each group (i.e. the present class colour groupings) to choose a part or character and say it.
- Division of the class into different sections to speak the poem.

The responses ranged over the four classes, appealed to a variety of intelligences and showed an enthusiasm for the performance of the piece that augured well for the formal introduction of the *Vorstellungskarte*.

5.6.3 Presentation of the Completed *Vorstellungskarte*

The completed *Vorstellungskarte* (Fig.7 on the following page) was given to the pupils and each child was encouraged to recognize her own contribution to the card.

Fig.7



The class continued with the translation of the next verses of *Erlkönig* and by now were developing a facility for recognizing the *Nomen* and attempting the *Verben*. Again there was a perception of the importance of variation in word order between languages. ‘Comment from F3 and J3 on translating, ‘Do you follow the words in order as you translate or do you put it into good English?’ (Teacher’s notes: 27/04/2010). However this was taking up a major amount of time for poetry and there was little being done *auf Deutsch* in the account section. The account was quite satisfactory in English and as each verse was completed the account was written. (cf. appendix5 for three examples of accounts of the fifth verse *Willst feiner Knabe du mit mir geh'n?*). In retrospect this account for each individual verse may not have been the best approach as it slowed down progress. It would probably have been better to finish the translation and then do an account of the complete poem. This problem didn’t arise in the very short earlier

poems. This waiting for completion of the full poem translation, before tackling the account, was tried later in *Ich habe meine Tante geschlachtet* (cf. below, Chapter Five, Section 9.1) and it worked well.

5.7.1 *Mehr auf Deutsch*: Strategies

In an attempt to move to the use of more L3, oral questioning on the verse *Mein Vater, mein Vater und siehst du nicht dort...* was introduced. Some sample questions:

‘Wie viele Stimmen hören wir in dieser Strophe?’

‘Ist die erste eine Frage?’

‘Was fragt er? Wer spricht?’

‘Was ist die Frage? Wer antwortet?’

‘Siehst er die Töchter?’

‘Hat der Vater Angst?’

The children, according to the notes ‘seemed reasonably able in answering’ (teachers notes 27/04/2010) and it was decided to incorporate these and questions like them into a questionnaire on the same verse (*Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort*) with some extra questions on the poem as an entity (cf. appendices 6,7). The idea behind the questionnaire was that it might be used in a dialogic manner in order to improve the childrens’ competency and also that it might provide them with idiom and vocabulary for their later account of the poem. The sixth and fifth class children answered quite well and the third and fourth class children showed, in their answering in English, that although their German answering was limited they had understood the original questions *auf Deutsch* (cf. Appendices 8, 9, 10, 11).⁷⁶ It is important to note that this was the first time this type of questionnaire had been attempted and it is quite possible that the standard would improve once mistakes had been noticed and procedures practiced. The teacher’s notes mention:

⁷⁶ The very cluttered appearance of A4’s answer (cf. appendices 8, 9) is due to this student’s diligent habit of revising and rewriting the answers after most exercises.

Having given the children the prompter questions [questionnaire] to see if it would help in writing the account, I found:

1. *There was an understanding of most of the questions*
2. *The children had insufficient competency to give fully realized answers*
3. *A number of children answered in English, showing they understood the questions and the poem.*
4. *There was universal agreement that they liked the poem.*

*I now need to go back over the questions and point out little things like *Wie viele Stimmen hören wir?*, *Wir hören*, *Stellt er eine Frage?*, *Er stellt...*' (Teacher's notes: 04/05/2010).*

5.7.2 Personal Involvement

It was satisfying to note the degree of anticipation that preceded the final verses and *denouement* when the child's fate was revealed. The children asked that they be allowed complete two rather than the usual one verse per class in order to reach the ending. In the final verse (cf. appendix 12) the children were given a copy each of the final stanza. The final word was omitted. Thus the suspense was maintained to the very end. The children knew that the word had to rhyme with *Not*. Many of them surmised the child was dead so they looked up 'dead' in their Wörterbuch and found 'tot'. Q.E.D! The mystery was solved and the conclusion was found. The difference in method adopted by each group can be clearly seen in the four examples. Some rely on writing and recording every word. *Gruppe Rosa* has decided that each member takes an individual line. There is variety in approach and diction and this is mirrored in another short exercise where descriptive adjectives were solicited using *Meiner Meinung nach* as an introductory phrase (cf. appendix 13). These adjectives were later noted, translated and introduced into the *Wörterwand* for the description of the character of the *Erlkönig* (cf. appendix 14) and would also be used in compiling the later *Affektive Karte*. There is a continual effort to have the children create their own language *quasi-Bedürfnisse* and to compensate for a lack of competency. There is a corresponding danger, that in

depending too much on learner autonomy the teacher forgets that she has primarily to teach them the words they need in order that they are enabled to express themselves.

The response to the ending of the poem was varied and personal. One particularly interesting answer was that of I3, a less able student who wrote,

‘I thing (sic) it was all a dream or the son was already dead before the Erlkönig got it. And the father knew the Erlkönig from before when he was a child’ I3, 4/05/2010.

This is surely the answer of someone who has become personally involved in the poem’s content and has a novel and individual interpretation of the implications of the text.

5.7.3 Overall Account of *Erlkönig*

The children were then asked to write individually an overall account of the poem (cf. Appendices 15,16,17). These ranged from the very detailed paraphrase of J3, (15) through the more objective appraisals (16), to the very simple but effective tripartite division of the poem by R1 (erroneously titled ‘Group blue’) (17). The accounts show an individual approach to the poem with certain aspects being selected and stressed. ‘The Erlkönig talks to the child, he tells him how lovely he is’, ‘I think Erlkönig is scary but I think the poem is easy to translate and easy to pronounce (sic)’. ‘There is an Erlkönig who is trying to take the son away and he teases him with things like his daughters and his mother’.

In discussion, a significant aspect involved the father’s knowledge of what was happening-‘*whether he saw the supernatural figures. Some suggested the child was hallucinating-one mentioned the ‘bright light’ supposedly seen by many before death. Others that the father wanted to quieten and reassure the child.* (Teacher’s notes: 04/05/2010).

In order to introduce a greater range of descriptive vocabulary *auf Deutsch* the children made a word list in English and translated the words into *Deutsch*. This wordlist was based on the *Erlkönig* poem. Each group then produced a ‘spider-web’ (cf. appendix 18)

The first spider-webs used both languages but as will be seen below a more effective method using a *Wörterwand* eventually evolved.⁷⁷

5.7.4 *Die Wörterwand*: Vocabulary and Affective Response

This later method while involving the children in its production also allowed for input from the teacher as ‘more knowledgeable other’. The *Wörterwand* is built up of words suggested by the children, preferably *auf Deutsch* but also in English. If however a word is given in English, before being used as part of the wall, it is translated using the *Wörterbuch*, group activity or teacher’s help. This vocabulary can then be used in the spider-web cards for *Erlkönig* the poem, *Erlkönig* the character, or for a description of *der Vater, der Sohn etc.* ensuring that there is a degree of choice and learner autonomy. The use of the *Wörterwand* is discussed more fully below.

Another aspect of developing this vocabulary was that it reflected the affective response to the poem and many of the new words would come into play in registering that response *auf Deutsch* e.g. *unheimlich, ein unheimlicher Mensch, ein unheimliches Gedicht*. There is also the grammar aspect of adjectival endings following the indefinite article. Thus vocabulary, grammar and affective response interact with one another in the creation of the *Wörterwand*.

In these early stages of account writing, the task appeared to be beyond their competence, so much so that the teacher had to revise his expectations in the light of the childrens’ ability.

When writing the account, the accent should be on what one can say rather than on what one wants to say. Thus we stick to straightforward sentences on what is in the poem or descriptions using simple structures, ‘ist’ and ‘sind’. No need for indirect speech. a) The children cannot do it, b) What they do themselves is memorable (i.e. they remember it better than if it is just given to them) (Teacher’s notes: 04/05/2010, brackets not in original).

⁷⁷ ‘Qualitative researchers often act as bricoleurs in achieving their research goals. Denzin and Lincoln (2000b) define bricoleur as a...Jack of all trades or a kind of do-it-yourself person [who deploys] whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand...If new tools or techniques have to be invented, or pieced together, then the researcher will do this’ (Ponterotto 2005: 134, brackets in original).

It is in such situations that one realizes the necessity of acceptance of ‘incomplete understandings’ on the child’s part referred to by Windschitl. ‘As teachers try to strike a balance between their obligation to the discipline and their obligation to the learner, they must frequently settle for partial understandings on the part of learners’ (Windschitl 2000: 149). This simplification of the account in writing will allow more time for interactive dialogue between class and teacher and group and teacher and within the group and dyad formations⁷⁸.

One of the main proponents of introspective methods in psychology, Ericsson (2002), explains that the closest connection between thinking processes and verbal reports are found when participants are instructed to verbalize their ongoing thoughts while focusing on a task. (Dörnyei 2009: 148)

5.8.1 *Tonkarten*

The importance of gesture, tone and voice has already been touched upon (Chapter Four, Section 9.6) and in order to create an awareness of tone and voice and to help the child to recognize ‘the distinction between the voice that speaks and the poet who made the poem’ (Culler 2002: 74), *Tonkarten* were introduced. These are cards on each of which a particular speaking tone is written e.g. *lustig, leise, tosend, traurig, demütig, ängstlich, flüsternd, mutig etc* (cf. appendix 19). These were set around the class and taught by using the correct tone to indicate their meaning. The children were then invited to provide test sentences. The teacher gave as examples ‘*Hast du gehört, meine Katze ist tot?*’, ‘*Wer hat das Fenster zerbrochen?*’ Among the suggestions were:

‘Siehst du nicht den Erlkönig?’ H3

‘Wem gehört dieses Buch?’ A4

‘Woher kommt die Uhr?’⁷⁹ C4

‘Wo ist dein Freund?’ D4

⁷⁸ This simplification of the account has perhaps affinities with the ‘Oppositional Practice’ advocated by Kramsch and Nolden (1994) mentioned in Chapter Four, Section 7.1, although on a simpler level.

⁷⁹ The clock in the classroom has *London* engraved on its face.

Children then selected the *Tonkarte* and read or stated the sentence in the tone indicated. The children realized that a variety of tone and expression could inform the intention of the speaker. The final line of *Erlkönig*, *In seinen Armen das Kind war tot*, was then attempted in a variety of suitable voices, *flüsternd*, *langsam*, *traurig* etc. There was an enthusiastic response to this exercise due probably to the elements of variety and of play involved.

By relating the *Tonkarten* to the poem as in ‘*Wütend passt gut zur.....Strophe*’, ‘*Traurig past gut zur letzten Strophe*’ the children were able to link to the affective aspects of the poem and at the same time were beginning to formulate ideas on *Vorstellung*. Thus the recognition of voice and tone plays an important part in the understanding, appreciation and appropriation of the poem. There was also, at last, a movement towards using *Deutsch* rather than English and an increase in the children’s confidence in so doing.

This would seem to be a way into Affektive suited to the very limited competence of the pupils and also ties in with Vorstellung. P1’s attempt was excellent for a beginner ‘Ängstlich passt gut zu der dritten Strophe, linie[n] zwei und drei’ (Teacher’s notes: 07/05/2010).

5.8.2 Working with Junior Classes: *Abendlied/ Rosemarie, Rosemarie*

On a day when the senior classes were taken for sports training, the remaining third and fourth and one fifth class pupil attempted the translation of Herbert Löns’ *Abendlied* or *Rosemarie, Rosemarie*.

*Rose Marie, Rose Marie,
Sieben Jahre mein Herz nach dir schrie,
Rose Marie, Rose Marie,
Aber du hörtest es nie.*

*Jedwede Nacht, jedwede Nacht,
Hat mir im Traume dein Bild zugelacht,
Kam dann der Tag, kam dann der Tag,
Wieder alleine ich lag.*

*Jetzt bin ich alt, jetzt bin ich alt,
Aber mein Herz ist noch immer nicht kalt,
Schläft wohl schon bald, schläft wohl schon bald,*

Doch bis zuletzt es noch hallt:

*Rose Marie, Rose Marie,
Sieben Jahre Mein Herz nach dir schrie,
Rose Marie, Rose Marie,
Aber du hörtest es nie. (Löns 2004: 560)*

Although the poem is not a hugely difficult one, the group of pupils translating it would comprise the least able section of the class. This gave the opportunity of seeing how they could work without the support of *Gruppenleiterinnen* and other more knowledgeable peers. The poem/song had been done successfully with the class of 2006/7 but the present class were unfamiliar with it. There were two phrases that posed problems for beginners. ‘*Schläft wohl schon bald*’ and ‘*doch bis zuletzt es noch hallt*’. *Schlafen* and *bald* proved helpful and a translation of the meaning was attempted rather than a word- for- word rendering. ‘Deep sleep comes soon’ was acceptable. *Letzte* helped decipher *zuletzt*, and *hallen* was given as ‘echo’. Otherwise they managed very well and teacher and group format was used re-arranging simpler larger groups as so many people were absent.

With the previous group 2006/7, we had approached the poem in the burlesque style of the Ensembles Deutsches Theater Berlin (Patmos 2004) and a class of seven sixth- class boys (rather unexpectedly!) revelled in the role of *unerwiderter Liebender* and exaggerated the role with great effect and enjoyment. However this group suggested otherwise.

In a discussion Q1 proposed that it was a genuinely sad poem and that perhaps the lady had died. This was an alternative and valid affective response to that of the teacher who had had a burlesque ‘send up’ approach and showed individual reaction to the poem. Very heartening! (Teacher’s notes: 07/05/ 2010).

5.8.3 *Wörterwand* /‘*Vater*’: Spider-web and Adjectival Endings

Reverting to *Erlkönig*, and further work on the *Wörterwand*, ‘*der Vater*’ (cf. appendix 20) the children were given the prepared page. When it was suggested by the teacher that there might be too many words contained in the ‘wall’, the children disagreed and mentioned that they had already covered a number of them and gave as examples *nervös*, *ängstlich*, *liebend*, *freundlich* and *tapfer*. It was significant that the children

decided this as the teacher was considering giving less. Then in groups they picked up to ten words that suited the character of *der Vater*. These selected words were placed on a spider-web for *der Vater* (cf. appendix 21). This spider-web was an advance on the original spider-web mentioned above in that they were helped to acquire a greater variety of words and the selected ones were written only *auf Deutsch*. Along with the *Wörterwand*, *der Vater* the students were also given the question ‘*Was für ein Mensch ist der Vater?*’ and the corresponding answers ‘*Der Vater ist einer Mensch*’ and ‘*Der Vater sieht sehr.....aus*’. This was an attempt to furnish them with correct adjectival endings and sufficient vocabulary for the *Meinungskarte* and also to help them in the later *Affektive Karte*. The description of character also aids the affective response to the character.

5.8.4 *Meinungskarte*: Use of and First Account *auf Deutsch*

At this stage (14/5/2010) there was a first attempt to use the *Meinungskarte* and to write an account of the poem *auf Deutsch*. As is obvious (cf. appendix 22) this caused difficulties and showed that the children needed a lot more practice. However each group does give an indication that progress might be made following more interaction between teacher and groups and there is a definite if limited sense of getting to grips with the intention of the *Meinungskarte*. There is also the positive aspect that once again the children are creating their own *quasi-Bedürfnisse* by revealing their needs in attempting the accomplishment of the task set.

5.8.5 Reprise of *Abendlied /Rosemarie* by Full Class

The children next reprised the translation of *Rosemarie* in their normal groupings and it was noted by the teacher that while, as expected, the senior pupils managed the translation quite well ‘*the younger children didn’t remember Tuesday’s work*’ (Teacher’s notes: 14/5/2010). As the translation was done quite quickly (the work was totally oral, the children were not required to do a written translation), time remained for each group to read the poem aloud. There was a degree of differentiation even at a first reading when recognition and pronunciation of words were both a little tentative. There was no attempt at *Übertreibung* from any group.

5.9.1 *Affektive Karte, Der Tantenmörder*

At this stage of the empirical study, it was felt that translation *Nomenkarte* and *Verbenkarte* had been covered and was even being internalized in practice and *Meinungskarte* had been tentatively introduced. When reading the poems encountered so far we had also included aspects of *Vorstellung* in our readings. The time-period for the study was drawing to a close and we decided to concentrate on the *Affektive Karte*. It was also felt that a break from *Erlkönig* would be advantageous and so the teacher introduced the *Moritat, Der Tantenmörder/ Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet*.⁸⁰

Der Tantenmörder

*Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet,
Meine Tante war alt und schwach,
Ich hatte bei ihr übernachtet
Und grub in den Kisten-Kasten nach.*

*Da fand ich goldene Haufen,
Fand auch an Papieren gar viel,
Und hörte die alte Tante schnaufen
Ohn Mitleid und Zartgefühl.*

*Was nutzt es, daß sie sich noch härmte —
Nacht war es rings um mich her —,
Ich stieß ihr den Dolch in die Därme,
Die Tante schnaufte nicht mehr.*

*Das Geld war schwer zu tragen,
Viel schwerer die Tante noch.
Ich faßte sie bebend am Kragen
Und stieß sie ins tiefe Kellerloch.*

*Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet,
Meine Tante war alt und schwach,
Ihr aber, o Richter, ihr trachtet
Meiner blühenden Jugend — Jugend nach.*

(Wedekind 2004: 567)

⁸⁰ Some might query the appropriateness of Frank Wedekind's bloodthirsty Moritat for primary school children. In his experience, the writer finds that the children are well able to distinguish between reality and poetic fiction and that they take a delight in bloodcurdling events when visited vicariously in a classroom situation. There are a number of equally gruesome childrens' songs that they enjoy, in particular "Weelah, weelah Waaliah" in which a lady does away with her child and is finally brought to justice. This more than matches the selected poem in gruesome description. *Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet* is an excellent poem for examining voice and intention as the character reveals his own horrid nature without realising that he is doing so, so that, from a number of aspects, it justifies its inclusion.

There were two potentially difficult lines, *was nutzt es das sie sich noch härme* and *Ihr trachtet meiner blühenden Jugend-Jugend nach*. These were given as ‘Of what use is it that she is still grieving herself so?’ and ‘You are holding my beautiful youth against me.’ That done, each group was given one verse to translate.

*Then I left each group translate their own verse and went from one to the other to see if help was needed. They were able to do most of it unaided. Then as each group completed their own verse they went to the other groups for help in translating the rest of the poem. Finally each group was asked to do a complete translation of the poem and this was successfully realized (cf. appendix 23).⁸¹ Although there were, of course, great similarities in the translations, there are differences in idiom and syntax which would argue for an individual appropriation of the poem in each group. (Teacher’s notes: 18/5/2010). What is also noteworthy is that although this is the initial translation phase there is already differentiation which may be further realized in the *Affektive Karte* options and in the *Vorstellungskarte*.*

The money was heavy to carry

But the auntie was heavier still

I hold the collar shakily of the dead auntie

And shove [sic] her into the depth of the cellarhole.

(Gruppe Rosa, 18/5/2010)

The gold was heavy to carry

But the auntie was even heavier

I grabbed her by the collar (sic)

I shuved (sic) her into the celler hole.

(Gruppe Blau, 18/5/2010)⁸²

⁸¹ While one would wish to include all the translations of poems, illustrations, accounts, etc. for comparison purposes, this would make the appendix unwieldy. In the interests of time and space a representative sample is given and every effort is made to represent different pupils and groups. When possible a number of examples are copied to a single page.

⁸² Cf. appendix 23 for a full translation by *Gruppe Gelb*.

It would have been advantageous had the children the time to further develop the *Affektive* and *Vorstellung* aspects of this poem but further necessary work on *Erlkönig* curtailed this.(cf. following paragraph). However they were enabled later to return to the poem and to discuss the language and the presentation with considerable confidence and success (cf. Chapter Five, Section 10.1 below).

5.9.2 2nd Attempt at Account Based on *Erlkönig Wörterwand*

The children next revised the *Wörterwand* for the *Erlkönig* character (cf. appendix 14). F3 suggested that it would be useful were words of a similar nature e.g. *gruselig*, *schaurig*, *unheimlich* or *komisch*, *seltsam*, *krumm*, grouped together on the wall. This would make for easier remembering. This was taken into account in the make-up of the *Wörterwand*. A spider-web was then done on the *Erlkönig* character (cf. appendix 24). The children were again asked to write an account *auf Deutsch* of the poem. This was done:

to see if a second attempt would show an improvement. This would indicate that by repeated use of the Scoba cards (in this case the Meinungskarte) the pupils could develop their ZPD. The second attempt (cf. appendices 25, 26 of 25/5/2010 compared with appendices 22 of 14/5/2010) showed a greater grasp of the task, an encouraging advance in vocabulary and a wider range of approach to the poem (Teacher's notes: 25/5/2010, brackets not in original) .

It seems evident that the children benefitted from the greater input of vocabulary in the *Wörterwand* and from the revisited use of the *Meinungskarte*. This would augur well for future tasks involving both methods in that as the pupils become more familiar with the methods involved, their competence and confidence should increase.

5.9.3 *Wörterwand 'das Gedicht'*

In an attempt to encourage proficiency in the *Affektive Karte*, words were sought to express opinions about the poem. The children already knew a good number of these words and this helped their confidence. These words came from a number of varied sources, from the *Tonkarten*: *traurig*, *schön*, *fröhlich*, from the other *Wörterwände*:

gruselig, spannend, interessant, from the Wörterbuch: *dramatisch, nachdenklich* and from the teacher, *gewalttätig, erfinderisch, usw.* These were placed on a Wörterwand

entitled *Das Gedicht* (cf. appendix 27) and their usage, i.e. the adjectival ending *es* when referring to *Gedicht* was explained and practiced.

Es ist ein trauriges Gedicht.

Es ist eines Gedicht.

Ich finde dieses Gedicht sehr traurig.

Meiner Meinung nach ist dieses Gedicht wirklich interessant.

Using these opening phrases, the children were asked to give three suitable descriptive adjectives to describe the poem. They managed this fairly well showing an understanding of the words and of their application to the poem and a fair command of idiom. This had been preceded by a good deal of oral work in an attempt to internalise the *Meiner Meinung nach* phrase. The children themselves had asked for the plural form *unserer* as expressing the group rather than individual intent.

Unserer Meinung nach ist Erlkönig ein unheimliches, gespenstisches und komisches Gedicht. Gruppe Blau: 1/6/2010.

Unserer Meinung nach das Gedicht Erlkönig ist geheimnisvolles, unheimliches und gewalttätiges Gedicht. Gruppe Gelb: 1/6/2010.

Unserer Meinung nach ist Erlkönig ein interessantes, unheimliches und geheimnisvolles (Gedicht omitted). Gruppe Orange: 1/6/2010.

5.9.4 Completed Affektive Karte, Use of Illustration

At this stage the finished *Affektive Karte* (Fig.8) was produced. It was explained as a way of helping the students to express their feelings about the poem, what they like and why they like it, *auf Deutsch*. Much of the work in it had been done previously by them as they worked through the verses of *Erlkönig*. The fact that the opening suggestion had been done already helped boost their confidence. The work with *Tonkarten* had prepared them for the suggestions to do with expression, *Man soll die dritte Strophe*

.....*aussagen*. As a preparation they spoke the poem with as much expression as possible.

We then did the Erlkönig twice, putting as much expression as possible into it. Some of the younger children were unable to read all but hit it here and there. But all enjoyed it. Then we divided it into groups Erlkönig, Vater, Sohn, Erzähler. This was done quite well. (Teacher's notes: 1/6/2010).

The children were encouraged to explore the *Ich mag die Bilder...* suggestion by drawing their own illustration of any part of the poem that appealed to them. This was given as *Hausaufgaben* and proved a hugely helpful approach to the *affektive* aspects of the poem. Not alone did it serve as a clarification of the content of the poem for each individual but when all the completed pictures were placed on the board it served as a stimulation for dialogue.

Fig.8



There was the added *quasi-Bedürfnisse* aspect of realizing the words necessary to talk about one's own picture and many of the pictures had aspects in common, so that in using these phrases, e.g. *In meinem Bild, der Wald, die Sterne, das Pferd, in der Nacht*, the children learned from each other's examples. Many of the children incorporated phrases from the poem into their pictures. There was a great variety of image and detail proving the individuality of the response (cf. appendices 28, 29).⁸³

⁸³ One cannot put all the pictures into the appendix but two were chosen particularly. F3's image shows a figure looking through the window at the Father and Son galloping by. 'Wer ist das beim Fenster?' elicited the response, 'Das ist der Dichter!'. H3 decided to illustrate die Erlkönigs Töchter 'Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein'. In the resulting picture these lovely ladies performed their dance to the energetic strains of a ghetto-blasters placed directly before them *im düstern Ort*, and blaring out 'BOOM BOOM POW !' as accompaniment. It was the clearest indication one could wish for, that the poem had been fully internalised and appropriated and had become part of H3's everyday consciousness.

As this paragraph considers the use of illustration, an example of how the poem was treated by an earlier group of students is relevant. This group, school-year 2001-2002, would have been of a similar age range and ability to the group featured in the empirical study. Each child was invited to represent *der Erlkönig* character or some aspect of the story. The pictures were discussed and particularly suitable aspects from the childrens' pictures e.g. the collar of the cloak, the elongated fingers, the wooded background, the figures on horseback, were selected and incorporated into a much larger scale picture measuring 150cm x 200cm. The outlines were pencilled in on six separate sections which were then collaged with suitable coloured magazine paper scraps. The sections were put together and the resulting wall-hanging was mounted in the classroom (cf. appendix 41). An arresting focal point and much commented on by visitors, its construction provided many discourse opportunities, gave the children a great sense of achievement and also provided a helpful integration with the art curriculum's construction strand.

5.9.5 *Vorstellungskarte, Auf dem Berge Sinai*, Appreciation

At this stage there were very few *Deutschstunden* left and there was a need felt to try out the *Vorstellungskarte* in more detail. Time did not allow of going through all the methods with the longer poems, so the short *Kinderreim*, *Auf dem Berge Sinai* was selected. This had been done earlier and the children were familiar with it. It provided

for a good variation of tone and the invention of accompanying gestures. It also was suited to be matched with simple song tunes.

*Auf dem Berge Sinai
wohnt der Schneider Kikriki
seine Frau, die Margarete
saß auf dem Balkon und nähte.
Fiel herab, fiel herab
und das linke Bein brach ab.
Kam der Doktor hergerannt
mit der Nadel in der Hand
näht es an, näht es an,
daß sie wieder laufen kann!*

(Volksgut 1984: 167)

Using this poem as a basis the children chose the various methods in the *Vorstellungskarte* and performed the poem accordingly. To vary the approach the various items on the *Vorstellungskarte* had been transferred to single cards (cf. appendix 38) and the children selected the card they wished to use. The illustrative methods had already been used in *Erlkönig* and would be used for later poems (cf. below) so they were omitted. The remaining methods used, e.g. the mime, the use of song, the introduction of gesture, the building from whisper to crescendo, the clapping of the beat, the recital of alternate lines, were all very successful and showed the variety of expression that was available. The children obviously enjoyed the exercise and the different approaches avoided any monotony in repetition. One child's comment "That was deadly!" (M2) expressed the satisfaction and sense of excitement felt by many. ('Deadly' of course, being used here as an adjective of high approval).

Later the *Tonkarten* were re-introduced and used in conjunction with *Auf dem Berge Sinai*. They were also used to point the mood in various verses of *Erlkönig*. 'Das Kind spricht so ängstlich' N2. , 'Der Erlkönig spricht anflehend' D4., 'Das Kind hat eine ängstliche Stimme' G3. A set of pictures corresponding to the verses was put up and the children sequenced them and this provided useful dialogue material. Using the *Affektive Karte* the children then created in groups their appreciation of the poem. This final written exercise (cf. appendices 30-37) ⁸⁴ contained *no use of English in the finished texts*, a telling advance on earlier responses and the children were more confident in their ability to use *Deutsch* and to translate from English. This exercise also showed that the children had appropriated lots of the material from the Scoba cards, the *Wörterwände*, and the Spider-webs and were able to re-use them to express their personal evaluation of the poem.

5.10.1 Final Sessions: Oral Aural Comparative Evaluation

The two last sessions with the children were mainly involved with oral work and listening. Phrases from *Erlkönig* were put up e.g. *In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind* and the children placed them in their context. *Das kommt in der dritten Strophe* etc. According to the notes:

⁸⁴ As this is the final written exercise and might be regarded as an example of the written realisation of this study, it was considered excusable and relevant to include all of the groups' examples in the appendix .

These (phrases) now have a context and are familiar so this is a good recognition and memory- enhancing method (Teacher's notes: 11/ 6 /2010).

The children used the *Sage die Zeilen abwechselnd* method, i.e. each child taking a separate line for *Ich habe meine Tante geschlachtet* and this worked quite well. Time did not allow a written *Affektive Karte* or *Wörterwand* but in discussion, the children offered for this poem the words *blutrünstig, krumm, unheimlich, gewalttätig, schaurig* and a number of others. This indicated again that they were able to transfer material from one poem to another and re-use it successfully. They also did pictures of their choice of *Ich hab meine Tante geschlachtet* and *Auf dem Berge Sinai* (cf. appendices 39,40)

As another approach to the *Erlkönig*, the recording of the poem by Otto Sanders (Patmos 2004) was played to the children. They listened with great attention and were very willing to comment. The comments were made in English but later translated and used *auf Deutsch* as the teacher did not want to hinder the expression of response at this first attempt. Among the comments were:

'I found it too fast.' B1

'I found the voice dull.' F3

Particular pronunciations were noted. E4 noted the pronunciation of *halt*, J3 noted *bleibe*. C4 noted the pronunciation of *Töchter* and questioned some of the pauses and run-on lines. G3 was not happy with the ending (with how it was expressed). N2 agreed and M2 preferred to make a pause between the final words, *das Kind - war - tot*. L2 wished for a more lively approach. I3 said that he (Otto Sander) didn't make it 'scary'.

All of these suggestions served a double purpose. They helped to clarify the affective response of the children themselves and they served as a *quasi-Bedürfnisse* role in elucidating the needs of the children in expressing themselves *auf Deutsch*. In dialogue, the teacher and class worked out suitable sentences to convey all of the above. *Es war zu schnell. Ich fand die Stimme eintönig/langweilig. Die Pausen hat mir nicht gefallen. Die Ende hat mir nicht gefallen. Die Ende soll langsamer sein. Es braucht ein lebendigeren Ansatz. Es war nicht gruselig genug.* This was a useful enabling exercise and helped the children's confidence.

The *Abendlied/Rosemarie, Rosemarie* was then played. This is a version from the Ensemble Deutsches Theatre Berlin (Patmos, 2004) in which one member of the cast exaggerates the part of the mournful lover to great comic effect. J3 queried whether the interjections were intentional or a response from a audience member. It was hugely enjoyed by the children. *‘Das Lied war sehr lustig’*. L2

Then a version of *Der Tantenmörder /Ich habe meine Tante geschlachtet* (Patmos, 2004) was played with music also by the author. There is an interesting dichotomy between the light almost airy tune and the grisly content of the poem. The children were not given any hint regarding this and were asked to give their oral responses *auf Deutsch*. The teacher was at hand to help if needed but the children managed most of the responses themselves and were quite confident. They also noted the contrast between tune and content without prompting. Among the responses were

‘Das Lied ist besser als das Gedicht’. A4

‘Es gibt Kontrast zwischen das Lied und das Gedicht’. F3

‘Das Lied ist sehr überraschend’. J3

‘Es ist ein trauriges und lustiges Gedicht’. I3

‘Es passt gut den Schülern in unserer Schule. Meiner Meinung nach ist das Lied sehr lustig. Es gibt viele unterschiedliche Gefühle [in diesem Gedicht]’. C4

‘Die Ende war sehr gut, denn er hält die Note eine lange Zeit’. B1

‘Meiner Meinung nach ist die zweite Strophe sehr spannend, denn die Musik ist lebendig. Die melodie ist schön’. D4

‘Es ist ein interessantes Gedicht, denn es ist so komisch’.E4

The responses given, both the written ones based on the *Affektive Karten* (appendices 30-37) and the above oral ones, their responses to the versions of *Erlkoenig* and *Der Tantenmörder*, clearly show the childrens’ identification with and appreciation of the

poems and a corresponding facility in expression *auf Deutsch*.⁸⁵ The fact that they are confident enough now to enjoy, discuss and at times dismiss other versions indicates that they have a personal vision of the poem, its characters and how it should best be presented. The process of internalisation and personal appropriation of the poem seems well in hand and the way is open hopefully for discussion, evaluation, internalisation and above all enjoyment of many, many, others.

Conclusion

6.1.1 ‘Gardening in a Gale’, the Current Situation

The efficacy of any teaching approach is dependent on the background and conditions under which it is taking place. Thus prior to the evaluation, conclusions and suggestions, resulting from the empirical study in particular, a brief assessment of the context and background against which those evaluations, conclusions and suggestions will be acted out, might be considered reasonable. This study (Chapter two) has argued strongly against the NCCA’s 2008 review of the feasibilities of modern languages in the primary school curriculum. The review contends that these new emphases on Language

⁸⁵ As a treat the children asked that Johann Gottfried Herder’s ‘Edward’ be played. As the teacher’s notes state this was *‘interesting because they certainly didn’t know every word. I had played ‘Edward’ before and briefly translated it as it went along but the many repetitions and the exceptionally lugubrious voice and intonation of Ben Becker had obviously captured their imagination ,showing the power of tone and voicing and the children’s willingness to enter into even an incompletely understood but stirring story’* (Teacher’s notes 15/6/2010).

awareness, Intercultural awareness, Language Sensitization and Content and Language Integrated Learning, are as equally effective in preparing the children to acquire a foreign language as the Communicative Competency approach involving the actual designated language itself.⁸⁶

‘Parlous’ is not too strong a word to describing a situation in foreign language teaching where unproven, unevaluated and questionably effective systems (cf. Chapter 2, 2.3, Chapter 2, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3) are given precedence by the government over the only fully-critically-evaluated, successful, parent- supported, and currently practised initiative in the primary system, that of the MLPSI. And yet this is clearly the case as revealed in the answer to parliamentary question 109 on Tuesday, 20th October, 2009 by the then Minister of State, Sean Haughey.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has recommended against a further expansion of the language competency model at this time, citing issues of curriculum overload and difficulties relating to the replicability of the model across the system. It has recommended instead, in the short to medium term, that a strategy of language awareness should be promoted, with pupils continuing to begin their formal learning of a modern language at the start of second level (Ceist Phairliminte/ Parliamentary Question 109, 2009: 1)

The lack of encouragement and enthusiasm for MLPSI has already been commented on (1.1.1, 1.1.2) and there is no denying the finality of, ‘Given the difficult budgetary position and particularly in the context of the advice from the NCCA, there will be no expansion of the Modern Languages Initiative at primary level in the near term’ (Ceist Phairliminte /Parliamentary Question 109, 2009: 1). The issue of conforming to the Barcelona Agreement in relation to the teaching of at least two foreign languages from an early age is fudged ‘The Barcelona Conclusions are non-binding [...]. My Department fully accepts the desirability of this approach as an EU policy direction. This does not mean however that it is necessarily practicable in every member state’ (Ceist Phairliminte/ Parliamentary Question 109, 2009: 4).

⁸⁶ The writer has discussed these suggestions with many of his language-teaching colleagues and others involved in the provision of language-education at third level and, without exception, the introduction of a language awareness programme as suggested, without a communicative competency approach in a designated language, is considered to be impractical, ineffective and unlikely to benefit the students who attempt it.

Professor Eric Hawkin's much quoted phrase on teaching a foreign language 'We garden in a gale of English' (Byram 2004: 258) is prescient and applicable except that now, not alone has the teaching of foreign languages in the primary school to contend with the prevalence of English (or Gaeilge in Irish speaking areas), but with three additional major obstacles. These are, a) Governmental policy as articulated in the light of the NCCA report, b) Stress and overload on teachers and principals due to the demands of an over-ambitious curriculum programme⁸⁷ and c), 'the current difficult budgetary system' mentioned by the Minister, by which any extra expenditure on the provision of foreign-language teacher education is necessarily curtailed. It might be fanciful but not too removed from reality to say that the 'gale' in Hawkins' elegant phrase has increased to storm-force.

Faced with these difficulties it is incumbent upon the foreign language teacher to devise ways and means of being as effective and multi-tasking as possible, and to ensure that whatever methods or approaches are employed, they are shown to be valuable, viable, and variable in application. They need to be useful and effective in promoting second language acquisition, attractive and manageable for the pupils for whom they are intended and also applicable to other aspects of the programme and in other subject areas.⁸⁸ It is hope that the approach taken in the empirical study might help in some way to achieve these objectives.

6.1.2 Working Together: A Sociocultural Constructivist Context

⁸⁷ The latest NCCA report *Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools* (2010) has acknowledged the presence of overload in primary schools and 'has reflected to some extent on the points at which overload is/has been generated in the various stages of curriculum development (from conceptualisation to consultation, design, development, presentation, publication, dissemination, implementation and review) and has suggested that perhaps different and new strategies of revising and improving the curriculum are necessary' (NCCA 2010: 37).

⁸⁸ A possible corrective to overload noted in the report was the tendency to organize the curriculum by areas rather than by subjects. 'It is clear that the design of the curriculum as a series of separate subjects, by separate committees, and the subsequent design and operation of the in-service programme have overshadowed the notion of the curriculum as a holistic construct' (NCCA 2010: 13). Pepper (2008: 2), is cited on new ways in which overload might be avoided: 'Rationales for using broad areas to organize the curriculum have included: curriculum integration to optimize learning; attaching new importance to cross-curricular competences; and a need to simplify the curriculum and its assessment' (NCCA 2010: 28). The availability of the method shown in the empirical study to be incorporated into other subjects and subject areas might help in promoting the introduction of foreign language learning into aspects of mainstream education.

The formation of groups and the interaction that ensued from the social interaction within them has proved one of the most satisfactory aspects of the study. The children took to the arrangement of groups with enthusiasm and enjoyed the relegation of tasks such as word-researcher, reporter, and writer. From the interaction among group members emerged a consciousness of learning processes and a constructive ability to develop suggestions. (cf. below). The role of *Leiterin* (there were no sixth class boys) was taken very seriously and the *Leiterinnen* played a significant part in encouraging the younger members. All decisions of the group, whether in naming it, or roles chosen (apart from *Leiterinnen*, who were the sixth class pupils), or translation or aspects of interpretation were made by consensus. The less able students benefitted from the fact that they were not as exposed as in the traditional class / teacher interaction and were able to put forward their views with greater confidence. They benefitted from the senior pupils' more developed grasp of the subject. In repeat vocabulary testing (5.3.4) there was a marked improvement seen after group consultation.⁸⁹ The senior pupils as 'more knowledgeable peers', in turn benefitted from their role as advisors in that they had first to clarify issues for themselves before imparting it to others and they were, without realizing, it revisiting and revising the material being shared. The group situation proved extremely helpful in the completion of tasks such as translation, realization of meaning, affective response and performance presentation. Children were also very prepared to ask questions of the teacher through the group, as this mitigated the fear of posing a 'silly' question and subsequent embarrassment.⁹⁰

The interaction between the groups themselves also proved very advantageous. It was possible to give each group a particular verse to translate and explore and then have a plenum session where each learned from the other (cf. 5.10.1 *Affektive Karte- Der Tantenmörder*, also appendix 23). The children found this a much more interesting approach than the traditional teacher/class dialogue. There was that interest in each others conceptions, not only in the *Zeichnungen* to which Lencová refers, but to other

⁸⁹ A small but not insignificant example of development of the Zone of Proximal Development revealed by using a form of the Genetic Method, 'documenting strategic developments in situ' (Donato and Mc Cormick 1994: 454)'.

⁹⁰ Obviously it is stressed that there is no such thing as a silly question but oftentimes this assurance does not manage to overcome a child's fear of possible ridicule.

aspects of translation and meaning ‘weil sie Verrschiedenes über ihre Mitschüler und Mitschülerinnen erfahren konnten’ (Lencová 2002: 13).

The interaction between group and teacher had also a beneficial effect. The fact that the teacher acted as facilitator and helper was accentuated by the fact that he went from group to group and they, in a sense, set the agenda for the dialogue. The teacher was there to answer their expressed needs and his role was markedly different from Freires’ ‘banking’ concept of ‘receiving, filing and storing the deposits’ (Freire 1996: 53).

The above findings would appear to indicate that a sociocultural constructivist approach based for the most part on Vygotskian theory and its further development into activity theory by Vygotsky’s disciple Gal’perin, can be used effectively in enabling the students to complete their own personal appropriation of poetry in a foreign language in which they have limited competency.

6.1.3 Learner Responsibility: *quasi-Bedürfnisse*

During the course of the study, the student assumed a far more active, reflective and responsible attitude. Relieved by the group formation from a possibly daunting one-to-one correspondence with the teacher, the child grew in confidence. The huge importance of both verbalization and dialogue are recognised in the study and the children are encouraged to clarify their thoughts by speaking them aloud and to engage in dialogue with members of their group and with the teacher. This is particularly relevant when attending to the affective and aesthetic response elements of appropriation (cf. 5.6.1, 5.8.2, 5.10.1.)

Perhaps one of the most important principles to emerge in the course of the study is based on a respect for and a willingness to recognize the child’s articulation of its own needs, in the much quoted *quasi-Bedürfnisse*⁹¹. This is at the heart of a genuine constructivist approach. It is salutary to trace the development of this awareness in the teacher as the study progresses. In 5.4.3 for example the teacher gives words that ‘might

⁹¹ ‘It was only as this study progressed that it became clearer how important a role the child is expected to play in the positing of *quasi-Bedürfnisse* and how exact and relevant is the information that the child gives to the teacher, relevant to the task expected of her. As might be expected of a constructivist approach, the importance and effectiveness of the child’s evaluation of her own needs and requirements should not be underestimated’ (Section: 5.5.3).

be useful' to the children. He realizes on reflection it would have been better to solicit the words from the pupils themselves and later developed the concept of 'spider-web' charts where the children posited the words. A further improvement concerned the creation and use of the '*Wörterwand*' which involved both children and teacher. The children by now were able to have a say in the perfecting of the technique and advised the teacher⁹² concerning the quantity of words (5.9.3) and the positioning of words of a similar meaning on the '*Wörterwand*' (5.8.3). In 5.8.2. the children were able to decide on the method to be used by the group in deciphering the last two verses of *Erlkönig* (cf. appendix 12). By sharing in the development of these techniques they were also furthering their appropriation of the subject matter, i.e. the poems under discussion. It is also notable that the co-creation of what proved to be a very useful tool for effective and interesting vocabulary acquisition, die *Wörterwand*, evolved from dialogue, and had valid and worthwhile input from individual students, groups and teacher all interacting and influencing one another.

6.1.4 The use of L1 in the Appropriation of Poetry

One of the notable aspects in the study was the slow but eventually successful replacement of L1 by the target language in the children's oral and written work. The study always recognized the limited language competency of the Irish primary school child. There is throughout the study, evidence of a considerable progression from the early stumbling attempts (cf. appendix 2, 8, 10,) through the later achievements (appendix 25, 26) to the relative sophistication of the final attempts (appendix 31-37). This would not have been achieved without the recognition of L1 as a potent instrument of instruction. Featured among the central tenets of Vygotskian theory as has been claimed, are Mediation (3.2.17) Dialogue (3.2.18) and Verbalization or Language into Thought (3.2.22). It is through these conduits that Internalization is achieved, thus the absolute necessity for language that one can understand and by which one can be understood. Within the study, the mother-tongue, English, was used:

- a) To avoid frustrating the students in their early attempts and thus alienating them from language learning and poetry appreciation at a very susceptible age.

- b) To allow them to respond to the poem and verbalize and thus clarify their thoughts and opinions
- c) To help the teacher realize⁹³ their capabilities and to devise acceptable avenues to explore.
- d) On a more pragmatic note, to explain clearly and succinctly points of grammatical usage that might take a lot longer and be less comprehensible in the target language.

The use of L1 however needs to be always paralleled with usage of the target language: single words, suggested phrases, worked examples, step-by-step approaches, questionnaires. There should be praise for attempting a phrase, acceptance of error and incomplete achievement, so that gradually, phrases like *Meiner Meinung nach*, *Ich finde es*, *Es gefällt mir* become internalized through repetitive (but not drill-like) use. Through English the children can indicate their *quasi-Bedürfnisse* whether those are concerned with vocabulary, idiom, usage, whatever they need to complete the required task. Then these needs can be answered by helping the children arrive at the correct translation of the English phrases. Insofar as the children were capable of understanding, the target language was used but it would have been foolish to disregard the potency of L1 in underpinning the educational process. The successes achieved by the use of L1 would seem to justify the statements from Lantolf and Torne (2006: 294) and Holmes (2004: 209) already quoted (cf. 4.4.3).

6.1.5 Scoba Cards and their uses in Foreign Language Learning

One of the more innovatory aspects of the study was the introduction of Scoba cards based on Piotr Gal'perins' Object Orientated Activity Theory. Gal'perins' ideas are acknowledged as putting in place the practical applications of Vygotskian theory, what Gindis (1998) refers to as 'concrete educational procedures' (cited in Rambusch 2006: 1999). These cards are based on sociocultural theory in their co-construction as a result of dialogue and group interaction. They lend themselves to the continuing examination and assessment of the task in hand allied to the genetic method. They focus on the

⁹³ The word can be understood here in both its senses. The teacher is enabled to realise (in the sense of knowing) to what extent the children view understand and are capable of attempting the tasks. Armed with this information the teacher is then able to help them realize (in the sense of completing) the above-mentioned tasks.

process rather than the end product. They help the student achieve a greater degree of autonomy and an owning of responsibility. There is recognition of the child's input and a building on what is already known. There is a steady step-by-step progression as the suggested elements in each card are incorporated into the child's vision and there is also a deepening psychological, cognitive and aesthetic progression as the cards move from simple translation (*Nomenkarte, Verbenkarte*) to account of content, (*Meinungskarte*) and performance (*Vorstellungskarte*), and finally to aesthetic response (*Affektive Karte*). In accordance with Gal'perin's ideas these steps on the road to personal appropriation are interdependent and interchangeable and throughout the study there have been examples where it proved opportune to focus on one aspect rather than another (5.4.1). The cards themselves are not to be regarded as set in stone and can be added to or adapted as the need arises. The temptation of re-using them with another class without the class having contributed to their co-construction should be strongly resisted.

Within the study they provide the Vygotskian psychological tool⁹⁴, as pivot between activity and internalization on which the children can base their attempts to respond to and appropriate the given poem. They can function as points of departure, elements of development, instruments of mediation, instigators of dialogue, instillers of confidence. They underline the importance of the child's activity and exemplify the ideas of Gal'perin on generalization, abbreviation and mastery (Haenen 2001: 160, cf. 3.2.20).

The children enjoyed the knowledge that the Scoba cards were their own creation and the colourful, tangible, laminated cards gave their confidence a boost in having a plan and method by which to accomplish the given task. The *Nomenkarte* and the *Verbenkarte* were soon mastered and their application extended to other areas (5.3.2, 5.4.3). The *Meinungskarte* (cf. Appendix 22) as might be expected posed greater difficulties but as is clearly shown, more familiar usage of the card led within a very short period to a much improved result (Appendix 25, 26). All of the work with the earlier cards proved helpful as the later *Vorstellungskarte* and *Affektive Karte* were introduced and the work on these latter provided evidence of the usefulness and practicality of the use of the Scoba cards (5.10.1, cf. also Appendices 30-37).

⁹⁴ '...human higher mental functions must be viewed as products of *mediated* activity, The role of mediator is played by *psychological tools* and means of interpersonal communication' (Vygotsky 1986: xxiv, italics in original).

6.1.6 Illustration

It is interesting to note that even at a very early stage in the study (5.2.5), trends were beginning to emerge that would later achieve even greater definition and strategic importance. Many of these have been mentioned above: group interaction, dialogue, use of L1, construction and use of Scoba cards, and the importance of positing *quasi-Bedürfnisse*. It is understandable that illustration did not come strongly into focus until a much later stage. It was not until the children had gone beyond the boundaries of translation and meaning, and entered upon the affective qualities of the poem and their own aesthetic response that illustration came into its own as an effective tool of expression and response⁹⁵. The many uses and beneficial effects of illustration became noticeable as the children progressed from the *Nomenkarte* and *Verbenkarte* to the *Meinungskarte*. But even in the earlier stages *Abbildungen* was cited as an aid to discovering context and illuminating content (5.2.2, 5.3.5). Illustration was used successfully to indicate artistic and as a result poetic probability (5.6.1). It helped to clarify vision, Klimt's magnificent portraits of Emilie Flöge, paralleled '*Meine Mutter hat manch gulden Gewand*'. The pupils themselves suggested illustration as a form of presentation of the poem in the compilation of the *Vorstellungskarte*.

Illustration proved 'a hugely helpful approach to the *affektive* aspects of the poem' (5.11.3). In doing her own illustration the child was enabled to clarify content and create her own vision of the events contained within the poem. This may be particularly useful for those children whose literary skills are weak. In illustration, a child encapsulates her own vision. It does not matter whether she is artistically gifted or not. The illustration is a pictorial shorthand for her response to the poem. It is not done for the teacher. It is the child's possession. In looking at the illustration it is easy for the child to fully recall whatever response prompted the picture that she drew. It is not necessary for the teacher to understand the drawing, this is definitely not the place for correction of perspective or suggested 'improvements'. It is to be respected as the child's representation of her response.

Another rewarding aspect of illustration, and here the teacher can use the child's drawing in a productive manner, is by discussing with her the contents of the picture,

⁹⁵ Like words, tools and nonverbal signs provide learners with ways to become more efficient in their adaptive and problem-solving efforts' (Vygotsky 1978: 127).

drawing her out on the implications involved and unobtrusively providing answers for the *quasi-Bedürfnisse* of vocabulary and idiom needed to discuss the picture. If pictures can be used in a series they enable the children to sequence the events or the verses of the poem, and when placed on the board or display unit (thus giving them status and validity) they can be used to generate general dialogue concerning the poem. This in turn helps the children to learn from one another and to experience aspects of the poem that they had not hitherto realized. (5.9.4). All of these advantages, the illumination of content, initiation of discussion, clarification of vision, use in sequencing, provision of opportunity for weaker students, revision of content, selection of visual imagery, consciousness of affective properties, expression of emotional response, shown in this study, suggest that illustration is a multifaceted, effective and valuable aspect in any approach to the appropriation of poetry by primary children. It might prove an effective avenue for further exploration in the field of second language acquisition.

6.1.7 Voice, Tone, Gesture: Child Selected Performance

The study also recognizes the importance of child- selected performance, voice, tone and gesture in defining response. These aspects might, in the light of the previous paragraph, be defined as aural and oral illustration. The introduction and use of *Tonkarten* assisted the children in a variety of ways (5.9.1). They helped create an awareness of tone and voice and a differentiation between the voice of the character and that of the poet. They helped recognise the intention of the speaker. They helped in the definition of character and in the case of *Der Tantenmörder*, in unwitting revelation by the character himself. The children were enabled to attempt a variety of versions in the expression of various lines and thus approached a consciousness of the affective in action.

It is clear that pre-eminence is given to ‘child-selected’ aspects. The *Affektive Karte* may suggest approaches but it is the child that chooses the answers. They are not ‘gifted’ to the child by the teacher. The child’s response is what is required.

The study shows voice, tone and gesture to be also valuable when used in conjunction with the *Vorstellungskarte* (5.9.5). As the children selected mime, song, clapping, alternate line recitation, accompanying gesture, they unconsciously but very enjoyably

advanced their appropriation of the poem. Then having put their ideas into practice they were enabled to evaluate the expression of others (5.10.1).

So much of voice, tone and gesture exists in children's play that it is not surprising that they find it easy to imbue the characters and situations involved with considerable and convincing attributes. Vygotsky (1978: 108) comments, 'The second realm that links gestures and written language is children's games'. The actions involved in presenting *König Tinizong* (5.3.6) or *Der Tantenmörder*, '*Ich stieß ihr den Dolch in die Därme*' ! (5.9.1) contributed affectively, effectively and most importantly, enjoyably, to the poem's appropriation.

6.2.1 Alternative Applications

The findings from the two final research areas already posited in the Introduction⁹⁶ might, with profit, be combined, in order to develop an awareness of possible future directions in foreign language teaching. Arising from this study of one particular aspect and approach, there have been many aspects of language explored: translation, understanding, deconstruction of text, word order, imagery, illustration, interpretation, affective quality, aesthetic response and more.

This is not to say that the children are consciously aware of these aspects but they comprehend them as they relate to their appropriation of the poem. They have been covered in the mediated, step-by-step approach of the Scoba cards, in group dialogue and interaction with more knowledgeable peers and with the teacher as facilitator. It would appear shortsighted not to capitalize on this achievement by extending its application to other genres. The methods used in the appropriation of poetry are equally useful in approaching short literary texts and excerpts. The study provides only one example of work on *Das Eselein* (Grimm 2008: 252) but this could be developed to embrace *Märchen*, excerpts from *Sagen*, simple suitable texts, descriptive pieces. Simple

⁹⁶ The implications of the use of the method or modifications of the method in other genres, literary excerpts, short stories, *Märchen* etc. and other languages, particularly Irish, it being one of the two required languages in the Irish primary school curriculum.

The implication of the latest directives contained in the NCCA 2008 report on the teaching of foreign languages in the primary curriculum. This last, though not directly concerned with the empirical study is surely of immense importance in dictating future trends in any approaches to second language acquisition, literature-based or otherwise.

series like the Lesemaus' *'Conni kommt in die Schule'* *'Connie geht zum Arzt'* etc. (Schneider, Wenzel-Bürger, 1997) give insights into another culture while still dealing with the familiar everyday world of going to the dentist, learning to dance, getting a new brother⁹⁷. An imaginative use of the sympathetically illustrated *'Gebetbuch für Kinder und ihre Eltern'* (Leist, 1973) would provide many aspects for discussion. The use of question cards (5.4.4), *Wörterwände* (5.7.4) and Spider-webs (5.8.3) would be equally effective and in the reading of these excerpts there could well be many occasions for the use of *Affektive Karte* and *Vorstellungskarte*.

6.2.2 New Strategies

The report *Curriculum Overload in Primary Schools* (NCCA 2010) has suggested that 'perhaps different and new strategies of revising and improving the curriculum are necessary' (NCCA 2010: 37). In evaluations of the curriculum in action it was found that 'textbooks exerted a *dominant influence on teaching and learning*' (NCCA 2010: 14, italics in original). This was due to the breadth and length of the curriculum. Teachers relied on texts as a guide through the labyrinth. In attempt to reorganize curricula in other countries, 'It has been suggested that in curricula which are organized by subjects (rather than areas), the learning content is presented in relatively narrow 'domains' (e.g. *history* and *geography*), whereas organization by area tends to present content in broader, more conceptually related 'domains of experience' (NCCA 2010: 28, italics in original). To relate this to the study findings, it does seem unnecessarily repetitive that in each language one should have to develop the tools of aesthetic response as has been done above for Deutsch. Rather, having explored one language these methods and approaches could be transferred and used in approaching poetry in English or Irish. This was attempted quite successfully in translation aspects in the study with the Irish language poem *An Spideoigin* (5.4.3).

In a more broadly envisioned, less subject-orientated Curriculum, the language lesson could make a strong contribution to other non-language areas as in History or Geography, where for example a project could be based on the story of *Papa Weidt* and his protection of the blind Jewish brushmakers who worked for him (Deutschkron

⁹⁷ Other excellent beginners readers are the *Lesezeichen* series published by Heinemann (1996) and the B.B.C *Bücherregal* series published by Nelson (1996). Both series are easily comprehensible, well illustrated and graded. They deliver a mixture of fiction, fact and descriptive pieces suited to their intended readers.

Ruegenberg 1999). This would not necessarily entail that the lesson be done completely *auf Deutsch* but that it could be informed by excerpts, quotations and illustrations from the book. Music is another fruitful area for integration and books like *365 Einfache Experimente für Kinder* (Churchill, Loeschnig, Mandell, 2005) would ensure that science was not without a language input. Drama of its very nature could be used in a similar manner to poetry in second language acquisition.⁹⁸ In this way, room might be found for developing competency without taking too much time from other subjects. Admittedly this approach would probably be feasible only where the language teacher is also the class teacher. It is also not envisaged as a full blown CLIL approach. The prerequisite is a willingness on the part of the individual class/language teacher to recognize and use these possibilities.

6.2.3 In the Real World

However one may theorise about possible suggested changes, one still has to ‘garden in the gale’ of present conditions. The study posits an approach to aesthetic response, and the appropriation of poetry by the individual student. As has been shown in Chapter 4 (4.5.2) the Department lists fifteen ‘objectives for the teaching of a modern language’. Among them are: enjoyment and fulfillment in language activities; exploration of playful elements of language; enhancing self-esteem; developing listening skills; understanding of word order; stress and accent; the significance of tone, voice and gesture; confidence in discussing experience; accurate pronunciation; the cultural aspects of other countries; development and extension of vocabulary; reading and writing the language; appreciation of other cultures and cultural diversity (cf. NCCA 1999: 16). The approach to poetry, tested and evaluated in the empirical study would appear to tick most, if not all of these boxes in the department’s list of objectives.

Apart from this departmental *imprimatur* and perhaps more importantly in the mind of the educator, the approach has also been validated by the children’s evident, enthusiastic and informed reaction. Despite their limited language competency, they have been enabled to respond collectively and individually to the elements of translation,

⁹⁸ cf. ‘Hänsel und Gretel’ ‘Des Kaisers neue Kleider’ and other similar *Theaterfassungen* in Huckepack (Cros, Ladiges, Laveau 1999:5.7, 9.12). These short playlets have the advantage of underpinning many of the themes designated for the programme e.g. Introducing oneself, Feasts and holidays etc, (NCCA 2001: 19) and topics selected by the teacher e.g. *Kleidung, Farben, Tiere* etc. as recommended (NCCA 2001:31).

understanding, performance, and aesthetic response in the appreciation of poetry. In so doing, they have been successful in the appropriation of the poetry of a language, a culture, and a world, other than their own. They have even perhaps, through their own interaction, through verbalization and mediated dialogue, through the use of illustration and Scoba cards, and also presentation and utterance, discovered *das Zauberwort* of which Joseph von Eichendorf long ago wrote so eloquently:

‘Schläft ein Lied in allen Dingen,
die da träumen fort und fort,
und die Welt hebt an zu singen,
triffst du nur das Zauberwort’

(Eichendorf 2002: 93)

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List of Appendices

Appendix 1	<i>König Tinizong</i> Command Cards.....	286
Appendix 2	<i>Fragen über das Gedicht</i>	287
Appendix 3	Vocabulary Test.....	288
Appendix 4	Vocabulary Test.....	289
Appendix 5	Group-work Examples, ‘ <i>Willst feiner Knabe...</i> ’	290
Appendix 6	Questionnaire , ‘ <i>Mein Vater ,mein Vater...</i> ’ ...	291
Appendix 7	Questionnaire , ‘ <i>Mein Vater ,mein Vater...</i> ’ ...	292
Appendix 8	Questionnaire Answers, Sixth Class	293

Appendix 9	Questionnaire Answers, Sixth Class.....	294
Appendix 10	Questionnaire Answers, Fourth Class.....	295
Appendix 11	Questionnaire Answers, Fourth Class.....	296
Appendix 12	Group Translation, ‘ <i>Dem Vater grauset</i> ’s.....	297
Appendix 13	<i>Meiner Meinung nach</i>	298
Appendix 14	<i>Wörterwand</i> , <i>Erlkönig</i> , <i>das Kind</i>	299
Appendix 15	<i>Erlkönig</i> , Individual Account, Fifth Class Pupil.....	300
Appendix 16	<i>Erlkönig</i> , Group Accounts.....	301
Appendix 17	<i>Erlkönig</i> , Individual Account, Third Class Pupil.....	302
Appendix 18	<i>Erlkönig</i> , Spider -web, <i>Gruppe Rosa</i>	303
Appendix 19	<i>Tonkarten</i>	304
Appendix 20	<i>Wörterwand</i> , <i>der Vater</i>	305
Appendix 21	<i>der Vater</i> , Spider-web, <i>Gruppe Orange</i>	306
Appendix 22	Group Accounts <i>auf Deutsch</i>	307
Appendix 23	Translation , <i>der Tantenmörder</i> , <i>Gruppe Gelb</i>	308
Appendix 24	Spider-web, <i>Erlkönig</i>	309
Appendix 25	Account <i>auf Deutsch</i> , <i>Gruppe Gelb</i>	310
Appendix 26	Account <i>auf Deutsch</i> , <i>Gruppen Orange</i> , <i>Rosa</i>	311
Appendix 27	<i>Wörterwand</i> , <i>das Gedicht</i>	312
Appendix 28	<i>Illustration</i> , ‘ <i>Wer reitet so spat...?</i> ’.....	313
Appendix 29	<i>Illustration</i> , ‘ <i>Willst feiner Knabe...?</i> ’.....	314
Appendix 30-37	Final Accounts, <i>Alle Gruppen</i>	315-322
Appendix 38	<i>Vorstellungskarte</i> , Prompt cards.....	323

Appendix 39	<i>Illustration, 'Auf dem Berge Sinai'</i>	324
Appendix 40	<i>Illustration, 'der Tantenmörder'</i>	325
Appendix 41	<i>Erlkönigcollage.....</i>	326

Appendices

Appendix 1

Köpft Ihn (Sie) sofort!

**Tanzt für mich bis Ihr vor Erschöpfung
zusammeneinbrecht!**

Kauft mir ein Fußballstadion!

Appendix 2

		Fragen über den Gedicht 8-2-10
		1 Nein dieses Gedicht handelt von einem König. ✓
		2 die Höflinge sprechen ^{im} Gedicht
		3 Nein ^{der} sprechen nicht Dichter ^{spricht nicht} im Gedicht.
sie es ist ist Sie sie sind		4 Der König ^{ist} is unangenehm und faul ✓ gut!
		5 Die Höflinge ^{sind} is sympathisch
		6 Ja die Höflinge ^{sind} klapper. ✓
		7 Weil die Höflinger sprechen mit dem König ✓
		8 Ja der Königs ^{name ist} den Tirizong.
		9 er
		(?) Sehr Gut Kaiser ✓ 212/2010

Appendix 3

6th Class		4th class	
his dem	who Wer	Hedem	who Wer
Arm Arm	rides reitet	Arm Arm	reitet r
he Er	so so	He Er	so so
holds faßt	fast schnell	faßt	schnell
him ihn	through durch	ihn	durch
tight <small>or safely/securely</small> sicher	Night Nacht	sicher	so Nacht
he er	and und	er	und und
holds halt	wind Wind	halt	Wind
him ihn	his Es	him ihn	it Es
warm warm	is ist	warm warm	ist is
	the der		He der
	father Vater		Vaterf
	with mit		mit w
	small seinem		seinen
	child Kind		Kind
	he Er		He Er
	has hat		his hat
	the den		his den
	child Knaben		boy Knabe
	full wohl		tight wohl
	in in		in in

29
31.
Sehr gut!

20
31

4th class

the	dem	Who	Wer
Arm	Arm	riding	reitet
He	Er	so	so
holds	faßt	late	spät schnell
him	ihn	through	durch
safe	sicher	Night	Nacht
He	er	and	und
holds	halt	Wind	Wind
him	ihn	It	Es
warm	warm	is	ist
		the	der
		father	Vater
		with	mit
		his	seinem
		child	Kind
		He	Er
		holds	hat
		the	den
		child	Knaben
		holds	wohl
		in	in

Sehr gut ✓
30/31 ☆

3rd Class

dem	his	Wer	who
Arm	arm	reitet	rides
Er		so	so
faßt		spät	schnell
ihn		durch	through
sicher		Nacht	night
er		und	and
halt		Wind	wind
ihn		Es	Es
warm		ist	is
		der	der
		Vater	Fater
		mit	mit
		seinem	seinem
		Kind	Kind
		Er	Er
		hat	hat
		den	den
		Knaben	Knaben
		wohl	wohl
		in	in

14/31 ✓

31/17

Gruppe Rosa!

19/10/10

In the fifth verse: we think the Erlkönig is trying to trick him. Telling him about the lovely land he lives in. And his daughters are there and they lead the nightly dance. And the daughters are going to mind him and sing and dance him to sleep. We think he is trying to trick him and we think none of it is real he is just lying to him.

19-4-10

Gruppe Blau. Fifth Verse

The fifth verse is about:

asks

The Erlkönig is trying to convince the boy to go with him, by saying "My daughters are waiting for you" and that they are leading the night-time dance, and that they will rock you to ^{sleep} and dance and sing to you.

19-4-10

Gruppe Schwartz (Fifth verse)

This poem is about.. The Erlkönig talking to the child and saying to come with him, he says "My daughters are waiting for you and they lead the night dance". The Erlkönig also says that his daughters will sway and dance and sing for him.

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort? –
"Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh' es genau:
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau."

Wie heißt deises Gedicht?

.....

Wie viele Stimmen hören wir in dieser Strophe?

.....

Wer spricht in der ersten Linie?

.....

Stellt er eine Frage?

.....

Wer antwortet in der dritten Linie?

.....

Deiner Meinung nach, sieht der Vater die Töchter von
Erlkönig?

.....

Hat der Sohn angst?

.....

Warum sagst du so?

.....

Spricht der Erlkönig in dieser Strophe?

.....

Der Titel dieses Gedicht ist.....

Dieses Gedicht handelt
von.....
.....
.....

Der Dichter heißt

Am Anfang dieses Gedichts
.....

Magst du dieses Gedicht? Ich mag es (nicht)
.....

Meiner Meinung nach ist dieses
Gedicht.....

Es ist einfach /schwierig zu lernen
Meiner Meinung nach ist es.....

Ich mag dieses Gedicht (nicht)
den.....
.....
.....

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort? –
"Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh' es genau:
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau."

Wie heißt deises Gedicht?

Dreistänig Gedicht heißt Erlkönig ✓

Dieses Gedicht heißt Erlkönig

Wie viele Stimmen hören wir in dieser Strophe?

Wir Hören ^{Wird} den Sohn und den Vater ✓

Wir hören der Sohn und den Vater

Wer spricht in der ersten Linie?

Der Sohn spricht in der ersten Linie

Der Sohn spricht in der ersten Zeile

Stellt er eine Frage? stellt

Ja stellt der Sohn eine Frage

Ja der Sohn stellt eine Frage

Wer antwortet in der dritten Linie?

Der Vater antwortet in der dritten Linie

Der Vater antwortet in der dritten Zeile

Deiner Meinung nach, sieht der Vater die Töchter von
Erlkönig? ansie

Meiner Meinung nach

Meiner Meinung nach ~~nicht~~ sieht nach die

Hat der Sohn angst? hat Tochter von Erlkönig

Ja hat der Sohn angst

Ja der Sohn hat angst

Warum sagst du so? ^{nicht}

der Erlkönig Tochter am Ort und der Vater seh es

~~nicht Erlkönig Tochter~~ Der Tochter von Erlkönig am Ort und

Spricht der Erlkönig in dieser Strophe? der Vater siehts nicht

~~nein~~ der Erlkönig spricht nicht

Nein der Erlkönig spricht nicht

Der Titel dieses ^S Gedicht ist Erlkönig
Erlkönig

Dieses Gedicht handelt von Erlkönig, Erlkönigs tochter, Sohn und Vater. Diese Gedicht handelt von er, Sohn und der Vater... redite... so spat... durch nacht und wind.
Erlkönig, Erlkönigs tochter, Sohn und der Vater

Der Dichter heißt Der Dichter heißt Goethe:
Der Dichter heißt Goethe

Am Anfang dieses Gedichts
Diese Gedicht handelt von er, Sohn und der Vater
who ridet so spat durch nacht und wind.
Am Anfang diese Gedichts wir ridet so spat durch nacht und
Magst du dieses Gedicht? Ich mag es (nicht)
Ich mag es dieses Gedicht
Ich mag dieses Gedicht.

Meiner Meinung nach ist dieses
Gedicht ist sehr sehr gut
ist sehr sehr gut

Es ist einfach /schwierig zu lernen

Meiner Meinung nach ist es ist einfach
ist einfach

Ich mag dieses Gedicht (nicht)
den es ist aufregend, ich (schräge)?
warten für die letzte Strophe

I like this poem because it wasn't to hard and we worked in groups and I had great fun doing this poem.

4th Class

Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort? –

"Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh' es genau:
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau."

Wie heißt dieses Gedicht?

Erlkönig

Wie viele Stimmen hören wir in dieser Strophe?

You heard two voice

Wer spricht in der ersten Linie?

der Kind spricht

Stellt er eine Frage?

Yes he dose ask a question

Wer antwortet in der dritten Linie?

Der Vater antwortet in der dritten linie

Deiner Meinung nach, sieht der Vater die Töchter von
Erlkönig? ^{ansie}

He did not see die Töchter von Erlkönig

Hat der Sohn angst?

Ja Hat der Sohn angst ✓

Warum sagst du so? ^{nich}

B.e.c.a.u.s.e you could heard it in his voice

Spricht der Erlkönig in dieser Strophe?

nein Erlkönig Spricht nicht ✓

4th Class 2
(M2)

Der Titel dieses Gedicht ist Erkloing.....

Dieses Gedicht handelt
von Der Sohn der Vater der Erkloing
und die Erkloing Töchter.....

Der Dichter heißt Der Dichter heißt Goethe

Am Anfang dieses Gedichts
.....

Magst du dieses Gedicht? Ich mag es (nicht)
.....

Meiner Meinung nach ist dieses
Gedicht I thought this poem was very good

Es ist einfach /schwierig zu lernen

Meiner Meinung nach ist es.....

Ich mag dieses Gedicht (nicht)
den Yes I do like this poem
because it is very exciting.....

The father cruel he riding
Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind
he holds in Arm the groaning child
Er halt in Armen das ächzende Kind,
reach the farm yard with difficulty and trouble
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not;
In seinem Armen das Kind war tot

The father was terrified, riding in the wind
Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind
he holds the groaning child in his arms
Er halt in Armen das ächzende Kind,
he reaches the yard with pain and difficulty
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not;
In his arms the child was dead
In seinem Armen das Kind war tot

- Reord.
- T 1 Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind
J 2. Er halt in Armen das ächzende Kind,
L 3 Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not;
Z 4. In seinem Armen das Kind war ...

The father terrifide he rides so fast

Dem Vater grauset's, er reitet geschwind

Er halt in Armen das ächzende Kind,
reaching the farm the terrified and trouble
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not;
In
In seinem Armen das Kind war ...

meiner Meinung nach
 1. interesting. 2. exciting 3. heart racing 4. imaginative. 5. mysterious.
 6. creepy 7.

meiner Meinung nach
 1) The poem is scary
 2) The poem is horrible
 3) The poem is terrifying
 4) The poem is sad
 5) The poem is cruel
 6) The poem is creepy
 7) The poem is mysterious

8) freaky
 9

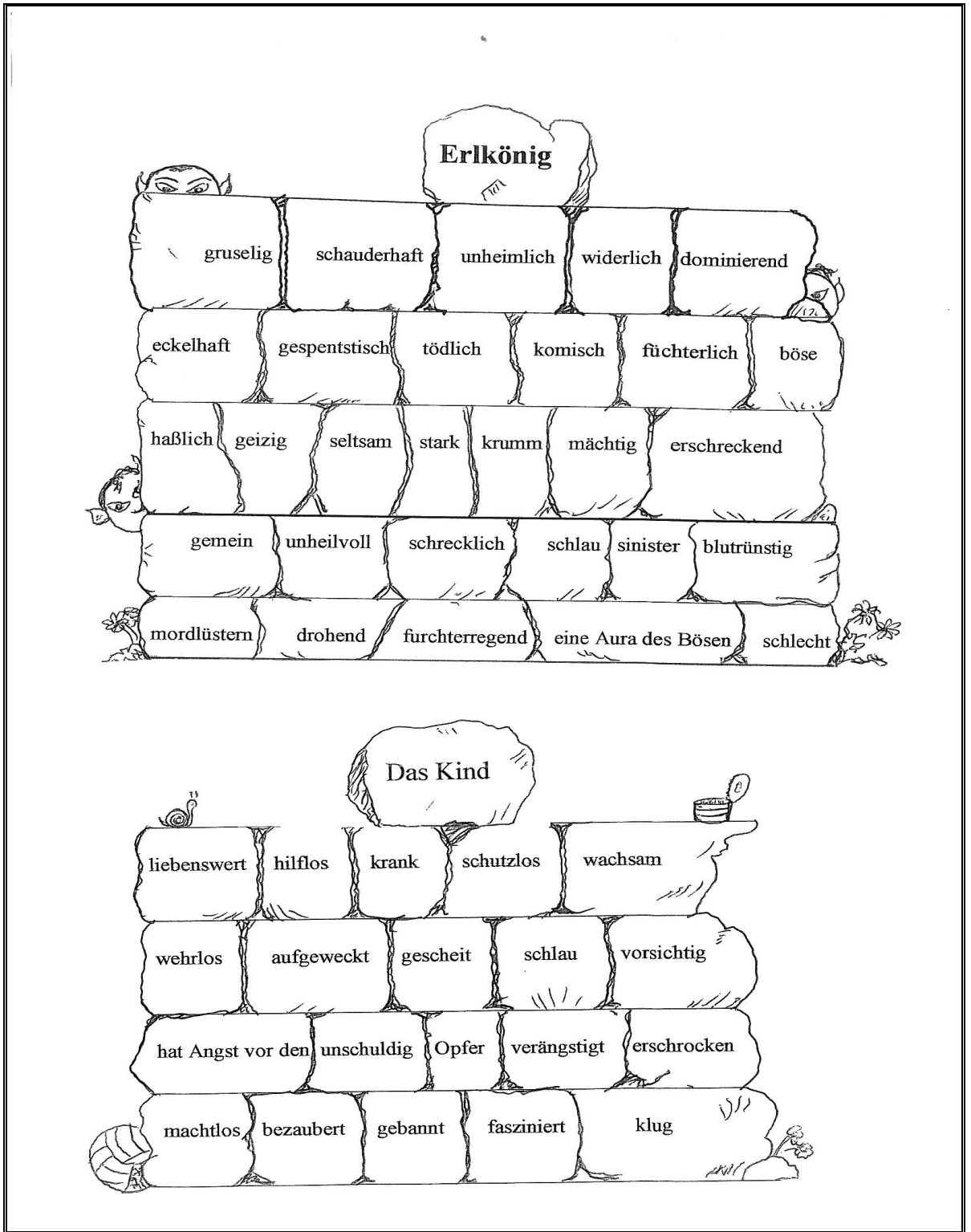
meiner Meinung nach
~~mean~~
 mean
 wicked
 vicious
 sad
 scary

f
 armyery
 child
 spooky

~~dangerous~~

Paurig

Meiner Meinung nach
 1. Creepy
 2. Fairy tale
 3. sad
 4. gloomy
 5. sullen



Appendix 15

11-5-10

ErLKönig

- verse 1. It's about a man who rides late in the wind with his son. He holds the son tight and warm.
- verse 2. The Son is seeing something in the wind and he puts his head down. The father asks "why do you have your head down?" "Do you not see the ErLKönig (Fairylking)" said the son. Then the dad calms the son down by saying "It is only a strip of wind".
- verse 3. The ErLKönig said "You lovely child come with me, I will play games with you, I have lots of Springs flowers, My mother has a golden dress".
- verse 4. The son said "My Father, my Father the ErLKönig is speaking to me". "Calm down, be calm, my child, It is the old willow in the tree.
- verse 5. The ErLKönig said "My daughters lead the night dance They rock you and sway you and sing you asleep
- verse 6. "My Father, my father do you not see the ErLKönig daughters?" said the son. My son, my son I see it ok, It is the old grey willow".
- verse 7. The ErLKönig said "Come with me, or if you willing not to come." My father, my father, the ErLKönig wants me! The ErLKönig is holding my arm".
- verse 8. The Father is worried, riding in the wind. He holds the child tight in his arms. With pain and diffuc in his arms the child died.

This poem is about a Father and a son who are riding very late through the night and wind, there is an Erlkönig who is trying to ~~take~~^{take} the son away, and he teases him with things like his daughters and his mother etc. In the end he does and kills the son.

This poem is about a father riding in the night he holds the child in his arms the father asks why is his head down, the son says he sees the Erlkönig with his crown and cape. The Erlkönig talks to the child, he tells him how lovely he is. The child tells ~~his~~ every thing the Erlkönig says to him to his father. The father doesn't believe him when they reached the yard the Erlkönig had taken the child away and he was dead.

5th Class

About the Poem Erlkönig.

I think Erlkönig is scary but I think the poem is easy to translate and easy to pronounce the words. In the ~~the~~ first verse it was not the interesting but in the 2 it got ~~more~~ interesting but by the ~~last~~ second last it got more complicated and the last was very sad because the son died in the farm ~~was~~

The king

Group blu

R₁

Verse 1

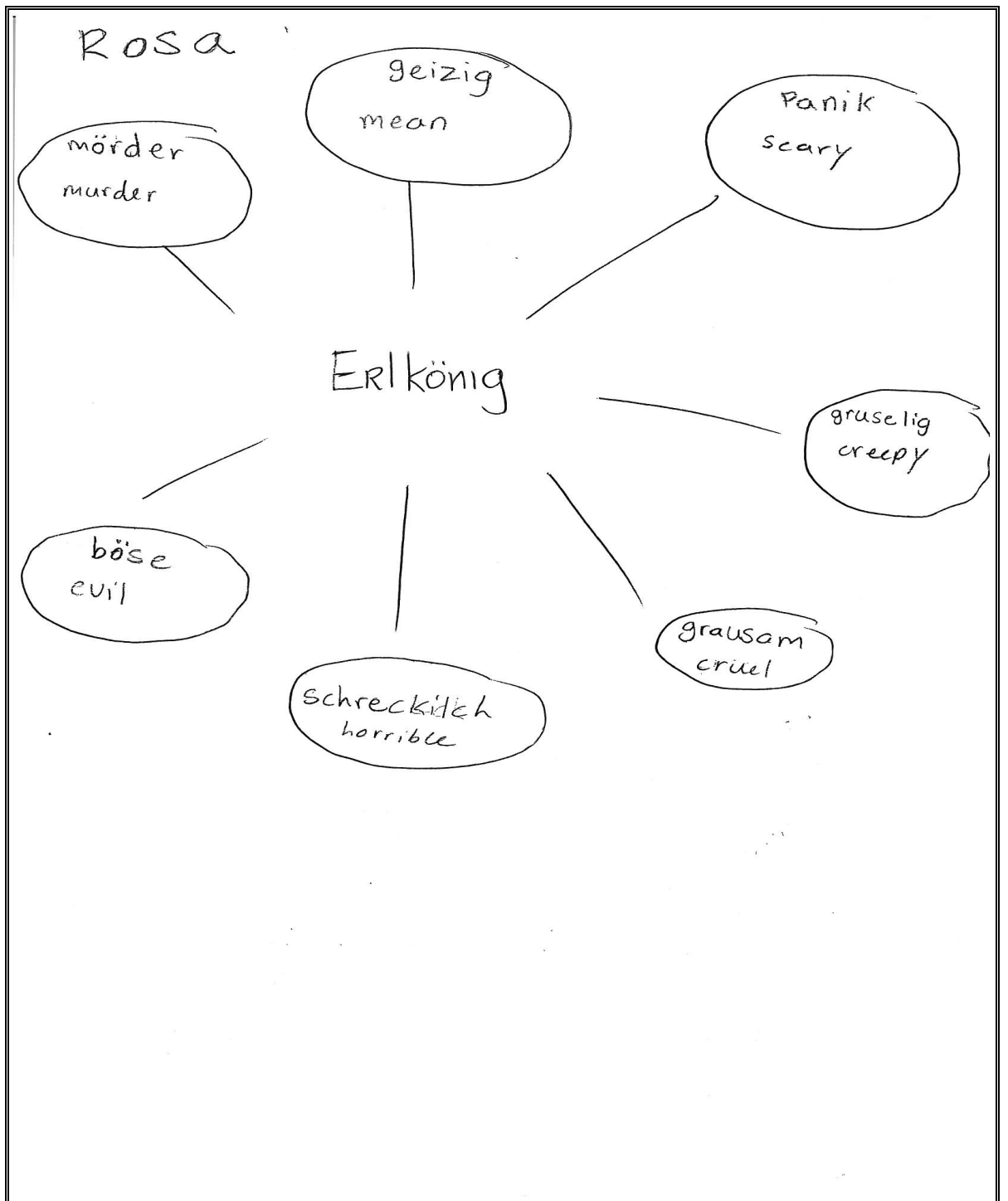
In Verse one there is a father and his son who are riding a horse. His son looks back and sees a strange looking figure.

Verse 2

It looks like a devil and the boy is scared and nervous. He tells his father what he saw, but his father says it's only the russels in the trees.

boys Verse 3

The ~~father~~ ^{boys} ~~arm~~ gets very sore because the strange figure, which is the devil, pinches his arm. The father and the son both get upset.



Appendix 19

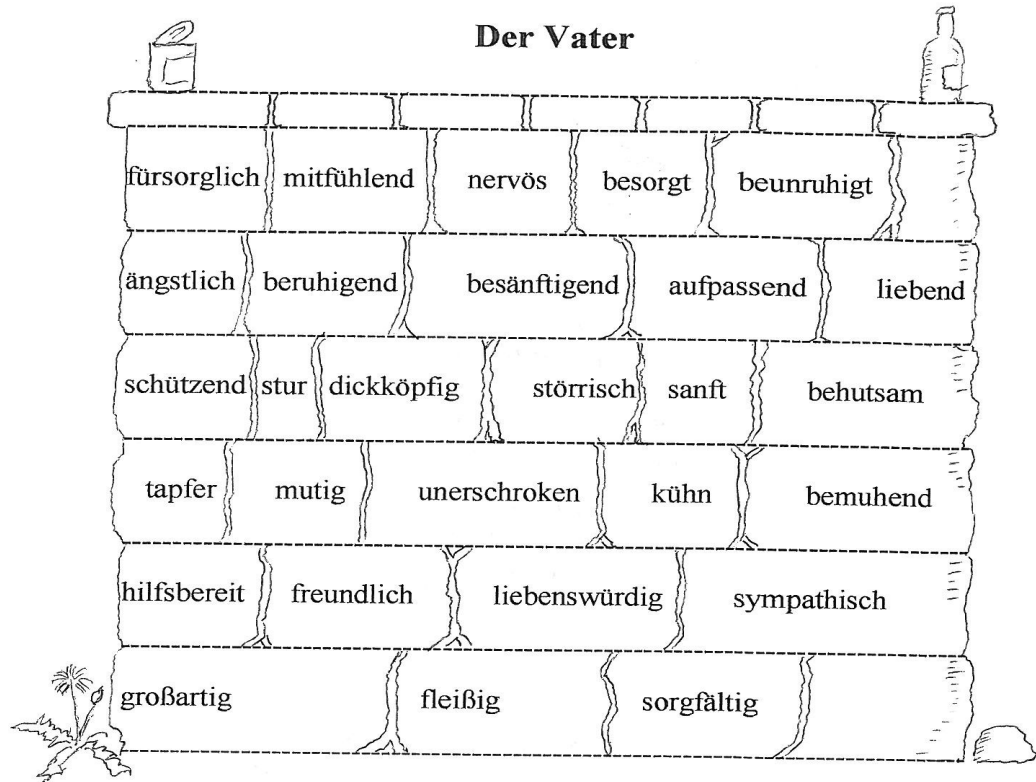
Traurig

Ängstlich

Unterwürfig

Schnell

Der Vater



Was für ein Mensch ist der Vater?

Der Vater ist ein freundlicher Mensch .

Der Vater ist freundlich.



DATE 14-5-10

FROM Gruppe ROSA ! TO

Der Titel dieses Gedicht ERLKÖNIG.
Dieses Gedicht handelt von einem ERLKÖNIG.
In der erste Strophe der Vater reitet so spät
durch nach und wind
In der zweite Strophe The son sees the ERLKÖNIG.
In diesem Gedicht gibt es mang characters.
Der Dichter heißt Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
Am Anfang der Vater reitet so spät am Ende
das Kind war tot.
Es kommt vom Traumland, Ya.

DATE

FROM

TO

Gruppe Blau

1. Der Titel dieses Gedicht ist ERLKÖNIG

In der letzten Strophe war Kind war
tot.

In diesem Gedicht, gibt es: ERLKÖNIG

Der Vater

Der Sohn

und Der

ERLKÖNIGS

tochter.

Der Dichter heißt Johann
Wolfgang
Goethe.

Am Anfang des Gedichts
der ist ein Vater und der Sohn
und der Vater ist reitet so spät durch
nacht und
wind.

14-5-10

Orange

1. ERLKÖNIG.
2. ERLKÖNIG, Vater und Kind.
3. In der ersten Strophe der Vater ist reitet spät durch Nacht und Wind.
4. Ein aufregend Geschichte.
5. Wolke kann Goethe.

DATE 18-5-10

FROM

Gruppe Gelb

TO

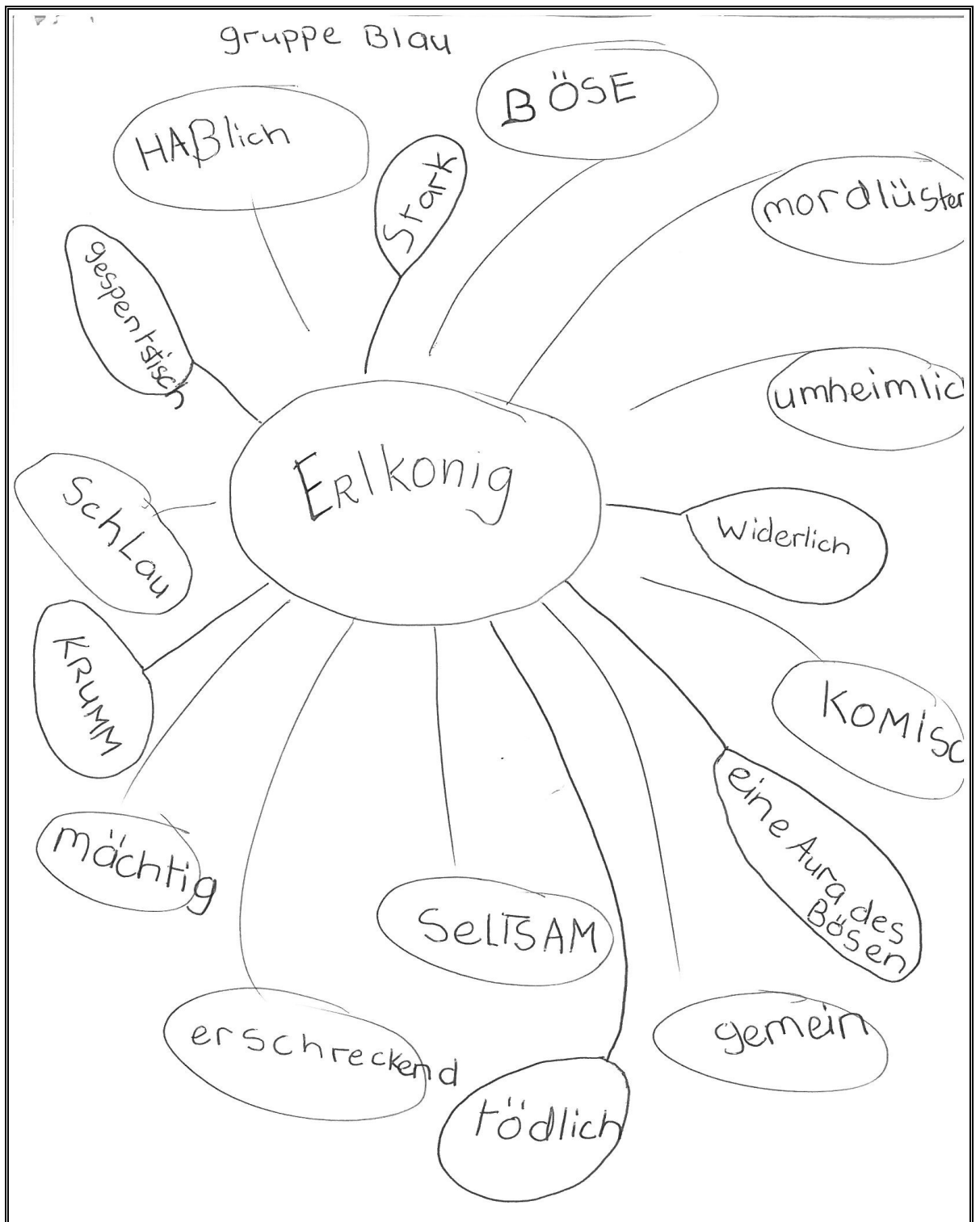
I killed my aunty so
My aunty was old and weak.
I slept over in her house
And rooted in her chest.

I found a pile of gold.
And lots of paper too
And I hear my aunty puffing
Without soft heart or pity

What does it matter if she is still sobbing
Night was all around me.
I stabbed her with a Dragger in the stomach
The aunty Puff no more

The gold was heavy to carry
But the aunty was heavier
I was pulling her by her collar shakily
And shoved her into the cellophane

I have killed my aunty, so
My aunty was old and weak
But you judge you are against me
Because of my Beautiful Blooming youth.



25-15-10

Gelb

~~Der~~ Der Titel dieses Gedichtes ist Erlkönig.
Der Dichter heißt Johann Wolfgang Goethe.
In diesem Gedicht es gibt Erlkönig, Erlkönig, Tochter,
Sohn und Vater.

Dieses Gedicht handelt von einem Vater und einem Sohn
~~die~~ ^{die reiten} ~~so~~ so spät durch Nacht und Wind (~~ist~~)
Der Vater hält ihn warm. Der Erlkönig kommt. Und
der Sohn sagt "Mein Vater, mein Vater und siehst du
nicht dort?" Der Vater sieht den Erlkönig nicht.

Der Vater hat Angst vor dem Erlkönig. Im Ende des
Gedichtes. Der Sohn war ~~tot~~ ^{tot} ~~Meinung~~ ^{Unsere} Meinung

* nach ist der Erlkönig böse, unheimlich und krumm.
Er ist auch eckelhaft und tödlich.

Der Gedicht ist ^{ein} bischen schwierig.

Wir mag diesem Gedicht.

Jede Strofe vier Zeilen.

Es ist ein trauriges Gedicht.

* Unserer Meinung nach der Vater ist tapfer,
liebend und angstlich, er ist auch hilfsbereit und
nervös.

Gruppe Oranga 25/5/10 Erlkönig

Dieses Gedicht heißt Erlkönig. Der Dichter heißt Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Es gibt acht Strophen in diesem Gedicht. Am Anfang der Vater und Sohn ist reitet so spät, Der Vater fragt "Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht." Der Sohn sieht der Erlkönig, Der Vater sieht nichts. Mitten im Gedicht verleiht den Sohn zu kommt mit der Erlkönig, Der Sohn spricht über Erlkönig zu der Vater aber der Vater glaubt ihm nicht. Am Ende des Gedichtes [das Kind stirbt].

Gruppe Rosa

25/5/10

Der Titel dieses Gedicht Erlkönig.

Es gibt acht Strophen.

In der zweiten Strophe der Kind spricht.

In der dritten Strophe der Erlkönig spricht.

Der Sohn ist krank

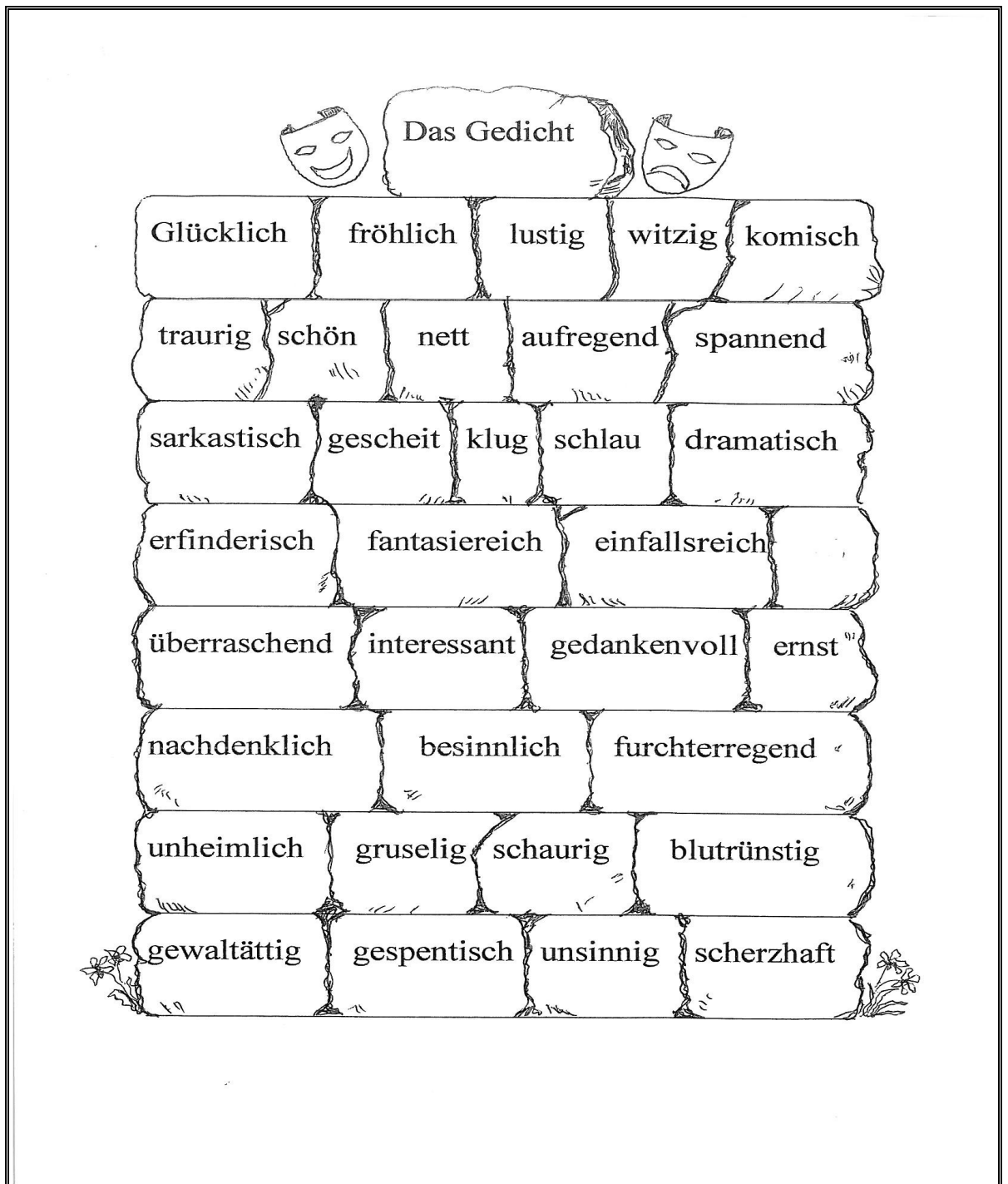
Meiner Meinung nach ist der Erlkönig eine Art des Bösen und mächtig und heißlich

Der Erlkönig ist verdrängt

Der Kind ist angst von Erlkönig

Der Dichter Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Der Erlkönig versucht zu Bestechungsgeld der Kind





Appendix 29



Appendices 30-37

Gruppe BLAU.

25/5/2010

Der Titel dieses Gedichts ist Erlkönig.
Dieses Gedicht handelt von einem Vater
einem Sohn und einem Erlkönig.
In der ersten Strophe ~~ist~~ Der Vater
~~ist~~ reitet so spät durch Nacht und
Wind.

~~In der~~ ~~mittlern~~ im Gedicht:
Der Sohn ist sehr krank und
der Sohn sieht Erlkönigs Töchter.
aber der Vater sieht nicht.

Am ^{sie} Ende ^{des Gedichts}: Der Vater
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und
Not und in seinen Armen das
Kind war tot. Der Erlkönig hat
töten der Sohn.

Der Dichter heißt: Johann
Wolfgang
von Goethe.

Der Vater ist Mutig, nervös
und schützend.

Der Sohn ist hilflos, krank und
ängstlich)

Der Erlkönig ist gruselig, eckelhaft
und krumm. Er ist ~~Böse~~ auch Böse
und gemein. ^{Sehr Gut!}

(Auf der Rückseite: Unserer Meinung (sic)
ist er sehr gut)

Gelb

8 Ich mag es besonders als der Erlkönig spricht. ✓

9 Du weißt erst am Ende was wirklich passiert
Flüsternd. ?

10 Eine Flüsternde Stimme passt gut zu der dritten Zeile in dem ersten Strophen

11 Meiner Meinung nach Dieses Gedicht ist frei erfunden ✓

Gelb

1 Der Erbkönig ist ein Böser und unheimlicher Mensch.
Der Sohn ist ein kranker Mensch.
Der Vater ist ein liebender Mensch.

2 Ich mag es wann der Erbkönig kommt.
Es ist traurig wenn der Sohn ist tot.
Ich finde es gruselig wenn der Erbkönig spricht.
Es ist geheimnissvoll als der Erbkönigs Töchter
tanzen und singen.
Der Vater spricht Liebevoll in der zweiten
Strophe.
Der Erbkönig spricht anflehend in der dritten
und fünften Strophe.
Der Erbkönig spricht losend in der siebten
Strophe.

3 Man soll die erste Strophe schnell und
aufregend aufsagen
Man soll Strophe drei scheidend aufsagen

4 Das Kind spricht so ängstlich.

5 Ich mag die Bilder in diesem Gedicht besonders
in der Erbkönig Tochter singen und tanzen strophe.
fünften Strophe wenn....

6 Man könnte die letzten strophe sehr langsam und
flüsternd sprechen ✓

7 Meine Lieblingsstrophe ist die fünfte.

Gruppe Orange

Der Erlkönig ist ~~ein~~ mächtig und unheimlich und eckelhaft und böse.

Ich mag es wenn der Erlkönig spricht.
Es ist traurig wenn das Kind ~~totet~~ ^{ist}.

Man soll Strophen drei unheimlich aufsagen.

Das Kind spricht so [buigh], ruhig?
Der Erlkönig spricht so Smeichled, elnd

Ich mag die Bilder in diesem Gedicht,
besonders in der fünften Strophe, als die Töchter
singen und tanzen und wiegen dich ein.
^{das Kind?}

Man könnte die letzte Strophe sehr Erlkönig [?]
sprechen.

Meine Lieblingsstrophe ist die fünfte Strophe.

Ich mag es besonders als der ^{ie siebte} siebten Strophe.
^{was passiert?}

Du findest / erst am Ende heraus

Eine schnelle Stimme passt gut zu der dritten
Zeile.

Meiner Meinung nach, dieses Gedicht ist frei
erfunden, es kommt aus Fantasieland.

Sehr gut!!

Gruppe Schwarz

25.5.2010

- ① Der Titel dieses Gedichts ist 'Erlkönig'
- ② der Dichter heißt Johann Wolfgang ^{Von} Goethe
- ③ In der ersten ^{Strophe} der Vater mit seinem Kind, Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm.
- ④ Unserer Meinung nach, ~~Es~~ ist ziemlich schmerzhaft
- ⑤ ^{unserer} Meiner Meinung nach, der Erlkönig ^{ist} böse, unheimlich und krumm Er ist auch geizig, gespenstisch.
- ⑥ ~~Das~~ ^{ist} Kind krank, hilflos
- ⑦ In der ~~ersten~~ ^{Zweiten} Strophe ~~das~~ Kind sieht ^{der} Erlkönig und Der Vater sieht nichts.
- ⑧ In der dritten Strophe der Erlkönig spricht.
"Du liches Kind, komm, geh mit mir!" ^{er sagt} auch spricht
"Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand!"
- ⑨ Das Ende des Gedichts der Erlkönig fasst ~~das~~ Kind ^{am} und das Kind war tot.
- ⑩ ~~Meiner~~ ^{unserer} Meinung nach, ist dieses Gedicht gruselig. ✓

Gruppe Schwärz

unserer Meinung nach ist Erbkönig ein aufregendes
geschicktes und unheimliches Gedicht.

Das Kind spricht so erschrocken

Das Erbkönig spricht so gruselig

Das Vater spricht so beunruhigend

Ich mag die Bilder in diesem Gedicht,
besonders in der ersten Strophe.

Meine Lieblingsstrophe ist die letzte.

Ich mag es besonders als der Vater und
Kind reibt so spät durch Nacht und Wind

Du weißt erst am Ende was wirklich passiert

Eine langsame Stimme past gut zu der
letzten Strophe.

Dieses Gedicht ist frei erfunden, es
kommt aus Fantasieland

Der Erbkönig hat das Kind getötet und das
ist eine Traurigkeit

Schwarz!

4-6-10? GRUPPE ROSA

25/5/2012
4-6-10

Es gefällt mir wenn Der Vater ^{versucht} ~~ist~~ ~~versucht~~ ~~zu sagen~~ der Erlkönig ist nicht wirklich. ~~da~~.

Es ist traurig wenn Der Sohn ist tot.

Der Erlkönig ist ein unheimlicher und furchterregender Mörder.

man soll strophe drei flüsternd und anflehend aussagen.

Es ist gruselig wenn der Erlkönig ^{versucht} ~~ist~~ ~~zu~~ ~~entführen~~ ~~den~~ ~~Sohn~~ ~~away~~.

Das Kind spricht so besorgt.

⁶⁸⁸
zu entführen
zu entführen

Ich mag die Bilder in diesem Gedicht besonders in der ersten strophe.

man könnte die letzte strophe sehr traurig und langsam sprechen

meine Lieblingsstrophe ist die dritte ..

Du findest erst am Ende ^{heraus} was wirklich passiert.

Eine gruselig stimme passt gut zu der dritten Zeile. u das

meiner me~~n~~ung nach ^h Dieses Gedicht ist frei erfunden.

Gruppe Blau

21,

46

Der Erikönig ist ein mächtiger Mensch.

Der Vater ist ein fleißiger Mensch.

Der Sohn ist ein machtloser Mensch.

Es ist traurig wenn der Sohn
töten. *stirbt*

Man soll Strophe drei unheimlich
aufsagen.

Wir mag es wenn Der Erikönig
spricht

Wir mag es nicht wenn
der Sohn töten. *stirbt*

Meine Lieblingsstrophe ist ^{die} vierte Strophe

Ich mag es besonders ^(er sagt) als der Erikönig hat
mir ein Leids getan

Wine am Ende was wirklich passiert ?

Eine wütende Stimme passt gut zu der dritten
Zeile "Meine Vater mein Vater jetzt fällt er
an Erikönig hat mir ein Leids getan"

(auf der Rückseite)

Ja ist ein Fantasyland Gedicht.

Sehr gut





