

CONSULTANCY REPORT II URUGUAY

Embedding foreign language learning progressions
within the framework of the MCRN
Analysis, Guidelines and Recommendations

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CONSULTANCY TO SUPPORT THE PROCESS OF DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LEARNING PROGRESSIONS IN THE LANGUAGE DOMAIN (FOREIGN LANGUAGES) ASSOCIATED WITH THE NATIONAL REFERENCE FRAMEWORK (MCRN) (UR-T1144)

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANEP	Administración Nacional de Educación Pública (National Board of Public Education)
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FL	Foreign Language
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MCRN	Marco Curricular de Referencia Nacional (National Reference Curriculum Framework)

1 Introductory discussion of MCRN priorities

The provision of high-quality education for all young people is a high priority in most jurisdictions worldwide today, including Uruguay. Two particular threads of concern in addressing this target run throughout the MRCN document – that of so-called *universalisation* or provision of education for all and *inclusion* or ensuring provision is designed to meet the individual needs of every learner, whatever their background. In essence, these themes address not only the expectations of equality of opportunity but also an expectation of equity in education.

These challenging and complex priorities deserve some further discussion in this introductory section of the Report, particularly given the difficulties in translating specific terminology that can sometimes cause meanings to be lost where there is no exact equivalent in both languages. In this discussion I aim to establish a baseline for the critical examination of further themes included in the MCRN which may be of particular relevance to the foreign language progressions.

In a discussion of contemporary education policy and globalisation, Rizvi & Lingard (2010, p.76) propose that equity in education is concerned with ‘who gets what, when and how?’ Elaborating on this definition they argue that education systems today are shaped by a very narrow definition of equity, principally concerned with issues of access to educational opportunities and failing to ‘address the broader historical and political contexts that produce disadvantage in the first place’ (p.157). They propose that through a focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (UN, 2015) contemporary definitions of equality have been framed in terms of universal access to primary schooling, gender equality in education, and ensuring access to information technology in education, with the aim of overcoming ‘the digital divide’ (p.153). However, in establishing these timebound, measurable targets there is an assumption that access alone will produce social justice. This position ignores the historical conditions which continue to define quality of provision and fail to seriously address what conditions might actually contribute to success. They conclude that, as such, the MDG adopts ‘a very weak definition of the concept of justice’ (p.157).

Rizvi and Lingard's (2010) account confirms the importance of drawing a distinction between the terms *equality* and *equity* – terms which are often used interchangeably. The following front cover illustration from the Handbook on Measuring Equity in Education (UNESCO, 2018) clarifies the distinction by emphasizing that equality may offer equal access to education, but a prerequisite for facilitating equity in terms of educational outcomes is to ensure an equal starting point for all learners (figure 1). Thus, young people who may experience lack of equity by reason of such factors as family socioeconomic status, minority language status, specific individual needs (both physical and cognitive), lack of access to qualified teacher expertise, geographical remoteness and familial negative socio-historical perceptions of education will be in need of targeted support if social justice is to be fully achieved.



Figure 1. Equity and the potential for equal outcomes (adapted from cover illustration, Handbook on measuring equity in education, UNESCO, 2018).

This viewpoint is addressed in some detail in the MCRN's Appendix 1 which provides a discussion of both the importance and the challenges of overcoming socio-historical patterns of disadvantage that have resulted in a lack of equity for educational provision in Uruguay. However, a stronger acknowledgement of the need to pay attention to the wider aspects of social disadvantage, some of which do not lend themselves well to the global trend in measurement and accountability, will also need to be addressed in the future, if Uruguay is to fully achieve a position of equity across all education phases. In the following sections of the Report this theme will be further elaborated with reference to specific aspects of foreign language (FL) provision.

2. Democracy and the formation of Learning Progressions (FLs)

Report I (Enever, 2018), submitted to ANEP in November 2018 included a detailed account of the democratic procedure adopted for the design and formation of the Learning Progressions for FLs. At each stage of the process a rigorous procedure of consultation with a range of actors was undertaken, aiming to ensure that the final document would facilitate educational inclusion for all. A guiding principle in the selection of outcomes to be achieved at the end of each phase of compulsory schooling was that these should be set at a *minimum* level, to be achieved by all. With this principle in mind, it was important to consider learning contexts where the access to quality FL provision was limited by the challenges of geographical remoteness and associated difficulties in the supply of qualified FL teachers and / or the provision of remote online teaching. In this sense, the Learning Progressions (FLs) have adopted a strong notion of equity, one which pays ‘attention to the historical conditions that define people’s capacity to benefit from state provisions – not simply to issues of access, but also to outcomes’ (Rizvi & Lingard (2010, p.76).

The following six sections will address each of the so called ‘guiding forces’ of the MRCN, reviewing the ways in which the Learning Progressions are linked to these. This is followed by a final section drawing attention to FL-specific factors that may also need to be more fully addressed with regard to question of equity, despite their lack of inclusion in the MCRN.

3. Guiding principles

3.1 Education as a human right

The principle of *Education as a human right* can be traced back to a UN Declaration formulated in the aftermath of World War II (UN, 1948) with the aim of establishing peace and stability for the future. Article 26 of 30 articles states the following:

- (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
- (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

(UN, 1948, p.7)

As an aside, it is perhaps pertinent to note here the contribution made by the Uruguayan representative, Senator Isabel Pinto de Vidal, who was instrumental in contributing to the full acknowledgement of women's rights during the negotiation of wording for the Declaration. From the date of this initial Declaration many further elaborations have been constructed with regard to education, both by the UN and by individual nation states. However, even after more than 70 years, it cannot yet be claimed that the right to education has been fulfilled in the majority of jurisdictions worldwide.

With reference specifically to the inclusion of foreign languages in the Uruguayan curriculum, this places a requirement for the State and for individual schools to ensure opportunities for all school students to learn a FL are provided. In the case of Uruguay a decision has been taken to provide English as a compulsory subject from primary year 4 to the end of compulsory schooling (Media 6) in all schools. This is a particularly demanding remit in the more remote regions of the country where some 980 primary schools reportedly were still without an English teacher or access to remote learning opportunities in 2018 (Enever, 2018, p.13)

In the regions close to the Brazilian border, where Uruguayan Portuguese is commonly the regional language, Uruguayan Spanish will inevitably be positioned as a second language and English as a third. In these contexts learners are likely to experience some cross-linguistic benefits gained from classroom exposure and increased metacognitive awareness as a result of their plurilingual experience. However, it will be important to pay particular attention to quality provision of all three languages in these regions if the minimum required levels of proficiency are to be achieved and the right to education in the regional language (minority language /L1), L2 (Uruguayan Spanish) and the FL (English) is to be fully realised. Currently, no Learning Progressions for Uruguayan Portuguese or for Spanish as L2 have yet been designed. These will need attention in the future to ensure that school students right to an education which acknowledges their cultural and linguistic identity is fully realized.

3.2 Student-centred learning

The MCRN emphasizes the importance of placing the student at the centre of learning, reflecting a model of teaching and learning where students have the opportunity to work at

their own pace in engaging and challenging classroom tasks. According to O'Neill and McMahon (2005) the use of the term *student-centred learning* can be traced back to the seminal work of Jean Piaget (see Piaget, 1960) and even John Dewey (see Dewey, 1916), both of whom perceived learning and education as a democratic entitlement.

Broadly speaking, the concept of student-centred learning is understood today as indicating a shift away from a model of the teacher as instructor, towards the teacher as facilitator or guide to student learning. A useful summary of what this might mean in practice is provided by Lea, Stephenson and Troy (2003, p.322):

- [R]eliance upon active rather than passive learning,
- an emphasis on deep learning and understanding,
- increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student,
- an increased sense of autonomy in the learner,
- an interdependence between teacher and learner (as opposed to complete learner dependence or independence),
- mutual respect within the learner–teacher relationship,
- a reflexive approach to the learning and teaching process on the part of both teacher and learner.

Relating the summary by Lea et al (2003) to the context of FL learning, the principles of a constructivist view of learning are evident. The emphasis here is on learners constructing their own meanings through an active process of discovery. In facilitating this the teacher acts as a more knowledgeable other, supporting the learner in becoming more independent over time (Vygotsky, 1978, p.86). This epistemological position can also be related to the *usage-based* model of FL learning identified by Tomasello (2003), emphasizing the importance for learners of having a language-rich learning environment with lots of opportunities to practice the language and create their own meanings.

The structure of the Learning Progressions (FLs) has been designed to provide learners with a framework, enabling them to identify which FL outcomes they wish to achieve and to plan their own learning with an increasing sense of autonomy. Given the skill-based nature of FL learning the necessity for developing an increasing sense of autonomy is axiomatic to progress. The extracts from the Learning Progressions shown in Figure 2 illustrate the nature of progression embedded in each set of descriptors – moving from limited oral production towards an increasing ability to communicate independently of support from a teacher or more able other (for example, fellow student).

Oral production	
Primaria 4-6	Asks for help, when needed, to produce a message and keep the flow of communication.
Media 1-3	Conveys the message autonomously although the teacher or interlocutor helps them to facilitate communication at times.
Media 4-6	Monitors the flow of communication and is able to correct mistakes that may interfere with communication or uses circumlocution to transmit the message.

Figure 2. First draft Foreign Language Learning Progressions. Oral production. Appendix I extract. (Enever, 2018, p.22)

3.3 Learning as a personal and collective construction

Reference to Vygotskian theory in the section above focuses on developing autonomy, relating this to individual language learning. Equally important in the understanding of Vygotskian theory however, is the stress laid on the social construction of meanings, where Vygotsky proposes that all language learning occurs within a social context and is, to a greater or lesser extent, co-constructed by the participants engaged in the act of meaning making. This theme is elaborated throughout the MCRN, drawing on the work of Jerome Bruner (1991) whose work has provided valuable further insights to the sometimes incomplete collected works of Vygotsky published by colleagues, following his early death. Bruner was particularly interested in how language developed, arguing that the human mind is shaped by culture rather than by biological inheritance. He proposed that the process of *shaping* occurs through culture’s ‘symbolic systems – language and discourse modes, the forms of logical and narrative explication, and the patterns of mutually dependent communal life’ (Bruner, 1991, p.34).

It is today accepted that Bruner’s strong response to the so-called *cognitive turn* in the field of second language acquisition, led by Chomsky (1988), is now moderated by an acknowledgement that language learning is both a cognitive and a social process. Nonetheless, Bruner’s work has been important in providing further insights to the work of Vygotsky, particularly with reference to the operation of the zone of proximal development

(zpd). In this process Bruner identifies the role of *scaffolding*, a procedure which, with the aid of the intervention of a tutor (teacher or fellow student), ‘enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts’ (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976, p.90). However, Wood et al note that ‘comprehension of the solution must precede production’ (p.90), indicating the necessity for the learner to have a prior grasp of the goal or outcome in order to be able to target their efforts accordingly.

Interaction	
Primaria 4-6	Interacts with another speaker slowly, uses strategies of repetition, rephrasing and repair.
Media 1-3	Interacts fairly easily in structured situations and short conversations, provided the other person helps if necessary.
Media 4-6	Uses a wide range of simple language to engage in unprepared conversations on topics that are familiar or of personal interest

Figure 3. First draft Foreign Language Learning Progressions. Interaction. Appendix I extract. (Enever, 2018, p.25)

The first draft Learning Progressions (FLs) have not set out to provide explicit guidance to teachers on ways of working in the classroom. However, the inclusion of a set of outcomes specifically focused on Interaction (see Figure 3 for an example) by implication, does provide guidance on expected modes of classroom organization and task design. At each level of task difficulty in the descriptors relate to informal interactions or conversations, in which the focus is on communicating meaning rather than on achieving accuracy. As such, opportunities for peer scaffolding are more likely to arise during the natural flow in the clarification of meaning, than might otherwise occur when a learner is expected to engage in a prepared (rehearsed) production task. This refocusing in the nature of classroom language tasks requires a move away from the traditions of careful monitoring of each learner’s production, towards an approach where learners’ are engaged in communicative activities which provide opportunities for shared construction of meaning through informal, often unmonitored interaction.

The inclusion of interaction as a new strand in Companion Volume to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2018) marks an important acknowledgement of the role of collaborative learning, not fully acknowledged in the original CEFR publication (Council of Europe, 2001). The inclusion of a separate strand focusing specifically on interaction outcomes in the Learning Progressions (FLs) aims to reflect the importance of providing learners with frequent classroom opportunities to build their skills in simulated ‘authentic’ interaction activities as a preparation for similar ‘real world’ interactions.

3.4 Teaching as an intentional activity

In this section of the MCRN the right to education is re-visited, placing an emphasis on the role of the teacher in providing both access and clarity regarding the programme of learning and expected outcomes, together with creating suitable conditions for active learning to occur. This perspective draws on the work of Paulo Freire and philosophies of education related to humanism and critical pedagogy. The work of Freire had a major impact on debates around classroom pedagogies, promoting an educational approach based on problem-posing and dialogue. To clarify what this might mean in practice he used a *banking* concept of education to describe a perspective whereby ‘knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing’ (Freire, 2005: 72). His critical response to this authoritarian and somewhat paternalistic view of education was to propose a model of *co-intentional education* involving the rejection of hierarchal forms of education and the prioritization of egalitarian and collaborative approaches. The following extract (Freire, 2005, p.80) illustrates the role of the teacher in this process:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of freedom*, not *against* it.

In practice, this re-positioning of the teacher as co-constructor of knowledge may not be fully achievable in every educational context today, particularly under contemporary conditions where pre-determined outcomes are perceived as a requirement by national education authorities – often driven by societal expectations, patterns of international comparison and global rankings (for example, PISA). In a climate of 21st century digital connectivity such factors will inevitably influence curriculum design. Nonetheless, much can be achieved in

terms of learner agency in the field of FL learning in Uruguay, given the skill-based nature of outcomes framed in the Learning Progressions (FL).

In the process of curriculum planning at the national, regional and local levels, it will be important to write into the outlines a range of possible task types which might enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes relevant to their age range, allowing for both diversity of learning needs and inclusion. At individual classroom levels it would then be possible for learners themselves to become agents in defining their choice of task types through which they could progress in their FL learning. Through such an approach a framework could be established in which the teacher might intentionally collaborate with learners, supporting and guiding them in the process of becoming autonomous learners. This approach is particularly relevant to FL learning where specifically individualized language learning strategies are necessary ‘to facilitate the comprehension, retention, retrieval and application of information in the second or foreign language’ (Oxford, 1990)

Written production	
Primaria 4-6	Uses simple words and phrases to describe everyday objects. e.g. size, colour.
Media 1-3	Writes short simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people.
Media 4-6	Narrates a story, Writes a report. Summarises the main points in a text.

Figure 4. First draft Foreign Language Learning Progressions. Written production: Appendix I extract. (Enever, 2018, p.24)

Figure 4 provides an illustrative example of the flexibility embodied in the learning outcomes defined for written production. It is immediately apparent, for example, that the choices for descriptions of everyday objects (primaria 4-6) is extensive and would certainly lend itself to a process of negotiation regarding which items would constitute a useful body of knowledge for everyday purposes within specific, culturally defined local contexts. In similar vein, the open-ended nature of the media 4-6 outcome for narrating a story and writing a report could be adjusted to meet any of the preferred focuses as defined by the learners themselves.

In the preparation of curriculum guidance at national level it will be important to emphasise the priority of indicating the range of interpretations for task types available for each and every descriptor. By foregrounding this perspective teachers and learners may be encouraged to take ownership of the curriculum and jointly negotiate pathways to learning which are culturally relevant to their present and future needs.

3.5 Learning environments as spaces of cultural circulation and construction

Through much of the 20th century the school has been perceived as a central site for learning within communities, organised along traditional lines comprised of individual classrooms for each age group, a general meeting hall, possible additional facilities such as a library, science laboratories, music and art facilities, provision for a midday meal, sports and recreational facilities. Today however, within contexts of heightened digital interconnectivity, learning is increasingly taking place beyond classroom walls. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) this is particularly significant, given the position of English as a global lingua franca. For example, research is now showing that children in northern Europe as young as 10 years are regularly engaging in online gaming activities, in English (Lindgren & Enever, 2017). In this process of using English for social purposes, learning trajectories beyond the outcomes expected for children of this age group are now being recorded.

Evidence such as this illustrates the significant contribution that the wider cultural context beyond the school environment makes to students' learning. In line with this perspective, Duarte (2003) claims that the formative and socialising functions of education in Latin America frequently occur today in other environments such as the city and on computer networks, thus escaping 'the rationalist discourse of the teacher and the book, cultural vehicle par excellence since the Enlightenment' (Duarte, 2003 p.98) [author's translation].

Despite such claims however, it seems likely that the school will continue to be a significant site for learning in the foreseeable future. As such, it is important to plan for a learning environment which supports cultural circulation and construction, facilitating the inclusion of digital learning as an essential part of that environment – recognising also that the school students' learning environments reach beyond school walls to encompass the family and wider societal environment as sites for learning. Conceptualising this extended learning space poses substantial demands for rethinking the physical classroom design with reference to

flexible furniture, working spaces and display areas, together with the positioning of tablets / mobile phones / computers to provide easy access for working electronically as a regular part of daily routines. Similarly, it brings new challenges to teachers to consider how to validate learning beyond school, creating seamless links for learning across different learning spaces. In this Report it is not appropriate to engage in a detailed discussion of how this might be achieved. Rather, I will focus here on the question of creating spaces of cultural circulation and construction, with reference particularly to intercultural and intracultural spaces, of particular relevance to FL learning.

The unique contribution that FLs make to the school curriculum is their potential for raising awareness of other cultures. This experience challenges learners to become more aware of their own culture and those of neighbouring regions and countries, in addition to those more distant countries in which the FL might be spoken. Through such experiences learners expand their intercultural awareness, their appreciation of *otherness* and, in so doing, may construct an expanded cultural identity or self-image. The significance of establishing a positive self-image as a successful FL learner is elaborated in Dörnyei's recent work on motivation theory - an extract is included here for a full explanation of the concept:

1. Ideal L2 Self, which concerns the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self: if the person we would like to become speaks an L2 (e.g., the person we would like to become is associated with traveling or doing business internationally), the ideal L2 self is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because we would like to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves.
2. Ought-to L2 Self, which concerns the attributes that individuals believe they ought to possess to avoid possible negative outcomes; such perceived duties, external expectations, and obligations may therefore bear little resemblance to the individual's own desires or wishes.
3. L2 Learning Experience, which concerns situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the positive impact of success or the enjoyable quality of a language course).

(Dörnyei & Chan, 2013, p.438)

The association that Dörnyei & Chan make with travel and operating internationally, using the medium of a L2, reflects the learner's future potential for cultural circulation and increased intercultural understanding as a positive outcome of being equipped with a plurilingual identity.

At present, the MCRN makes little reference to the concept of intercultural competence, placing emphasis on a *shared national culture* instead (MCRN 2017, p.23). However, the inclusion of FLs in the curriculum is recognized as a discrete subject area (pp.61/62) indicating the potential for knowledge of FLs to facilitate engagement in social practices, to

communicate and to build knowledge. Given the stated intention that the MCRN should be regarded as ‘an open document’, with an expectation that it will be further modified, as the need arises, in the future, consideration should be given to making a stronger statement on regarding the importance of developing intercultural awareness as a part of the school curriculum. Similarly, consideration might be given to including this theme as a discrete learning strand in the Learning Progressions (See Enever 2018, p.17 for further reference to this).

3.6 Assessment as a dimension of the teaching and learning process

The Learning Progressions (FLs) have set out to provide guidance for teachers and learners regarding the expected *minimum* outcomes at the end of each phase of schooling, They are expected to serve as a base for the further development of the curriculum and any associated teaching and learning materials. In addition, they offer a comprehensive reference for the construction of assessment tasks – both formative and summative.

In the development of the Learning Progressions (FLs) careful attention was given to consultation with teachers and teacher educators around the country, helping to determine the design of a cohesive set of descriptors which all students could be expected to achieve. In line with the objective of ‘ensuring educational continuity’ (MCRN 2017, p.15) connections between each level of achievement are clearly evident. Figure 5 provides an illustration of

Reading comprehension	
Primaria 4-6	Follows the narrative sequence of a text with visual support as long as it is presented chronologically.
Media 1-3	Follows the narrative sequence of a text with no visual support as long as it is presented chronologically.
Media 4-6	Interrogates a text to reveal its logical sequence.

Figure 5. First draft Foreign Language Learning Progressions. Reading comprehension: Appendix I extract. (Enever, 2018, p.23)

how this is articulated in one of the descriptors for reading comprehension. Here, the descriptor sets a requirement by the end of primary year 6 to be able to read a narrative text,

with the support of illustration to aid comprehension; moving to being able to achieve this without the additional support of illustration by the end of media 3 and then being able to understand a text even when the content is not organised chronologically by the end of media 6. It will be evident from these descriptors that no reference is made to the length, content or complexity of the text – this will need to be decided by more local teacher groups, according to what is considered culturally appropriate and achievable.

As indicated above, forms of assessment may include both formative and summative approaches – both of which will provide guidance to learners on progress and future directions for study. With regard to formative assessment, three main approaches are relevant to mention here: assessment *for* learning (AfL, see Black & Wiliam, 1998); diagnostic testing (see Alderson, 2005); peer and self-assessment (see Butler, 2016). Regular use of these on-going forms of classroom assessment enable learners to benefit from support and encouragement in making progress and becoming increasingly autonomous in defining their individualised pathways to proficiency.

Summative assessment is more likely to occur at the end of an academic year and/or the end of a schooling phase (e.g. primaria 6). Assessment formats may include tests designed by teachers for use with their own classes; exams prepared by a regional or national consortium of testing specialists; or exams prepared and administered by international testing businesses with specialist expertise (e.g. Cambridge ESOL, TOEFL). The strength of the locally and nationally designed tests lies in their potential for cultural relevance which takes into account the national Learning Progressions. While internationally designed tests do not respond to specific local circumstances, they do offer a standard of international comparison which may provide useful guidance on national achievements.

A final point to note with reference to FL assessment is the tendency for many assessment procedures to exclude assessment of oral production, often attributed to the time-intensive demands of assessing each individual learner, which may need to be conducted by teachers during school time. This area of testing deserves greater attention in test design, given the increasing importance of oral communication today, both during face-to-face communication and via a range of digital technologies. The priority here will be to achieve a level of fluency sufficient for communicating meaning in international contexts, rather than a concern with a high level of accuracy – particularly at the elementary stages.

4. Further considerations and conclusions

This Report has set out to review the ways in which the principles of the MCRN are embedded in the Learning Progressions (FLs). In approaching this task I have adopted the six Guiding Principles identified in Section 3 of the MRCN as a framework for discussion of how each principle relates to the work conducted by the ANEP Expert group in the formation of the Learning Principles (FLs). Key threads running throughout this Report are the ethical principles of ensuring universality and inclusivity for all learners of FLs, with due attention to diversity and individual needs.

With reference to recent developments in pedagogical approaches to FL teaching and learning, and particularly to the role of English as a global language One final point is worthy of consideration in relation to the Learning Progressions (FLs). At present, the Learning Progressions (FLs) are strongly focused on linguistic outcomes. This reflects partly the influence that the CEFR has had on FL curricula worldwide over the past 20 years or so, but also relates to an increasing trend towards the commodification of languages (Heller, 2010). This trend has resulted in a shift away from viewing language as intimately connected with cultural identity towards a view of language as a skill closely associated with ‘the work process and work products of the new economy’ (Heller 2010, p.108). One outcome of this trend has been that literary texts published in the FL are often not included in school language curricula today. A possible way of addressing this gap in the Language Progressions (FLs) might be to include a descriptor relating to the inclusion of literary texts in the proposed section on the development of intercultural awareness proposed in Section 3.3 (p.14).

In summing up the issues discussed in this Report it is evident that the Learning Progressions (FLs) have broadly succeeded in responding to the framework established by the MCRN. However, it will be in the detailed elaboration of the FL curriculum framework and subsequent local curriculum developments that the response to the MCRN will be fully detailed. A further influence on the final quality of provision relates to the design of local and national exams. Evidence from high stakes international testing (eg. PISA) has demonstrated the extent to which nation states have revised their curriculum provision in an effort to achieve more highly on these testing systems – often despite the limited cultural reference of such systems to local and national contexts. This is indeed a challenging time to formulate a national curriculum for FLs which maintains a strong grasp of ethical and democratic principles!

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