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*Tertium comparationis* 1 (1995) 1, S. 42-62

urn:nbn:de:0111-opus-28573

Erstveröffentlichung bei:



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# Regional Identities in Europe: The Position of Lesser Used Languages in the Educational Systems of the European Union<sup>1</sup>

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## *Abstract*

Mercator-Education focuses on the position of lesser used languages throughout the educational systems of the European Union. Examples of lesser used languages include Catalan in Spain, Frisian in the Netherlands, Scottish-Gaelic in the U.K. and German in France. The Mercator-Education Centre in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, coordinates a network of institutes, each of which represents a European language community. One of its main activities has consisted in conducting comparative inventories on several levels of education, such as pre-school education, primary education and teacher training. The current article provides an overview of the working method of Mercator-Education, presents preliminary results of the comparative studies undertaken so far and attempts to contribute to the development of an explanatory theory of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems. Special reference is made to how the use of minority languages in education relates to regional identity.

## 1 Introduction and overview

In comparative education, the principal unit of comparison has commonly been viewed as the national system of education. This approach goes back to the practice of early comparativists such as Kandel, Schneider, and Hans who focused on the nation-state, employing concepts such as 'national character'. However, over the years this notion that comparative educationists should compare national systems of education has eroded (Kelly & Altbach 1986). Instead, comparative educationists have increasingly dealt with the place of the educational system under study within the larger world system. This has led to the identification of 'world regions' in the international study of education (Armove 1982, Halls 1990).

As a result, the unit of comparison has shifted away from the national level to that of the supra-national level of world regions. At the same time, however, a shift to regions within states can be distinguished (Edwards, Jütte & Renkema 1991). It is in this shift toward the analysis of regions within contemporary states that the Mercator-

Education studies can be situated. Mercator-Education, based in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, studies the position of lesser used languages within the educational systems of the member states of the European Union.

After outlining the political and institutional context of this research, the current article begins by examining the comparative studies Mercator-Education has undertaken. Central to its working method is the use of expert-correspondents who respond to a standardized item-list. Secondly, the current position of lesser used languages in European education is addressed and some results of previous studies undertaken are presented. These comparative studies cover the pre-primary and primary level of education in the regions concerned, as well as teacher training and the provision of learning materials. They have resulted in a description of the (relative) position of lesser used languages in educational systems. However, to go beyond such a description would require an explanation of their position. Therefore, thirdly, this article addresses the question of what relevant analyses have been proposed in comparative education for such an explanation. Special reference is made to the relation between regional identity and the place of language in the school curriculum.

## 2 Mercator-Education: conducting comparative inventory studies

### 2.1 Political and institutional context

Mercator-Education's research target is the position of lesser used languages in European education. Political concern about these languages is relatively recent: the debate on their position has intensified over the last few decades. The increasing political, cultural and economic unity of Western Europe has in general been viewed as a threat for the continued existence of lesser used languages (Gorter 1991: 57). The languages of majorities are replacing those of minorities. Commonly used concepts related to this process of replacement are language loss (e.g. Fase, Jaspaert & Kroon 1992), language retreat (e.g. MacKinnon 1991) and language shift (Fishman 1991). Such a process ultimately may end with the extinction of the minority language (Markey 1987). By many, instruction in or about a minority language is viewed as a way of maintaining this language (e.g. Allard & Landry 1992, Edwards 1992). Children and youngsters are considered the future generation that will be able to communicate (also) through the minority language.

Political initiatives have therefore been taken on a European level to promote the use of indigenous minority languages in Europe's educational systems.<sup>2</sup> Their general purpose is to sustain Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity. The earliest European political involvement with lesser used languages dates back to October 1981 when the European Parliament approved the Arfé-resolution. This enabled the European Commission to develop a program of activities in order to improve the position of the lesser used languages. One of the results of the Arfé Resolution was the establishment in 1982 of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages (EBLUL). The EBLUL is based in Dublin, Ireland and has as its general aim to preserve and promote the lesser used autochthonous languages of the European Union, together with their associated cultures (Ó Riagáin 1987).

In October 1987 the European Parliament passed the Kuijpers Resolution on the protection of the languages and cultures of regional minorities. This resolution calls for action to be taken by the EU member-states, e.g. legal recognition of their language minorities, wider access to broadcasting facilities and legal guarantees for the use of minority languages in governmental and juridical affairs. Moreover, the Kuijpers Resolution asked to 'allow for minority language education to be conducted at all levels and recognize its equality with education in the national language' (Sikma & Gorter 1991: 1).

The year 1987 also saw the birth of the Mercator-Education network, which is coordinated by the Mercator-Education Centre, based at the Fryske Akademy, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. It is one of the four branches that together form the European Mercator network, a large documentation, information and research network focusing on the lesser used languages.<sup>3</sup> The Mercator network was initiated by the European Commission and is currently coordinated by the Taskforce for Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth. Mercator-Education particularly focuses on the position of the indigenous minority languages throughout the educational systems of the European Union. Mercator-Education has been based at the Fryske Akademy since 1987.<sup>4</sup> The aims of Mercator-Education are threefold:

- to exchange information,
- to build and maintain a data-base of documentation,
- to conduct research,

on autochthonous minority languages in educational systems in the European Union.

## 2.2 Mercator-Education's research target

The target of research of Mercator-Education is the educational position of lesser used languages within the European Union. All educational provisions, public as well as private, are included in Mercator-Education's research. The concept 'lesser used language' may require some further explanation. Within the present 15 member states of the European Union as many as 40 million people in over 40 different communities speak a 'lesser used language' (see appendix 1). The Council of Europe has named these languages 'regional or minority languages' (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, explanatory report 1993). All of these languages are spoken by a minority in the state involved.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the languages concerned have been described variously as '(indigenous) minority languages', 'regional languages', and 'lesser used (autochthonous) languages'. Mercator-Education prefers the term 'lesser used languages' (although the shorter 'minority language' (ML) is also being used). This concept covers:

- Unique languages spoken in only one EU member-state, e.g. Welsh in the United Kingdom, Galician in Spain, Sardinian in Italy or Sorbian in Germany,
- Unique languages distributed over more than one EU member-state, e.g. Basque, both in Spain and France,
- Languages spoken by an autochthonous minority in a particular EU member-state, but which are also the language of the majority in another (EU-member) state: e.g. German as spoken in Italy, France, Belgium and Denmark, Danish in Germany or Slovene in Italy,

- Languages which are national languages at the EU member-state level, but which do not enjoy the status of official working language of the European Union, videlicet, Luxembourgish and Irish.

In this article, the language communities that speak a lesser used language are referred to as regional minorities or language minorities. They can be seen as 'long resident' minorities as opposed to the 'new' immigrant minorities that have arrived in recent decades.

### 2.3 Comparative inventory studies

The Department of Social Sciences of the Fryske Akademy was developing expertise on the comparative study of minority schooling prior to the establishment of Mercator-Education, evidenced by the EMU project (Sikma & Gorter 1988) it carried out between 1986-1988. This project can be described as a follow-up study to a similar project carried out on the pre-primary level (Ó Murchú 1987). EMU aimed to create an inventory of 'the position of the regional minority languages in primary education in the member states of the European Community' (Sikma & Gorter 1988: 2). It resulted in a total of 34 separate studies and a comparative synthesis report (Sikma & Gorter 1988, Sikma & Gorter 1991). In the early Nineties Mercator-Education started 3 new projects, which were all conducted in a way more or less similar to EMU. They are the following:

- EMOL (1990-1993). A synthesis report is currently in print (Dekkers, in press).
- LEMA (1992-1993). A synthesis report has been published (Tjeerdsma & Sikma 1994).
- PREP (1992-1993). An overview of provisions has been published (van der Goot, Renkema & Stuijt 1994).

The above four projects of the Fryske Akademy/Mercator-Education all strived for a comparative inventory.<sup>6</sup> Two distinctive elements of such a 'comparative inventory' can be mentioned: the collection of data from language communities in Europe, followed by a comparison of these data in order to be able to draw conclusions and make policy recommendations in this area. Data-gathering has led to the publication of separate descriptive studies on European regions. The gathering of such data, not burdened by theoretical presumptions, can be understood as a first phase of inductive-type research. The writers of the EMU synthesis report underscore the fact that the choice was made 'for a pragmatic approach, in which theoretical aspects have been left out of consideration' (Sikma & Gorter 1991: X). After gathering region-specific data, these were compared. The conduct of these studies can generally be described as following a multi-stage design, as shown in the diagram in table 1 (appendix 2; adapted from Tjeerdsma, 1993). The following aspects of this design are especially important:

- The use of expert-correspondents from the language communities involved. This use of well-informed experts who have professional knowledge of minority language education in their own region guarantees a high standard of information in the separate reports. The correspondents can be seen as 'key informants'. In most cases a verification of the content of the draft report was included.
- The development and use of a standardized item-list. To avoid the production of reports very diverse in terms of how the information is structured, an item-list is used

through which a range of identical items is presented in the same order to the correspondents.

- The development and elaboration of a separate databank component. A large databank has been created on the educational aspects of lesser used languages. For the separate projects, specific databank components are created, from which detailed information (for comparison, or other use) can be easily retrieved.

### 3 The current position of lesser used languages in European education

#### 3.1 The EMU project: a synthesis of diverse situations

The studies described above have resulted in a number of publications (Sikma & Gorter 1991, Dekkers, in press, Tjeerdsma & Sikma 1994, van der Goot, Renkema & Stuijt 1994). Several other studies on the educational position of language minorities have been published in recent years (e.g. Churchill 1986, Ó Murchú 1987, Baetens Beardsmore 1993; for some examples of comparative studies of minority language education, see Stuijt 1994). The EMU project, however, can be considered the first inventory that intends to give a Europe-wide overview through cross-regional comparison. The goal of cross-regional comparison of minority language education has been to reach a higher level of analysis than would have been achieved by the publication of separate descriptive studies alone. In other words, comparison is understood as an attempt to 'compound' the data from the inventory and arrive at a synthesis (Sikma & Gorter 1991: 10).

To describe comparison in this way, the establishment of a synthesis was proposed by e.g. García Garrido (1987: 30). In the case of the EMU project, the synthesis was made by evaluating responses according to a 'strength-weakness' dimension. As can be seen in the diagram in appendix 2, Mercator-Education's approach involves the use of expert-correspondents who are asked to respond to a pre-defined, standardized item-list. Mercator-Education subsequently uses these responses as the 'raw material' for comparison. In most projects an attempt was made to classify the item-responses from different backgrounds according to the strength-weakness dimension. This choice for a strength-weakness dimension has been one out of a larger whole of optional criteria. The result is the establishment of a typology of educational provisions in diverse European regions. For primary education (the EMU project) a distinction was made between the extent and the content of minority language education. 'Extent' refers to factual, quantitative aspects of educational provisions in the minority language such as 'the amount of time spent on minority language education, the number of pupils involved, the number of schools involved, the number of hours for which the minority language is the medium of instruction, the amount of learning materials available, etc.' (Gorter 1991: 60)

The second term, 'content', points to aspects related to the actual curricular activities that take place in schools, such as: 'the place of the minority language in the curriculum as subject or as medium of instruction, the language skills taught, the methods used, the subjects for which the minority language is used, the development and production of learning materials, etc.' (Gorter 1991: 60). Most of these aspects were first classified separately, through comparative analysis, according to a strength-

weakness dimension. Also, a final classification of the position of lesser used languages in primary education was made, summarizing the 'scores' on the separate aspects.<sup>7</sup> This classification is presented in table 2 (appendix 3).

An important conclusion of the EMU project was that there is a severe lack of education in and about lesser used languages. This type of education, for the largest part, merely exists in the margins of the European educational systems. Language minorities have not been successful in all regions in organizing minority language education within the public education system, nor have they been able to establish private educational provisions. As a consequence, even in regions classified in the strongest group, not all pupils are able to receive their primary education (partly) through the lesser used language. Gorter (1991) observes that there are developments only in a few cases towards a full-fledged educational system that exists side by side with the traditional system or replaces the older majority language dominated educational system (Gorter 1991: 62). These cases, in which an educational transition of considerable extent has been taking place, include the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (Spain), Catalonia (Spain), Ireland and the German-speaking community of South Tyrol (Italy) (cf. Sikma & Gorter 1991: 109f.). Several constraints for the further development of minority language education in the regions concerned were distinguished in the EMU project (cf. Gorter 1991: 62f.):

- Insufficient legal provisions,
- Lack of competent teachers,
- Lack of adequate instructional material,
- Attitudes of teachers and parents involved.

### 3.2 The other Mercator-Education projects: teacher training, learning materials and pre-school education

The above constraints are dealt with, along with a range of other questions, in the other projects of Mercator-Education. The EMOL project addresses the training of teachers for minority language education at primary and secondary education levels (Dekkers, in press). The quality of teacher education is a factor whose influence has been underestimated, although the teacher is the main actor in language instruction in the classroom. The ability of the teacher to speak the minority language fluently as well as his competence in directing the language development of students are major goals in teacher training for minority language education. In the language communities various options exist for improving teacher performance in this area, ranging from the inclusion of the minority language in initial teacher preparation to making in-service training available for teachers already actively involved in minority language education. One of the conclusions of the EMOL project is that the position of lesser used languages is considerably stronger within institutes of teacher training for primary education than it is in those for secondary education (cf. Dekkers, in press: chapter 8.2). This difference has been considered in establishing the classification of the relative position of lesser used languages in European teacher education, as presented in table 3 (appendix 4).

The issue of the availability of instructional material is the focus of the LEMA project (Tjeerdsma & Sikma 1994). The development of attractive and inexpensive learning materials appears to be a bottle-neck in providing effective minority lan-

guage education. Development and distribution takes place on a small scale. Unique language minorities and those which are minorities in more than one state attempt to meet their needs by developing the learning material in their own language community (Tjeerdsma & Sikma 1994: 49). Those minorities that speak a language that is spoken by a majority in another state generally rely on the import of learning materials produced in the other state. As in the EMU project, the relationship is underscored between the actual position of a minority language in the educational system on the one hand and formal responsibility with regard to minority language instruction on the other.

In the PREP project the issues of formal responsibility and parental attitudes are distinguished as essential in the establishment of pre-primary education in the lesser used language (van der Goot, Renkema & Stuijt 1994). Where no public system of pre-primary education in the lesser used language exists, private initiatives by parents and teachers have successfully been established. The concern of parents in this area is with the transfer of children from the family, the sphere of primary socialization, to nursery school and kindergarten, the earliest secondary socialization.

In all projects the presence of a firm legal basis for the establishment of educational provisions appeared to be important. Protection by state, regional or local authorities of minority language initiatives is essential for their success. In general, a centralized governmental and educational system does not seem to offer the same prospects for such protection as does a decentrally organized system. As a consequence, private educational initiatives have especially emerged in the former.

## 4 Towards an explanatory theory: comparative education in relation to cultural diversity, language and regional identity

### 4.1 Introduction: towards an explanation

The establishment of classifications, such as those presented in tables 2 and 3, implies a precise description of the current relative position of lesser used languages in educational systems, on a national and international scale. Yet, to go beyond a mere description of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems would require an explanation to be offered. True understanding can only be based on a theory explaining the typology that was established (Halls 1981: 151). In the section above several factors have been mentioned that appear to influence the relative position of lesser used languages in educational systems, such as:

- Legal protection: does a minority language receive any formal protection by state and regional authorities, through which its position in education is safeguarded?
- Responsibility and policy issues: do public authorities take responsibility for the inclusion of minority language instruction in the educational system or, if not, do they support the initiatives of private bodies aiming at the establishment of educational provisions in this area?

Attitudes of actors involved: do parents and teachers have positive attitudes toward the inclusion of the lesser used language in education, even if this implies considerable financial investment and extra duties for educationists and teachers?

Notwithstanding the importance of identifying such factors, no comprehensive explanatory theory of the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems exists to date. The questions above are responded to within contemporary Western societies which are not culturally and linguistically homogeneous. This section is intended to trace the extent to which comparative educationists have engaged in the problem of the position of ethnic and language minorities in educational systems and what explanatory analyses have been proposed in this matter.

#### 4.2 Cultural diversity and the role of language in education

Comparative education has dealt extensively with the role of education in a culturally and ethnically diverse society. In 1976 Paulston called the relationship between ethnicity and educational change 'a priority for comparative education' (Paulston 1976a). His view is echoed by Grant (1977), who urges comparative educationists to study the response of educational systems to cultural pluralism. In 1977 and 1983 the CESE conferences were dedicated to the overarching theme of how cultural diversity influences educational development (Holmes 1980, Mitter & Swift 1985). Holmes (1985) identifies two groups that do not fit Hans' description of the 'ideal nation': a unity of language, religion and race. These groups are the 'recently arrived' and the 'long resident' (Holmes 1985: 693).

Comparative educationists have studied the educational position of both these categories of linguistically and culturally distinct groups, to wit, recently arrived immigrant minorities and long resident autochthonous minorities. However, the bulk of educational studies in this area have focused on the first category. Examples of such studies in comparative education include: Steedman (1979), McLean (1983), Opper (1983), and Smolicz (1990). The theoretical foundation for much of the comparative research conducted on these ethnic minorities had been provided by the work of e.g. Schermerhorn (1970)<sup>8</sup> and Ogbu (1978, 1983). Mobin Shorish and Wirt (1993) underline that most of this comparative research on education and ethnicity has theoretically been based on notions of power and control (Mobin Shorish & Wirt 1993: 2f.).

The second category of ethnic minorities, those who are long resident in contemporary societies, has also been named indigenous minorities (Welch 1988). Studies in comparative education that address the educational position of these minorities include e.g. Hawkins' study of national minorities in China (1978), Kravetz' study of minorities in the former USSR (1980), Barrington's comparison of Maori education in New Zealand along with the education of Native Americans in the USA (1981), the study of Welch (1988) on the schooling of the Aboriginal minorities in Australia, and the work of Abu Saad (1991), who studied the Bedouin Arabs in Israel.

Mercator-Education studies the educational position of what are often called the European regional or language minorities. In comparative education the position of these indigenous minorities was studied by e.g. Cohen (1976), Paulston (1976b), Tusquets & Benavent (1978), McNair (1980), Csapo (1982), Brinley Jones (1983), García Garrido (1983), Grant (1981, 1983, 1988), Corner (1988), Morgan (1988), Petherbridge-Hernandez (1990a) and Grant & Docherty (1992). The Saami were included by Wirt (1979) in his well-known comparative analysis of ethnic minorities. It can be concluded that of the over 40 lesser used language communities in the European Union, the Basques, Catalans, Welsh, Saami and the Gaelic community of Scotland have been the most frequent object of study of comparative educationists. In

general, such studies have been descriptive and the development of theory has been very limited. The work of Paulston (1980a, 1980b) on non-formal education has been used by Petherbridge-Hernandez to analyze educational transformations in Catalonia (Petherbridge-Hernandez 1990a, 1990b, Petherbridge-Hernandez & Raby 1993). More often, however, apart from a factual description of their characteristics, nothing more than a mere a typology of minorities is presented (e.g. Corner 1988; Grant 1988).

Although comparative education has only very rarely been connected theoretically with sociolinguistics<sup>9</sup>, many cases have included the language factor (Taylor 1992) in the analysis of the educational position of ethnic minorities. For the first group, immigrant minorities, concern for the language of their children has led to the establishment of bilingual education provisions (e.g. in Germany: McLaughlin & Graf 1985). In their case, speaking a language other than that of the dominant majority has primarily been seen as an obstacle to attaining scholastic achievement similar to that attained by majority children (cf. Troyna 1988).

However, for the lesser used language communities, language nowadays is hardly viewed as a possible hindrance to the school careers of children, but is seen much more as the main component of identity.<sup>10</sup> Heyman (1978) remarks that 'it seems that language, more than any other minority group characteristic, can become the rallying point for minority *identity* [italics added] concerns, partly because of its identification with the many cultural aspects of group identity and partly because of its relationship with the identity of the self' (Heyman 1978: 3). Edwards (1988) affirms that language has been ascribed a central role in strengthening identity (Edwards 1988: 205). Edwards points to the role language had in the development of national identities in Romantic nineteenth-century Europe (Edwards 1988: 205). Fishman (1972) refers to this instrumental function of language in the development of nation-states in Europe as well as in 'new' or 'developing' nations (Fishman 1972: 29ff.). Yet it is not only nation-states that have used language to constitute or strengthen their identity; ethnic minorities within contemporary states do the same (Renkema 1994a). This relation between minority language and ethnic identity has been observed by e.g. Brinley Jones (1983) and Woolard (1990), who points out that 'language choice does not simply follow from ethnic identity, but may actually constitute it' (Woolard 1990: 63). Language can thus be seen as one of the central issues in the revival of regional identities in Europe.

#### 4.3 Regional identities and European curricula

In Europe, processes of nation-building, centralisation and rapid transition from traditional societies into modern societies have led to the marginalization of minority language groups. The core of modern society has become the urban settlement, being the centre of government and economic life. Regions become the periphery of this urban centre. This process has been described as 'internal colonization' (cf. Evans 1991; Edwards 1985: 73f.; and especially Hechter 1975). Although this concept has most commonly been used to describe the economic dependence of regions peripheral to the centre of a nation-state, it also has a cultural dimension, as Bahrenberg (1993) remarks that 'regarding culture, internal colonization means homogenization of originally divergent "regional" cultures and the gradual establishment of an "advanced culture" (...) by means

of educational systems and national cultural institutions. An important element in this process is a uniform literary language, which often develops from the administrative language of the national centre. Deviating languages become dialects. The cultural traditions which are not in accordance with the advanced culture are being regarded as folklore' (Bahrenberg 1993: 67).

As a consequence the languages and cultures of mostly rural or maritime minorities have been driven to the periphery of modern society. Examples are the Gaelic and Saami communities. Often, regions were engulfed by a modern state. Other European indigenous minorities, or better put, their territories, have been transferred from one state to another following international conflicts and agreements, as a result of which people have ended up in the margins of a culture that is not their own. In all these cases, the culture and language of the dominant majority differ from the minority. For indigenous minorities, the post-war construction of a unified Europe has meant integration into an even larger political, economic and cultural entity. These processes, however, are counterbalanced by the revival of regional identities<sup>11</sup>. Halls (1983) underscores this apparent contradiction between global integration and local diversity, stating that 'it is (...) a paradox that in an era when nations combine in international organisations as never before, the pull for regionalism has never been stronger. (...) Where culture is becoming homogenized, an instinctive necessity is felt to preserve local particularisms' (Halls 1983: 169f.).

This revival of ethnic identity has consequences for the school curriculum in European regions. Regional groups demand that their culture and language be included in the school curriculum. The school curriculum defines 'what should be taught in schools'. Traditionally, knowledge taught in schools has been seen as the transfer of culture: the totality of cultural attributes gathered during the course of human history. However, not all cultural attributes can be included in the school curriculum, because of limited time and the explosive growth of knowledge. The development of the school curriculum therefore necessitates selection. In view of this, the curriculum should specify the knowledge of most worth for transfer to future generations. In most cases, the issue of what constitutes the actual content of the curriculum is not addressed, as social consensus is presupposed as to what valuable cultural 'goods' are<sup>12</sup>. In practice, 'culture' has been defined by a unitary and integrative idea of what should be mediated: the majority language, the history of the dominant groups in society and their values (cf. Welch 1993).

Adjacent to developments in the sociology of education (Young 1971, Bourdieu & Passeron 1977, Apple 1986, 1990) comparative educationists have started to use a concept of 'culture' that is less unitary and integrative (Welch 1991, 1993).<sup>13</sup> Developing the school curriculum implies that only certain cultural elements are included: the curriculum describes the selection of 'culture' that is considered valuable. This selection is linked to the position of groups in society. Consequently, culture is seen as 'an arena of social contest, largely unequal, in which the dominant group gains, or retains, control over a cultural definition which is thus seen as more legitimate, and of higher status - and which is subsequently confirmed in schools (Welch 1993: 8). Since dominant groups are able to select the knowledge they consider legitimate, the school curriculum reflects not only 'what' knowledge is of most worth, but in particular, 'whose'. Instead of viewing the curriculum as a 'neutral' selection of cultural attri-

butes, it is analyzed in relation to the distribution of power in society. Aronowitz & Giroux (1991) observe that 'the culture transmitted by the school is related to the various cultures that make up the wider society, in that it confirms and sustains the culture of the dominant groups while marginalizing and silencing the cultures of subordinate groups (...)' (Aronowitz & Giroux 1991: 49). Apple (1990) refers to educational organizations as a system of institutions which helps to 'produce the type of knowledge (...) that is needed to maintain the dominant economic, political, and *cultural* [italics added] arrangements that now exist' (Apple 1990:X).

In other words: the dominant majority employs education to reproduce the dominant (high-status) culture that is valuable to itself, rejecting (low-status) minority culture. In contrast, and as a result of a struggle over legitimate definitions of knowledge, ethnic minorities in Europe are increasingly able to select the school knowledge which is valuable to them. They successfully discredit the legitimacy of majority knowledge. Some of them are able to do so within the curricula offered in public school systems, while others are establishing their own provisions.

In this approach the position of minority languages in the curriculum obviously can not be analyzed without referring to the political and economical system. Corner (1988) states that cultural and linguistic minorities have: 'found themselves locked into the political and educational system of the majority which has only limited empathy towards recognizing their needs. Economic and political factors seem to greatly determine the extent to which cultural and educational development can be created from a position of dependency (...)' (Corner 1988: 232). The dependency of ethnic minorities on the political and economic system of the majority obviously is an important determinant of their relative position in education. This dependency controls the degree to which their curriculum demands are responded to as well as the possibilities they have of establishing their own provisions. The evident reaction of ethnic minorities to this dependency is a call for more autonomy. Corner (1988), however, comparing Catalonia and the Basque Country, points to the fact that 'the perception of autonomy which the minority regards itself as having' is also an important factor (Corner 1988: 236f.). For a more thorough review of the relative success of ethnic and linguistic minorities in controlling their own education, see Churchill (1986).

## 5 Summary, conclusions and suggestions for further research

Mercator-Education is focused on the position of lesser used languages in European educational systems. The continued existence of these languages is the subject of growing political concern and minority language education is expected to contribute to their maintenance. Mercator-Education has conducted a number of comparative inventories on several levels of education. Two important aspects of these studies can be mentioned: (firstly) the gathering of specialized information directly from the regions involved by employing expert-correspondents, followed by (secondly) the cross-regional, cross-national comparison of data. This has led to the establishment of classifications of the (relative) position of lesser used languages in European education.

Comparative education has dealt extensively with the position of both immigrant ethnic minorities and 'long resident' minorities. Much of the work done in comparative education has been descriptive. Research conducted on the former category has in

general been driven by notions of power and control. Research conducted on the latter, however, rarely offers an explanatory analysis.

It can be concluded that throughout many European regions monolingual minority language schools and bilingual schools have emerged. Increasingly, education in Europe takes place through a lesser used language. As such, this educational phenomenon can be explained as the expression of an increasing sense of regional identity within a unifying Europe. At the same time, the use of language in education contributes to ethnic identity.<sup>14</sup> For European education, this implies that while educational systems and curricula may be converging rapidly, minority groups (bound by a collective ethnic identity) in a large number of regions are successfully discrediting majority school knowledge, while locally implementing alternative curricula that do satisfy their views of valuable knowledge more comprehensively. Convergence on the one hand is apparently somewhat balanced by divergence on the other.

Yet, while the (albeit modest) growth of education in and about lesser used languages in Europe can thus be satisfactorily explained as correlating with the revival of regional identities, the differences between regions can not yet be explained. A number of factors such as legal protection of the minority language, formal responsibility and attitudes of the actors involved have been mentioned in the Mercator-Education studies. It is necessary to investigate to what extent differences can be attributed to political arrangements and to the societal benefits and prestige of the lesser used language involved (cf. Giles, Leets & Coupland 1990). Further study should also incorporate the degree of centralization of the public educational system, and the ease with which (educational) interest groups are able to influence educational policy-making in general and curriculum development in particular. Questions such as these suggest a need for making in-depth case-studies (Renkema 1994b Renkema, in press).

### *Anmerkungen*

1. An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper at the 16th Conference of the Comparative Education Society in Europe, Copenhagen, June 1994. The text was shortened and slightly edited. For correspondence: Wim Jan Renkema, Mercator-Education, Department of Social Sciences, Fryske Akademy, Postbus 54, 8900 AB, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, Netherlands. Tel.: 31-58-131414/Fax.: 31-58-131409.
2. For example: the adoption of the Arfé Resolutions (in 1981 and 1983), the Kuijpers Resolution (in 1987) and the Killilea resolution (in 1994) by the European Parliament, and the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe of the European Charter for Regional and Minority languages (1992). This charter has been adopted as a convention, to be ratified by the member states of the Council of Europe. In all resolutions and in the European Charter the contribution of education to maintaining the lesser used languages is firmly stated. The Council of Europe, for instance, speaks of 'the fundamental importance of teaching and, more specifically, of the school system, for the preservation of regional or minority languages' (European Charter for Regional and Minority languages, explanatory memorandum, 1993, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press, 25).
3. The four Mercator branches focus on various topics, viz. media (Aberystwyth, Wales, U.K.), general studies (Paris, France), legislation (Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain) and education (Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, Friesland, the Netherlands). The Mercator network bears the name of Gerard Mercator, the 16th century cartographer who was the first to mark geographical names on maps in the language of the area concerned.
4. The Fryske Akademy is based in Leeuwarden/Ljouwert and is a scientific institute that has dedicated itself since 1938 to research regarding the bilingual province of Friesland (Netherlands). Its three main interests are the Frisian language (Department of Lexicography and Department of Linguistics), Frisian history and literature (Department of Literature, History and Onomastics) and Frisian society, including

sociolinguistic aspects (Department of Social Sciences). Within the Fryske Akademy Mercator-Education's activities are carried out in the Department of Social Sciences.

5. Luxembourgish is not spoken by a minority of the people in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. Nearly all inhabitants of this country speak Luxembourgish. It is nevertheless considered a 'lesser used language' because of its status in the European Union.
6. The name 'EMU' was derived from the Frisian project title: *Europeeske Minderheidstalen yn it primêre Underwiis* (European minority languages in primary education). 'EMOL' was derived from the Frisian project title and is an abbreviation of 'Europeeske minderheidstalen yn 'e oplieding fan leararen' (European minority languages in teacher training). The project aimed at creating an inventory of the training of teachers for primary and secondary schooling in the European Union. LEMA is an abbreviation of learning material; it aimed at creating an inventory of the development, production and dissemination of learning material for minority language education, at the pre-primary and primary level of education in the European Union. PREP is an abbreviation of pre-primary education and aimed at creating an inventory of pre-primary provisions in lesser used languages throughout the European Union.
7. This 'summing up' in order to present the position of the languages in primary education in a clear, albeit reductive, manner is not without problems. Referring to the table shown (cf. appendix 3), Gorter (1991) states the following: 'We have tried to present a final classification of the languages that indicates their relative position in primary education *vis à vis* each other. This table (...) has to be interpreted with great care. (...) It is important to know that this final classification was not arrived at merely by adding up the previous classifications we made of the various sub-aspects. First, we did not have complete data for all aspects, and secondly such a simple sum would mean that the various aspects that could be classified would be weighted in the same way' (Gorter, 1991,61).
8. Schermerhorn's main work has been within the American tradition of race relations research. His most influential publication is *Comparative ethnic relations: a framework for theory and research* (New York: Random House, 1970), in which he distinguishes between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups in society. For Schermerhorn a subordinate minority is a group which is relatively small in size and that is unable to exercise power. Schermerhorn defines 'ethnicity' as: 'a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of peoplehood' (Schermerhorn, 1971, 6).
9. An attempt to relate these two fields of study theoretically was made by Moore (1972). She proposed comparative studies in the area of language varieties in educational systems. Studies of this kind are Shafer & Schafer (1975) and Marks (1976).
10. Although immigrant minorities are also increasingly showing concern for the preservation of their own identity (cf. Liebkind, 1989), their first interest has in general been integration into the majority, in particular with regard to the socio-economical domain.
11. 'Regional identity' is a concept that lacks a clear definition and therefore should be used with care. The same holds true for 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic identity' (cf. Perunovi\_ 1992). Concerning the concept of 'regional identity' Hoekveld (1993) states that: 'it is an inexact, ambiguous, amorphous, multi-interpreted term' (Hoekveld 1993: 15). He nevertheless uses the term, which he defines as 'a representation of some selected and integrated properties of the region as expressed by its inhabitants or by outsiders for whom this selection has a particular meaning and/or interest, while the integration of properties is either real or imagined' (Hoekveld 1993: 15-16). One of this selected properties may be the language used by inhabitants. In this article 'regional identity' is pragmatically defined as the (subjective) ethnic identity of regional groups in contemporary European states. The 'revival' of regional identities can be seen as a response to processes of (inter)national integration and homogenization (cf. Halls 1983). It entails the conscious reconstruction of ethnic identities by contemporary regional groups. Such a revival 'can only succeed when the authorities also create symbolic communities' (Hoekveld 1993: 35). Elements used in this revival include the common past, the language and the literature (cf. McDonald 1993; Hoekveld 1993). Hoekveld (1993) underscores that the revival of regional identities does not exclude the possibility of adherence to other identities (cf. de Swaan 1993).
12. Commenting on proposals for a core curriculum of 'common culture', Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) analyze the concept of culture in this view of the relation between culture and curriculum: 'From this perspective culture (...) is not a terrain of struggle: it is merely an artifact, a warehouse of goods, posited either as a canon of knowledge or a canon of information that has simply to be transmitted (...) ' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, 38).
13. Welch states that in comparative education the idea of the school curriculum as a 'neutral' selection of cultural contents around which consensus exists was increasingly abandoned: 'No longer could knowledge or culture be seen as either monolithic or neutral. On the contrary, knowledge and culture now b e-

came arenas of contest, with classes, gender groupings, or *ethnic groups* [italics added] vying for control. Moreover, different aspects of knowledge and culture have more or less power and status and are connected to the distribution of power in society in particular ways. The notion of 'cultural capital' or 'cultural power' expresses this relationship' (Welch, 1991, 530-531).

14. For a further analysis of the reciprocal relation between ethnic identity and minority language schooling, see Renkema (1994a).

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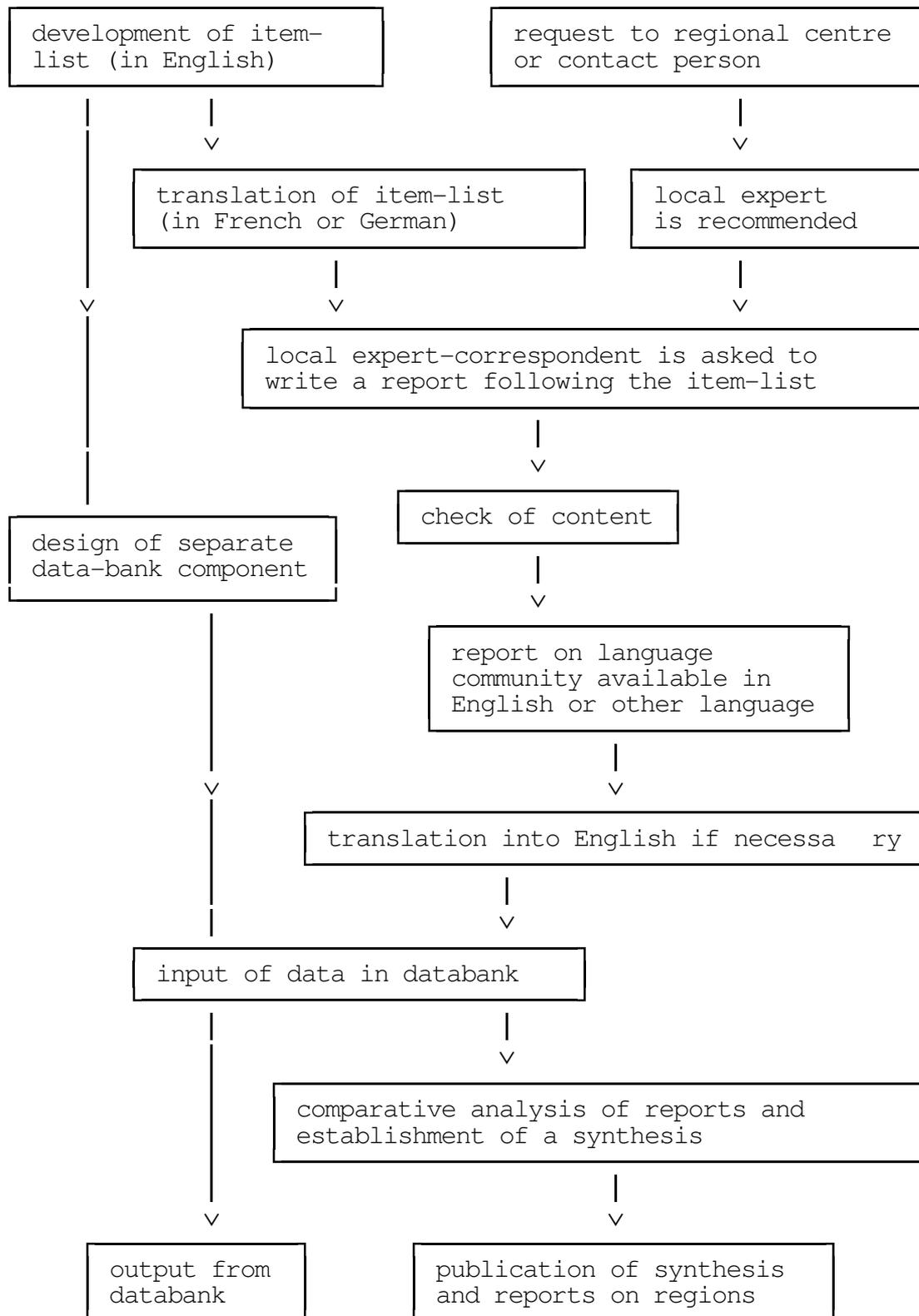
Map of lesser used language communities in the European Union<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> In this map, which was created in 1994, Norway is shown as a member of the European Union. However, Norway recently has decided not to join the Union .

*Table 1:* The conduct of Mercator-Education's comparative inventory studies: a multi-stage design (Source: adapted from Tjeerdsma 1993).



*Table 2:* Relative position of 31 European lesser used languages in primary education (Source: adapted from: Sikma and Gorter, 1988/1991; Gorter, 1991)<sup>2</sup>.

<b>Strong</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Weak</b>
Basque (Spain)	Basque (France)	Albanian (Italy)
Catalan (Spain)	Breton (France)	Catalan (Italy)
Danish (FRG)	Catalan (France)	Cornish (UK)
French (Italy)	Corsican (France)	Croatian (Italy)
Frisian (NL)	German (France)	Flemish (France)
Galician (Spain)	Ladin (Italy)	Friulian (Italy)
German (Belgium)	Occitan (France)	Greek (Italy)
German (Denmark)	Scottish-Gaelic (UK)	Irish (N-Ireland, UK)
German (Italy)		North Frisian (FRG)
Irish (Ireland)		Occitan (Italy)
Luxembourgish (L)		
Slovene (Italy)		
Welsh (UK)		

<sup>2</sup> Saterfrisian (FRG), Romani (Italy) and Sardinian (Italy) also were included in the EMU-inventory. It appeared that they were the only three language communities responding in which no primary provisions whatsoever were available for the minority language involved.

*Table 3:* Relative position of 24 European lesser used languages in teacher education (Source: adapted from: Dekkers, in press, chapter 8.3)<sup>3</sup>.

<b>Strong</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Weak</b>
Basque (Spain)	Breton (France)	Albanian (Italy)
Catalan (Balearic Isles, S.)	Corsican (France)	Basque (France)
Catalan (Catalonia, Spain)	Frisian (NL)	Catalan (France)
Catalan (Valencia, Spain)	German (France)	Friulian (Italy)
Danish (FRG)	Irish (N-Ireland, UK)	Ladin (Italy)
French (Italy)	Scottish-Gaelic (UK)	North Frisian (FRG)
Galician (Spain)	Welsh (UK)	
German (Belgium)		
German (Denmark)		
German (Italy)		
Irish (Ireland)		

<sup>3</sup> Cornish (UK) and Greek (Province of Lecce, Italy) were included in the EMOL-inventory. It appeared that no teacher education provisions whatsoever were available for the minority language involved.