Democratic language education and transculturality

Borders, passages, convergences

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Introduction[1]

In the proposal for a paper that was sent to me, the scientific committee of the conference organised by the University of Salerno specified the request as follows:

> What is the impact of De Mauro's vision, set out in *Dieci tesi per un'educazione linguistica democratica* in 1975, on language education in Europe and in European documents on the development of language acquisition?

> Many European documents, starting with the CEFR, take up the major themes of democratic language education, the theoretical foundations and application of which were developed by Tullio De Mauro. De Mauro's role in defining the identity of educational linguistics is undeniable. But to what extent has De Mauro's revival been reflected in European documents? Have they really taken account of the 'Italian case', i.e. both the specific national history and multilingual situation, and the thinking, particularly that of De Mauro, which has developed innovative linguistic-educational proposals? (my translation from the Italian)

I could start by saying very briefly that the impact of the ideas and proposals developed by De Mauro within Giscel and particularly in *Dieci tesi per un'educazione linguistica democratica* was far from what it could have been. And that would be the end of the matter. There would be no need to turn this observation into a paper. What may be more interesting - but also more complex to unravel - is to try to understand why this was so, why there was so little circulation between Italy and Strasbourg.

To do this, I will adopt a historical approach and focus my analysis on the situation and developments of the projects carried out within the Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe (which later became the Language Policy Division and then the Language Policy Unit), from the early 1970s until recently. I will try to explain how the linguistic and, more broadly, epistemic (and even ideological, in the non-critical sense of the term) references in relation to which this work was carried out differed markedly from demaurian conceptions. Various factors may come into play.

As part of the comparison of contexts, I will also briefly mention the guidelines adopted in France to reform and renovate the teaching of French in the 1970s, at a time when Giscel in Italy was adopting the *Dieci tesi*. It will also be necessary to put forward considerations and reminders of the relative weight of the various languages within the

European institutions and more widely. All of this will be set against the constancy of the project and De Mauro's major contribution.

And, throughout the journey I am proposing here, I note convergences and crossovers in terms of language education policy, including from a democratic perspective, between the demaurian theses and the productions of the Council of Europe, but starting from and depending on situations, developments and aims that are largely different[2].

Remorse and tribute

Before embarking on the journey I have just outlined, I would like to express a personal remorse and tribute. It is personal, but it has to do very directly with the question I have been asked. Although I have been involved in language didactics and language policy for a very long time, I only really discovered the *Dieci tesi* and Giscel's proposals about twenty years ago, through the study produced in 2003 for the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe by Edvige Costanzo under the title *Language Education (Educazione linguistica) in Italy: an experience for Europe?* (Costanzo, 2003). There have been more frequent occasions since then (Cavalli, 2007; Coste, Cavalli, Crissant & van de Ven, 2007) but it took me several decades to come across De Mauro's contribution.

I met Tullio De Mauro in Viterbo in 2010, at the XLIV Congresso della Società di Linguistica Italiana (SLI), organised by Silvana Ferreri. Tullio was kind enough to tell me that he appreciated the lecture I had given entitled 'On some language aspects of plurilingual and intercultural education' (Coste, 2012), which focused entirely on the work of the Council of Europe. Above all, he had the extreme courtesy not to remind me that he himself, many years earlier, had done much more than pave the way in this direction.

Some aspects and effects of transcultural relations

In what follows, I will draw on findings and analyses that relate to the concept of transculturality. This concept has recently been the subject of a reasoned construction by Jürgen Erfurt (Erfurt, 2021; Coste, 2019, 2023). He develops his own conception of transculturality and the process of transculturation in relation to other authors from different fields. Although transculturation is fundamentally seen as a balance of power in an unbalanced relationship, it is not reduced to a reductive political and polemical reading. The process is considered at different levels, ranging from individual and family migration to historically unbalanced relationships between cultural groupings (such as those produced by colonisation).

I believe that this process of transculturation is of direct interest to my purpose here. And I would like to explore it at different levels and from different angles, all of which, in my

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[2] As I was writing this paper, I discovered, the article just published in *Italiano LinguaDue* by Monica Barni: Dalle Tesi GISCEL ai documenti di politica pluri(?)-linguistica europea: stesse sfide in contesti diversi (Barni, 2023). But this article does not interfere with my present analysis.

opinion, have to do with the question of the reception or non-reception of Tullio De Mauro's work in European institutions. I would like to begin by briefly recalling situations and developments that are well known, but which are relevant to our subject.

At the macrocultural and macrolinguistic level: the relationships between languages and cultures in Europe, within the movements that have marked the last 50 years, are easy to observe.

- Massive influence of cultural and linguistic references and practices of Anglo-Saxon origin, particularly North American, in a globalisation dynamic[3]
- In both Italy and France, English has become the dominant language as a result of both political choices and social demand, and there is no need to stress the imbalance in cross-cultural circulation, to the detriment of French in Italy and German in France.
- Even so, Italian had less of a place in the French education system than French did in Italy.

In terms of disciplines, transcultural dimensions are not irrelevant either. From one country or geographical area to another, transitions are more or less likely. With the modulations already mentioned, and if we set aside the 'hard' sciences (mathematics, physics, etc.) and medicine (provided that publications are in English), it seems that the humanities and social sciences (philosophy, sociology, anthropology) cross cultural barriers more easily - even against the dominant current - than, say, the educational sciences (see, for example, the recognition of Foucault, Derrida or Bourdieu in the United States[4]).

And if we focus more closely on education, it is clear that ideas and proposals relating to the learning of foreign languages are (insofar as they come from countries or institutions with a strong presence in the field) more easily disseminated across cultures than those relating to the teaching of the 'mother tongue' and 'national' literature of a given country, which is much more culturally rooted in the traditions and contextual specificities of the territory[5] .

Another notable difference that I think can be linked to the line I'm trying to take is that research work undoubtedly tends to circulate more widely transculturally than work in the field of contextual intervention. This is all the truer because, in many fields where

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[3] This is not to say that these processes are unidirectional. Even against a backdrop of global imbalance, local adaptations and resistance are at work, leading to forms of what has been termed 'glocalisation'. In addition, very contemporary phenomena, such as the affirmation and retreat of identities (including religious dimensions) and geopolitical multipolarities, are affecting, by blocking or making more complex, the transculturations that were still considered triumphant at the end of the 20th century.

[4] Recognition through translation. Whereas in the scientific sectors just mentioned, recognition comes through direct publication in the dominant international language.

[5] This observation has a direct bearing on the issue we are dealing with here: the *Dieci tesi* are tackling the challenge of reforming the teaching of the national language.

legitimacy is sometimes fragile, research also seeks its own recognition by distancing itself from societal and social intervention and its institutional neighbours[6] .

More generally, local civic and political commitment is not easily exported in its modes of analysis and argumentation, precisely because it is rooted in a particular history and situation, which alone gives it its full meaning. In this respect, democratic language education and the place of languages in democratic education constitute a challenge that can be taken up, shared and give rise to transcultural convergences, without this becoming an issue of precedence.

Finally, with regard to the role of the Council of Europe, one must not underestimate the importance of its institutional bilingualism and the need for studies, reports, recommendations and other instruments to be published in both English and French (which is not the case for the European Union). This founding measure presents an undeniable advantage for the French language insofar as contributions of French-speaking origin, initially drafted in French, are also statutorily accessible to a non-French-speaking public with a command of English, whatever the cultural environment and particularities of this public, for example in the field of education. The reverse is obviously true, but we are well aware that this official parity between the two languages cannot conceal the imbalance between them on the European and world stage. And beyond the positive aspects of this two-way game between French and English, it is clear that it contributes to a certain de facto undermining of the other European languages in a Union that today has 46 members countries[7] .

The importance of cross-border disseminators

A final point can be added to the list of factors affecting transcultural circulation. It relates to the dimensions mentioned above and directly concerns the reception of De Mauro's work: his purely linguistic work, touching on the theory of language, was recognised in France long before his contributions in the field of language education. This is a significant discrepancy that needs to be clarified more concretely by a series of dates of publication of translations in French.

Introduzione alla semantica, published in 1965 by Laterza (De Mauro,1965) was translated into French by Louis-Jean Calvet in 1969, published by Payot, under the title *Une introduction à la sémantique*. De Mauro's translation of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* appeared in 1967, also published by Laterza. Its critical apparatus ("Introduzione e commento al 'Corso di linguistica generale' ") was translated into French by Calvet and added to the 1972 reissue of the *Course* by Payot. The 1985 reprint also includes an *afterword* by Calvet.

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[6] Since we are also talking here about the role and influence of the Council of Europe, I cannot fail to point out that, in the eyes of certain critical specialists in the field of languages, the proposals of the Language Policy Division are insufficiently based on research and come under the heading of technical interventionism, or even neo-liberal ideology, in which 'experts' of dubious legitimacy are compromised.

[7] Germany has regularly contested this state of affairs, and German is now indirectly recognised in the work of the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages) based in Graz, Austria.

As for a translation of De Mauro's publications on language education, it was not until 2022 that a selection of texts, first edited by Silvana Loiero and Marie Antonietta Marchese (De Mauro, 2018) and then translated by Pierre Escudé, appeared in French by Lambert-Lucas under the title *L'éducation linguistique démocratique* (De Mauro, 2022). Admittedly, De Mauro had not published a book bringing together his work on educational language policy and education[8]. Nonetheless, recognition of his work has come late, and owes everything to the tenacity of those who passed it on, rowing against the tide, so to speak. In addition to Louis-Jean Calvet, already mentioned, and the editors and preface authors of the collection of texts, we should mention Jean-Claude Beacco (Beacco, 2019, 2022), whose ties with Italy are many and varied. It was he who, as an expert with the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in the early 2000s, invited Edvige Costanzo to produce the reference study *L'éducation linguistique (Educazione linguistica) en Italie: une expérience pour l'Europe?* (Costanzo, 2003). And let us not forget Pierre Escudé, a tireless and generous volunteer translator and knowledgeable commentator (Escudé, 2019, 2022)[9] as well as central in the publication in French of an homage to De Mauros's work and influence (Arabyan, Bronckart & Escudé, 2019. Globalised *bestsellers* are the subject of rivalry between publishers seeking to secure translation rights, but for works in academic circuits that are not first published in English, we need committed campaigners to promote their translation into another language[10].

Origin of the Council of Europe's "Modern Languages Projects

While it is important to identify the shifts in action and proposals that have taken place in Strasbourg, there are two important documents by academics who have played a major role in the Council's language policy development.
One owes the first document to John L. Trim, who, for over twenty years (from the early 1970s to the late 1990s), was director of the successive "Modern Languages Projects" and who, in 2002, while experts continued to develop pilot projects, retraced their steps under the title *Modern languages in the Council of Europe 1954-1997. International co-operation in support of lifelong language learning for effective communication, mutual cultural enrichment and democratic citizenship in Europe* (Trim, 2002).
The second text is essentially the work of Jean-Claude Beacco[11]. *Languages for democracy and social cohesion. Diversity, equity and quality. Sixty years of European*

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[8] *Scuola e linguaggio* (De Mauro, 1977), with this encompassing title, could have attracted attention outside Italy, is indeed a work in the field of language education, but because it is so firmly rooted in the Italian school system, it was too contextualised to lend itself to translation for the French-speaking world.
[9] Pierre Escudé has translated not only *L'educazione linguistica democratica*, but also other works from T. De Mauro: *Parole di giorni lontani* and *Parole di giorni un po' meno lontani*.
[10] Cross-border dissemination sometimes occurs. Pierre Escudé has written a new preface (Escudé, 2022) for the Lambert-Lucas reprint of *Une introduction à la sémantique*.
[11] who, along with Michael Byram, was programme adviser to the Language Policy Division in the early 2000s, whose director at the time was Joseph Sheils. I would like to mention the names of these three colleagues because of the decisive role they played in the rapid transformation of the Council's work from the learning of modern (foreign) languages to the development of plurilingual and intercultural education. Joe Sheils, in the exercise of his official responsibilities, has been a driving force within the institution, constantly sharing and supporting the guidelines and proposals of the evolving group of experts associated with the projects.

co-operation (Council of Europe, 2014), published on the occasion of the 60th anniversary (2014-1954) of the Council's activities in the field of modern languages, gives a broad outline of this journey. These two documents, very different in style, scope and the occasion on which they were written, are complementary and revealing, including on the ways in which concepts circulate across borders. One will note that they both mention the democratic dimension of the projects.

But let me return now to an earlier date. In 1975 (the very same year as the *Dieci Tesi*) *The Threshold Level* (Van Ek, 1975) was published, under the aegis of the Council of Europe and the first Modern Languages Project, to be followed in 1976 by *Un niveau-seuil* (Coste et al., 1976). In a sense, this is where the answer to the question put to me comes from, this is where the gap between the guidelines and work of the Council of Europe on the one hand, and the positions taken by De Mauro on the other, becomes apparent.

The fundamental difference concerns the subject itself. The *Dieci Tesi* adresses the Italian context and the conception and teaching of Italian as a school subject (a 'mother tongue' rich in dialects and constituent variation); whereas *The Threshold Level* deals with a 'foreign' language and the setting of a limited objective and content for a first functional level of learning.

But above all, *The Theshold Level*, *Un niveau-seuil* and similar publications for other languages (including, for Italian, *Livello Soglia*, published in 1982) are part of a dual movement, the components of which are quite distinct but complementary. On the one hand, the explicit model adopted is that of training systems based on the definition of credit units (*unit-credit system*). This is a modular system defined in particular by Bertrand Schwartz[12] in 1968 (Schwartz, 1968), with a view to adult continuing education (see Coste 2022). In this context, the major document produced by the group of experts coordinated by John L. Trim was *Systems development in adult language learning* (Trim, Richterich, Van Ek & Wilkins, 1973-1980).

On the other hand, from a theoretical and epistemological point of view, a pragmatic conception of language referring to the work of John L. Austin (Austin, 1962) and the theory of speech acts. To this can be added the influence of Dell Hymes, who introduced the notion of *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1972), which was to serve as the standard for communicative approaches in foreign language teaching.

In the mid-1970s, the Council of Europe's work on modern languages produced an unexpected combination of adult continuing education systems based on credit units, the philosophy of language and the sociolinguistics of speech events.

Admittedly, in a global conception where the objectives of learning a foreign language are characterised in relation to the "language needs" (present or future) of the learners, the speech acts that they will have to perform or understand, the notions that they will

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[12] As director of the Institut national de formation des adultes de Nancy (INFA), Bertrand Schwartz played an important role in the development of adult continuing education. The unit-credit system was developed to enable young people and adults to prepare for the CAP (Certificat d'aptitude profssionnelle).

have to express or interpret, these practical and pragmatic aims are certainly not totally at odds with (part of) the aims that Giscel attributes to the school. But they are far removed from the vast global conception and plural vision of languages that De Mauro posits when he writes:

> … la compresenza sia di linguaggi di tipo diverso (verbale, gestuale, iconico, ecc.), cioè di diversi tipi di semiosi, sia di idiomi diversi, sia di diverse norme di realizzazione d'un medesimo idioma. Esso pare una condizione permanente della specie umana e, quindi, di ogni società umana. L'età contemporanea, attraverso i grandi moti migratori, l'eccezionale sviluppo dei linguaggi artificiali e di quelli formalizzanti o formali delle scienze, l'introduzione e diffusione di tecnologie che consentono la riproduzione e diffusione mondiale e di massa delle produzioni segniche d'ogni tipo, esalta oltre ogni limite noto la capacità plurilingue delle società umane (De Mauro, 1977 Scuola e linguaggio (1975) 2018: 73)[13].

In the comments that accompany the emphasis on the innovative and founding nature of De Mauro's contribution to the 1970s movement, there is a particular insistence on the democratic nature of this educazione linguistica, and it would not be surprising if, with regard to this dimension, and even without there being a crossover and influence, a position of the same order were displayed in Strasbourg, by virtue of the very values to which the European institution has committed itself since its creation in 1949. But this is not exactly what we find. The institution that houses the European Court of Human Rights obviously places the emphasis on human rights and, from the outset, on the defence and protection of fundamental freedoms. It was only after 1989 and the opening up to the countries of the former USSR that the three poles of Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy became the institution's calling card, so to speak.

And meanwhile in France

It might be thought that, while there is a major gap between this plural conception of languages and language put forward by De Mauro and the guidelines and references which, at the same time, may be recommended or inspired by the instruments developed by the first Modern Languages Project of the Council of Europe, there are closer links and stronger overlaps to be found between the criticisms and proposals put forward by the *Dieci Tesi* and what was happening in France, at around the same time and in a certain post-1968 movement.

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[13] … the coexistence of both languages of different types (verbal, gestural, iconic, etc.), i.e. of different types of semiosis, and of different idioms, as well as of different norms of realisation of the same idiom. It appears to be a permanent condition of the human species and, therefore, of every human society. The contemporary age, through the great migratory movements, the exceptional development of artificial languages and of formalising or formal languages of the sciences, the introduction and diffusion of technologies that allow the worldwide and mass reproduction and diffusion of sign productions of all kinds, exalts beyond all known limits the plurilingual capacity of human societies (De Mauro, 1977, Scuola e linguaggio (1975) 2018: 73).

In fact - but this needs to be looked at more closely - I believe that despite similar historical situations, the projects and implementations at the time differed significantly between France and Italy, even though militant groups in both countries were convinced that the teaching of the 'mother tongue' needed to be radically changed. I will confine myself here to highlighting a few characteristics of the French scene[14].

In 1967, a renovation plan for primary education was officially drawn up ("Plan Rouchette") (Bishop, 2008). A period of experimentation was planned until 1972 in various locations, with teams of teachers also working with academics as part of the Institut pédagogique national (IPN). The emphasis was on communication (with grammar taking second place), oral expression (also as a preparation for the written word), and the teacher's role was one of facilitation rather than imposition. Linguistics and linguists played an important role in supporting the reform project, which gave rise to fierce controversy, both in terms of opposition between supporters of traditional teaching methods and reformists, and in the political arena. The Ministry of Education was cautious in its final publication, and the content of the reform was watered down even further when, in 1975, with the introduction of the "collège unique"[15], the ambivalent notion of "mastering the language" was put on the agenda for primary school as a prerequisite for success at collège.

This whole movement is explicitly part of a wider democratisation of the education system, in which the teaching of French, particularly at primary level, has a decisive role to play. Renewed French language teaching should therefore facilitate access for all children to a language that enriches their communication with others and enables them to express themselves in writing and orally in a personalised way, thus enabling a greater number of them to pursue a long secondary education.

In the 1970s in France, there was no expression equivalent to "democratic language education", but there was certainly a desire, at a time when secondary education was opening up to all pupils, to make language dimensions a determining factor in this democratisation process. This is not without its tensions and resistance. There were certain similarities with what was happening in Italy during the same years, but with three notable differences which I mention here without analysing them:

- The linguistic concepts of reference were diverse in France, but the dominant currents at the time tended to be structuralist-inspired, in a form of 'applied linguistics'; links were established with the approaches developed for French as a foreign language in the 1960s.
- Linguistic variation is taken into account to a lesser extent than in the work of Tullio De Mauro and Giscel. It is more a question of 'registers' and 'levels of language' than of plurality of semioses.

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[14] For comments on the Italian scene, see, among others, De Carlo & Bonvino (2019).
[15] The Haby reform of 1975 (named after the Minister of Education at the time) put an end to the system of streams (modern, classical, transition/practical) that had previously been in place. The aim was to establish a "collège for all" (the first cycle of "secondary education") as a continuation of the "school for all" (primary education).

- It's also because in a country where French is the constitutional language of a "one and indivisible" Republic, the representations and regulations attached to its teaching are and remain more prevalent than for Italian in a country where dialects have their rightful place and recognition.

In short, I have made this diversions via the French scene, at a time when the *Dieci Tesi* are being published in Italy, in order to show that, on the one hand, there are historical similarities in the movements affecting education systems that have to manage more democratic access to secondary education, but that, on the other hand, the common recognition of the importance of the language dimensions - and particularly of the major language of schooling - in this process is expressed in very different ways in the two countries. And this for historical as well as macro-sociolinguistic reasons.

A final remark to close this excursus: to my knowledge, there is no reference in the French debate of the 1970s to the work of Giscel or to the positions taken by De Mauro, whereas at the same time, as noted *above*, De Mauro's *Introduzione alla semantica* and *Introduzione e commento al 'Corso di linguistica generale* were translated into French. In the mid-seventies, he is no stranger to France. Confirmation of the different regimes in transcultural relations and circulations.

Twenty years on at the Council of Europe: plurilingualism and plurilingual competence

While, in the 1970s, it was partly the development of education systems and their integration of new student populations that called into question the teaching of the 'mother tongue' of schooling, it was another opening up, that of Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Wall in 1989, that helped to accelerate certain developments underway at the Council of Europe in the Modern Languages Section[16] .

Taking account of linguistic and cultural plurality and diversity is certainly part of the institutional mandate of an international organisation founded in 1949 for the purposes of communication, cooperation and mutual understanding between the countries of Western Europe, just emerging from the Second World War and now facing the Soviet bloc. But it was not until the 1990s that the notion of plurilingualism appeared and gradually made its way into the language teaching landscape (see, among many others, Coste & Hébrard, 1991). And it is a question of *individual plurilingualism*, first of all in French, within the Council of Europe itself, and differentiated from *societal multilingualism.*[17]

It should be remembered that De Mauro, in his 1977 text offering a very broad vision and definition of what he meant by plurilingualism, was operating at a completely different conceptual level, in terms of both comprehension and extension. Plurilingualism, made up of the multiplicity of semioses and the internal variation that each presents, reinforced

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[16] In 1998, this became the Language Policy Division - the change of name and level in the organisation chart being anything but irrelevant.

[17] For the record: it was some time before the Council's translators stopped systematically translating *plurilinguisme* as *multilingualism* and agreed to introduce *plurilingualism* as distinct from *multilingualism*.

by the technologies available, is nothing less, in his terms, than "the plurilingual capacity of the human species".

The distance (but at the same time the all-embracing compatibility) between this demaurian conception and the notion of plurilingual competence, as presented in the 1990s in a study (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 1997) prepared for the Council of Europe in the context of the development of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) is flagrant[18] . Even if this notion was subsequently more solidly developed conceptually, it is first and foremost the result of a didactic gesture aimed at establishing a plurilingual curriculum economy, arguing in favour of the learning of several modern foreign languages in the school curriculum, in opposition to a trend which, in many education systems, tends to make English the *de facto* only foreign language that pupils learn.

And what needs to be emphasised here is that this study, like the CEFR which takes up the concept, places plurilingual competence within a framework which remains that of the teaching and learning of foreign languages (or, in any case, languages other than the main language of schooling as a subject and as the principal medium of instruction). Admittedly, the original 1997 definition, reproduced here, can perfectly well cover all the languages available to an individual, as the last reference in the definition implies, characterising a plurilingual competence which may be heterogeneous, *but which is one as a repertoire available to the social actor concerned.* Nevertheless, it is primarily in the sphere of modern foreign language teaching that the notion of plurilingual competence is circulating and spreading.

Rethinking language education policies in a changing Europe

From 1991 onwards, the pace of change began to accelerate, affecting national language policies. Migratory movements, the assertion of minorities in search of recognition, the westward bias of countries that had emerged from the Soviet sphere - these were all rapid developments that led not just to a rethink of teaching methods, but also to a rethink of education policies and language policies. Promoting plurilingualism also means highlighting relationships of domination and inequality between languages and between users. The issue of language rights has to do with the "protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms", which was the basis for the creation of the Council of Europe in 1949. Its European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages was adopted in 1992 and came into force in 1998[19]. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National

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[18] In its original formulation, the concept of plurilingual (and pluricultural) competence is defined as follows: *Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the competence to communicate in language and to interact culturally possessed by a speaker who has mastered, to varying degrees, several languages and has had varying degrees of experience of several cultures, while being able to manage all this linguistic and cultural capital. The major option is to consider that there is no superposition or juxtaposition of skills that are always distinct, but rather the existence of a plural, complex, even composite and heterogeneous skill, which includes singular, even partial, skills but which is one as a repertoire available to the social actor concerned* (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 1997, p. 12; CECR, 2001, p. 129).

[19] De Mauro played a role in the movement which led to the creation of this language policy instrument.

Minorities was adopted in 1994, and its system of national reports and advisory committee opinions was set up to defend freedoms.

It was against this backdrop that Jean-Claude Beacco and Michael Byram wrote a *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies* for the Language Policy Division (Beacco & Byram, 2003, final revised version: 2007), entitled *From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education*. This publication represents a double qualitative leap in relation to the CEFR: 1) it is not a reference framework but an operational guide and 2) the aim is not just to "learn, teach and assess" (CEFR) but to educate in and through languages. We are resolutely entering a new dynamic, and this broadening of perspectives in the thinking and productions of the Council of Europe is part of a series of developments and debates, of which I will only mention a few salient points here:

- The place given to cultural dimensions is initially uncertain. Already, the notion of plurilingual and pluricultural competence had often been reduced, in usage, to plurilingual competence; Beacco and Byram's Guide sticks in its title to "plurilingual education"; at various times, variations between "plurilingual and pluricultural" and "plurilingual and intercultural" will appear...
- The question has been decided in favour of the *Platform of resources and references for plurilingual and intercultural education*, which is available online on the Council of Europe's website[20] and is a mine of information that has yet to be fully explored.
- The 2003-2007 *Guide* was followed by two others, more directly focused on operationalising plurilingual and intercultural education: the *Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education* (Beacco et al., 2010-2016), which has also been published in two successive editions, the second of which has enriched the first thanks to the contributions of various seminars and work in the meantime, including a third guide, more closely linked to the relationship between languages and subjects in the curriculum, the *Guide to Curriculum Development and Teacher Training. The linguistic dimensions of all school subjects* (Beacco et al., 2016). These guides also have the common feature of being published at a time when the Council's priorities for education are focusing on quality and equity.

In the years since 1989, the values and priorities set by the Council of Europe have, for obvious reasons, been more strongly expressed, with some shifts in emphasis over time. Three immovable pillars are constantly recalled: "human rights, democracy, the rule of law"; at one point the prospect of "European citizenship" is mentioned, later rewritten as "democratic citizenship"; quality and equity in education are part of an objective of "social cohesion".

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[20] At the following address: https://www.coe.int/fr/web/platform-plurilingual-intercultural-language-education/

A journey together

It was in the context of the preparation of the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies* that a number of "satellite" studies were commissioned. One of these, entrusted to Edvige Costanzo (on the initiative of Jean-Claude Beacco), was already mentioned at the beginning of this contribution and is entitled *L'éducation linguistique (Educazione linguistica) en Italie: une expérience pour l'Europe?* (Costanzo, 2003). Almost 30 years after the *Dieci Tesi*, contact has been established. How will this 'experience' be taken into account in the years that followed, the major developments in which have just been outlined?

It should be said that, although this late contact did not radically alter the Language Policy Division's programmes, it did have some notable consequences. In particular, there is a very explicit and detailed reference to l'Education linguistique démocratique in *Un document européen de référence pour les langues de l'éducation ?* (Coste, Cavalli, Crişan & van de Ven, 2007)[21] . Democratic language education is presented as a contribution to plurilingual education. The document also has some interesting features. It was prepared for an Intergovernmental Conference held in Prague in November 2007 and entitled: *Languages of Schooling within a European Framework for Languages of Education: learning, teaching, assessment*. The allusion and the parallel drawn with the CEFR published in 2001 (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*) show a significant shift in a few years:

- the "languages of education" are all the languages present in the education system; we are clearly in the logic of plurilingual education
- the "languages of schooling", "mother tongues" or not, major languages of the school, are obviously part of the languages of education and have a central and pivotal role in it
- *Un document européen de référence pour les langues de l'éducation?"*, a "document" rather than a "framework", presented in the form of a question, takes a broad view of the CEFR, but will in fact remain at the questioning stage.

In addition to the development given to *Educazione Linguistica*, a significant place is given to the notion of *Bildung*, referring to the Germanic conception of a global, humanistic and individualising education, far removed from purely functional or utilitarian learning. A balance to be struck with the more resolutely social dimension *of Educazione linguistica democratica*.

Ironically, *A European reference document for the languages of education?* is one of the resources available online on the Council of Europe's language policy website, in both French and English, but, presented as a contribution to the 2007 Intergovernmental Conference, it has not been officially published. Ironically again, it was translated into Italian by Rosa Calò and Silvana Ferreri *(Un documento europeo di referimento per le lingue dell'educazione?*) and published by Editions Sette Città (Calò & Ferreri, 2009).

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[21] This contribution is due in particular to Marisa Cavalli, another example of "passage".

At the end of the day, what we have to recognise is that the Council of Europe's language policies and the developments they are undergoing are part of a scale which, because it has a scope other than that of movements specific to the situation of a particular State, is always out of step with the potential contributions of this other area. This is all the more the case given that factors related to the multiple conditions of transcultural circulation, as described at the beginning of this text, may come into play.

The culmination of the path I have tried to retrace for the Council of Europe is a form of convergence and proximity with the theses of *l'Educazione linguistica democratica*, as they had been shaped, on the one hand, by conditions specific to Italy's linguistic situation and the specificities of teaching Italian as a subject and language of schooling, and on the other, by De Mauro's powerful vision of the "plurilingual capacity of the human species". And the origins of the Council's work, set here at the beginning of the 1970s, lie a long way from *Dieci tesi* in that, on the one hand, it concerned only modern foreign languages and, on the other hand, the epistemic and systemic options adopted at the time, inspired as much by adult education technology as by various variations of pragmatism, were at the very least hardly compatible with De Mauro's conceptions of language. From this we can infer that, over the last forty years or so, it is the Council of Europe that has been moving, so to speak, towards a form, if not of integration, at least of companionship with *Educazione linguistica democratica*.

In conclusion

Let's go back to our starting point and the question I was asked, namely:

> In the context of the analysis of possible De Mauro and Italian contributions to the European plurilinguistic vision, the topic of plurisemiotic education from early childhood emerges, for a better development of verbal language itself and for the development of multimodal and multimedia competence. This interpretation of plurilingualism, understood as plurilingualism of verbal languages and other types of languages, is based on a general theoretical model of semiosis, on which De Mauro has always based the analyses of his different objects of study. Is this link between the general theoretical dimension and the linguistic-educational sphere present in European policy documents on plurilingualism? (my translation from the Italian)

Clearly, in the light of the foregoing reminders and analyses, the answer must be in the negative. The conception of plurilingualism adopted in the work of the Council of Europe includes the plurality of languages and the constitutive plurality of any language. Many of the studies produced and the *Guides* take multimodality and the articulation between languages and other forms of semiosis into consideration, but the issue is not to recommend any kind of semiotic theorising.

Should we see this as a serious shortcoming and a sort of epistemological flaw that would invalidate the scope of the Council's work and would be due to the lack of information and theorising capacity of the "experts" who produced it? You will understand that I am

personally ill placed to formulate an opinion on this question. Suffice it to say that there has been no shortage of critical questioning of the Language Policy Division's proposals and instruments from various quarters and angles. This is also due to the fact that they have been widely disseminated and, as a result, have been very vulnerable to challenges to their relevance or their foundations.

Now, if we look at the political level and the societal role that the Council of Europe can play, the tangible is perhaps to be found in a text with a strong symbolic impact (rather than a proven performative force!) such as Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture[22] . Another useful and necessary tool for mediation is the book edited by Michael Byram, Mike Fleming and Joseph Sheils entitled *Quality and Equity in Education. A Practical Guide to the Council of Europe Vision of Education for Plurilingual, Intercultural and Democratic Citizenship* (Byram, Fleming & Sheils, 2023).

There are many ways of summing up and assessing the answers to the initial questions: different stakes, difficult circulation, opportunities ignored or badly seized, late convergence, imperfect coincidences... In the final analysis, what matters is that we come together to defend the right causes and promote the same values. A final twist? Perhaps, but in any case, thank you to the mediators and messengers who, at different moments, have passed the message on, in both directions,

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[22] Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 February 2022 at the 1423rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

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