

# **Cultural Discourses in CEF: How Do They Relate to ELF?**

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## Abbreviations

CDA	Critical discourse analysis
CEF	<i>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment</i>
CoE	Council of Europe
ECML	European Centre for Modern Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELF	English as a <i>lingua franca</i>
ELFA	The Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings
ELP	European language portfolio
FL	Foreign language
ICC	Intercultural communicative competence
L1	First language
L2	Second language
NNS	Non-native speaker
NS	Native speaker
SELF	Studying in English as a Lingua Franca
VOICE	The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English

# 1 Introduction

English as a national language is only the source of world language, not the world language itself. And it must more and more be reduced to merely one variety of World English among many. World language is the domain in which national distinctions dissolve. (Brutt-Griffler 2002: 181)

The above quotation from Janina Brutt-Griffler's acclaimed *World English: A Study of Its Development* raises a number of exciting points about the English language in today's world. First of all, it refers to English as a "world language", which undoubtedly refers to English being used in international communication around the world. Second, the quotation draws our attention to different varieties of English and suggests that national varieties such as British or American English are varieties "among many". Brutt-Griffler further argues that "national distinctions dissolve" in the domain of world language, which implies that World English does not belong to any one nation or people. This could be taken to suggest that national varieties of English may decline in importance among speakers of English who use the language primarily in the international arena, especially as second language (L2) speakers of English have already outnumbered the first language (L1) speakers (Crystal 2004). In addition, the reference to World English could be taken to indicate an emerging, denationalised international variety of English.

The English language is clearly in a state of flux. A big question is, who can claim ownership of the language? If we follow the idea of English being a world language, we might want to reconsider the traditional idea of a language belonging to its native speakers (e.g. Jenkins 2000: 7; Widdowson 1994: 358). English as a world language could be seen to belong to *all* of its speakers. But what might this conception together with the other points raised above suggest about teaching English?

My aim in this study is to shed light on the broad area of teaching English as a world language by taking a perspective on *culture*. That is, what is the role of culture in teaching English as a world language? This is the underlying question of the present study that explores the treatment of culture in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEF), a widely used handbook for foreign language (FL) education published by the Council of Europe. The purpose is to analyse what kinds of cultural discourses emerge in CEF in order to find out how culture is represented in it and how its ideas relate to teaching English as a world language. I chose to analyse CEF

because of its influential status in relation to planning language teaching around Europe. The ideas in CEF have, for instance, influenced the Finnish National Core Curricula, which exert a strong influence on Finnish schools. How CEF has affected these curricula is analysed in chapter 8 in order to find out which parts of CEF seem to be taken up in practice. The research questions are as follows:

1. What kinds of different, possibly contradictory discourses are (re)produced within CEF and the newest Finnish National Core Curricula in terms of (teaching) cultural issues, and what is their relationship to one another?
2. What do these discourses reveal about the relationship between language teaching and culture in CEF/the curricula?
3. How do the discourses in CEF and the ones in the curricula relate to one another?
4. Which parts of CEF seem to be applied in practice and why?
5. How do the discourses relate to English as a world language?

I concentrate on the representation of culture in CEF because treating English as a world language raises important questions about what culture is with reference to a world language and how it might change our conceptions of what to teach as culture.

The study is divided into ten chapters. Chapter 2 delves into the theme of English as a world language. It takes a look at the background of the field and considers shifting from a native speaker (NS) target to a competent non-native speaker (NNS) one in language teaching. In chapter 3, I turn to cultural issues. The chapter begins with a discussion on the relationship between language and culture. I then proceed to considering the issues of teaching culture and intercultural communicative competence and what they might suggest in relation to English as a world language. In chapter 4, I take a look at CEF and consider the role of the English language in Finland. Chapter 5 turns to the methodological framework by introducing the discourse approach used in the analysis of CEF and the Finnish National Core Curricula. The analysis follows in the next chapters, with chapter 6 focusing on drawing out cultural discourses from CEF, chapter 7 considering the document among other projects of the Council of Europe and chapter 8 outlining the discourses in the Finnish National Core Curricula. The purpose is to explore how (teaching) culture is treated in CEF and to reflect these findings with the discourses discerned in the curricula. The findings are looked at from the perspective of English as a world language and further discussed in chapter 9, with concluding remarks in chapter 10.

## 2 Communicating in English around the world

### 2.1 *The concept of ELF*

It is doubtful whether anyone would deny that the English language is used as a medium of communication around the world. But what should we call a language that is used worldwide, in international contexts, increasingly with no NSs present in these contexts? There are a number of interrelating terms that refer to a language being used outside its national borders, as it were: We can talk about (English as) a world language (e.g. Brutt-Giffler 2002), an international language<sup>1</sup> (e.g. Jenkins 2000; McKay 2002), a global language (e.g. Crystal 2004) or a *lingua franca* (e.g. Seidlhofer 2004; 2005; Mauranen 2003). Referring to English as a world or global language (or using the terms *World English* and *Global English*) seem to emphasise the worldwide spread of English, whereas English as an international language or *lingua franca* calls attention to international communication and stresses the role of English as a medium of such communication.

Since my study calls for a focus on cross-cultural encounters and thus on international communication, either of the latter terms would suit my interests. However, for reasons of clarity, I will from now on only use the term *English as a lingua franca* (ELF), which is increasingly preferred in the research literature as well (Jenkins 2004: 63, 66; Seidlhofer 2004: 212; cf. Jenkins 2000: 11). ELF is here defined as “communication in English between speakers with different first languages” (Seidlhofer 2005: 339). Typically, ELF refers to communication where none of the speakers’ native tongue is English (e.g. Routledge Encyclopedia 2000: 357; House 1999: 74; Jenkins 2004: 63), and therefore lays emphasis on NNS-NNS contacts, which also forms the centre of the present study.

However, despite the presence of a NS, I would be ready to accept cross-cultural encounters (of more than two participants) in which a NS of English is required to adjust his or her speech and behaviour along similar lines to other speakers of English as ELF communication. In fact, Jenkins points out that “[m]ost [ELF researchers] consider that ELF interactions can be said to include NSs, although only as a small

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the term *English as an international language* vs. *International English* see Seidlhofer (2004: 210).

minority within the totality of the world's ELF users" (Jenkins 2004: 63; see also Mauraen 2006: 129). Jenkins also argues, in referring to a *lingua franca* core for the phonology of English, that "L1 speakers [...] will [to a certain extent] be obliged to make productive and receptive adjustments if they, too, wish to interact in English internationally" (Jenkins 2000: 135, also 160, 227). In addition to this, successful cross-cultural encounters require *each* participant to leave their cultural baggage behind and move into a so called inter-space to make the communication work (Kaikkonen 2000: 50, orig. Finnish "välitila"). Thus, if NSs of English are "forced" to adjust the way they use and even understand English (both in terms of, for instance, pronunciation and specific cultural conventions of using the language), it appears that English has become a *lingua franca* for them as well, which would justify including these cross-cultural encounters under ELF communication. (Cross-cultural encounters and related terminology are discussed more thoroughly in chapter 3.)

## ***2.2 The spread of English***

English is undoubtedly the most widely used *lingua franca* of international communication in today's world. Estimates have it that L2 speakers of English have outnumbered the L1 speakers (Crystal 2004). The language is one of the most widely learned foreign languages in the world (Graddol 2006: 70-72; Phillipson 2003: 94, 15). This places English in a unique situation: No other language has ever been so widely spoken and so widely learned. But what does this suggest?

Researchers seem to agree that the English language spread because of two main reasons: the colonial past and the economic power of the United States (e.g. Crystal 2004: 59; Graddol 1997: 9; Phillipson 2003: 74-75; Brutt-Griffler 2002). However, there are different interpretations of the spread, as well as different views about its consequences. Those who view the spread as a negative phenomenon often consider the English language to represent oppression because of its colonial past and the ways it has been promoted to the exclusion of other languages (Phillipson 1992; see also Jenkins 2005a: 50-55). While it cannot be disputed that English was the language of the British Empire and that it is now used by the leading economic and military power of the world, Brutt-Griffler has argued that "English owes its existence as a world language in large part to the struggle against imperialism, and not to imperialism alone" (2002: ix).

She draws our attention to how English has been used as a means of resistance in Asia and Africa rather than as a language of simple oppression (Brutt-Griffler 2002: 65, 73). Of course, we cannot overlook that English, as the language of powerful nations in the past and present, has been “utilized for the purposes of cultural domination” (Al-Dabbagh 2005: 6). This suggests for instance superior attitudes towards other languages on the part of some NSs of English, which can be seen in such movements as the English Only movement in the US (Jenkins 2005a: 94; Smith 2005: 56-57). In addition, promoting NSs of English as the preferable teachers of English can be seen to represent a form of cultural domination (see e.g. Cook 2001: 175-176).

It is therefore not surprising that the spread of English is sometimes considered a threat to other languages (see Jenkins 2005a: 138-144). However, Graddol argues that the spread of English cannot be considered to have caused language endangerment, since “[t]he downward trend in language diversity began before the rise of English as a global lingua franca” (2006: 60). Moreover, according to Brutt-Griffler (2002: 122), a global *lingua franca* is more likely to support bilingualism than replace national languages. Following Pennycook, I too think that instead of simply worrying about the spread of English, we need to consider “how English is taken up, how people use English, why people choose to use English” (1999: 150). What is crucial are the uses to which English is put as well as the question about who decides what is correct English (Phillipson 2005: 164), which brings us to the question of ELF.

### ***2.3 English as a lingua franca***

Al-Dabbagh argues that what is needed to achieve a working *lingua franca* is to transform “the conditions that gave rise to the oppressive domination of [such languages as English]” (2005: 6). I think that the *lingua franca* approach to English could be a way to transform these conditions, since in ELF research, we need to stop concentrating on NS cultures and stop thinking in NS terms, and instead start considering how English is used among NNSs in the international community. This changes the (im)balance of who can claim ownership of English. As Widdowson argues, languages are “not transmitted without being transformed” (2003: 45-46), which in terms of ELF implies that we need to take NNSs into account when considering how the English language is changing. In this sense, the international ELF community could be seen to influence the English

language just like NS cultures and societies do. In ELF research, English used in international contexts can no longer be seen to belong to its NSs, or as Modiano puts it: “In the global village, English is public domain” (1999: 27). Thus, rather than argue about whether the English language is suitable to be a *lingua franca* (cf. Smith 2005) or whether we should start using another language in international communication (cf. Phillipson promoting Esperanto 2003: 171-174), it seems more reasonable to study what the current situation implies for the English language and its speakers, be they NSs or NNSs.

This does not mean adopting an English Only policy, but rather acknowledging the global reach of the English language and the fact that English is increasingly spoken between NNSs. Studies that focus on ELF do not try to promote English to the exclusion of other languages, nor do they try to take English away from its NSs; instead, they concentrate on analysing the English language as it is used between NNSs:

No one denies the ‘rights’ of so-called ‘native speakers’ to establish their own standards for use in interaction with other ‘native speakers’ (ENL), and even with ‘non-native speakers’ (EFL). However, the important question is: who should make such decisions for communication wholly between ‘non-native speakers’, i.e. for English as an International Language [i.e. ELF]? (Jenkins 2000: 7)

The question Jenkins is posing is extremely relevant in the light of English being used so extensively in international contexts with no NSs present. ELF speakers “need... to be intelligible to, and to understand, other NNSs rather than to blend in with NSs and approximate a NS variety of English” (Jenkins 2004: 63). ELF researchers suggest that it might well be “a new variety [of English] that emerges in situations where interlocutors do not share an L1” (Mauranen 2003: 514; see also Jenkins 2004: 65). In the future, this variety, or the core features of ELF, may well serve as the basis for international communication. And this may well result on a linguistically more balanced international arena, since an ELF variety would require the now-privileged-NSs to adjust their English to better suit the international setting (see Jenkins 2000: 135).

The ELF field has gained ground in recent years with descriptive research on ELF conducted by for instance Jennifer Jenkins (2000; 2005b) and Anna Mauranen (2003; 2005; 2006). Others who have embraced ELF include such scholars as Juliane House (1999), Anne Lesznyák (2004), Sandra Lee McKay (2002) and Barbara Seidlhofer (2004; 2005). In addition, two corpora of spoken ELF are currently being compiled, the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (ELFA) in Finland and the

Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) in Austria, which invite more researchers to join the field (see Mauranen 2003 and Seidlhofer 2004: 219 respectively).

Descriptive research on ELF so far has concentrated on different features of spoken ELF, the most comprehensive study being that of Jenkins's (2000; also 2005b) pioneering work on the core features of ELF phonology. Her research reveals that while "[m]ost consonant sounds", "[a]ppropriate consonant cluster simplification", "[v]owel length distinctions" and "[n]uclear stress" are among the most important areas in preserving "mutual phonological intelligibility" in ELF, for instance mispronouncing the sounds /θ/ and /ð/ did not cause any intelligibility problems in her data (Jenkins 2000: 132, 137). To quote Dauer, Jenkins's research "attempts to redefine what counts as an error by broadening pronunciation targets: As long as phonological distinctiveness and consistency are maintained, NNSs need not try to reproduce the exact phonetic qualities associated with a particular accent" (2005: 549). Jenkins thus suggests that pronunciation teaching concentrate on phonological aspects that are relevant to ELF intelligibility rather than to approximating a NS accent.

Other ELF studies similarly focus on NNS-NNS contacts and on the requirements for successful communication in these contacts. For instance, Mauranen's (2005; 2006) studies based on the ELFA data imply that ELF communication differs somewhat from NS use and orients towards meaning rather than form. Based on her analysis, Mauranen argues that ELF communication is "complex and sophisticated" (2005: 290). To quote her at length:

lingua franca speakers show considerable awareness of the requirements of the communicative situation in which they find themselves, and are able to regulate their language and interaction accordingly. A distinct orientation toward content allows minor imperfections to pass, but only as long as they do not hamper intelligibility; maintaining a sufficient level of intelligibility is constantly monitored in cooperative interaction. (Mauranen 2006: 147-148)

What follows is that we should concentrate on ELF *users* rather than seeing the participants in an ELF interaction as *learners* aspiring towards the NS ideal (Mauranen 2005; 2006). As Mauranen puts it, "[b]y observing language which works in ELF contexts, we can move towards principled and explicit language targets for international speakers of English, based on empirical findings" (Mauranen 2005: 275). English teaching, then, should take learners' real-life needs into account and prepare them for cross-cultural encounters rather than concentrate on NS-NNS contacts and the ideal NS target. Of course, some learners will mainly interact with NSs of English and for them a

“traditional” English as a Foreign Language (EFL) approach will be more appropriate (Jenkins 2004: 65). Nevertheless, because of the prominence of NNS-NNS encounters, there is a need to adjust English teaching to better accommodate ELF.

## ***2.4 Competent non-native speakers***

What follows from the discussion on ELF in terms of English teaching is a rejection of the NS as an ideal or norm for language learners. The NS model is first of all unattainable, and second, “even if it were possible, it would create the wrong kind of competence” (Byram 1997: 11; see also Cook 2001: 177; Mauranen 2003: 517). As Cook writes, there is no point in basing language teaching on a (monolingual) NS model because “L2 users are not the same as monolinguals” (2001: 177). “What we need [instead] is a model that recognizes the distinctive nature of knowing two or more languages and does not measure L2 knowledge by a monolingual standard” (Cook 2001: 194). Thus, as Kramsch (1991: 235) suggests, it would be more reasonable to concentrate on developing learners’ bilingualism along with their biculturalism (or plurilingualism and pluriculturalism for that matter). In this context, “the intercultural speaker”, that is a successful L2 user, is the attainable ideal (Byram 1997: 70; cf. Seidlhofer 2003: 23). The shift from a NS norm to the intercultural speaker is especially relevant for ELF, since it suggests that learners do not need to strive for standard pronunciation, nor for the values and behaviours of NSs of English (Byram 1997: 112-113). Instead, they need to aim at becoming successful intercultural speakers who can stand between viewpoints and cultures (see Cook 2001: 179). This further implies that the purpose of ELF is not to lower teaching/learning standards for English; but rather to adjust them to better reflect the reality of intercultural encounters.

## 3 Cross-cultural encounters

### *3.1 Relationship between language and culture*

According to Claire Kramsch (2000: 14), Edward Sapir's and Benjamin Lee Whorf's work on the relationship between language and culture (and the so called linguistic relativity theory that they developed on the basis of their work) has prompted two notable insights:

1. There is nowadays a recognition that language, as code, reflects cultural preoccupations and constrains the way people think.
2. More than in Whorf's days, however, we recognize how important context is in complementing the meanings encoded in the language.

The first insight relates to culture as semantically encoded in the language itself; the second concerns culture as expressed through the actual use of the language. (Kramsch 2000: 14)

These insights resemble Fairclough's approach to language as social practice, which takes a functional<sup>2</sup> view on language (Fairclough 2001: 16; see also Kramsch 1996: 5). For Fairclough, language is not an abstract system that can be separated from the social world. Instead, "[t]he whole is society, and language is one strand of the social" (Fairclough 2001: 19). The relationship between language and society is dialectical: they both influence and are influenced by each other (Fairclough 1998: 131).

As Pulverness (2003: 428) argues, languages have been shaped by social and historical circumstances that give them "resonance and meaning". The position of the English language in today's world is, for instance, often seen as the joint result of the expansion of the British colonial power and the emergence of the US as the world's leading economic power (Crystal 2004: 59; Graddol 1997: 9; cf. Brutt-Griffler 2002). When people oppose either or both of these influences, it can cause them to reject the language, even though "it is not the language itself that is the culprit" here (McKay 2002: 22). As a result, we cannot dispute the influence of the past on how people view languages today. Thus, I think that languages are intertwined with their cultural pasts, even though we should also bear in mind that cultural influence on languages continues to the present day (see Fairclough 1998: 131).

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<sup>2</sup> On functional approaches to language, see e.g. Halliday and Hasan (1986).

Of course, the question how much language, as code, reflects culture and constrains our thinking is somewhat more complicated than the issue of historical influence. According to Fairclough (2001), language affects our perceptions of what is natural and normal. In discussing the significance of language in social relations of power, he talks about “*ideologies*”, or “‘common-sense’ assumptions which treat authority and hierarchy as natural” and points out that “the exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language” (2001: 2, emphasis original). What this implies is that our perspective on the world is constrained by our own culture’s concepts and discourses which are embodied in language. And unless we become aware of these hidden ideologies, they continue to constrain our thinking. Fairclough (2001: ch 9) therefore proposes that critical language awareness be taught at schools to increase people’s awareness on how language affects our thinking. Interestingly, similar ideas have been suggested in ELF research as well (see Seidlhofer 2003: 22).

What could be taken as problematic in Fairclough’s views in terms of ELF is the idea of language embodying cultural features, which suggests that learning English means adopting at least some cultural ways of thinking. To overstate a bit, this could be taken to mean that teaching the English language equals feeding people NS values. But if English is seen to embody specific national cultures, could it not be used to increase language awareness as well, for instance through comparing cultural features in the learners’ native languages with those in English? And, more importantly, what would the cultural ways of thinking be in the case of English which represents a number of different national cultures?

Further, when we consider English as a global *lingua franca* used between NNSs in cross-cultural encounters, we can no longer connect the language to a specific national, English-speaking culture. Rather, I think, we need to realise that English is influenced by the international community using the language and that the culture behind the language may well be(come) that of the ELF community. ELF research already suggests that English is used differently in *lingua franca* situations compared to usage between NSs (e.g. Mauranen 2005; 2006), which implies that NNSs are affecting the English language and perhaps even creating their own ELF cultures. I therefore argue that the *lingua franca* role of the English language reduces or even undermines the impact of NS cultures on English and emphasises the role of context in creating

meanings. The culture tied to ELF is not a national one, but rather something that people with various cultural backgrounds construct in the encounter.

### ***3.2 What is culture?***

Since the ELF approach of my study suggests intercultural contacts, I define *culture* from the perspective of intercultural contact situations. I define an *intercultural contact situation* as any situation where participants with different mother tongues communicate using a *lingua franca*. This suggests that the participants in these interactions have potentially different cultural backgrounds on the grounds that they speak different languages. I thus follow the idea of language and culture being, to a certain extent, intertwined. However, I want to emphasise the importance of (non-linguistic) context in rendering culture (ir)relevant. In this view, intercultural means the “dynamic process created in the encounter” (Kaikkonen 2000: 50, my translation). This process entails that all participants move towards each other reaching for a so called inter-space (Kaikkonen 2000: 50; see also House 2000: 43-44). In a similar vein, Kramsch (1996) suggests that what takes place in intercultural encounters is a creation of a “third culture”, which can be understood as a space between a person’s own and the target culture(s). As a result, an intercultural contact situation includes a process in which participants can create “unique rules for [...] interaction” (Ahvenainen 2005: 25), or in which a new “culture” potentially emerges.

This resembles Hu’s (1999) view on cultures being constructed in specific contact situations. She rejects the idea of culture being a fixed cultural background and sees cultures as “discursive events” (Hu 1999: 297, my translation). For her, a contact situation is intercultural only when culture becomes discursively relevant in the situation (Hu 1999: 297-298). Hu thus takes the idea of creating a “third culture” further by treating even the cultural backgrounds of the participants as narrative constructions. I accept her explanation that if cultures are treated as discursive events, we can get rid of essentialising conceptions of culture, and I certainly agree that culture may not be relevant in every potentially intercultural situation (Hu 1999: 299); but, then again, I think that simply treating cultures as discursive events does not succeed in disposing of the relevance of the participants’ differing cultural backgrounds in intercultural situations. Since even if the relevance of these cultural backgrounds depended on the

encounter, they would still be the source for the differences constructed in the encounter. They would still be the reason why culture can become discursively relevant in the first place. In addition, I think that in order for us to recognise when culture becomes discursively relevant, we need to have an idea of what culture is and thus define the concept of culture.

Nevertheless, I follow Hu (1999: 135) in her conception of cultures being contested and diverse. I will look at culture as the cultural background of the participants which can be diverse and which may or may not be(come) important in the course of the interaction. Following Kramsch, culture is here defined as

membership in a discourse community [or more than one] that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings. Even when they have left that community, its members may retain, wherever they are, a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting. These standards are what is generally called their 'culture'. (Kramsch 2000: 10, comment in brackets mine)

To the standards listed by Kramsch, I would add a standard for speaking, by which I mean for instance pragmatic rules which affect how people interact.

To sum up, I treat culture as a participant's cultural background that has been shaped and is being shaped by the participant's membership in a discourse community or discourse communities that have their own histories and standards. The participant's cultural background is a potentially relevant aspect of an intercultural encounter and the encounter itself is a discursive event in which, ideally, a third culture or cultures are being created. The creation of a third culture implies that the encounter needs to be seen as a place of struggle where cultural meanings are weighed and negotiated (cf. Kramsch 1996: 24).

### ***3.3 Intercultural communicative competence***

A successful intercultural encounter requires from the participants the ability to mediate between cultures in a non-native language, i.e. the ability to move towards an inter-space or a third culture. I will call this ability *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC)<sup>3</sup> (see e.g. Byram 2000; 1997: 70-71; cf. Edmondson and House 1998: 169-172).

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<sup>3</sup> Byram (1997: 70-71) distinguishes between intercultural competence (IC) and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) by saying that IC refers to the ability to mediate between cultures using one's own language and ICC using a foreign language. However, he seems to have dropped the

According to Byram (1997; 2000; see also Byram, Gribkova and Starkey 2002: 11-13), there are four different components of ICC: attitudes, knowledge, skills and critical cultural awareness. With attitudes, he refers to curiosity and openness, the readiness to reflect upon one's own and the others' culture(s). By knowledge, rather than knowledge of a specific culture per se, he means understanding how social groups and identities function in one's own and the interlocutor's country, as well as knowledge of general interactional processes. Skills are divided into skills of interpreting and relating, and skills of discovery and interaction. The former suggests an ability to interpret a cultural event and to relate it to one's own culture, and the latter refers to the ability to recognise and relate new cultural phenomena to the old. Skills of discovery and interaction also imply the ability to manage intercultural communicative situations. All the above components need to be supported by critical cultural awareness, which refers to the ability to critically evaluate cultural practices in one's own as well as in other cultures. Thus, with Byram's words, a person who has ICC

is someone who is able to see relationships between different cultures – both internal and external to a society – and is able to mediate, that is interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people. It is also someone who has a critical or analytical understanding of (parts of) their own and other cultures – someone who is conscious of their own perspective, of the way in which their thinking is culturally determined, rather than believing that their understanding and perspective is natural. (Byram 2000)

In short, ICC means the ability to relate one's own cultural background to other cultures. It requires a critical awareness of one's own position and attitudes, and a critical understanding of (parts of) other cultures, as well as the ability to mediate between cultures.

### **3.3.1 ICC and teaching**

Traditionally, language teaching has concentrated on providing students with cultural information, which according to Kramsch (1996: 23-24) “has favored facts over meanings and has not enabled learners to understand foreign attitudes, values, and mindsets”. Another approach has been to provide the students with “a key” to interpret target culture phenomena (Kramsch 1996: 24). Yet, even in this approach, it is the

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term ICC in his other publications referred to here and no longer maintains the distinction. To emphasise NNS communication, I nevertheless retain the term ICC.

students' responsibility to integrate the cultural knowledge they are given with the diversity they encounter when visiting the target culture, as well as with their own cultural perceptions (ibid.). What Kramsch suggests, instead, is an approach that sees culture "as a place of struggle between the learners' meanings and those of native speakers" (ibid.). By calling culture a place of struggle, she seems to emphasise the creation of a third culture. However, instead of calling culture a place of struggle, I would prefer to call the intercultural encounter a place of struggle for cultural meanings which are then shaped into a third culture. In cross-cultural encounters, the question is no longer about NS cultures vs. NNS cultures but rather about NNSs creating their own culture irrespective of the NS culture typically associated with the language they are using.

Kaikkonen (2000: 52) points out that in learning about specific characteristics of a foreign culture and cultural behaviour, we always expand our cultural view into two directions: we learn about our own and the others' culture. This is where we can begin to move towards a third culture. However, Kramsch (1996: 26) remarks that in order to really learn from the encounters, learners need to be given a "space" to interpret their own meanings. She emphasises the importance of dialogue and reflection in making sense of cultural meanings (Kramsch 1996: 26). A teacher's role is to help learners in doing this. Teaching ICC is thus based on comparing cultures and cultural experiences (see Byram 1997: 66; Byram and Tost Planet 2000: 189-190).

A number of different models and approaches have been created to illustrate the teaching of ICC. They all stress the ability to mediate between cultures. Byram and Tost Planet (2000: 189-190) suggest a comparative approach that would focus both on the learner's own and the foreign culture. The comparison would reveal to the learners that their way of looking at things is as cultural as anyone else's (Byram and Tost Planet 2000: 189). In addition, Byram (1990) has drafted a model with four interrelating dimensions of language learning, language awareness, cultural awareness and cultural experience, which similarly aims at ICC through exposing learners to different perspectives of cultural phenomena. In sketching yet another, more general model for ICC, he suggests that learners should be equipped "with the means of accessing and analysing any cultural practices and meanings they encounter" (Byram 1997: 19, see also 73).

Kramsch is on similar lines with her suggestion of establishing a "sphere of interculturality", which entails that "understanding a foreign culture requires putting

that culture in relation with one's own" (Kramersch 1996: 205-206). She further suggests that culture should be taught as an "interpersonal process" (ibid.). This includes a shift from the mere "presentation/prescription of cultural facts and behaviors [to] the teaching of a process that applies itself to understanding foreignness or 'otherness'" (ibid.). Kramersch's approach includes the idea of expanding one's cultural view, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of one's own and the target culture(s). A third aspect Kramersch takes up is that culture should be taught as difference, which highlights the existing diversity within every culture (ibid.).

### 3.3.2 ICC and ELF

Both Byram and Kramersch discuss teaching culture and ICC mainly from the perspective of languages representing certain cultures, although Byram has paid attention to the special role of English as a global *lingua franca* as well (1997: 20, 79-81, 112-115). Nevertheless, their approaches provide important insights into teaching ICC in ELF contexts. Both Kramersch and Byram draw attention to learners' cultural development and the importance of (critical) cross-cultural comparisons in that development. They stress the significance of understanding one's own cultural position in addition to understanding other cultures. And they aim at providing students with an ability to successfully engage with cultural diversity. All these aspects are relevant in teaching ELF. The problem is the question of the target culture. If English is no longer connected to any particular culture, which culture should we use in cross-cultural comparisons? Or should ELF teaching include no culture at all, as Jenkins (2000: 74; 2005a: 141) suggests?

Jenkins's view is based on treating English as the medium of communication between non-natives only (ibid.). (Of course, whether it is desirable to teach English purely as a *lingua franca* depends on the students' needs (see e.g. Byram 1997: 79-81).) What is problematic with Jenkins's stance is that lack of culture teaching also means lack of possibilities for cross-cultural comparisons that provide the basis for ICC (Byram 1997: 114). Byram suggests that, even when teaching ELF, it would therefore be relevant to focus on *some* cultures in order to develop ICC. He adds, though, that it might be desirable to focus on an English-speaking country, since

western – especially American and British – cultures are so dominant even where learners will have no need or opportunity to interact with native speakers, that a *critical* study of them and their relationship to learners' own is likely to be more beneficial than to ignore their presence. (Byram 1997: 114-115)

This is a relevant point, although I disagree with his too monolithic concept of “western cultures” and doubt whether the global industry can nowadays be reduced to the dominance of “especially American and British” cultures. Byram does point out, though, that in ELF teaching, an introduction to a national culture would have to be a mere example combined with developing a more general ICC (1997: 20). And a lot has happened in terms of global development since he wrote the passage. For instance, Graddol (2006: 112) points out that more and more critique is directed towards the US, which implies that the country is losing in international status. In addition, cultural influence is less unidirectional than what it used to be with increasing influence from different Asian countries (*ibid.*), which suggests that understanding “western cultures” may not be all that important anymore. Especially in the European context, it seems more reasonable to start taking “non-western” cultures into account. In terms of ELF teaching, we should also keep in mind the declining importance of NS standards and NS teachers of English to those wanting to use English in international settings (Graddol 2006: 114-115).

Another approach to teaching ELF comes from House (1999), who questions the importance of teaching ICC. House's (1999) study on ELF talk elicited during an international students' meeting in the Netherlands led her to conclude that misunderstandings in ELF talk would stem from “interactants' lack of pragmatic fluency” (House 1999: 85). House suggests that, since cultural differences proved not to cause the misunderstandings, the focus in ELF teaching “should be on the development of pragmatic fluency” rather than on cultural studies or ICC (House 1999: 86). This appears to be in accordance with what Edmondson and House refer to as “cultural awareness conveyed through language” (1998: 179-180, my translation). By this they mean that cultural aspects could be introduced by concentrating on linguistic aspects (including pragmatics) because language and culture are intertwined. Although Edmondson and House (1998) do not refer to ELF in this context, I would like to point out that concentrating on cultural aspects through language seems to be especially problematic in terms of ELF, since the English language as a *lingua franca* cannot be seen to represent any particular culture. What comes to developing pragmatic fluency is

equally problematic, since as McKay points out, “pragmatic rules [...] differ cross-culturally” (2002: 127). Thus, concentrating on pragmatic fluency is as problematic as the question of the target culture when talking about *teaching* ELF. I am therefore inclined towards McKay’s view that

[t]eaching objectives should emphasize that pragmatic rules will differ cross-culturally, and be based on the assumption that these cross-cultural differences do not require speakers to acquire the pragmatic rules of another culture but rather to mutually seek ways to accommodate to diversity. (McKay 2002: 127-128)

The role of pragmatic fluency in using ELF is, of course, worth looking into more closely, especially as House’s (1999) findings on the lack of culture-based comprehension difficulties in ELF talk seem to be supported by a more recent study conducted by Mauranen (2006: 144). Yet, the cultural diversity typical of *lingua franca* contexts calls for a focus on intercultural issues as well. As Mauranen writes,

the contexts of use lingua franca speakers experience typically involve interaction with people from highly diverse backgrounds. This requires constant *intercultural sensitivity* to a degree not normally experienced by mono- or even bilingual speakers in their native languages. (Mauranen 2005: 274, my emphasis; see also 2003: 517)

The importance of intercultural sensitivity becomes even more apparent, when we take into account not only the cultural backgrounds of the participants but also the cultural contexts of the interaction and even the cultural cues carried by the language used (see Ahvenainen 2005: 25). Consider for instance a Finn meeting a German and a Spaniard in France, all of them communicating in English. In an intercultural encounter such as this, it seems important that participants be able to move away from their own culture towards other cultures present in that particular context. This requires intercultural sensitivity and willingness to place communication at the core of the encounter. It appears to be important that participants be(come) more aware of their own culture so that they can be aware of the cultural nature of their own actions and speech habits, and that way be able to explain where they come from, if need be. Now, the question is, how can the aspects of cultural diversity and intercultural sensitivity it requires be taken into account in teaching ELF?

### 3.3.3 Taking culture into account in teaching ELF

McKay makes a perceptive comment by pointing out that educators today need to acknowledge the *lingua franca* role of the English language, i.e. they need to think globally; but they also need to think of “how English is embedded in the local context”, i.e. teach locally (McKay 2002: 118). Thus, in planning English teaching, we need to look at both the global and the local context in order to be able to choose a suitable approach for teaching the language. Ultimately, it is always the learners’ (present and future) needs that are to be taken into account (see Byram 1997: 79-81). Yet, even when the local contexts are diverse, the present position of the English language requires a concentration on the *lingua franca* role. To illustrate how English teaching can be extended to include this role, I briefly introduce three approaches to ELF teaching. The purpose here is to anchor the discussion on ICC and ELF to concrete examples. However, the examples are not to be taken as perfect models, but rather as a starting point for discussion.

The first model, drawn up by Peter Doyé (1999), aims at ICC:

It is the competence to communicate with members of other cultures in general – i.e. without restriction to the target culture – that intercultural education and foreign language teaching have to aim at. (Doyé 1999: 96)

Doyé (1999: 93, 96) suggests that cultural studies in the sense of learners acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes related to the target culture(s) are still needed for interaction with NSs, and as a common reference point among NNSs (see e.g. Byram 1997). He thinks that NNSs can draw on their common knowledge of the English language to communicate more easily (Doyé 1999: 96). He then borrows Wolfgang Klafki’s “Prinzip des Exemplarischen” to suggest that cultural studies focused on the target culture(s) could be used as an example to illustrate differences and similarities in other cultures (Doyé 1999: 97-98). This, he thinks, would help learners to better accommodate to the diversity of cultures encountered in *lingua franca* situations. In addition, Doyé (1999: 93, 96) proposes that cultural studies should be “complemented by world studies”. This UNESCO initiative starts from global issues, such as ecological problems, which are then anchored to specific cultures (Doyé 1999: 98-99). The main purpose is to raise awareness of global “interdependence” (Doyé 1999: 93, 98). As a result, Doyé’s approach includes the study of specific cultures which is then used as a

reference point in exemplifying phenomena in other cultures, as well as a focus on world studies that proceed from general global issues to their effects in specific cultures. What this model lacks is a focus on developing awareness of learners' own culture(s), which would enable the learners to create a "third culture". The question also remains, especially in terms of the English language, *which* target culture(s) are to be used as a reference point among non-native English speakers?

The second model, by Wolfgang Hallet (2001) is based on the assumption that in order for the learners to develop their cultural identities, or create a third culture, the classroom needs to be seen as a hybrid "third space" in which various languages and cultures come together. He writes that

[t]he cultural complexity of foreign language teaching and its hybridity become even more apparent when we realise that the cultural elements that are brought together and mixed up in the teaching contexts do not come from **the** own and **the** foreign culture alone. (Hallet 2001: 112, my translation, emphasis original)<sup>4</sup>

In Hallet's model, the classroom is treated as a crossroads for (1) discourses from the learners' own culture(s) and societies, (2) discourses from the target cultures and societies, and (3) cross-cultural and global discourses (2001: 115-121). The focus on learners' own and the target cultures follows similar reasoning to Byram's (e.g. 1997) ideas on developing ICC. Hallet points out that awareness of one's own cultural background in addition to familiarising learners with the target cultures enables them to build ICC as well as their own cultural identities (2001: 116-117). In addition, Hallet emphasises the importance of taking into account the diversity of all cultures (2001: 120). The third sphere of Hallet's model introduces global discourses that transcend cultures and cultural meanings (2001: 117-120). Hallet thus combines the diversity of cultures with global issues that touch upon and even combine cultures around the world. His model suggests that the three spheres of cultural discourses should be brought together in the classroom to create a space where the learners can develop their (inter)cultural competences.

The third, a somewhat more radical proposal, comes from Seidlhofer (2003: 22-23). She thinks that it might in some contexts be possible to replace English courses with a subject called "language awareness", which would include instruction in ELF

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<sup>4</sup> Original German as follows: Die kulturelle Komplexität des Fremdsprachenunterrichts und seine Hybridität werden noch deutlicher, wenn wir uns vor Augen führen, dass die in ihm zusammentreffenden und sich mischenden kulturellen Elemente durchaus nicht bloß **der** eigenen und **der** fremden Kultur entstammen. (Hallet 2001: 112, emphasis original)

(Seidlhofer 2003: 22). This is based on the assumption “that the demand for English will be self-sustaining and cannot, and need not, be met within the confines of a school subject” (Seidlhofer 2003: 23). Seidlhofer’s suggestion therefore exemplifies what the teaching of English as a pure *lingua franca* could look like (cf. Jenkins 2000: 74).

All of the above approaches to teaching English acknowledge the changing role of the language in today’s world. It seems inevitable from the examples that English teaching move beyond the boundaries of target cultures. Yet, it is a matter of debate and discussion how far from these cultures the teaching should move. In terms of the approach to ICC and culture adopted in this study, Hallet’s three-sphere model appears to be the most practicable one, since it takes into account the learners’ own culture(s), the target culture(s) and cultures that go beyond, in an effort to increase learners’ ICC. However, I do not want to impose one approach over another, especially as I think that the choice of an approach depends largely on the aims of the learners. Rather, my purpose is to look at the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEF) and the Finnish National Core Curricula from the perspective of these possibilities of teaching English, partly or purely, as a *lingua franca*.

### 3.3.4 ICC at Finnish schools

In order to relate the above discussion on ICC to the reality at schools, I take a brief look at language education in Finland. (The position of English in the country is discussed in chapter 4.) Finland is a northern European country with two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Along with these two, Finnish school children are required to learn at least one FL during their nine-year compulsory education. They are thus required to get acquainted with at least three different languages, Finnish, Swedish and one or more foreign languages, and very likely with more than three different cultures. This implies that Finnish school children stand a good chance of acquiring an open perspective towards different cultures and languages. Since many languages are taught, developing pupils’ ICC does not depend on English teaching alone.

What is more, mother tongue education at Finnish comprehensive schools is supposed to increase pupils’ interest in “examining language” and pupils are to learn to be critical towards different types of spoken and written texts (POPS 2004: 53, my translation). This kind of “language awareness” raising is supplemented with learning about one’s own and a number of other cultures through literature, theatre and films, as

well as with the aim of increasing pupils' openness towards different kinds of language users (POPS 2004: 50, 54). Mother tongue education in Finland consequently strives for developing pupils' skills in and awareness of their L1, but also relating their L1 to other languages and cultures. Seidlhofer's (2003: 23) proposal to introduce language awareness to schools discussed in section 3.3.3 is thus already taking place in Finland, not as a separate school subject replacing English, but integrated into mother tongue education. In addition, intercultural issues are taken up in that different cultures are looked at in relation to pupils' own. It should therefore be noted that, at least in Finland, FL or indeed English teaching is not the only place where issues of language awareness or even ICC are taken up. Considering the international status of the English language, though, English classes seem to suit this purpose well.

## 4 Common European Framework and English in Finland

Before turning to the methodological framework of my study, I briefly introduce CEF, which is analysed for cultural discourses in chapter 6. After that I take a look at the position of English in Finland, the country I have chosen as the example of European language policies in practice. I concentrate on the position of English at Finnish schools and society at large, which lays the ground for my analysis of the Finnish National Core Curricula in chapter 8.

### 4.1 Introduction to CEF

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEF) initiated by the Council of Europe provides a common basis for language education across Europe. The purpose was to create a reference work that would present to language professionals a common core for language teaching and learning as well as assessment (Huhta 2005: 109). A common core was supposed to facilitate the comparison of for instance language courses, curricula and proficiency in different European countries (ibid.). CEF includes a description of “what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what [other] knowledge and skills they have to develop” (CEF 2001: 1). CEF also contains reference scales which describe different stages of language learning (ibid.). However, it does not tell how and what language professionals should teach or what curricula should include. Rather, it provides a starting point for the elaboration of curricula and teaching practices and a reference point for comparing different systems.

A visit to the Council of Europe web-site<sup>5</sup> reveals that CEF has been embraced by language professionals around Europe. Its influence can be seen in the various projects in schools all over the EU, as well as in National Core Curricula that provide guidelines for individual schools. Because of this influential status, I think it is important to study the implications for language education provided by CEF. What comes to the role of English as a global *lingua franca*, it seems that the document does not pay much

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<sup>5</sup> The address to the education section of the Council of Europe web-site is: [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_Co-operation/education/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/).

attention to it (Ahvenainen 2005: 14) even though this special role has been acknowledged in other documents by the Council of Europe, such as the *Guide for Users* (2003: 9) and *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies* (from now on *Guide for Development* 2003: 28; see also Huhta 2005: 104). According to Ahvenainen (2005: 14-15; see also Kivistö 2005: 24-25), there appears to be a contradiction in CEF, since it promotes plurilingualism, which includes the idea that all levels of language competence should be accounted for, but still talks about achieving NS competence when drawing up assessment criteria. As Seidlhofer (2003: 23) argues, plurilingualism is likely to be achieved only if NS competence is abandoned. In addition, CEF seems to promote communication with native rather than with non-native speakers (see Kivistö 2005: 25). Keeping these implications in mind, it seems that CEF leaves out relevant issues dealing with intercultural communication as well as with teaching English as a *lingua franca*. There is thus a risk that these issues will not be taken into account in planning language curricula and in teaching. A brief look at the Finnish National Core Curricula implies just this. Even though intercultural communication is emphasised, the aim of language teaching, including English teaching, is that learners learn to communicate with members of the target culture, i.e. with NSs (POPS 2004: 139-143; LOPS 2003: 100). It should be noted, however, that Byram (2000; 1997) has worked on developing criteria for teaching and assessing ICC, particularly referring to the lack of criteria for socio-cultural competence in CEF. Thus, the document can and should be developed further. My analysis of CEF aims at presenting the reader with those issues that need to be developed in terms of ELF.

## ***4.2 English in Finland***

Finnish school children are required to learn at least Finnish, Swedish and one FL, but they are free to choose additional languages as well. Until the end of the 1950s, the first FL for most pupils was German; after that the large majority has chosen English (Sajavaara 1993: 47-48). The percentages for pupils choosing English as their first FL between the years 1994 and 2004 are given in Table 1. In addition to English being the most popular first FL with some 90 percent of comprehensive school pupils choosing it, the Finns' enthusiasm to learn the language is indicated by the approximately 98 percent of all comprehensive school pupils learning English in 2004 (Indikaattorit 2005: 25-26).

**Table 1 The percentages of Finnish school children choosing English as their first foreign language between the years 1994 and 2004**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>
%	86.9	86.6	87.7	89.0	89.7	90.5

Source: Indikaattorit (2005: 25; 2003: 21)

The high percentages for English may seem to indicate a lack of interest in learning other languages, but it is possible to choose more than one FL. Languages are offered in the third, fifth, seventh<sup>6</sup> and eighth form of the comprehensive school and can be started at upper secondary and vocational school, as well. In 2004, approximately 13 percent<sup>7</sup> of primary school children started a second FL as an optional choice, the most common being German and French (Indikaattorit 2005: 26). In addition, approximately 16 percent started to learn a FL in the eight form (Indikaattorit 2005: 27). A typical path is to start with English in the third form, take perhaps German in the fifth or eight and Swedish in the seventh form.

However, the popularity of the English language among Finnish school children cannot be disputed. It seems that the popularity goes hand in hand with the increasing influence of the language in international communication as well as in Finnish society as a whole. Today, the Finnish media is filled with English for instance in the form of TV shows, films, music and advertisements. Moreover, English is increasingly used in education, research and business, even within Finland (Taavitsainen and Pahta 2003: 6-8). Nevertheless, Taavitsainen and Pahta conclude that even though their “survey shows the increasing influence of English in Finland in several fields of life, [...] it also shows an attempt to preserve and cultivate the native language” (2003: 12). It appears that English is not seen to pose a threat to Finnish, it is rather considered a useful language to learn because of its prominence in everyday life.

What kind of English, then, has been and is taught at Finnish schools? A brief look at the 1985 and 1994 Finnish national core curricula for the comprehensive and upper secondary schools, which provide nationwide frameworks for language teaching,

<sup>6</sup> The seventh form is basically reserved for Swedish (for Finnish speakers), Finnish (for Swedish speakers) and English, which means that if the languages were not chosen in the third or fifth form, they start now. English is, however, optional.

<sup>7</sup> This figure does not include Swedish (for Finnish speakers) and Finnish (for Swedish speakers), since they are considered second and not foreign languages in Finland. However, as Sajavaara (1993: 39-40) points out, Swedish is just as foreign as any other language for many Finns, since the language is not heard or needed in their neighbourhood.

indicate that English, just like any other language, is considered to have specific target cultures, Great-Britain and the United States given as the main ones (POPS 1985: 76, 86; POPS 1994: 70-72; LOPS 1985: 64, 85, 101; LOPS 1994: 60-65). Even the newest curricula from 2003/2004 seem to be along similar lines in that they expect pupils to “communicate and act in a way that is acceptable in the target culture” (POPS 2004: 141; LOPS 2003: 100, my translation). Apparently this has been the case since the 1940s, with attention given to the United States alongside Great Britain since the 1970s (see Ranta 2004: 35-36). In the 1985 and 1994 curricula, learners are expected to acquire a (near) native-like pronunciation. The pronunciation target is described as “educated spoken language” (LOPS 1985: 64, 85, 101, my translation). In addition, it is required from the learners that they adapt to the cultural norms of the target culture, since the purpose is to learn ways to use language and act according to the cultural norms of the target culture (e.g. POPS 1994: 72).

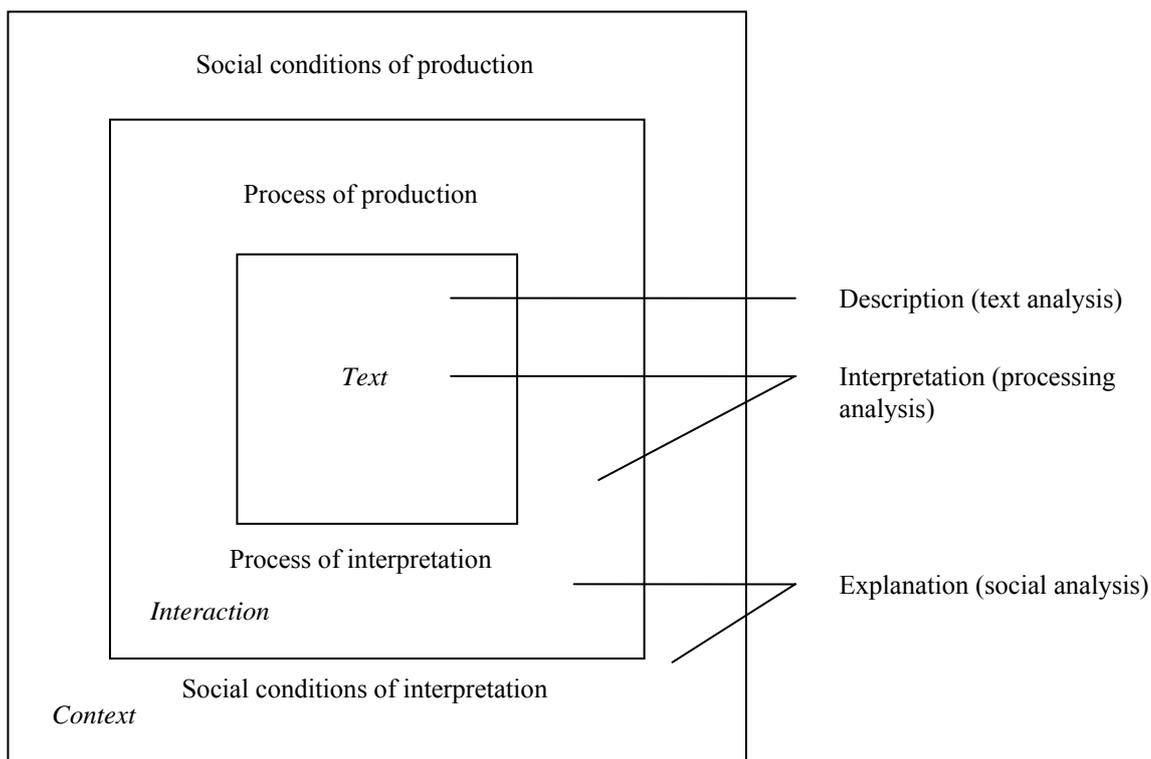
The newest curricula use the common reference levels of CEF, which have been adapted to the Finnish context, and thus set perhaps more realistic goals for the learners in terms of the expected language competences. However, the NS target looms in the background, since the reference scales tend to focus on NSs and NS-NNS contacts and imply that the NS competence is the highest. Interestingly, the 1985 curriculum for the comprehensive school indicates that the role of the English language in international communication should be taken into account (POPS 1985: 76, 86), but the 1994 and 2003/2004 curricula do not seem to give English a special position in terms of its position as an international *lingua franca*. It is pointed out, though, that foreign languages in general prepare pupils for “international co-operation” (e.g. LOPS 1994: 60, my translation). As Ranta points out, language education planners have paid some attention to the international role of the English language, but “the implications of this awareness to the model of English taught at school seem to have gone unnoticed” (2004: 36). Emphasis is still given to NS-NNS communication and NS targets. My analysis of the newest curricula aims at considering whether any room is left in the curricula for teaching ELF.

## 5 Material and methods

My purpose in analysing CEF and the FL parts of the Finnish National Core Curricula is to find out how culture is represented in them and how the ideas relate to teaching ELF. The approach I have taken to the analysis has been influenced by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and more specifically, by the version developed by Norman Fairclough. According to him, “CDA looks to establish connections between properties of texts, features of discourse practice (text production, consumption and distribution), and wider sociocultural practice” (Fairclough 1998: 87). The idea, then, is to concentrate on “the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions” (Fairclough 2001: 21), which is illustrated in Figure 1. In CDA, the analysis itself is therefore divided into the following three stages of description, interpretation and explanation (Fairclough 1998: 97-98; 2001: 20-22): (1) description is the stage that concentrates on the text itself, specifically on the formal characteristics of the text; (2) interpretation turns to “the relationship between text and interaction” (Fairclough 2001: 21) and looks at the text in the contexts of production and interpretation; (3) explanation takes the wider socio-cultural context into account by considering “the relationship between interaction and social context” (Fairclough 2001: 22). The strength of this three-stage analysis is the stage of interaction that is situated between the text and the wider socio-cultural context (see Heikkinen 1999: 66). Since this stage includes information on how the text was produced and how it is interpreted, it provides a practical means for connecting the text that is being analysed to sociocultural context.

Fairclough emphasises that “analysis of texts should not be artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discursive practices within which texts are embedded” (1998: 9). CDA is thus keen on taking context into account in its analyses, which means that the question of contextual relevance cannot be escaped. But how can we determine which contexts are relevant for the purposes of the analysis (Swann 2002)? CDA has been criticised for using such contextual information that does not emerge directly from the material examined (see e.g. van Dijk 1999). The problem is that if context is assumed beforehand and its discursive relevance is not “proved”, contextualisation loses its significance (van Dijk 1999). However, as Heikkinen argues, the idea is not to regard context as the basis of interpretation but rather to realise that “the results of the language analysis can be explained and evaluated in relation to knowledge of the practices of text

**Figure 1. Dimensions of discourse and discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001: 21, 1998: 98)**



production” (1999: 59, my translation). Even though different contexts can be expected to affect the text, they are not used as the basis of interpretation but rather as aspects which possibly explain the text or its features. I think the three stages of Fairclough’s model are very useful in this regard. They reduce problems of combining the text with social context, since the text is seen as a part of social context through the context of interaction. This delimits the number of relevant contexts and creates a link between the text and the social context, which enables the analyst to “prove” the relevance of the context in relation to the text.

My aim, then, is to bridge together the different stages of the CDA framework through analysing discourses. In Fairclough’s approach to CDA, *discourse* is seen as language use which both influences and is influenced by social contexts (Fairclough 1997: 31; 2001: 14-26). Fairclough thus combines a linguistic view of discourse as language use with a Foucaultian idea of discourse as social construction (Fairclough 1997: 31; Pietikäinen 2000: 192). In addition to referring to “discoursal action”, discourse can also refer to “specific instances” (Fairclough 2001: 24). We can therefore talk about different discourses in plural and for instance refer to a pedagogical vs. an economic discourse as different points of view to educational policies (Fairclough 1997:

31; Pietikäinen 2000: 192). These discourses are here described as socially constructed, “relatively consistent and coherent systems of meaning relations” (Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen 1993: 27, my translation). What I aim to do, then, is to work through the three stages of the CDA framework: first, I reflect on the emerging discourses related to (teaching) cultural issues in CEF (chapter 6); in the second stage, I evaluate how these discourses and CEF in general are positioned in relation to (some of the) other language policies in Europe and take a brief look at how it has been received (chapter 7); in the third stage, I delve deeper into the effects CEF has had, and draw out discourses from the newest Finnish National Core Curricula with the aim of focusing on the wider social context by considering such issues as why certain CEF discourses are more pronounced in practice than others (chapter 8). In addition, in order to apply the “critical” aspect of CDA, which Wodak describes as “having distance to the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and a focus on self-reflection as scholars doing research” (2001: 9), the analyses are followed by a discussion (chapter 9) where I reflect on the findings and the study as such.

The first stage of my analysis is concerned with the text itself (i.e. CEF), but instead of concentrating on the formal properties of the text, the focus is on the contents. It is true that Fairclough emphasises linguistic features and suggests that analysts concentrate on “textual form, structure and organization *at all levels*; phonological, grammatical, lexical (vocabulary) and higher levels of textual organization in terms of exchange systems (the distribution of speaking turns), structures of argumentation, and generic (activity type) structures” (1998: 7, my emphasis). In his own example analyses he uses short texts that suit this purpose well (see Fairclough 2001; 1998), but given the extent of CEF it seems more reasonable to concentrate on the contents and discuss some formal properties of the text, especially vocabulary, when support for the analysis is needed. The purpose, then, is to look for different discourses related to (teaching) cultural issues at work in CEF. It is considered how the discourses relate to one another and how they are (re)produced in order to build a coherent picture of how culture is talked about and how it is related to language teaching in CEF. The discourses should reveal what kind of culture teaching/learning CEF promotes, explicitly and implicitly. It is then further considered how the discourses relate to ELF.

A general framework such as CEF, which tries to embrace a number of different aspects related to language education, is very likely to include contradictions, since it needs to be broad enough to become widely accepted, yet specific enough to assert its

aims. It can therefore be expected that contradictions occur between and within the discourses drawn out from CEF as well. With contradictions I refer to inconsistencies and ambiguities within a discourse or between discourses (see Fairclough 1998: 8). A discourse can for instance support two opposing points of view, which counts as a contradiction. It should also be noted that the discourses are allowed to overlap to a certain extent. Since the idea is to analyse CEF from the perspective of (teaching) culture, different aspects of culture and cultural contacts need to be taken into account. Thus, even though one specific aspect of (teaching) culture may form the centre of one specific discourse, the same aspect can still be a part of another discourse which focuses on other cultural aspects. In short, the discourses overlap.

Drawing on the analysis of CEF, the second stage of my analysis concentrates on the contexts of production and interpretation as described in connection with CDA. At this stage, I relate the discourses in stage one to such issues as where and for what purposes CEF was written. Because of the scope of my study, this simply includes a brief look at the role of the Council of Europe in drafting language policies in Europe. CEF is looked at in relation to (some of) these policies and programmes with the purpose of considering the role of CEF in today's Europe (cf. Huhta 2005: 107). I consider which CEF discourses these policies and programmes seem to support. I then move on to the context of interpretation and take a brief look at how CEF has been received in general.

Finally, I focus on the effects of CEF on the FL parts of the newest Finnish National Core Curricula. This includes an analysis of the emerging discourses in the curricula. The purpose is to compare these discourses with the ones in CEF and to find out which CEF discourse or discourses seem to be taken up in the curricula and why that may be so. The discourses drawn out from the curricula are thus used in an effort to explain the prominence of certain CEF discourses, which corresponds to the stage of explanation in my analysis. What follows is a discussion on what the findings suggest in terms of teaching and using ELF.

## 6 Analysis of CEF

In order to systematically analyse the contents of CEF in terms of how culture is represented in the document, I first sought out all forms and combinations of the terms *culture* and *cultural*. A similar search was done for words *mother tongue* and *language* (including abbreviations such as *LI*) and for words ending in *-lingual* to see if culture and language are treated together. To get an idea of the kinds of cultural contacts (i.e. NS-NNS vs. NNS-NNS contacts) taken into account and preferred in CEF, words *non-native* and *native* along with those of *international*, *national* and *contact* were sought out. With the help of these word searches, I was able to discern which parts of CEF pay attention to cultural issues simply by looking at the concentration of the specific words in different parts of the document.

The words were then looked at in their immediate contexts and analysed to see what kinds of discourses emerge in CEF. Together with their contexts, the words were sorted out under the following, partly overlapping, topics: cultural and sociocultural issues, intercultural issues, plurilingual and pluricultural issues, reference levels, competences, CEF objectives and ELF-related issues. This was done to see what kinds of cultural aspects are taken into account and foregrounded in different parts of CEF, as well as how consistently the terms are used in the document. Particular attention was paid to cultural contacts referred to in CEF and the various competences<sup>8</sup> required from a language speaker. It was, for instance, considered how “native” one should be when using a FL, and what the scope and importance of cultural competence is in relation to other competences discussed in CEF. These considerations were further reflected on in view of the explicit objectives of the document. This way I was able to draw out a number of cultural discourses at work in CEF and to understand how the discourses are (re)produced within the document. It was also considered what the discourses reveal about the relationship between language teaching and culture in CEF, as well as how the discourses correspond to ELF. In the following sections, I go through the findings of the word search and explore the contents of CEF by delving into the emerging discourses. The *Guide for Users* is referred to at times to support the analysis.

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<sup>8</sup> See section 6.1 below for a discussion on competences.

## 6.1 Findings of the word search

In CEF, a variety of different words are used when referring to language and/or culture. The words with their respective number of occurrences in CEF is summarised in Table 2. The table clearly shows that some words are preferred to others. Particularly interesting is the frequency of the terms *plurilingual(ism)* (55) and *pluricultural(ism)* (39), especially in relation to the terms *multilingual(ism)* (6) and *multicultural* (2). The former terms refer to the ability of individuals to use different languages and relate to different cultures; the latter ones are used to refer to the coexistence of several languages and cultures in societies and to knowledge of several languages (CEF: 3-4; Guide for Users 2003: 39-40). That the terms *plurilingual(ism)* and *pluricultural* are used notably more often than *multilingual(ism)* and *multicultural* indicates that CEF concentrates on individual learners' needs rather than the needs of societies. In addition, the use of the terms *plurilingual(ism)* and *pluricultural(ism)* suggests that CEF favours learning several languages and learning about several cultures. International communication seems to be supported by the terms *intercultural(ity)* and *international(ly)*. It appears, however, that CEF focuses on NS contacts when we compare the occurrences of the terms *native* (49) and *non-native* (6).

*Culture* is not defined explicitly in CEF and where culture is referred to, it seems to suggest different things:

- (1) cultural characteristics of the foreign **country**<sup>9</sup> (CEF: 135)
- (2) the **various cultures (national, regional, social)** to which that person has gained access (CEF: 6)
- (3) Good knowledge of **the culture of a community** (CEF: 133)
- (4) The features distinctively characteristic of **a particular European society and its culture** may relate, for example, to: 1. Everyday living [...] 2. Living conditions [...] 3. Interpersonal relations [...] 4. Values, beliefs and attitudes [...] 5. Body language [...] 6. Social conventions [...] 7. Ritual behaviour (CEF: 102-103)
- (5) **cuisine and eating habits** of the particular foreign culture. (CEF: 138)

It appears from the above examples that culture can refer to different geographical areas as well as to the inhabitants of those areas (countries/nations and smaller regions/communities). The phrase “a particular European society” in example 4 implies that the word *society* refers to nation states which are considered to include cultural features; yet referring to “the culture of a community” in example 3 suggests that

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<sup>9</sup> I have emphasised key words and phrases in the example sentences.

**Table 2. The number of occurrences of selected terms in CEF**

LANGUAGE	N	CULTURE	N	CONTACT	N
foreign language(s) / FL	74	culture(s)	64	native	49
second language / L2	56	cultural	53	national	19
plurilingual(ism)	55	pluricultural(ism)	39	international(ly)	16
first language / L1	29	sociocultural(ly)	27	contact	13
mother tongue(s)	17	intercultural(ity)	26	non-native	6
bilingual(ism)	7	multicultural	2		
target language(s)	7	crosscultural	0		
monolingual	6				
multilingual(ism)	6				

Note: The figures do not include references and appendices in CEF.

culture can also be connected to smaller communities. It thus seems that CEF takes different “levels” of culture into account. In this sense culture could best be described as referring to different aspects related to living in a particular society or community, such as eating habits or religion, which is implied in examples 4 and 5. What is more, culture is seen to be closely linked with language:

- (6) Language is not only **a major aspect of culture**, but also **a means of access** to cultural manifestations. (CEF: 6)
- (7) in his or her **mother tongue and the associated culture**. (CEF: 43)

Language is considered a part of culture and a way to access culture. Languages are seen to represent certain cultures. It is therefore not surprising that culture is often coupled with language in CEF, a common pair being *plurilingual and pluricultural*. This implies that a culture is seen to be closely linked with NSs of a certain language. It seems, then, that in CEF, culture refers primarily to a set of societal – including language-related – practices of a certain society or community.

Despite the lack of an explicit definition of culture, culture is brought up in all but one chapter in CEF. Chapter 9, which deals with assessment, only talks about *pedagogic culture* and is thus given the least attention in my analysis (cf. Byram 1997). In addition, the reference scales concentrate on describing language skills (divided into listening, speaking, reading and writing) and only rarely mention culture as such. Of course, they do take up issues concerning culture, since the scales describe situations from everyday

life, which the language speaker should be able to cope with in order to reach a particular competence level. It is also pointed out that the mastery level (C2) could be expanded to include ICC, which many language professionals, regardless of their native language, can hope to achieve (CEF: 23; Viitekehys: 47).

CEF includes descriptions of different *competences* which give an indication of what is expected from language speakers. Since these competences are relevant in drawing out the emerging cultural discourses, I take a look at them before moving on to analysing the discourses. Competences are defined as “the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions” (CEF: 9). CEF differentiates between communicative language competences that include linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, and general competences that are less closely related to language. Cultural competence is mainly referred to as pluricultural competence (see section 6.2.3 below), which is often discussed together with plurilingual competence, or as a part of general competences, under which intercultural awareness, and intercultural skills and know-how are treated (see especially section 6.2.2 below). The way the competences are divided reveals that most attention in CEF is given to communicative language competences, which are defined as follows:

- (8) **Linguistic competences** include lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system (CEF: 13)
- (9) **Sociolinguistic competence** is concerned with the knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use. (CEF: 118)
- (10) **Pragmatic competences** are concerned with the functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts), drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges. (CEF: 13)

What is stressed in relation to these competences, in particular to the pragmatic and sociolinguistic ones, is “the major impact of interactions and cultural environments in which such abilities are constructed” (CEF: 13). It is also pointed out that plurilingual competence is a part of pluricultural competence (CEF: 6), which implies that culture is seen to lurk behind every linguistic move. How closely language is considered to represent culture and which culture(s) are in question is nevertheless unclear, especially as it is suggested in relation to plurilingual and pluricultural competence that linguistic and cultural skills may not go hand in hand (CEF: 168). The competences thus imply that there are contradictions in CEF which can be expected to show up in the discourses.

## 6.2 *Emerging discourses*

I have distinguished four, partly contradictory and partly overlapping discourses at work in CEF that are related to cultural issues. These discourses are referred to as (1) target culture discourse, (2) cultural diversity discourse, (3) pluricultural discourse and (4) learner-centeredness discourse.

### 6.2.1 Target culture discourse

The target culture discourse concentrates on NS-NNS contacts and seems to encourage adapting to the target culture represented by the language studied. Following the definition of culture given in section 6.1 above, *target/foreign culture* refers primarily to a set of societal – including language-related – practices of the community or communities where the language studied is spoken. Mostly, target/foreign culture denotes the practices in one specific NS community which seems to correspond to a specific (European) society rather than a smaller community within this society. Thus, we have for instance:

- (11) differences between the learner's culture and **the target culture** (CEF: 160)
- (12) the culture of origin and **the foreign culture** (CEF: 104)

These instances focus on one target culture related to the language studied. They imply NS-NNS communication. What is more, some of the contexts of the terms *culture(s)/cultural/sociocultural(ly)*<sup>10</sup> reveal a tendency to favour adapting to a specific culture. Both knowledge of a particular culture and the skills to act according to the rules of a specific culture are emphasised:

- (13) In some cases, the learning of a foreign language aims above all at **imparting declarative knowledge** to the learner (for example, of the grammar or literature or certain cultural characteristics of the foreign country). (CEF: 135)
- (14) including the **ability to cope with** what is implicit in the discourse of native speakers (CEF: 161)

Moreover, different aspects of culture are taken up such as *politeness conventions* (CEF: 119), *folk wisdom* (CEF: 120), *taboos* (CEF: 11), *literature* (CEF: 56), which appear to

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<sup>10</sup> The terms are not defined explicitly in CEF. They are used in a number of different word combinations and contexts and thus seem to cover all social aspects and practices which may differentiate countries, nations, societies, regions from each other.

support adapting to a specific culture. The target culture discourse is thus (re)produced throughout CEF in the various references to a specific target culture and its features, as well as to NS-NNS communication.

The learners are further expected to develop intercultural skills and know-how between their own and the target culture:

- (15) skills such as intercultural skills (mediating **between the two cultures**), (CEF: 158)
- (16) the ability to bring **the culture of origin and the foreign culture** into relation with each other (CEF: 104)

It seems that the expectations are quite high in terms of how well people are expected to deal with foreign cultures, since the *Guide for Users* (2003: 27) argues that “interculturality [...] is not simply a matter of knowing how the learner’s culture of origin and the target culture relate to each other, but being able to act appropriately in relation to both cultures”. “Acting appropriately” certainly indicates a certain amount of “adapting”.

This does not mean, though, that the learner should become a NS of the language spoken in this specific culture. When talking about the reference levels, it is pointed out that

- (17) Level C2, whilst it has been termed ‘Mastery’, **is not intended to imply native-speaker or near native-speaker competence**. What is intended is to characterise the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language which typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners. (CEF: 36)

Similarly, the *Guide for Users* points out that “Level C1 does not represent an ideal of unattainable perfection, but rather the highest level which it is practical to set as an objective for general language courses and public examinations” (2003: 17). These two examples suggest that the NS model is abandoned in language teaching. Yet, it does seem that the reference scales place NS competence as the highest form of language competence, since level C2 skills are often compared to those of NSs:

- (18) Can hold his/her own in formal discussion [...] **at no disadvantage to native speakers**. (CEF: 78; level C2)

In addition, the scale for sociolinguistic appropriateness expects a level C2 speaker to be able to adapt to the sociolinguistic and sociocultural climate of the target culture:

- (19) Appreciates fully the **sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by native speakers** and can react accordingly. (CEF: 122; level C2)

What is more, only NS-NNS contacts are referred to in the reference scales in general:

- (20) Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with **native speakers** quite possible without strain for either party. (CEF: 24, 27, 129; level B2)
- (21) sustain relationships with **native speakers** (CEF: 35, 74; level B2)
- (22) Can understand any **native speaker** interlocutor (CEF: 75; level C2)

It thus appears that despite the chances for NNS-NNS communication implied in connection with pluriculturalism, such as in the example below:

- (23) experience of relating to **several languages and cultures** (CEF: 134)

CEF works primarily on the NS-NNS axis. It seems that even when cultural diversity is taken into account, what is expected of a FL speaker is “willingness to assume the role of ‘cultural intermediary’ between his or her own and *the* foreign culture and to resolve intercultural misunderstanding and conflict” (CEF: 161, my emphasis). The FL speaker is the one who adapts, both in terms of language and culture.

In terms of English teaching, the target culture discourse could be characterised as the traditional EFL approach which aims at teaching the language and (about) the culture(s) of those who speak the language natively. Which parts of a native culture and which linguistic standards to choose is left open. In addition, the purpose would be to develop skills to move between one’s own and the foreign culture, which can be seen as a step towards developing ICC. Yet, it is expected that the FL speaker acts in a way that suits the NSs, which suggests that although there are two parties in a conversation, only one, the FL speaker, is to adapt to the interlocutor’s culture.

### 6.2.2 Cultural diversity discourse

In the cultural diversity discourse, emphasis is laid on the diversity between and within cultures:

- (24) the rich heritage of **diverse languages and cultures** in Europe (CEF: 2)
- (25) regional **cultures** (CEF: 103)
- (26) No European language communities are entirely homogenous. Different regions have their **peculiarities in language and culture**. (CEF: 121)

This diversity is seen to require an open attitude towards different cultures and a willingness to develop one’s own cultural identity. The idea is to promote mutual

understanding through increased intercultural awareness. The definitions for *intercultural awareness* and *skills and know-how* reveal that what is emphasised most in CEF is the ability to move between two worlds, one's own and the target culture (see 6.2.1), which does not leave much room for cultural diversity as such:

- (27) Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) **between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community'** produce an intercultural awareness. (CEF: 103)
- (28) [intercultural skills and know-how are defined as] the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary **between one's own culture and the foreign culture** and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations (CEF: 105)

It should be noted, though, that despite the emphasis on moving between two cultures, diversity is taken into account on regional and social level, and intercultural awareness is considered to be "enriched" by other cultures:

- (29) It is, of course, important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of **regional and social diversity** in both worlds. It is also **enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures** than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2. (CEF: 103)

In addition, there are some instances in CEF, which do not point at a specific target culture and can be understood to include international communication:

- (30) developing the ability of Europeans to communicate with each other **across linguistic and cultural boundaries** (CEF: 3)
- (31) cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact **with those from other cultures** (CEF: 104)

Moreover, in connection with plurilingual and pluricultural competence, emphasis is laid on the "experience of relating to several languages and cultures" (CEF: 134). It thus appears that there are two different aims at work here: the first one highlighting the target culture and the second highlighting international co-operation.

In the cultural diversity discourse, the ability to use different languages and relate to different cultures is considered a solution to effective (international) co-operation:

- (32) it is only **through a better knowledge of European modern languages** that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues (CEF: 2)

However, it appears from the above example that CEF focuses on cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe, which is understandable considering that the document is

called the *Common European Framework*; yet, concentrating on intra-European diversity is not enough in terms of global communication.

Despite the apparent focus on Europe, the cultural diversity discourse certainly supports the use of different languages and relating to different cultures. A simple comparison of how often the terms (numbers given in parentheses) *monolingual* (6), *bilingual(ism)* (7), *multilingual(ism)* (6) and *plurilingual(ism)* (55) are used in CEF suggests that plurilingualism is given most attention, which further implies that one of the main objectives of CEF is to promote learning several languages:

- (33) the overall objective of **promoting plurilingualism and linguistic diversity** (CEF: 169)

It is further pointed out that

- (34) the teaching and learning of any one language should also be examined **in conjunction with the provision for other languages** in the education system **and the paths which learners might choose** to follow in the long term in their efforts to develop a variety of language skills. (CEF: 169)

School curricula should thus enable learners to choose several languages in the course of their school life. Curricula should also “avoid unnecessary repetition and [...] not just be limited to a curriculum for each language taken in isolation” (CEF: 169). Since the cultural diversity discourse consequently includes elements of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, it could perhaps be considered a part of pluricultural discourse. However, the discourse may be useful to keep as a separate discourse because it pays special attention to (intra-European) linguistic and cultural diversity.

### 6.2.3 Pluricultural discourse

Because the examples given to support the pluricultural discourse include a number of confusing key terms – specifically *competence*, *competent*, *proficiency* and *proficient*, but also *knowledge*, *skills* and *abilities* – I take a look at what these terms mean in CEF before going on to the details of this discourse. As pointed out earlier, the term *competence* refers to “the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions” (CEF: 9), where *knowledge* refers to declarative knowledge and *skills* to the ability to act accordingly (CEF: 11). The term *abilities* seems to be interchangeable with *skills*, but no explicit definition is given. In contrast to the all-

encompassing *competence*, the term *proficiency* refers to the different stages of the common reference levels and is often used in combination with the word *language*:

- (35) in discussing **scales of language proficiency** (CEF: 37)
- (36) the **level of proficiency in the languages making up plurilingual competence** varies (CEF: 173)

It thus seems that proficiency is treated as a part of competence. Competence is used to refer to all the elements that are essential for using language, and proficiency refers to how efficiently one can use language (see Guide for Users 2003: 14). For instance, level C in the reference scales is called “Proficient User”. The level is further divided into C1 “Effective Operational Proficiency” and C2 “Mastery” (CEF: 23). In addition, the level C2 is considered the highest level of language proficiency (*ibid.*). However, it seems that the term *competent* is also used to refer to proficiency in a language:

- (37) a fully **competent** user of a language (CEF: 131)
- (38) young people **competent** in more than two languages (CEF: 134)

It appears that someone who is a competent or proficient user of a language is on level C. Then again, someone with partial competence in a language has lower proficiency in at least some aspects of the language compared to a fully competent or proficient user.

The pluricultural discourse is built around the objectives of plurilingual and pluricultural competence, which support the diversity of languages and cultures. The terms *multilingual* and *multicultural* are used in reference to societies in which different languages and cultures coexist, and to refer to knowledge of several languages (CEF: 3-4; Guide for Users 2003: 39-40). The terms *plurilingual* and *pluricultural*, in contrast, emphasise the ability of individuals to use different languages and relate to different cultures. These language and cultural competences form a common repertoire that can be drawn on in intercultural encounters:

- (39) Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has **proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures.** (CEF: 168)

The pluricultural discourse suggests that partial competences should be acknowledged as a part of a person’s linguistic and cultural repertoire, which can therefore include differing degrees of competence in different languages as well as differing degrees of cultural competence:

- (40) Plurilingual and pluricultural competence is generally **uneven** in one or more ways (CEF: 133)
- (41) **partial competence** [...] is not a matter of being satisfied, for reasons of principle or pragmatism, with the development of a limited or compartmentalised mastery of a foreign language by a learner, but rather of seeing this proficiency, imperfect at a given moment, **as forming part of a plurilingual competence which it enriches.** (CEF: 135)

In addition, it is suggested that there may not be “links between the development of abilities concerned with relating to other cultures and the development of linguistic communicative proficiency” (CEF: 168). The pluricultural discourse thus accepts the idea of a language speaker’s repertoire of differing plurilingual and pluricultural competences which can be drawn on in cross-cultural encounters.

However, the choice of the word *imperfect* in example 41 above is rather odd (be it the only occurrence of the word in the whole document). Since the idea of plurilingualism is to accept all linguistic competences as a part of a person’s plurilingual repertoire, one would expect that partial competences would not be treated as “imperfect”. The choice of the word seems to imply that taking partial competences into account loosens the criteria of acceptable achievement, but the ideal NS is still considered the highest target. What seems to be the case in other parts of CEF contributing to the pluricultural discourse, though, is that instead of representing a language *learner’s* “imperfect” language learning, partial competences are seen to contribute to the language *user’s* plurilingual competence. It appears, for instance, that the discourse takes successful communication rather than “perfect” language skills as its goal, since it hints at the possibility of participants in an interaction communicating with each other using different languages or alternating between two or more languages:

- (42) **partners may switch from one language or dialect to another**, exploiting the ability of each **to express themselves in one language and to understand the other**; or a person may **call upon the knowledge of a number of languages** to make sense of a text, written or even spoken, in a previously ‘unknown’ language, recognising words from a common international store in a new guise. (CEF: 4)
- (43) It is possible to **code switch** during the message, to resort to bilingual forms of speech. (CEF: 134)

It seems that the ideal NS model in language teaching is here replaced with a model of an interculturally competent speaker, since the aim appears to be to develop a repertoire of language and cultural skills that can be drawn on in different (inter)cultural encounters where (successful) communication is what matters most. Similarly,

- (44) the aim of language education 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.** (CEF: 5)

The pluricultural discourse thus draws a picture of an “ideal” situation, where people would understand and accept linguistic and cultural diversity, and acknowledge partial competences as the resources to draw on in cross-cultural encounters. This discourse partly questions the NS model in language teaching, and like the cultural diversity discourse, promotes plurality in language teaching.

Yet, it appears that partial competences are to be viewed in relation to the reference scales (see CEF: 135-136), which implies that the pluricultural discourse supports the use of these scales. The scales include descriptions of different competence levels and can thus be used to rate one’s own (partial) competences in different languages. However, the reference scales refer to NS-NNS contacts only:

- (45) Can **sustain relationships with native speakers** without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to **behave other than they would with a native speaker.** (CEF: 76; level B2)

Otherwise, the pluricultural discourse seems to support all kinds of contacts, since the aim is to develop a repertoire of different languages which can be used in any type of intercultural communication. It could therefore be argued that there are two discourses within pluricultural discourse, a NS-NNS one and an international discourse, of which the latter is more prominent.

#### 6.2.4 Learner-centeredness discourse

The learner-centeredness discourse builds up from the numerous suggestions that the users of CEF are asked to think about in terms of what the learners need to learn. These include, for instance, the following:

- (46) What **knowledge** of the world or of another culture will they [the learners] need to call on? (CEF: 44)
- (47) what **new experience and knowledge** of social life in his/her community as well as in the target community the learner will need to acquire in order to meet the requirements of L2 communication (CEF: 104)
- (48) what **cultural intermediary roles and functions** the learner will need/be equipped/be required to fulfil (CEF: 105)
- (49) what types of objectives appear best suited to learners [...] at a particular point in the development of a **plurilingual and pluricultural competence** (CEF: 176)

This discourse does not seem to favour any specific types of cultural contacts; rather it leaves final decision-making to local educators, who are expected to adapt their teaching to the *needs* of their students:

- (50) basing language teaching and learning on the **needs**, motivations, characteristics and resources **of learners** (CEF: 3)

Similar emphasis can be found in the *Guide for Users* as well. It is argued that teaching should “depend entirely upon a full appreciation of the learning/teaching situation and above all upon the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of the learners and other parties concerned” (Guide for Users 2003: 20).

An important part of the learner-centeredness discourse is self-assessment, which is taken up in different parts of CEF for instance in an introduction to the language portfolio (CEF: 20) and in the form of a self-assessment grid, which includes “Can Do” statements for different areas of language competence (CEF: 26-27):

- (51) **I can use** simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know. (CEF: 26; level A1, spoken production)
- (52) **I can understand** texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. **I can understand** the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters. (CEF: 26; level B1, reading)

It is argued in CEF that “[t]he main potential for self-assessment [...] is in its use as a tool for motivation and awareness raising: helping learners to appreciate their strengths, recognise their weaknesses and orient their learning more effectively” (CEF: 192). In this sense, self-assessment can be considered a part of a more general goal of guiding students towards responsibility and independence in their language learning. What is problematic in terms of cultural issues, though, is that there are no scales in CEF for ICC. In addition, chapter 9 of CEF, which deals with assessment, pays hardly any attention to cultural issues. Even though Byram (2000; 1997) has written about developing criteria for teaching and assessing ICC, specifically referring to the lack of criteria in CEF, it seems that his work has gone largely unnoticed in terms of adapting the reference scales in practice. For instance the Finnish National Core Curricula analysed in chapter 8 below only apply the scales for language competence. There is therefore a risk that if language teaching and (self-)assessment are based on the scales, cultural issues will be ignored. It seems, however, that the learner-centeredness

discourse is the most flexible one in terms of accepting different teaching and learning objectives, including those of ELF.

### ***6.3 Culture and language teaching/learning in CEF***

In CEF, culture seems primarily to refer to a set of societal practices which include language. That is, language is regarded as a part of culture and the two are mainly treated as closely intertwined with the words *language* and *culture* often paired together:

- (53) The learner of **a second or foreign language and culture** does not cease to be competent in his or her **mother tongue and the associated culture** (CEF: 43)

Yet, the interconnectedness of language and culture is questioned in CEF when it is suggested in relation to plurilingual and pluricultural competence that linguistic and cultural skills may develop separately. In addition, CEF places intercultural issues under general competences that are considered less closely related to language than communicative language competences (i.e. linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences). This implies that learning a language does not equal learning to deal with the cultural features of the communities where the language is spoken. There thus seem to be contradictions in CEF as to the relationship between language and culture.

It appears that the target culture discourse follows the path of combining language with a specific culture more than the other discourses. Its focus on “the target culture” suggests that a language is connected to a specific culture, which consequently delimits the possibility of concentrating on several target cultures in teaching or even on diversity within the one target culture. The discourse builds on NS-NNS contacts, since it draws on the reference scales which concentrate on these contacts, and since it takes up intercultural communicative competence in the form of mediating between one’s own and the “other” culture:

- (54) sustain relationships with **native speakers** (CEF: 35, 74; level B2)  
 (55) mediating **between the two cultures** (CEF: 158)

The discourse seems to support the traditional EFL approach to language teaching where languages are taught in order to be able to communicate with NSs of the language. What is more, the discourse seems to suggest that FL speakers should learn to

adapt to the foreign culture(s) associated with the language in question. It thus appears that the target culture discourse supports such teaching in language classes that aims at adopting (near-)native-like skills on all aspects of language as well as in terms of cultural competence. For instance, the highest level of the reference scales (i.e. C2) constantly refers to NSs and NS competence, which implies that the ideal NS model is still intact in the target culture discourse:

- (56) at no disadvantage to **native speakers** (CEF: 78, 82; level C2)
- (57) Has a good command of **idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms** with awareness of connotative levels of meaning. Appreciates fully the **sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by native speakers** and can react accordingly. (CEF: 122; level C2)

The examples above also show that a FL speaker on level C2 is supposed to understand sociocultural issues and be able to react appropriately, again in relation to NSs and their culture.

The cultural diversity discourse partly breaks away from NS-NNS contacts, since it takes international communication into account:

- (58) communicate with each other **across linguistic and cultural boundaries** (CEF: 3)

Nonetheless, the discourse seems to consider it more likely that FL speakers communicate with NSs rather than with other NNSs, since it concentrates on the ability to mediate between two cultures, as was the case with the target culture discourse. The cultural diversity and the target culture discourses therefore overlap in the sense of concentrating on NS-NNS contacts. Since different aspects of culture and cultural contacts were taken into account to draw out the discourses in CEF, some of these cultural aspects may occur in more than one discourse and cause overlap. Yet, the discourses represent different perspectives on (teaching) culture, and despite the overlapping parts, form entities of their own.

Thus, although the target culture discourse and the cultural diversity discourse overlap, the cultural diversity discourse takes diversity between and within cultures as its starting point and consequently promotes learning many languages as well as learning about and learning to deal with a number of different cultures, which is not the case with the target culture discourse. Since the cultural diversity discourse also pays attention to international co-operation, it seems to have a broader idea of why one should learn languages and relate to different cultures than the target culture discourse:

rather than adapting to a specific society, we can learn languages for cross-cultural communication. The cultural diversity discourse therefore implies that international cooperation becomes possible because people can speak a number of different languages and relate to a number of different cultures. It seems, though, that the diversity of cultures suggested in the cultural diversity discourse is limited to intra-European diversity. In terms of language teaching, then, the cultural diversity discourse suggests that NS-NNS contacts and specific target cultures remain the focus of attention. However, cultural diversity, especially diversity between and within European cultures should be taken into account.

While the cultural diversity discourse still largely holds on to NS-NNS contacts, the pluricultural discourse takes all kinds of contacts into account. It suggests that learners develop a repertoire of language and cultural skills that can be drawn on in different intercultural encounters. All bits and pieces of language and cultural competence may at some point prove useful. The pluricultural discourse encourages language users to make use of all of their linguistic and cultural competences to make communication work:

- (59) a person may call upon the **knowledge of a number of languages** to make sense of a text, written or even spoken (CEF: 4).

The cultural diversity discourse and the pluricultural discourse overlap in the sense that they both emphasise learning a number of different languages and relating to different cultures, but the pluricultural discourse seems to go further in accepting the use of the complete repertoire of one's plurilingual and pluricultural competence in cross-cultural encounters. It no longer suggests NS-NNS contacts, but rather communication where all the languages and cultures known to the participants in an interaction can be used.

It is further pointed out in the pluricultural discourse that linguistic and cultural competences may not go hand in hand. It is therefore considered possible to acquire a certain amount of language skills without acquiring a similar amount of cultural skills and vice versa. This suggests that languages and cultures may not be as intertwined as is implied for instance in the target culture discourse. However, even the pluricultural discourse includes some references to NS-NNS contacts and consequently overlaps with the target culture discourse in this regard: the emphasis of the pluricultural discourse on partial competences seems to allude to the use of the reference scales which focus on NSs.

Despite this, the pluricultural discourse can be said to concentrate on developing plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. This implies that a number of different languages and cultures are to be taken into account in language teaching, and that teaching should accept all linguistic and cultural competences as forming a common repertoire to be used in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the pluricultural discourse seems to include elements that call into question the ideal NS model in that it lays emphasis on communication with plurilingual and pluricultural competence seen as a solution to international communication. This seems to call for a rethinking of the range of languages offered in school curricula, as well as a rethinking of how the languages are offered in them and which cultures may be relevant in teaching the languages.

It may be useful to draw on the learner-centeredness discourse here, which puts the learners' needs first. The important question in terms of teaching culture would be: Will the learners use the language primarily with NSs or with other NNSs? The answer to this question would determine how culture should be taught. The learner-centeredness discourse provides us with the possibility of questioning the interconnectedness of a language and a specific culture and implies that it may not always be necessary for the learners to acquaint themselves with the NSs' cultures.

#### ***6.4 How do the discourses relate to ELF?***

As the above discussion shows, the contradictions between (and sometimes within) the discourses are primarily related to the following: (1) NS-NNS contacts vs. all contacts, (2) one specific target culture vs. diversity and plurality of cultures and (3) a close connection between a specific language and a specific culture vs. a loose connection. The target culture discourse combines NS-NNS contacts with one specific culture intertwined with a specific language; whereas the cultural diversity discourse mainly supports NS-NNS contacts, but lays emphasis on the diversity and plurality of cultures, which implies that the discourse may not connect languages to specific cultures as strongly as the target culture discourse. The pluricultural discourse takes all contacts as well as the diversity and plurality of cultures into account and moves away from a close paring of languages with specific cultures. Since the learner-centeredness discourse places learners' needs at its centre, it depends on the learners which aspects should be taken up in teaching.

The findings suggest that CEF pays a lot of attention to NS-NNS contacts, although it also supports international co-operation and consequently opens up the possibilities for NNS-NNS communication and ELF. In terms of ELF, NNS-NNS contacts imply that NNS accents and the various cultural backgrounds of the speakers in international settings are taken into account when teaching the language. An ELF approach thus requires that attention be given to cultural diversity and ICC. The NS model in language teaching should be replaced by that of an interculturally competent language speaker.

Keeping these features in mind, it becomes obvious that the target culture discourse with its emphasis on “the target culture” the learner is supposed to adapt to, does not leave any room for ELF. What is more, the reference level scales that the discourse makes use of tend to refer to NSs and compare the learner’s language skills to those of NSs. This implies that the NS model is intact in this discourse. The target culture discourse therefore remains on the NS-NNS axis, which is too narrow for ELF.

The cultural diversity discourse, in contrast, concentrates on cultural diversity, which is a useful feature for ELF. However, the diversity tends to be intra-European, which is too limited in terms of the global spread of English. Moreover, the intercultural skills that are taken into account in the cultural diversity discourse focus on moving between two cultures, one’s own and the “other”. In ELF situations, however, there is more than one target culture that must be kept in mind. It thus seems that despite some of the promising qualities of the cultural diversity discourse, the discourse does not support ELF, but rather remains on the NS-NNS axis.

This axis is broken by the pluricultural discourse, which takes all contacts into account and stresses communication, both of which are important aspects for ELF. The pluricultural discourse takes a step towards the ability to move between one’s own and *several* other cultures rather than “the target culture(s)”, again a crucial feature for ELF. Moreover, the emphasis on communication together with the aim of developing a linguistic and cultural repertoire to be used in intercultural settings implies that the NS model in language teaching is at least partly questioned. It is true, though, that the discourse seems to accept the use of the reference scales to assess partial competences, which means that there is a hint of NS-NNS thinking in the pluricultural discourse as well. However, the discourse includes features that support an ELF approach.

Interestingly, though, there is a passage in CEF that reads:

- (60) [m]ultilingualism may be attained by [...] **reducing the dominant position of English** in international communication. (CEF: 4)

This seems to indicate that English is seen as a threat to linguistic plurality. The cultural diversity discourse and even the pluricultural discourse would indeed rather see multiple languages at work than a single *lingua franca*, even in international encounters. It appears that the difficulty of combining effective international communication and plurilingualism is not taken into account, at least not explicitly. Plurilingualism may not facilitate communication if participants in an encounter have learned different languages. And it is hardly realistic to expect people to learn (parts of) all or even most of the, let us say, European languages, no matter how important linguistic and cultural diversity is considered to be. But even if CEF might at some points frown at the idea of accepting a *lingua franca*, the pluricultural discourse seems to allow for language teaching to move away from NS-NNS thinking.

A look at the learner-centeredness discourse further reveals that CEF lays a lot of emphasis on learner-centeredness – thus leaving the ultimate choices to educators and of course, to learners themselves. Since the learner-centeredness discourse takes the learners needs as its starting point, this discourse definitely carries the possibility of supporting ELF. In fact, the learner-centeredness discourse seems to be the most flexible one in terms of ELF, considering that the English language is used so extensively in international communication. If learners need to learn how to encounter people who come from different backgrounds and have different mother tongues, and if they will use English primarily in international encounters, they need ELF. This suggests for instance that a competent ELF user is taken as a model in language teaching (see section 2.4 above) and that learners are exposed to different NNS English accents. In terms of whether NS cultures are relevant in teaching, we need to think about the learners' needs to learn to encounter NSs of English and the settings where they are likely to meet these NSs. For instance, if the NSs are simply a part of the international community, how important is it to concentrate on the NS cultures?

To sum up, it seems that CEF includes some elements that can support an ELF approach. The target culture and the cultural diversity discourses do not seem to accept ELF, since they focus on NS-NNS contacts, and moving between two cultures. Nevertheless, the pluricultural discourse takes up the ability to move between several cultures and implies that the NS model can be abandoned in language teaching. Both are crucial issues in terms of ELF. And even though the pluricultural discourse may prefer

using a number of different languages in international communication, this does not have to contradict using a *lingua franca* in certain situations (see section 9.2 below for a discussion on this). Yet, the most obvious support for ELF comes from the learner-centeredness discourse, provided that the learners will use English primarily in cross-cultural settings.

## 7 CEF in context

This chapter aims at placing CEF in the contexts of production and interpretation. I start by taking a look at the context of production by considering CEF among other language policies of the Council of Europe (CoE). This includes an introduction to the role of the CoE in drafting language policies in Europe as well as an examination of some of the policies and programmes of this institution. CEF is then considered among these policies and programmes, which are further reflected on in view of ELF. In addition, I briefly consider why CEF contains somewhat contradictory discourses. After that, I move on to take a look at the context of interpretation, which consists of reflecting how CEF has been received in general.

### *7.1 Language policies and programmes of the Council of Europe*

Various instances affect European language education policies. Individual states have a primary role in forming their own policies, but institutions of the EU and the CoE provide pan-European guidelines for language education, which are often taken up by individual states (Huhta 2005: 100). According to Huhta, the European language policy is affected by two opposing forces: “on the one hand, the increasingly international industry and working life require a common language. On the other hand, the aim is to strengthen the richness of European cultures and languages, and support diversity” (2005: 112, my translation). Huhta (ibid.) continues by arguing that the EU and the CoE have supported both approaches, the EU more often from the economic point of view and the CoE from the point of view of plurilingualism. This paradox is apparent in the aims of CEF as well, whose purpose summed up in the *Guide for Users* (2003: 13) reads: “to improve communication whilst maintaining and encouraging diversity”.

Within the EU, the body working in the field of education is the European Commission. Its department, Directorate-General for Education and Culture, aims to provide mechanisms for implementing educational policies of the EU (European Commission web-site). These include EU funding programmes related to education, training and youth, which for instance are supposed to increase opportunities to learn abroad. Socrates and Erasmus exchange programmes are an example of these. The

education policies also contain action plans and work programmes, which concentrate on various issues concerning education, such as new technologies in education.

An even wider body operating in the educational field in Europe is the CoE with its forty-six<sup>11</sup> member states. The European Commission co-operates closely with the CoE in many of its activities related to language education policies, which means that the CoE plays a significant role in developing language policies and actions in Europe (Huhta 2005: 101) – even if its policies and actions are guidelines rather than directives. Since CEF is a CoE project, I concentrate on the CoE language education policies.

The CoE, founded in 1949, is an intergovernmental organisation (Huhta 2005: 100). It

covers all major issues facing European society with the exception of defence. Its work programme includes the following fields of activity: human rights, media, legal co-operation, social and economic questions, health, *education*, culture, heritage, sport, youth, local and regional government, and environment” (*Guide for Users* 2003: 4, my emphasis).

The CoE thus deals with a very broad spectrum of activities, one of which is education. In terms of language education, the CoE has accepted recommendations for language and culture policies, which bind its member states (Huhta 2005: 100). Such recommendations relate, for instance, to regional and minority languages, modern languages, directions for language policies and linguistic diversity (*ibid.*). In addition, the CoE has for more than three decades published documents related to language learning, use and skills (Huhta 2005: 101).

The CoE web-site reveals that the language education policies of the CoE aim to promote the following:

- PLURILINGUALISM: all are entitled to develop a degree of communicative ability in a number of languages over their lifetime in accordance with their needs
- LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: Europe is multilingual and all its languages are equally valuable modes of communication and expressions of identity [...]
- MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING: the opportunity to learn other languages is an essential condition for intercultural communication and acceptance of cultural differences

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<sup>11</sup> The member states (June 2006) are Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom (CoE Member states).

- DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: participation in democratic and social processes in multilingual societies is facilitated by the plurilingual competence of individuals
- SOCIAL COHESION: equality of opportunity for personal development, education, employment, mobility, access to information and cultural enrichment depends on access to language learning throughout life (LPD web-site).

It appears that plurilingualism is the key issue behind all the above aims. Plurilingualism is considered to facilitate understanding between Europeans with different mother tongues as well as to promote democracy and social cohesion. Plurilingualism is taken up as “a fundamental principle” in the *Guide for Development* (2003: 15, 30) as well.

The division responsible for language educational activities of the CoE is the Language Policy Division situated in Strasbourg, France. The Language Policy Division carries out intergovernmental medium-term programmes concentrating on policy development. Following the aims of the CoE language education policies, the division “is responsible for designing and implementing initiatives for the development and analysis of language education policies aimed at promoting linguistic diversity and plurilingualism” (LPD web-site). The division’s work is complemented by that of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, Austria, which runs international language education projects primarily targeted at experts in the language field. “These essentially aim to raise awareness on critical issues, provide training to language education practitioners and facilitate networks of specialists” (LPD web-site; see also ECML web-site). ECML is currently running its second medium-term programme called “Languages for social cohesion: language education in a multilingual and multicultural Europe”, which comprises 22 individual projects carried out between the years 2004 and 2007 (ECML web-site).

The Language Policy Division’s work includes various projects in the fields of language education and language policies, both on national and international level. These projects are here given a closer look in order to situate CEF in the contexts of the language policies supported by the CoE. I take a look at the key projects introduced at the Language Policy Division’s web-site (LPD web-site), which provides summaries of the projects as well as links to further information. The following paragraphs dealing with the Language Policy Division’s work mainly draw on the contents of this web-site. Table 3 sums up the key projects undertaken by the Language Policy Division to achieve the aims of the CoE.

**Table 3. Programmes of the Language Policy Division of the CoE**

<b>Programmes and efforts</b>	<b>What they entail</b>
<i>Guide for the development of Language Education Policies in Europe</i> , accompanied by a series of thematic studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides a means to formulate language policies of individual countries along the lines of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity</li> <li>• targeted at policy deciders</li> </ul>
Language Education Policy Profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CoE provides expert assistance to member states who wish to develop their language education policies</li> <li>• includes analysis and reflection of current language education policies along with suggestions for development</li> </ul>
<i>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a common core for language education across Europe</li> <li>• aims at facilitating “transparency and comparability in the provision of language education and qualifications”</li> </ul>
<i>Manual for relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages</i> and illustrations of levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps examination providers in relating their certificates to CEF</li> <li>• includes illustrative material for a number of languages</li> </ul>
Reference level descriptions for national or regional languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• descriptions of language competence in individual languages corresponding to the levels in CEF</li> </ul>
European Language Portfolio (ELP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a personal document to reflect on and to keep a record of one’s language and cultural skills</li> </ul>
European Day of Languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a day to celebrate linguistic diversity and plurilingualism in Europe</li> <li>• held each year on 26<sup>th</sup> September</li> </ul>
Medium-term Programme 2006-2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a programme outlining the present projects of the CoE</li> </ul>

Source: LPD web-site

As Table 3 shows, the projects include, among other things, drawing up documents, providing expert assistance and raising people's awareness on language diversity. The first two programmes or efforts of the CoE listed in Table 3 suggest that the Language Policy Division supports national language policies. The division has arranged numerous conferences and workshops to discuss language policies (Huhta 2005: 108; Takala and Kaftandjieva 2004: 46), it offers assistance for member states to reflect on their language policies, and publishes documents and studies which are drawn up to provide common guidelines for language policies and education. The division thus has a twofold aim in that it both prepares common policy guidelines and assists member states in developing their own policies. This is interesting, since the aims can appear to be opposed to each other. Of course, given that member states invite the Language Policy Division to assess and develop their language policies, it is very likely that the common guidelines are used as a point of comparison in developing the national policies.

Indeed, the *Guide for Development* is the key document targeted at policy deciders who are responsible for organising language teaching in member states. The document is supposed to provide a means to formulate language policies along the lines of plurilingualism and linguistic diversity, the two main aims of the CoE. Its purpose is to "serve as a reference document" (LPD web-site) and provide common principles for the development of Language Education Policy Profiles drawn up for individual countries. The Language Education Policy Profiles entail a process of analysis of current language policies in a specific country or region with suggestions for further development. At the request of national or regional authorities, the CoE provides assistance in this process. The *Guide for Development* is considered "one of the key documents" (LPD web-site) in the policy development process and it is supplemented with a series of thematic studies which elaborate on key issues from the document.

The *Guide for Development* also includes a discussion on ELF. The document suggests that English could be taught as a *lingua franca* "if the contents of teaching were culturally neutralised (with no relation to English-speaking societies) and the linguistic reference model were one of the varieties of international English" (Guide for Development 2003: 28). The document thus acknowledges the role of English as a global language, but it seems that at the same time English is considered a threat to European plurilingualism. It is stressed that the "[t]eaching of English should be conceived so as to stimulate speakers' plurilingualism and not block its later

development in the name of a monolingual ideology” (ibid.). It appears that the fear of the ever-spreading English language is connected to the fear that Europeans will be satisfied with learning only English and consequently cannot achieve deeper understanding of the linguistic and cultural richness of the continent (see Huhta 2005: 104). Apparently the idea is that after having learned a language and acquainted themselves with the “associated” culture, Europeans should be able to live in another European country other than their own, which requires different kind of language and cultural competence than using a language in international settings.

Table 3 indicates that in addition to supporting national language policies, the Language Policy Division concentrates on projects related to CEF (LPD web-site). Attention is given to CEF itself, and the document is said to provide a common basis for language education across Europe. As a reference document, it is supposed to facilitate international comparison of language skills and certificates. Reference levels included in CEF play a central part in the comparison process, and they seem to be given most attention in terms of developing CEF. The *Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference* (from now on *Manual*) aims at helping examination providers to link assessment to the reference levels, which is supposed to increase transparency and comparability of language competences. The Language Policy Division is also developing material illustrating these levels in different languages to ensure that the levels are interpreted in the same way by different language professionals. In addition, Reference Level Descriptions for national and regional languages are being developed. These include detailed descriptions of language competence for individual languages, consistent with the six levels of the CEF. Such descriptions are thought to ease the planning of language courses as well as assessment. It seems, though, that these efforts leave out ICC.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a CoE project which is given some space in CEF. The ELP is “a personal document in which language learners can record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences” (LPD web-site). It consists of three parts: a *Language passport* with descriptions of one’s language skills, a *Language biography* with experiences of using each language, and a *Dossier* with examples of personal work. The portfolio models, which differ according to countries and educational contexts, are accredited by a European Validation Committee (LPD web-site). The ELP is supposed to increase learners’ awareness of their own learning and guide them towards taking more responsibility for it.

The European Day of Languages aims to raise awareness of different languages in Europe in order to diversify the array of languages learnt and to promote linguistic and cultural diversity of the continent. In addition, it aims at supporting lifelong language learning. These objectives indicate the importance of plurilingualism as well as the responsibility of each individual citizen to expand his or her language (and cultural) skills.

The Language Policy Division's Medium-term Programme 2006-2009, only briefly introduced in Table 3, gives us an indication of the current and future work of the CoE. It also reveals which policies and documents are currently being revised. The programme is called "Language Policies for Democratic Citizenship and Social Inclusion" and it consists of four different projects: (1) Policies and standards in languages of education, (2) Language Education Policy Profiles, (3) European proficiency standards for transparency and quality and (4) European Language Portfolio (ELP) (LPD-web-site). The purpose of the *first* project is to support "equal opportunities for successful learning" (ibid.). The project concentrates on languages of school instruction, and the idea is to take measures in order to provide pupils with sufficient competence in those languages. The *second* project refers to the Language Education Policy Profile activity of the CoE referred to above. The *third* project aims at assisting examination providers in relating their language examinations to CEF. This includes developing the *Manual* as well as drawing up illustrative material in individual languages corresponding to the levels defined in CEF. The purpose is to make assessment more transparent and comparable across Europe. The third project also includes developing a common curriculum framework for Romani, and seeks to promote understanding between decision makers in terms of issues related to language requirements for adult migrants who wish to obtain a residence permit or citizenship. The latter emphasis seems to indicate such language policy that combines a specific language to a specific national culture. The *fourth* project aims at improving the quality and promoting the use of ELPs.

FL teaching/learning is explicitly touched upon in the three latter projects of the Medium-term Programme. The first project, which concentrates on the languages of education, pays attention to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils to succeed in school education, i.e. primary and secondary education. This means supporting pupils in their L1 or L2 development, depending on the language(s) of instruction. However, the project could easily be expanded to include FL education if we take into account that

many people will study in a FL at some point in their lives. Higher education in many European countries expects that students at least read a FL, mostly English, well enough to tackle the required readings. Finland is a case in point (see Taavitsainen and Pahta 2003).

Language Education Policy Profiles of the second project can have a major influence on national language policies and thus further affect FL teaching. Encouraging the use of ELPs, as in the fourth project, directly influences the way language competences are documented. ELPs are increasingly adopted in language teaching as a part of assessment and as a way to motivate language learning (see Kohonen 2004 on Finnish experiences on using ELPs). In addition, project three shows that the CoE has started to publish documents which are to help examination providers in relating language examinations to CEF. This promotes transparency and comparability of language competences and influences language teaching, since the reference level descriptions serve as a basis for assessment. The reference levels can also be seen to direct language teaching. They divide language competence into listening, speaking, reading and writing, and describe what one should be able to do with language in certain stages of language competence. Because the reference levels focus on language, however, it may also mean that culture and ICC are not taken into account in teaching.

### **7.1.1 CEF as a part of CoE policies**

CEF clearly remains an influential part of the policies of the CoE. The document is introduced independently among the various programmes and projects of the Language Policy Division as a reference document that provides a basis for comparing language qualifications across Europe. In addition, CEF has prompted new projects and continues to be developed. It is accompanied by the *Guide for Users*, as well as by a number of case studies concerning the use of the document. If we take a look at the projects built around CEF, it seems that the parts of CEF that have been most influential are the reference levels. The Language Policy Division has worked on linking language examinations to CEF and, related to this, published the *Manual* along with illustrations of the different levels in a number of languages. In addition, reference level descriptors, or profiles, are being developed for national and regional languages. It will be

particularly interesting to see what the English Profile<sup>12</sup> will look like, especially in relation to cultural references. The current Medium-term Programme follows on similar lines, as one of its aims is to help examination providers in relating their examinations to CEF. The programme also pays attention to the possibility of using the reference levels when testing language skills of migrants wishing to obtain a residence permit or citizenship.

### *Interpretations*

The above focus on the reference levels suggests that emphasis is put on the comparability of language (rather than (inter)cultural) skills across Europe. In terms of the discourses outlined in chapter 6, then, concentrating on the reference levels introduced in CEF implies that elements of all the analysed discourses can be found in practice. In a way, the pluricultural discourse is supported, since the discourse seems to make use of the reference scales in evaluating and reporting one's partial language skills. The scales for instance suggest the possibility of having different speaking and writing skills in a particular language. They also seem to emphasise the value of even the most basic language skills. However, the reference scales focus on NS-NNS communication which – in other aspects than these scales – is untypical of the pluricultural discourse. In this sense, the target culture discourse along with the cultural diversity discourse are closer to explaining the approach to CEF, since they pay attention to the relationship between the culture of origin and the target culture, thus suggesting NS-NNS contacts. However, since the reference scales tend to take NSs as a point of comparison for language skills, they remain rather rigid and do not accept much diversity. I would therefore say that the cultural diversity discourse is not supported when focusing solely on the reference scales. As to the learner-centeredness discourse, it is clear that the discourse is supported, since some of the reference scales are intended for self-assessment.

Other policies of the CoE which do not directly relate to CEF are mostly in favour of the cultural diversity or the pluricultural discourse. The brief look at the projects of the Language Policy Division supporting national language policies suggests that the *Guide for Development* and the Language Education Policy Profiles lay emphasis on

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<sup>12</sup> For information on the current English Profile project see the following web-site: <<http://www.englishprofile.org/>>.

plurilingualism and linguistic diversity. These aims are to be achieved through changes in national language policies, for instance by diversifying the array of languages taught at schools. In addition, the *Guide for Development* suggests the possibility of ELF. These CoE programmes seem to be closest to either the cultural diversity or the pluricultural discourse depending on whether attention is given to NS-NNS or international communication. The same seems to apply to the European Day of Languages. The ELP falls under the learner-centeredness discourse with its emphasis on learners and the room it gives for different ways of documenting language and cultural competence.

Since the CoE policies and programmes rely on different discourses discerned in CEF, they seem to imply contradictions similar to those found in the document. For instance, it seems that the policies supporting the reference levels with their NS and target culture focus are at least partly in opposition to the policies supporting plurilingualism. Thus, to reverse the thought, if the policies of the CoE are not consistent, it may explain why CEF as a general reference framework and as a part of these policies contains contradictions as well.

### **7.1.2 ELF and CoE policies**

As I see it, the ELP represents the most flexible element for implementing an ELF approach to the CoE policies. In addition, the *Guide for Development* acknowledges the dominance of the English language in education and international communication. The document even suggests that English could be taught as a *lingua franca*. It seems, however, that English is regarded as a threat to plurilingualism, which shows up as a certain cautiousness in the document: it is pointed out that English should not pose a threat to Europeans learning other languages (Guide for Development 2003: 28). This apparent discrepancy between plurilingualism and ELF is discussed in greater detail in section 9.2.

Even though the ELP and the *Guide for Development* offer ways to take up an ELF approach, the extensive concentration of the CoE policies on the reference levels introduced in CEF is problematic in terms of ELF, since the reference levels seem to support NS-NNS communication. In addition, the levels, despite the arguments in CEF denying the NS ideal as an attainable target (“Level C2 [...] is not intended to imply native-speaker or near native-speaker competence” (CEF: 36)), only include references

to NSs and NS competence. There is thus a risk that the reference scales focus English language teaching exclusively on NS contacts. What is more, concentrating on the four parts of linguistic competence specified in the scales – that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking – could mean undermining the importance of cultural competence and/or ICC. Since teaching ELF suggests that the English language does not need to be connected to specific target cultures, lack of attention to cultural issues may seem unimportant in relation to ELF. However, not paying attention to cultural issues can also imply that no interest is shown to the question of what is to be considered a target culture in the first place. What may follow from this is that English teaching remains on the NS-NNS axis typical of language teaching in general and thus concentrates on NS contacts rather than using English with other NNSs. Besides, ELF interaction is highly international, which means that intercultural skills are worth practicing.

## ***7.2 How CEF has been received***

The Language Policy Division conducted a survey in the spring of 2005 to find out how well-known CEF is and how much it is used (Survey 2005). The results of the survey indicate that CEF is “*rather widely known* in the responding institutions [which included representatives from a number of instances such as higher education, examination providers and primary and secondary schools] (3,16 on a 0-4 scale) and it is “*quite widely used*” (2,24 on a 0-4 scale)” (Survey 2005: 3, emphasis original). According to the survey, the main users of CEF are teachers, teacher trainers as well as test and material writers, and the areas where CEF is mostly used include for instance language testing/assessment/certification and language curriculum development. The same areas were also considered “**most useful**” in terms of using CEF (Survey 2005: 4, emphasis original). The survey supports my observations of the emphasis given to the reference scales, since the findings suggest that “[t]he clearly **best known/most frequently used** parts of the CEFR<sup>13</sup> are **the common reference levels of language proficiency**” (ibid.). Some of the users of CEF were also concerned about CEF being reduced to the reference levels:

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<sup>13</sup> CEFR is an abbreviation of the *Common European Framework of Reference* used alongside CEF.

*The CEFR is very promising in its philosophy and general idea, especially concerning multilingualism. Unfortunately it is very rarely used in the very sense of its own philosophy but being misused as a simple testing instrument.*

*I have sometimes noticed that courses/textbooks/examinations are placed on the CoE levels more in an impressionistic than in a systematic way. (Survey 2005: 5)*

The survey further indicates a need for a concise summary of the main points of CEF, which could be easily absorbed and which would include examples of practical applications (Survey 2005: 6). Despite these shortcomings, the effects of CEF can be felt in language education across Europe. The following chapter turns to the analysis of the newest Finnish National Core Curricula (POPS 2004; LOPS 2003) in order to provide a detailed example as to which parts of CEF have been taken up in practice and why that may be so.

## **8 Analysis of the Finnish National Core Curricula**

In this chapter, I analyse the FL parts of the newest Finnish National Core Curricula (i.e. POPS 2004: 137-146 and LOPS 2003: 99-106) in an effort to exemplify how CEF has been applied in practice. Particular attention is given to English among the foreign languages. The Finnish National Core Curricula provide nationwide frameworks for language education and therefore influence English teaching at Finnish schools. Since Finland is both a member of the EU and the CoE, it serves well as an example of the influence of these institutions on national language policies. In fact, Takala and Kaftandjieva (2004: 47) point out that the work of the CoE has been used “consistently” since the late 1960s in developing Finnish National Core Curricula for modern languages. My analysis consists of drawing out discourses from the curricula and comparing these with the discourses emerging in CEF. The purpose is to find out which CEF discourse or discourses seem to be taken up in the curricula and why certain discourses are more pronounced than others. I use the discourses discerned in the curricula in thinking about explanations for the prominence of certain CEF discourses.

The analysis proceeded similarly to the one conducted on CEF. It started with a systematic word search intended to find the sections of the FL parts of the curricula that deal with culture. These sections were looked at in their immediate contexts and reflected as a part of the overall structure of the curricula. The sections were then analysed to see what kinds of cultural discourses emerge from the texts. Finally, the discourses were compared to the ones found in CEF and further considered in terms of teaching ELF. The analysis material is in Finnish for reasons of better availability, but I have provided translations where necessary.

### ***8.1 Findings of the word search***

To start with, I take a look at the structuring of the FL parts of the curricula. As school subjects, foreign languages are seen to require the development of skills, knowledge and cultural competence (POPS 2004: 138; LOPS 2003: 100). The National Core Curricula thus acknowledge the interrelationship of languages and cultures. The FL parts of the comprehensive school curriculum include descriptions of the aims, key contents and

criteria for assessment for the A-, B1- and B2-languages<sup>14</sup>. The aims and assessment criteria are divided into language skills, cultural skills and learning strategies, which implies that culture is treated in specific sections of the curriculum. The assessment criteria include tables specifying the levels of language competence expected from learners at a certain point of their studies (after sixth and ninth form). These levels are adapted for the Finnish school system from the CEF scales. The upper secondary school curriculum contains the aims and criteria for assessment, again following the adapted CEF scales, for the languages starting in the comprehensive school and for the optional B3-language(s) starting in the upper secondary school. It also includes short descriptions of the contents of the language courses to be offered. Both curricula treat all foreign languages together. However, English is given a special position in terms of language skills.

A number of different words and phrases are used in the curricula to refer to culture. A selection of these words with their respective number of occurrences is given in Table 4. As the table shows, there are numerous references to the target culture associated with the FL studied. Different formulations are used: *target culture*, *culture of the target language*, *target country*, *target language country*, *language area* and *cultural area*. All these indicate a close connection between a language and a specific culture. Moreover, the instances referring to target countries connect culture to specific nation states. Culture clearly seems to refer to the values and habits of the speakers of a certain language and their surroundings, which more often than not denote countries or nation states:

(61) people, geography, history, sights and possibilities for holidaymaking in one's own and **the target language countries**. (LOPS 2003: 104)<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, if we take a closer look at the term *kohdekulttuuri* (target culture), we notice that the term is used exclusively in the singular. This is quite surprising, since many languages are associated with more than one culture, and even if the language is spoken in a restricted area, the culture can hardly be considered one hundred percent homogenous. It should be noted, though, that there are at least some instances of

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<sup>14</sup> The A-language starts in primary school. All pupils begin to learn a FL (or the second national language) in the third form (A1-language). In some schools, FL teaching may start even earlier. In addition, it is possible to choose an optional A2-language beginning in the fifth form. The B1-language starts in the seventh form and is either Swedish/Finnish or English. The B2-language is an optional one beginning in the eighth form.

<sup>15</sup> All examples from the curricula are my translations.

**Table 4 The number of occurrences of selected terms in POPS (2004) and LOPS (2003)**

<b>Words and phrases</b>	<b>POPS</b>	<b>LOPS</b>	<b>Total</b>
kohdekulttuuri (target culture)	14	2	16
kielialue (language area)/ kulttuurialue (cultural area)	8	2	10
kulttuurien välinen (intercultural)	3	1	4
kohdekielen kulttuuri (culture of the target language)	2	1	3
kohdema (target country)	0	3	3
kohdekielinen maa (target language country)	0	2	2
other references to culture*	16	17	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>71</b>

Note: The numbers include inflected forms of the words/phrases.

\* In addition to the word *kulttuuri* (culture) with all its inflected forms, these include compounds such as *kulttuuritaidot* (cultural skills) and *kulttuurisidonnaisuus* (culture dependent).

“societies of the target countries” (LOPS 2003: 105, 106) and “people of the target language countries” (LOPS 2003: 104, 106), which imply that a language may be spoken in more than one country. Of course, this does not place emphasis on the heterogeneity of the target culture and is rather cold comfort to someone wishing to learn for instance ELF.

As indicated in Table 4, there are only four occurrences of the phrase *kulttuurien välinen* (intercultural), but the places where they occur are central. For instance, in the upper secondary school curriculum, it is included in the very first sentence:

(62) The teaching of foreign languages develops the **intercultural** communicative skills of the students (LOPS 2003: 100)

In addition, the awareness of cultural similarities and differences between one’s own and the target culture are emphasised elsewhere:

(63) The pupil [...] starts to acquaint oneself with the **similarities and differences of the target culture and the Finnish culture** (POPS 2004: 139)

The ability to move between one’s own and the target culture thus seems to be among the central aims of FL teaching. However, both the numerous references to the target culture and the way the word *intercultural* is used suggest that the curricula support NS-NNS contacts.

## 8.2 *Emerging discourses*

I have discerned three discourses in the curricula, which follow the three distinct aims of the comprehensive school curricula: cultural skills, learning strategies and language skills. The discourses are called (1) target culture discourse, (2) learning to learn discourse and (3) language skills discourse.

### 8.2.1 Target culture discourse

As the word search already indicated, the curricula concentrate on target cultures. The course descriptions in the upper secondary school curriculum refer to the target culture and the people who live in countries where the language is spoken natively:

- (64) texts associated with **societies of the target countries** (LOPS 2003: 102)
- (65) nature and its phenomena and how nature is perceived in one's own and **the target language culture** (LOPS 2003: 105)

Similarly, the comprehensive school pupils are to learn

- (66) basic information about [their] own and **the target culture** (POPS 2004: 143).

In addition, they are supposed to

- (67) **familiarise themselves with the target culture** and understand it against their own cultural background (POPS 2004: 141),
- (68) **communicate and act in a way that is acceptable in the target culture** in normal everyday situations (POPS 2004: 141), and
- (69) **communicate** in everyday situations **with representatives of the target culture** in a manner that is **natural in the target culture** (POPS 2004: 139).

It appears from the above examples that it is not enough to learn *about* a culture, but rather pupils are expected to learn to *adapt* to target culture norms and learn to use language the way it is used in the target culture. These expectations follow to upper secondary school, since one of the aims in the curriculum is that the student

- (70) can communicate in a manner **typical of the target language and its culture** (LOPS 2003: 100)

The general objective of developing “intercultural communication skills” in FL education given in example 71 below seems to denote an ability to move between one's

own and the target culture associated with the language studied, rather than an ability to communicate in situations where speakers represent a number of different cultural backgrounds:

- (71) Foreign language teaching develops students' **intercultural communication skills**: it provides them with knowledge and skills related to a language and to using that language. In addition, it offers them an opportunity to develop their awareness, understanding and appreciation of **the language area or the culture of the community associated with the language studied**. When these issues are considered, what are taken into account in particular are **European** identity and **European** multilingualism and -culturalism. (LOPS 2003: 100)

In addition to supporting the target culture idea, the above example suggests a focus on Europe. However, even though European linguistic and cultural diversity are taken into account here, there is no shift of focus away from NS-NNS contacts. What is more, the target culture is treated as a coherent entity with hardly any internal variation. It is acknowledged that a language can be spoken in more than one country:

- (72) people in the target language **countries** (LOPS 2003: 104)

Yet, the term *target culture* is always in the singular:

- (73) art, literature [...] of the **target culture** (LOPS 2003: 105)  
 (74) basic knowledge of one's own and the **target culture** (POPS 2004: 139)

To conclude, the target culture discourse of the curricula supports the traditional EFL approach to language teaching with a specific target culture and its norms as a point of comparison in language learning. The purpose is to learn to use language with NSs of the target language in a way that is acceptable to these NSs.

### 8.2.2 Learning to learn discourse

Learning strategies and skills are emphasised throughout the FL curricula. Learners are to learn

- (75) to act in a **responsible** manner and to make an effort in language learning situations (POPS 2004: 139),  
 (76) use the textbook, dictionary and other means to acquire information **independently** (POPS 2004: 139),  
 (77) to realise the importance of **persistent communicative exercise** necessary in language learning (POPS 2004: 142),

(78) to **recognise their own strengths and needs in order to develop themselves** as communicators and language learners (LOPS 2003: 101).

Gradually, learners are expected to take more and more responsibility over their own learning. They are expected to acquire skills to learn independently and to recognise their strengths and weaknesses as both language learners and users. Since emphasis is laid on guiding learners towards independent language learning, it seems that life-long learning is supported. Acquiring “good language learning routines” (POPS 2004: 138, orig. Finnish “hyviä kielenopiskelutottumuksia”) certainly indicates this.

Surprisingly, no reference to culture is given in the learning strategies sections of the comprehensive school curriculum, nor in those parts of the upper secondary school curriculum where learning strategies and skills are discussed. Even though a fair amount of space is devoted to cultural issues, learning strategies only relate to language skills and argue that a learner needs to learn

(79) to evaluate one’s own work and **different areas of one’s language skills** in relation to **the aims** (POPS 2004: 141).

These “aims” supposedly refer to the reference level scales, which do not include cultural skills, but rather concentrate on how to use language in different situations. Highlighting language skills over cultural skills is further supported by the upper secondary school curriculum’s FL evaluation section, which says that

(80) [t]he evaluation of the subject includes **all areas of language proficiency** according to the emphasis given in the course descriptions (LOPS 2003: 100).

The areas of language proficiency refer to the reference levels. It therefore seems that the learning to learn discourse concentrates on supporting independent, life-long language learning, yet stresses language competence over cultural skills.

### 8.2.3 Language skills discourse

The language skills discourse builds up from reference level tables, which present the goals for language competence at certain points of learning, as well as from descriptions of expected language skills. The goals for language competence given in the tables differ according to the number of years studied. For an example of such a table, see

Table 5, which includes the expected competence levels for “good skills”<sup>16</sup> after the sixth form in comprehensive school. As Table 5 shows, learners are not expected to achieve native-like competence, but rather their language skills are compared to the reference level standards. Of course, the NS looms in the background, since the scales progress towards NS competence (see Appendix).

**Table 5 Language competence levels after the 6th form of the comprehensive school**

<b>Language</b>	<b>Listening comprehension</b>	<b>Speaking</b>	<b>Reading comprehension</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<i>English</i>	A2.1	A1.3	A2.1	A1.3
<i>Other languages</i>	A1.3	A1.2	A1.3	A1.2

Note: See Appendix for explanations of the levels.

Source: POPS (2004: 140)

As further indicated by Table 5, the curricula divides language skills into four categories. Spoken language skills seem to be emphasised especially when one starts to learn a new language and in the first few upper secondary school courses:

- (81) **first mainly in speech** and gradually increasing written communication (POPS 2004: 138),
- (82) **Spoken interaction** is emphasised during the course (LOPS 2003: 104, 105)

This is interesting especially in terms of upper secondary schools, since they end in a matriculation examination, where spoken language skills (i.e. spoken production) are not tested. There thus appears to be a contradiction between what is expected to be taught and what is tested.

The curricula offer a possibility to choose a number of different languages in the course of one’s school life, which supports plurilingualism. In addition, as Table 5 shows, language competence can vary in different aspects of the competence, which means that for instance listening comprehension skills are expected to be better than speaking skills when finishing the sixth form. The language skills discourse thus makes use of the CEF idea of partial competences in the sense that it accepts unequal language skills, at least at certain stages of learning. It is, however, questionable whether the discourse can be said to accept the idea of a repertoire of language and cultural skills

<sup>16</sup> Good skills correspond to mark 8 on a 4 to 10 scale where 10 is the best mark.

that could be used in intercultural encounters, since the discourse focuses on NS-NNS contacts.

Table 5 indicates that English language skills are expected to be better than corresponding skills in other languages, which suggests that English is given a special status because of its prominence in today's world. However, there is no difference in how English is treated in terms of culture. The curricula thus place English among the rest of the languages in this regard, and consequently stress the NS culture(s) associated with the language.

Hardly any attention is given to different varieties of English (or of any other language for that matter) or even to using English (or some other language) in international settings. It is pointed out *once* in the comprehensive school curriculum that a learner should

- (83) become aware of some of the central differences between **different varieties of English** (POPS 2004: 141).

This could be taken to include NS and NNS varieties if we decide to stretch the interpretation a bit. However, if considered in the framework of the overall modern language curriculum, which concentrates on NS cultures, it seems the example sentence above indicates NS varieties only. In the upper secondary school curriculum, it is pointed out that

- (84) [course t]hemes are approached from the point of view of one's own country, the cultural area of the language, and **depending on the language** and the theme, also **from a wider perspective** in order to give students the possibility to make comparisons (LOPS 2003: 100).

The formulation "from a wider perspective" offers teachers a window to expand for instance English teaching outside the target culture(s) emphasised in the curriculum. Otherwise, international communication is absent from both FL curricula. It is therefore not surprising that language skills, too, concentrate on communication with NSs. If we for instance take a look at the following example, we notice that the purpose is to learn to use language in target language settings:

- (85) Situations and themes from the point of view of one's own and **the language area of the language studied** (POPS 2004: 139, 141, 143, 145).

In brief, the language skills discourse concentrates on language competence as it is presented in the reference levels, and consequently emphasises NS-NNS contacts.

### ***8.3 Culture and language teaching/learning in the curricula***

The findings of the analysis indicate that languages are seen to be connected to specific cultures and countries. The target culture discourse seems to support language teaching which aims at adapting to the foreign culture(s) associated with the language in question. The learning to learn discourse appears to emphasise language skills over cultural skills. However, because it aims at increasing learners' responsibility for their own learning, it leaves room for different approaches to teach and learn languages. The language skills discourse does not pay much attention to culture as such, since it concentrates on the reference level scales. It seems, though, that culture is given a similar role to the one in the target culture discourse: the aim is to learn to use the language in the target culture(s).

It is surprising that emphasis is put on learning to use language in a way that is acceptable in the target culture(s), yet the evaluation section of the comprehensive school curriculum declares the following when referring to culture:

- (86) The pupil is **acquainted with** the mutual relationships of his or her own and the target culture and **understands** some of the differences and similarities between the cultures. (POPS 2004: 144)

The example sentence indicates that learners are supposed to learn about foreign cultures, not how to deal with them. I think this contradicts the aim of learning to use a language in a manner acceptable to NSs. In addition, it is problematic from an ELF point of view where “merely knowing about a culture will not be sufficient to gain insight into how to interact in these encounters” (McKay 2002: 82).

### ***8.4 Discourses discerned in the curricula and ELF***

None of the discourses extracted from the curricula clearly support an ELF approach to teaching. In fact, there are hardly any references to using languages in international settings. The discourses thus prioritise NS-NNS communication and concentrate on specific target countries and cultures. The target culture discourse, which deals with

culture the most, emphasises NS-NNS contacts and suggests that learners adapt to target language and cultural norms. The discourse follows the traditional EFL approach to language teaching leaving little room for ELF.

The learning to learn discourse seems to emphasise language competence over cultural skills, and so undermines the importance of (inter)cultural competence. However, the discourse supports life-long learning by assigning students more responsibility over their own learning, which means that language learning can take different forms as different people try to find learning strategies and aims that suit them. In principle, this is broad enough to allow for the possibility of students choosing to learn ELF or teachers supporting students to develop skills needed in ELF communication. Yet, this is simply a possibility, not an explicit suggestion of the discourse.

The language skills discourse seems to recognise the role of the English language in today's world in terms of language skills (but not cultural skills), since it expects English skills to be better than corresponding skills in other languages. Nevertheless, the problem in terms of ELF is that these skills are expected to develop in the direction of NS skills. In addition, it seems that contact with other NNSs in international settings has been forgotten. Instead, the emphasis is laid on NS contacts. There is one reference to the varieties of the English language, but whether these include NNS varieties is unlikely. As a result, excluding the possibility of individuals choosing to learn ELF, the ELF approach cannot be said to be supported by any of the discourses discerned in the curricula.

### ***8.5 Comparison of the discourses in CEF and the curricula***

I drew out four discourses from CEF: target culture, cultural diversity, pluricultural and learner-centeredness discourses, and three from the Finnish National Core Curricula: target culture, learning to learn and language skills discourses (see sections 6.2 and 8.2). Because of apparent similarities, I decided to call one discourse in both “target culture discourse”. Both the one in CEF and the one in the curricula support NS-NNS contacts and moving between one's own and a specific target culture. These discourses do not take ELF into account, but rather concentrate on learning to use a language according to target culture norms. The target culture discourse seems to be especially strong in the

curricula, since the NS-NNS axis is supported by the other discourses of the curricula as well.

The learner-centeredness discourse of CEF and the learning to learn discourse of the curricula show similarities. These discourses concentrate on learners and developing their language learning skills. Both stress learners' responsibility and self-assessment, and they pay attention to reference level scales as a means to evaluate one's own language skills. What the learner-centeredness discourse emphasises more are learners' needs, which do not come up in the learning to learn discourse. The curricula rather concentrate on what learners need to learn, which I suppose, is typical of curricula as such. However, learners are expected to take more and more responsibility over their own learning, which indicates that they are supposed to learn to recognise their own needs. This again allows for some people to choose to learn ELF. Yet, while the learner-centeredness discourse is quite flexible in terms of accepting different teaching and learning objectives, and provided that learners need to be able to use English in international settings, can be said to support an ELF approach; the learning to learn discourse can only barely be stretched to include ELF.

The cultural diversity discourse of CEF concentrates on diversity between and within cultures as well as on using a number of different languages as a solution to international communication. It seems that the latter part is taken into account in the curricula as well, since pupils can choose to learn a number of different languages during their school life, as indicated under the language skills discourse. The first part, however, is pretty much forgotten in the curricula. For instance, the term *target culture* is always in the singular form.

The pluricultural discourse of CEF emphasises communication and does not limit intercultural issues to NS-NNS contacts. In addition, it suggests that people acquire (partial) competence in a number of different languages and cultures in order to form a repertoire of language and cultural skills to be used in intercultural encounters. Although the discourse still seems to make some use of the NS-centred reference scales, which indicates a slight contradiction in the discourse, it includes elements that support ELF. The language skills discourse of the curricula, in contrast, seems to rely heavily on the reference scales and consequently emphasises contacts with NSs. It thus appears that international communication among NNSs is given even less attention in the curricula than in CEF.

It can be concluded from these findings that CEF has influenced the Finnish National Core Curricula a lot, but only certain parts of CEF and certain ideas have been chosen. The strongest link between CEF and the curricula is the target culture discourse, which aims at adapting to the target language cultures. Languages are seen to represent certain cultures, often nation states, which is especially problematic in terms of English. However, there is another strong link between CEF and the curricula in that they both concentrate on the learner, albeit with slightly different connotations. The learner-centeredness and the learning to learn discourses suggest that learners develop their learning skills and take more responsibility of their own studies. Yet, while the learning to learn discourse may only imply a possibility for an ELF approach, the learner-centeredness discourse suggests that learners' needs should be taken into account, and these needs may well include teaching/learning ELF. A third strong link are the reference levels, which support NS-NNS contacts and take the NS as a point of reference. It is interesting that even the pluricultural discourse extracted from CEF, which explores the possibilities of accepting partial language competence and placing successful communication as the main goal, relies partly on the reference scales. It appears that the reference scales override some of the more elaborate ideas in the pluricultural discourse, such as using languages among NNSs or drawing on all, even partial, language competences in cross-cultural interaction. The lack of these ideas in the curricula suggests just that. The possibility of NNS-NNS communication in CEF, as indicated by the cultural diversity and in particular the pluricultural discourse, is not taken up in the curricula. Rather, the discourses in the curricula concentrate on communication between NSs and NNSs. As a result, ELF is left with very little space in the curricula.

Why, then, are certain parts of CEF more pronounced in the curricula than others? It appears that the curricula continue the traditional approach to language teaching, in which languages are learned in order to be able to communicate with NSs of these languages, and in a manner acceptable to the NSs. This emphasis leaves less space for teaching languages for international purposes. In addition, all foreign languages are treated together, which suggests that the compilers of the curricula do not want to bestow a special status on any language as an international language. Still, it seems that the curricula acknowledge the presence of the English language in today's world, since English skills are expected to be better than corresponding skills in other languages. In terms of culture, however, English is treated the same as other languages: with specific

target cultures. Since emphasis on NS-NNS communication and target cultures can be found in CEF as well, it is not surprising that the target culture discourse is so pronounced in the curricula.

It seems to me that the curricula have taken up issues from CEF which have been easiest to apply. An indication of this is the use of the reference level scales adapted to the Finnish school system, which provide guidelines for the evaluation of the learners' language competence. I assume that since these scales lack descriptions of (inter)cultural competence, the way culture is treated in the curricula has not changed much from what it has been in earlier curricula. The curricula have thus made use of the reference level scales in describing language competence expected from the learners, but have not developed teaching and evaluating cultural skills. By concentrating on the scales, the full implications of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism in CEF seem to have gone unnoticed in the curricula.

## ***8.6 Concluding remarks***

The concise survey of the CoE language policies and programmes in chapter 7 above indicates that CEF is an influential part of the policies, especially in terms of the reference level scales. The analysis of the curricula suggests the same: the scales are used to determine language competence expected from learners. The emphasis on the scales imply that on the one hand, partial language competences are taken into account, which may suggest support for plurilingualism if the partial competences are seen to build a common repertoire to be used in cross-cultural encounters; but on the other hand, NS-NNS contacts are stressed over NNS-NNS contacts, which implies that attention is given to specific target cultures. In addition, the analysis of the curricula suggests that concentrating on the reference level scales shifts attention away from developing (inter)cultural skills which could be used in international communication. Instead, emphasis is laid on specific target cultures. Moreover, the CoE language policies clearly aim at establishing transparent ways to compare language skills across Europe with the reference level scales and their NS emphasis forming the key part in this process.

The discourse discerned in CEF which is most influential in practice thus appears to be the target culture discourse with occasional references to the other discourses. For

instance, the policies of the CoE encouraging the learning of several languages and relating to several cultures point at the cultural diversity or the pluricultural discourse, depending on the emphasis on NSs or international contacts respectively. The *Guide for Development* even refers to ELF. In addition, the Finnish National Core Curricula support learning more than one FL with their “associated” cultures. Yet, cultural diversity is not taken into account, which implies support for the target culture discourse of CEF.

In terms of ELF, the attention given to NS-NNS contacts is problematic. The cultural diversity and specifically the pluricultural discourse of CEF take into account NNS-NNS contacts, and the learner-centeredness discourse implies that if learners need to use English in international settings, an ELF approach could be appropriate in teaching. The survey of the CoE policies indicates that the learner-centeredness discourse is supported by the Language Portfolio. It therefore seems that the CoE takes into account learners’ needs in developing their policies and programmes. In addition, the discourse has similarities with the learning to learn discourse of the curricula. The curricula, however, support other aspects of the learner-centeredness discourse than the learners’ needs as such. Thus, the FL parts of the Finnish National Core Curricula do not really offer support to ELF, even though they have been influenced by CEF, which includes elements in the pluricultural and the learner-centeredness discourses that can be taken to support ELF.

## 9 Discussion

### *9.1 Critical reflections on the study*

Since CEF has influenced language policies around Europe and seems to come up continuously in discussions related to language education, I thought it would be important to analyse what the document really claims and to see which ideas have been taken up in practice. Further, because of the prominence of English in international communication, I wanted to see if CEF took ELF into account, and since ELF implies changes in the way culture is taught, I decided to focus my attention on how CEF deals with culture and cultural contacts. To get an idea of how CEF has been applied, I turned to the Finnish National Core Curricula.

In my study, I followed the CDA framework developed by Fairclough (e.g. 1998) with its three stages of description, interpretation and explanation. What can be considered problematic with this framework is that it does not suggest any specific methods to be used in the study; rather, it provides the researcher with the mere structure for the analysis. Of course, Fairclough (1998; 2001) does give examples of what the stages should include. For instance, he emphasises a thorough linguistic analysis in the description stage. Nevertheless, with an extensive document such as CEF, a detailed linguistic analysis of a great number of different aspects of the language would have been too broad. I also think that concentrating on only a few aspects would have been too narrow in terms of my purposes of finding out how culture and cultural contacts are treated in CEF and how they relate to ELF. For this reason, I chose to draw out discourses rather than examine the language used in CEF. I thought that discourses focusing on the contents would be better suited to my purposes. Since I mainly paid attention to the vocabulary in my analysis of CEF and did not go into any detail in terms of for instance sentence structure, it would, of course, be interesting to study such features in more detail. This might provide new insights into CEF. It would also be interesting to compare the implications for assessment with those for language teaching in CEF, especially as it seems that assessment does not pay any attention to culture.

With the discourses discerned in CEF, I was able to discuss different emphases on cultural issues in CEF and relate them to ELF. Since an analysis like this one always includes interpretations on the part of the analyst, to make the analysis systematic and

transparent, I did a word search to find those places in CEF that I needed to concentrate on. My focus on culture and ELF, then, guided me through the analysis, where I looked at how culture and cultural contacts are (re)produced in CEF. This meant that I had to allow the discourses to overlap to a certain extent, since an emphasis on specific cultural features in a discourse does not necessarily exclude from it features typical of another discourse.

The interaction stage of the CDA framework, although a good bridge between the text and the social context, is sometimes left out of studies using CDA, since it ideally requires a study of its own. However, since I consider the stage a very important part of the framework, I wanted to include it despite the limited scope of my study. Given that a thorough analysis of the contexts of production and interpretation was not an option, I decided to include a brief look at the policies and programmes of the CoE, which is also responsible for publishing CEF. This review, despite its narrow scope, helped me reflect on the role of CEF among other policies of the CoE as well as on how prominent the different discourses discerned in CEF are in practice. A more thorough analysis could obviously be of use especially if we wanted to analyse the implications of the policies of the CoE and perhaps reflect them with those of the EU.

My overall focus on ELF and what it suggests for teaching culture directed my choice of the wider social context to an analysis of the FL parts of the Finnish National Core Curricula. This seemed a natural choice considering that the CoE policies mainly aim at improving (foreign) language education, which implies that CEF is relevant to curricular development as well. Including the L1 and L2 parts of the curricula in my present analysis could have provided interesting points of comparison between FL, L2 and L1 education. Further, taking the complete curricula into account would have enabled me to reflect general educational goals with those of FL education. However, for my purposes of finding out how CEF has affected the curricula and whether the curricula include possibilities to teach ELF, an analysis of the FL parts seems adequate. The analysis of the curricula provided an example of the effects of CEF and were used to think about why some parts of CEF have been more influential than others. They also revealed that the FL parts of the Finnish National Core Curricula do not support ELF. Since the curricula have a direct influence on what is to be taught at Finnish schools, they should give some indication of the present situation in classrooms. Of course, a study on classroom practices is needed to get an idea of how CEF is applied in teaching. It would also be interesting to study how widely known and used CEF is among

language teachers in Finland in the first place, and which ideas they would be willing to implement.

## ***9.2 Discussion of the findings***

Graddol (2006: 92) points out that “[o]ne of the weaknesses of the European project is that all languages are positioned as having a ‘home’ in one or more member countries.” What follows from this observation is a discrepancy between theory and practice:

In theory, English has no greater status, in European terms, than, say, French or Swedish. In practice, within many large companies, and even in parts of the European governmental institutions, English has become a common working language. (Graddol 2006: 92)

Based on my own analyses, it certainly seems that the connection between a language and a nation state is strong. The Finnish National Core Curricula constantly refer to target countries and target cultures, and the CoE language policies, even though they aim at plurilingualism, seem to regard NS-NNS communication as the main point of reference. Although CEF includes some instances that refer to international communication, the document concentrates on NS-NNS rather than NNS-NNS contacts. The same is true of the curricula. This emphasis is quite surprising if we consider the international settings where for instance CEF was developed. These settings have definitely required one or two *lingua francas* used as the common working language because of the different mother tongues of the participants. It seems that *lingua francas* are needed in practice, but it is difficult to assign a language an official status as a *lingua franca* when the political climate is in favour of multi- and plurilingualism<sup>17</sup>. The CoE policies support plurilingualism; yet most publications of, for instance, the Language Policy Division are either in English or French. The use of both English and French probably indicates an effort to support plurilingualism, or at least bilingualism, in practice. However, the languages are still used as *lingua francas* among NNSs.

I wonder whether the difficulty of combining ideas or ideals of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism with practice could explain why CEF contains different, partly contradictory discourses. The language policy of the EU certainly seems rather unclear,

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<sup>17</sup> Following the CEF (3-4) definitions, with *multilingualism* I refer to the coexistence of different languages in society as well as to knowledge of several languages and with *plurilingualism* to the ability of individuals to use a number of different languages.

trying to balance between institutional monolingualism and multilingualism (Johansson and Wiberg 2005: 40-45; Huhta 2005: 112-113). According to Johansson and Wiberg, the proponents of monolingualism in the institutional level of the EU claim that using many languages “hinders effective communication” and “slows down decision-making” (2005: 40-41, my translation). Multilingualism is also considered “an economic burden” (ibid.). Using one language, in contrast, is seen to deepen European integration and ease communication. English is considered a viable option to be the *lingua franca*, since “everybody can speak English at least to a certain extent” (ibid.). It should be noted, though, that using only one language does not mean no complications will arise. The opposing party in favour of multilingualism regards the costs of interpretation and translation as low compared to the total budget of the EU and suggests that multilingualism ensures democracy (Johansson and Wiberg 2005: 42). Using solely English is considered to provide NSs of the language “disproportionate advantage” (Johansson and Wiberg 2005: 42, my translation). It seems, however, that international settings require competences that NSs of English do not possess by being NSs (see Graddol 2006: 115). As Jenkins (2000: 135) has argued, ELF requires NSs to adapt to the international setting, too. In short, both institutional monolingualism requiring competence in English and institutional multilingualism requiring plurilingualism have their problems.

However, I think the biggest problem here is the juxtaposition itself. If we for instance return to the *Guide for Development*, in which English is considered a threat to European plurilingualism, we realise that plurilingualism and using a *lingua franca* are seen to contradict each other. But why should they? Competence in English does not have to reduce competence in other languages. As Breidbach (2003: 17) points out, “the European communicative sphere produces a multitude of different settings with a wealth of different communicative needs”. Thus, different situations require different language and cultural skills. If English is embraced as the official language in multinational *public fori*, it does not mean that other languages could not be used or that they would disappear in other domains. It seems that the choice of any “national” language spoken in Europe to be the official *lingua franca* is politically problematic. Yet, it is also strangely Eurocentric to fight for multilingual *public fori* when the rest of the world seems to have embraced English (see Graddol 2006: 94-95).

Considered against this background, it is not surprising to find different voices in CEF. The discourses discerned in the document reveal a certain ambiguity in its aims.

NS-NNS contacts are emphasised, although the cultural diversity and pluricultural discourses indicate a possibility of NNS-NNS contacts. Target cultures associated with the languages studied are stressed, although the pluricultural discourse aims at taking partial competences into account and using languages in all kinds of situations. There is a strong link between nation states and languages, although it is indicated that plurilingualism is the key to cross-cultural communication. There is even a faint voice criticising the use of English in international settings; yet learners needs are deemed important and these needs may suggest the importance of learning to use ELF. Again, it seems that plurilingualism and ELF are seen to contradict each other.

The survey of the CoE policies and how CEF has been received indicate that the reference level scales are the parts of CEF which have been taken up most. This suggests a focus on partial language competences, NS-NNS contacts and self-assessment. Especially because of the NS-NNS contacts, the scales are ill suited to teaching or assessing ELF. In addition, the scales concentrate on language competences, leaving out ICC.

The reference level scales play a major role in the Finnish National Core Curricula. The levels are used as a reference tool in assessment and therefore guide the assessment process. The scales expect students' English skills to be better in comparison to those in other languages. However, English is treated like any other language in terms of culture. Thus, the curricula seem to acknowledge the status of the English language in today's world, but do not think it could be taught as a *lingua franca*. The curricula concentrate on NS-NNS contacts. They have thus followed CEF mainly in terms of the reference scales and consequently do not leave much room for teaching ELF. However, the learning to learn discourse discerned in the curricula, which follows in the footsteps of the learner centeredness discourse of CEF can be stretched to include ELF, since it aims at assigning students more and more responsibility over their own learning. In principle, this could mean motivating students to acquire skills to better use English in international settings rather than with NSs of the language.

Even if the curricula at this point are reluctant to assign English a *lingua franca* status, Ranta's (2004) study on Finnish upper secondary school teachers' and students' attitudes on ELF provides encouraging results on teaching ELF in the future. She found out that most of the students saw their future as ELF users (Ranta 2004: 72). In addition, the teachers' attitudes are changing towards a broader conception of the language, and the NS target is strongly supported by only a minority (21 %) of the teachers, although

teachers are still inclined towards introducing NS varieties of English in their teaching (Ranta 2004: 69-70). Since teachers are obliged to follow the National Core Curricula, it is to be expected that the current situation at Finnish schools cannot be inclined towards ELF. However, this also indicates that changes in the curricula should affect teaching practices. Thus, as Ranta (2004: 75) points out, the instances compiling the curricula are in key position in assigning English teaching a *lingua franca* goal at Finnish schools.

Since languages are strongly connected to nation states in Europe, and there are countries in Europe where English is spoken natively, it seems understandable that English teaching has concentrated on these NS cultures. What is interesting, though, is that along with the United States, for instance in the Finnish curricula, emphasis has been laid on the British culture as if it was the only English speaking culture in Europe (e.g. POPS 1985: 76). Similarly, in the *Guide for Users*, when referring to a table in CEF illustrating different situations where language skills are needed, the following comment appears: “The examples are, of course, related to British culture” (2003: 20). It thus seems that the range of NS cultures connected with English – cultures such as Irish, South-African, Indian – is not taken into account.

Considering that proponents of ELF want to shift attention from NS cultures to skills needed in international communication, an ELF approach in teaching indicates a shift of focus from American and British cultures to developing intercultural skills. The analysis of CEF and the curricula both suggest that ICC is considered important. However, it is treated as a competence to move between one’s own and the target culture. The ability to move between several cultures is taken up in the pluricultural discourse of CEF, but it seems that the overall idea is to achieve plurilingualism and through plurilingualism become acquainted with a number of different cultures associated with the languages and thus be able to act appropriately with representatives of different cultures. Even though the pluricultural discourse does not limit contacts to NS-NNS ones, they are still present in the discourse. When the pluricultural discourse is considered together with the target culture and the cultural diversity discourses, it thus seems that the emphasis on NS-NNS contacts and specific target cultures in CEF is so intense that no language is considered to be able to move beyond the boundaries of specific cultures. What is happening with English, though, is exactly this.

Of course, using ELF does not mean that English would no longer be used by NSs or that the language would no longer represent any NS cultures. Rather, using ELF means that English may develop into a new international standard to which both NNSs

and NSs of English need to aspire in order to take part in international communication. At this point, ELF teaching could mean more exposure to different native and non-native accents (see Kivistö 2005), less emphasis on native English speaking cultures, taking a successful ELF speaker as a model in teaching the language. In short, it could mean preparing students to encounter different kinds of accents and different kinds of cultures.

If we think of the three models of teaching ELF introduced in 3.3.3, and compare these with the findings of the analyses, we realise how far we are from Seidlehofer's (2003: 22) idea of replacing English courses with something called "language awareness". It is, of course, debatable whether this is what we want. Nevertheless, the focus in the Finnish National Core Curricula on target cultures and moving between one's own and the target culture do not leave much room for Doye's (1999) and Hallet's (2001) approaches either. Doye's world studies and Hallet's cross-cultural and global discourses are not taken into account, since the curricula concentrate on NS-NNS contacts. Thus, it appears that the first step towards teaching ELF would be to develop awareness and willingness to look beyond NS cultures in English teaching. On European level this indicates accepting that English has moved beyond NS cultures and realising that plurilingualism does not have to be threatened by a *lingua franca*.

In the light of the findings of my analyses, it seems that for CEF to better reflect an ELF approach, the reference level scales introduced in the document should be developed. This is particularly important, since the scales seem to have had the most influence in language policy decisions and practices around Europe. The scales should shift their focus away from NS-NNS contacts, or at least include NNS-NNS communication. In addition, they should be expanded to include ICC in order to reflect skills which are needed in international communication, rather than skills needed to adapt to target culture norms.

I suppose that the cultural diversity discourse drawn out from CEF could be of use here, since it pays attention to cultural diversity, including diversity within cultures. In addition, the pluricultural discourse introduces the idea of using the complete repertoire of one's language skills in communicative situations, which indicates a shift away from thinking in NS-NNS terms. The pluricultural discourse further accepts partial language and cultural competences and emphasises successful communication rather than "perfect" language skills. I therefore think that the pluricultural discourse is quite promising in terms of ELF – assuming that it is accepted that plurilingualism is not in

contradiction with using a *lingua franca* in certain situations, be it English or any other language the plurilingual person can speak. Of course, there still remains the problem of the reference level scales, which do not seem to reflect the whole possibilities of the pluricultural discourse. In the end, however, it boils down to the question of what kind of English teaching learners need? With whom do they expect to be in contact, mainly with NSs or with other NNSs? Do they expect to move to an English speaking country or use English in international settings? These questions relate to the learner-centeredness discourse of CEF, which can include teaching ELF if that is what learners' needs require.

Since English is increasingly used in international communication, it is very likely that these needs will arise. It would therefore be interesting to learn more about how English is used in these types of situations and whether ELF has any characteristics of its own. This indicates linguistic analyses of ELF communication. Such work on spoken ELF is currently done for instance in the universities of Tampere and Helsinki in Finland, but there is still a lot of ground to cover. In addition, a project called Studying in English as a Lingua Franca (i.e. SELF) is starting at the university of Helsinki, which aims at finding out about the kinds of English skills required from students studying in international study programmes. What kinds of interactional and linguistic strategies do these students use when speaking and writing English, and are these strategies any different from NS communication?

## 10 Conclusion

CEF is a general framework for (foreign) language education which includes all languages, not just English. It aspires to be comprehensive; yet at the same time open, dynamic and non-dogmatic. It is a compromise; yet it has clear objectives. The findings of my analysis of CEF suggest that in terms of cultural issues, there are at least four different discourses at work in CEF: target culture, cultural diversity, pluricultural and learner-centeredness discourse. All these discourses have somewhat different approaches to treating cultural issues and therefore they relate to ELF in different ways. It appears that the pluricultural discourse has certain aspects that can support teaching ELF, especially if it is not considered contradictory to promote learning several languages and to accept ELF at the same time. Since the survey of the CoE policies as well as the analysis of the Finnish National Core Curricula indicate the significance of the reference level scales, it seems important that the scales would be adjusted to better accommodate ELF. A shift of focus from NS-NNS contacts to using English in international settings is required if ELF is to gain a stronger foothold. In the light of the findings, it seems that the pluricultural discourse combined with a focus on what the learners need, as promoted in the learner-centeredness discourse, leave room for teaching ELF. However, ELF is just about forgotten in the Finnish National Core Curricula. As a result, there is a lot of work to be done to convince people that learning to use English in international settings requires changes in teaching practices; and that this does not mean lowering the standards for teaching English, but rather adapting them to better reflect intercultural communication.

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# Appendix

Reference levels adapted to the Finnish school system (POPS 2004: 280-297; LOPS 2003: 230-247, my translation; names of the levels from CEF 2001: 23):

## *Level A1, Breakthrough:*

Restricted communication in the most common situations

A1.1: Elemental language competence

A1.2: Developing elemental language competence

A1.3: Functional elemental language competence

## *Level A2, Waystage:*

Basic needs for immediate social intercourse and short messages

A2.1: Basic language competence – beginner stage

A2.2: Developing basic language competence

## *Level B1, Threshold:*

Coping with everyday situations

B1.1: Functional basic language competence

B1.2: Independent basic language competence

## *Level B2, Vantage:*

Coping with regular contacts with native speakers

B2.1: Basic level of independent language competence

B2.2: Functional independent language competence

## *Level C1, Effective Operational Proficiency and C2, Mastery:*

Coping with demanding language use situations

C1: Basic level of competent language competence

[C2: not available]