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The European Language Portfolio in Irish Post-Primary Education: A Longitudinal Empirical Evaluation

Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics
University of Dublin, Trinity College

2006

Emmanouil M. Sisamakis

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DECLARATION

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Summary

This thesis is a longitudinal examination of how the introduction of the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio (ELP) has affected foreign/second language teaching and learning in Irish post-primary schools. It examines and evaluates the nature and implications of the experience of a number of teachers and learners who use the ELP in their classes.

Chapter 1 sketches the European background of the ELP by presenting a brief overview of related issues, the Council of Europe and the policies it pursues as regards language education and the related projects it has organised. It then explains how the ELP was developed and piloted, and summarises current developments related to its successful implementation, dissemination and evaluation. The chapter also refers to the importance the ELP seems to have assumed on the agenda of policy makers outside the CoE, such as the European Union. The chapter goes on to provide an overview of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF), offers a brief examination of the claims made in various publications concerning the effects the CEF/ELP can have on language education, and presents some of the most comprehensive attempts made so far towards an 'ELP-oriented pedagogy'. Finally, it presents the case for an in-depth longitudinal quantitative and qualitative exploration of whether the ELP actively promotes what it claims to promote, under which prerequisites, and how it works when superimposed on the FL/SL curricula currently in place.

Chapter 2 discusses Irish post-primary language education, for which the ELP model in question was developed as a product of the 'Learner Autonomy Project' (LAP), and presents the main features of the LAP, the principal design features of this model and the work of the ELP Support Network (ELP SN) which offers on-going support to teachers using the ELP in Irish post-primary education. It also summarizes the findings of the predecessor of the current longitudinal project, the six-month ELP empirical evaluation project, conducted through the ELP SN. Finally, it presents an overview of self-determination theory, which supplemented the theoretical outlook, research methods and instruments of this project, and presents the theoretical background to this project.

In Chapter 3, the rationale, methodology, environment, limitations and expected outcomes of the research project are discussed in some depth. Options followed related to the data elicitation instruments, confidentiality issues, and extended triangulation techniques are examined in considerable detail.

Chapters 4 and 5 present and critically examine the project findings. Chapter 4 presents and examines summative project findings, while Chapter 5 discusses class- and teacher-specific findings. These two chapters draw from and should be read in tandem with the extensive data-containing appendices of the thesis, which exceed five thousand pages. This arrangement was employed since the large number and elaborate nature of the data elicitation instruments resulted in 'raw data' exceeding five thousand pages after a first 'data-reducing' codification of responses. As a result, it would be all but impossible to discuss the totality of the data in any meaningful way in the space available. At the same time, transparency and objectivity are best served by the current arrangement, where both the full recoded responses appear appended for the interested reader to peruse at leisure, and a critical analysis and discussion of the findings appears in the main body of the thesis, focusing on the themes which come out of the findings as most prominent and/or statistically significant.

Chapter 6 offers a brief summary of the principal conclusions which can be reached on the basis of the project findings, and examines how these conclusions may inform language provision in Irish post-primary education as well as in other language learning settings. First, it examines what the project participants' (teachers' and learners') responses tell us about this specific ELP model, the curricula currently in place, their schools, the practices they followed in project classes, their teachers/students, and themselves. Then it briefly addresses the issue of whole-school development and the potential benefits of advocating an ELP-informed pedagogy and introducing portfolio-based learning and benchmarking in all subjects and not only FL teaching and learning. Next, it discusses the implications of the possible introduction of Content and Language Integrated Learning in post-primary education along with the ELP in response to some of the concerns raised by the project participants. Finally, it examines what the findings of this project may have to offer to similar projects and ELP development, implementation and evaluation conducted in settings other than Irish post-primary education.

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Finally, I am grateful for a postgraduate studentship which was made possible by a research donation to the Centre for Language and Communication Studies; without such support, this project would have never materialised.

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Key to Abbreviations

-A	(Perceived) current attainment (of an Aspiration/aspiration type)
a)	First round of questionnaire administration
A/a	'Cronbach's alpha' (scale) reliability coefficient
AI	Aspirations index
ALTE	Association of Language Testers of Europe
ANOVA	[One-way between groups] analysis of variance
AutAs	Autonomous aspirations (intrinsic minus extrinsic aspirations)
b)	Second round of questionnaire administration
c)	'Third' round of questionnaire administration ([round b) minus round a) when both rounds have valid values]
CEF	*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*
CLCS	Centre for Language and Communication Studies
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CoE	Council of Europe
DES	Department of Education and Science of Ireland
DF	Degrees of freedom
ECML	European Centre for Modern Languages
EE1	First six-month Empirical Evaluation of the LAP ELP
EL	Experiential learning
ELP SN	ELP support network for teachers using the ELP in Irish post-primary education
ELP	European Language Portfolio
EU	European Union
Ext	External motivational orientation
ExtrAs	Extrinsic aspirations
F	Degree of observed difference in the means of the different groups examined in an ANOVA
FETAC	Further education and training awards council
FL	Foreign language
HDipEd	Higher Diploma in Education Course
-I	(Perceived) importance (of an Aspiration/aspiration type)
ICT	Information and communication technology
Ide	Identified motivational orientation
IILT	Integrate Ireland Language and Training
Inr	Introjected motivational orientation
Int	Intrinsic motivational orientation
IntrAs	Intrinsic aspirations
JC	Junior Certificate Examination
-L	(Perceived) likelihood (of an Aspiration/aspiration type)
L1	Mother tongue
LAP ELP	ELP model for 'Learners in Irish Post-Primary Education'
LAP	Learner Autonomy Project

LC	Leaving Certificate Examination
LCQ	Perceived autonomy support: learning climate questionnaire
LL	Language learning
LLL	Life-long learning
LPD, CoE	Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe
N/n	number of
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
OECD	Organisation for economic co-operation and development
ÖSD	Austrian language diploma
P/p	Observed significance/level of confidence
PCSELP	Perceived competence in using the ELP
PCSL	Perceived competence in learning scale
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate Course
PLC2	2nd-year of a Post Leaving Certificate Course
PosPerI	'Positive perceptions index'
PosPerI	Positive perceptions index
RAI	Relative autonomy index
RAIA	Relative autonomy index in 'school in general'
RAIL	Relative autonomy index in language learning
SD	Standard deviation
SDT	Self-determination theory
SL	Second language
SRQ-A	Academic self-regulation questionnaire
SRQ-L	Academic self-regulation in language learning questionnaire
SRQ-P	Pro-social self-regulation questionnaire
SRQ-S	Academic self-regulation in 'school in general' questionnaire
TCD	Trinity College, Dublin
TL	Target language
TY	Transition year
H^2	'eta squared' effect size measure

Introduction

European Language Portfolio overview

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) was developed by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe (CoE), Strasbourg, and was piloted from 1998 until 2000. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages (2001) as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe 2001, CEF) as 'the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures' (Council of Europe 2001, p.168).

The major principles underpinning the ELP are outlined in the *European Language Portfolio: Principles and guidelines* (Council of Europe 2004a; Schneider and Lenz 2001). According to CoE (2004a) the ELP:

1. is a tool to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism;
2. is the property of the learner;
3. values the full range of the learner's language and intercultural competence and experience regardless of whether acquired within or outside formal education;
4. is a tool to promote learner autonomy;
5. has both a pedagogic function to guide and support the learner in the process of language learning and a reporting function to record proficiency in languages;
6. is based on the CEF with explicit reference to the common levels of competence;
7. encourages learner self-assessment (which is usually combined with teacher assessment) and assessment by educational authorities and examination bodies;
8. incorporates a minimum of common features which make it recognisable and comprehensible across Europe;
9. may be one of a series of ELP models that the individual learner will possess in the course of life-long learning. ELP models can cater for the needs of learners according to age, learning purpose, and context and background.

The ELP consists of three parts:

- a LANGUAGE PASSPORT which summarises the owner's linguistic identity, language learning and intercultural experience and language qualifications in an internationally transparent manner;
- a LANGUAGE BIOGRAPHY which enables the owner to assess him-/herself, set learning targets, record learning and intercultural experiences, and regularly assess his/her progress;
- a DOSSIER in which the owner keeps samples of his/her work in the language(s) he or she has learnt or is learning.

Goal setting and self-assessment are conducted on the basis of the six *'common reference levels'* (A1-C2) of second/foreign language proficiency elaborated in the CEF (Council of Europe 2001). These levels have been scaled using the Rasch statistical model, actively promoting criterion referencing in foreign language (FL) and second language (SL) education (North 2000, pp.29, 33, 279, 343-9).

Although all ELP models share the common core mentioned above, they vary – sometimes widely – in relation to their specific contents and appearance. The reason for this stems from paragraph 3.5 of *Principles and guidelines* (Council of Europe 2004a, p.4) where ELP developing authorities are urged to 'take into account the diversity of learners' needs according to age, learning purposes and contexts, and background, e.g. to develop where appropriate distinctive ELP models for different age groups whilst taking measures to ensure mutual recognition of all models and continuity between different educational institutions, sectors, regions and countries'.

Research project overview

Main research question

It should have become apparent from the contents of the previous section that the 'CEF/ELP project' is quite ambitious. However, does the above-mentioned framework actively promote what it claims to promote? If so, under which prerequisites, and how does it work when it is superimposed on the FL curricula currently in place? Feeling that the best way to test the above claims is probably to evaluate its adoption in the education

system one country and explore in depth the nature of the relationship between a curriculum already in place and the ELP, I set up the longitudinal empirical evaluation project documented here under the supervision of Prof. David Little.

Case study: The ELP model for "learners in Irish post-primary education"

This ELP model has been specially designed in Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS), Trinity College, Dublin for use in Irish post-primary schools. Its detailed 'I can' checklists summarised the communicative learning goals prescribed in the Junior and Leaving Certificate post-primary syllabuses for Irish, French, German, Spanish and Italian, written in all these five (target) languages and in English, and classified according to the common reference levels established by the CoE. A preview copy of this ELP model can be viewed at the CLCS 'ELP support network' (ELP SN) site (CLCS 2003a).

Project overview

The project documented in this thesis is a longitudinal examination of how the introduction of the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio has affected foreign/second language teaching and learning in Irish post-primary schools. It examines and evaluates the nature and implications of the experience of a number of teachers and learners who use the ELP in their classes.

In summary, this project constitutes the natural evolution of two previous CLCS research projects: the 'Learner Autonomy Project' (LAP, documented in Little et al. 2002), which provided a significant part of the theoretical background and practical stimulus for the development of the ELP model in question, and its successor project, a six-month ELP Empirical Evaluation (EE1, documented in Ushioda and Ridley 2002). This project is also an answer to the call for a longitudinal study on the implementation of the ELP consistently voiced in ELP-related conventions, seminars, workshops and publications (e.g. Little 2002a; c; 2003b; Little and Perclová 2001; Schärer 2000; Ushioda and Ridley 2002).

The Ph.D. thesis documenting the project is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 sketches the European background of the ELP by presenting a brief overview of related issues, the Council of Europe and the policies it pursues as regards language education and the related projects it has organised. It then explains how the ELP was developed and piloted, and summarises current developments related to its successful implementation, dissemination and evaluation. The chapter also refers to the importance the ELP seems to have assumed on the agenda of policy makers outside the CoE, such as the European Union. The chapter goes on to provide an overview of the CEF, offers a brief examination of the claims made in various publications concerning the effects the CEF/ELP can have on language education, and presents some of the most comprehensive attempts made so far towards an 'ELP-oriented pedagogy'. Finally, it presents the case for an in-depth longitudinal quantitative and qualitative exploration of whether the ELP actively promotes what it claims to promote, under which prerequisites, and how it works when superimposed on the FL/SL curricula currently in place.

Chapter 2 discusses Irish post-primary language education, for which the ELP model in question was developed as a product of the 'Learner Autonomy Project' (LAP, Little et al. 2002), and presents the main features of the LAP and the principal design features of this model and the work of the ELP Support Network (ELP SN) which offers on-going support to teachers using the ELP in Irish post-primary education. It also summarizes the findings of the predecessor of the current longitudinal project, the six-month ELP empirical evaluation project, conducted through the ELP SN. Finally, it presents an overview of self-determination theory, which supplemented the theoretical outlook, research methods and instruments of this project, and presents the theoretical background to this project.

In Chapter 3, the rationale, methodology, environment, limitations and expected outcomes of the research project are discussed in some depth. Options followed related to the data elicitation instruments, confidentiality issues, and extended triangulation techniques are examined in considerable detail.

Chapters 4 and 5 present and critically examine the project findings. Chapter 4 presents and examines summative project findings, while Chapter 5 discusses class- and teacher-specific findings. These two chapters draw from and should be read in tandem

with the extensive data-containing appendices of the thesis, which exceed five thousand pages. This arrangement was employed since the large number and elaborate nature of the data elicitation instruments resulted in 'raw data' exceeding five thousand pages after a first 'data-reducing' codification of responses. As a result, it would be all but impossible to discuss the totality of the data in any meaningful way in the space available. At the same time, transparency and objectivity are best served by the current arrangement, where both the full recoded responses appear appended for the interested reader to peruse at leisure, and a critical analysis and discussion of the findings appears in the main body of the thesis, focusing on the themes which come out of the findings as most prominent and/or statistically significant.

Chapter 6 offers a brief summary of the principal conclusions which can be reached on the basis of the project findings, and examines how these conclusions may inform language provision in Irish post-primary education as well as in other language learning settings. First, it examines what the project participants' (teachers' and learners') responses tell us about this specific ELP model, the curricula currently in place, their schools, the practices they followed in project classes, their teachers/students, and themselves. Then it briefly addresses the issue of whole-school development and the potential benefits of advocating an ELP-informed pedagogy and introducing portfolio-based learning and benchmarking in all subjects and not only FL teaching and learning. Next, it discusses the implications of the possible introduction of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in post-primary education along with the ELP in response to some of the concerns raised by the project participants. Finally, it examines what the findings of this project may have to offer to similar projects and ELP development, implementation and evaluation conducted in settings other than Irish post-primary education.

1. The Council of Europe and the European Language Portfolio

1.1. Preamble

This chapter attempts to sketch out the European background of the ELP. It does so by presenting a brief overview of related issues, the CoE, the language education policies it pursues and the related projects it carries out. It then presents the CEF and offers an overview of how the ELP was developed and piloted, as well as current developments related to its successful implementation, dissemination and evaluation. It also attempts to outline the importance the ELP seems to have assumed on the agenda of policy makers outside the CoE, especially the European Union (EU). The chapter also offers a brief examination of the claims made in various publications on the effects the ELP has on language education. It presents the case for an in-depth longitudinal quantitative and qualitative exploration of whether the ELP actively promotes what it claims to promote, under which prerequisites, and how it works when superimposed on the FL/SL (foreign and second language) curricula currently in place.

1.2. Introduction

Although there are still many areas of contention in relation to the current situation in language teaching and learning in Europe, a consensus on a broader level is documented in many publications on a number of major issues which are relevant to this research project. Owing to restrictions of space, I provide below only a brief overview of the most indicative issues among them:

- foreign languages (FLs) play a key role in promoting further development of individuals and life-long learning (Council of Europe 1998; European Commission 1995; 2002);
- there is a pressing need to help learners to become critical thinkers who have come to terms with the need to keep developing and who experience FL learning

as positive and intellectually rewarding (Council of Europe 2001; Sisamakis 2002d);

- a shift towards portfolio-based learning is growing in size and importance (Kohonen 2000b; 2002; Little 2004d);
- there is a need for consistency and objectivity of teaching-learning, evaluation and assessment (North 2004), and for whole-school development (Kohonen 2003; Lehtovaara 2001);
- there is a need to promote plurilingualism and to diversify the linguistic proficiency of EU citizens (Council of Europe 2000c; 2004b; European Commission 2003);
- there is a need to promote learner autonomy in (language) learning (Benson and Toogood 2002; Little 1991; 2004a; b);
- and – finally – there is a need for education systems to change in order to accommodate all the above (European Centre for Modern Languages 1998; European Commission 1995; 2001a; b; 2002; 2003).

As a response to all the challenges facing language education mentioned above, the CoE launched two twin pedagogical tools: The CEF (Council of Europe 2001) and the ELP.

1.3. Council of Europe aims and policies

The CoE has arguably been the single most influential policy making body in the development of language education policies across Europe in the last few decades. Among its various activities, it has set up a standing committee of ministers whose mandate is to make recommendations to CoE member states, a number of which are linked to language education and are related to the issues discussed in this thesis (Council of Europe 1998; 2000b; c; 2002).

Frequently co-operating with and affecting the language policies of the EU and its member states, the numerous individual CoE member states, and other language-related policy-making bodies, the CoE has, for instance, been instrumental in the development of the communicative approach in language teaching. To this day, it continues to promote language policies which promote intercultural understanding and communication among

the peoples of Europe (e.g. Bedyñska 2004; Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey 2002; Byram and Zarate 1997; European Centre for Modern Languages 1998; Willems 2002), democratic citizenship (e.g. Breidbach 2003; Council of Europe 2004b; Starkey 2002), critical thinking and independence of thought (e.g. V. Harris et al. 2001; Szesztay 1999).

The CoE also advocates through its two designated bodies dealing with language education (i.e. the Language Policy Division, hence LPD, CoE, and the European Centre for Modern Languages, hence ECML), a more holistic approach to language education, whereby research, policy making, teaching and learning practice, evaluation and assessment are treated as integral parts of a whole which can inform one another in a mutually supporting and dynamic way. The CoE not only believes that FLs play a key role in promoting further development and life-long learning, but also advocates a celebration of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, defined in CEF as 'the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures' (Council of Europe 2001, p.168). Naturally, such a state of affairs would have dramatically positive effects on the intercultural competences and communication abilities of Europeans.

The great number and magnitude of CoE projects precludes a more comprehensive presentation at this point. The reader may find a more comprehensive overview of CoE aims, language policies and projects both in the very comprehensive *Guide for the development of language education policies in Europe: from linguistic diversity to plurilingual education* (Beacco and Byram 2003b), its supportive documents (e.g. Beacco and Byram 2003a) and case studies, and in numerous other publications of more specific interest. A diachronic overview of how CoE has supported innovation in language education from 1962 onwards is presented in three ECML publications edited by Frank Heyworth (1999; 2003a; 2003b; cf. also Trim 2002).

Since the focus of the research project documented in this thesis is the ELP, the following sections offer a brief overview of only the CEF and the ELP and not other more general CoE projects and activities. Arguably, the CEF and the ELP act as twin pedagogical tools, whereby the CEF operates as a principled overarching framework which can be used by language educators, policy makers, etc. in order to reflect on their

practice and think of ways to successfully integrate language tasks, goals and assessment. The ELP provides a transparent and maximally relevant version of that empowering framework to each of the several learning and teaching settings in Europe.

1.4. Common European Framework overview

In brief, the CEF is a unified framework of reference which 'provides a common basis for the elaboration and critical evaluation of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively [...] covers the cultural context in which language is set [...] defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis [...] and introduces objective criteria for describing language proficiency to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and accordingly aid European mobility. [...] It also includes the description of 'partial' qualifications. Giving formal recognition to such abilities will help to promote plurilingualism through the learning of a wider variety of European languages' (Council of Europe 2001, pp.1-2; cf. also North 2000, pp.2-3; Trim 1979; 1995; Trim 2002, p.101).

The CEF is designed in a very comprehensive way. Its discursive parts deal with broader educational issues related to FLs in order to enable its users to develop a wide perspective on the nature of language learning and teaching in general and on the situation in relation to its European multilingual and multicultural background in particular. It seeks to present an overview of all the variables related to language learning (LL) and engages its users in a reflection process through which they are asked to consider different issues and develop their own insights pertaining to the fruitful application of the CEF. Care is taken to ensure that language learning is acknowledged by CEF users as a multi-faceted educational activity which involves and affects learners and teachers as whole human beings with individual personalities and not just on a linguistic level.

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Figure 1-1: CEF Common Reference Levels: Global Scale

		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
UNDERSTANDING	Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided. I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
SPEAKING	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
WRITING	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

Figure 1-2: Common Reference levels: self-assessment grid

A major strength of the CEF is that it contains a framework of illustrative proficiency descriptors which can be used to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning and teaching of languages across Europe. Five of the main principles which were employed in the creation of the descriptors are 'positiveness, definiteness, clarity, brevity and independence' (North 2000, pp.343-346; North and Schneider 1998; Schneider and Lenz 2001, p.47). So as to come up with descriptors which adhere to these principles a mix of intuitive, qualitative and quantitative techniques was used. The validity of the descriptors was ultimately ensured through their principled ranking and an additional calibration to the educational settings in which they were initially piloted (Switzerland) according to the Rasch statistical model (Council of Europe 2001, pp.217-225). Care was taken throughout the procedures followed for their creation to establish that in their final form they do make up an objectively graded proficiency scale and are relatively context-free, so that they can be applied in a variety of educational contexts throughout Europe without significant alterations or modifications. They were worded in a positive manner as 'can do' statements; this makes them evidently suitable for language teaching as they can be used by learners and teachers in an on-going process of setting and negotiating short and long-term objectives (North 2000, pp. 338-342; North 2004; North et al. 2003; North and Schneider 1998).

The descriptors are arranged in six '*common reference levels*'; i.e. six levels of proficiency, which are taken to be distinct from one another. These levels range from A1 (very limited proficiency) to C2 (near native-speaker proficiency). Each of the six common reference levels has a 'global description' (Fig.1.1, taken from Council of Europe 2001, p.24) and a second more detailed one in the form of the so-called self-assessment grid (Fig.2, taken from Council of Europe 2001, pp.26-7) which breaks it down according to five language skills: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing.

Capitalising on the insights anchored in various previous publications such as *Threshold 1990, Vantage* and *Waystage 1990* (van Ek and Trim 1991a; b; 2000), each level of the above skills is further broken down through a number of more specialized illustrative descriptors arranged into scales of proficiency which summarise in a compact and transparent way the different things a learner must be able to do in a language so as

to be able to claim that he or she has mastered any aspect of a specific language skill at a specific level (cf. e.g. CEF's illustrative scales for listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, written interaction and written production, found in Little and Perclová 2001, pp.72-90).

These characteristics give a modular character to the whole framework which in reality empowers language teachers and learners in the sense that through its use it should become easier for the learners to assess their proficiency in the FL, if not on their own, at least with the help and guidance of their teachers. This modularity breaks LL into more user-friendly (smaller) pieces and effectively nullifies the fact that 'when only six proficiency levels are specified for the whole spectrum of a learner's proficiency in FL the levels might sound demotivatingly far from one another' (North 2000, p.279; citing North 1992, cf. also related discussion in Chapter 5). It also makes it easier to form a better-founded idea of the initial and the ongoing limitations and capacities of learners, since the illustrative descriptors when used as an assessment grid will invariably give a more accurate and colourful description of a learner's proficiency in a language than a numerical classification would yield (for a broad comparison between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment cf. Little 1999b, pp.2-3).

Although the main strength of the CEF is that it constitutes a comprehensive framework of reference according to which each of the diverse formal and non-formal language learning, teaching and assessment settings in Europe could be cross-referenced and critically assessed, it might be argued that this comprehensiveness itself renders the whole construct somewhat unwieldy (Berwick 1989, p.59), making it rather difficult for individual teachers and learners to use on an ongoing basis without putting in a lot of extra work in the form of an on-going process of critical selection of and reflection on the parts of the CEF which apply to their circumstances (Morrow 2004b).

However, in my opinion the CEF undoubtedly constitutes a major step forward for language education across Europe since it constitutes the best existing overarching framework of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment (cf. e.g. Heyworth 2004; Mariani 2004), despite a number of criticisms which have been expressed by various sources. Such criticisms include the limitations of the CEF in its application in diagnostic testing owing to gaps in the competences contained in it (e.g.

Huhta and Figueras 2004, p.66; Little 2005b, p.6), the fact that the CEF 'does not deal with cognitive styles in detail' (Alderson 2002, p.41) and the claims that considerable work is needed in order to make CEF scales suitable for secondary school learners (e.g. Hasselgreen et al. 2003, p.14; Starr Keddle 2004). Furthermore, Heyworth (2003b, p.139) expresses the 'need to develop training modules in order to enable as many teachers as possible to benefit from the richness of CEF contents' to supplement the CEF User Guides. Little expresses doubts about the usefulness of the global scale (Little 2003a, p.134). Morrow (2004a, p.6-7) observes that 'the reaction of many readers who approach the Framework looking for guidance in their work [...] is to find the sheer amount of detail, the range of decriptors, and the plethora of terminology completely baffling. [...] The published versions of the CEF are not exactly user-friendly. [...] And yet, like good literature, the CEF repays, and deserves, careful study'.

Of course, there is no denying that the critical selection and reflection mentioned above should be an on-going process in language education (Little 1999b, pp.4-5); however, it could help if it was made simpler as a process, consequently making it easier for teachers to involve their students in the decision-making which affects their own learning. After all, it is the students themselves who need to become actively involved in productive reflection if we ever want them to become critical thinkers, responsible learners and by extension democratic citizens (on this notion cf. also Council of Europe 2001, p.1; Council of Europe 2002; 2004b; Lehtovaara 2001; Little 2002c, p.34).

Many of the problems outlined in the previous three paragraphs are effectively dealt through the introduction of the pedagogical companion piece to the CEF, the ELP.

1.5. European Language Portfolio

1.5.1. ELP Overview

The ELP was developed by the Language Policy Division of the CoE. Concrete work towards its development was launched in 1991 (North 1992) and culminated in a multifaceted pan-European pilot project which took place from 1998 until 2000. The ELP was officially launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages

(2001) as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism (Council of Europe and European Union 2001).

The major principles underpinning the ELP are outlined in *European Language Portfolio: Principles and guidelines* (Council of Europe 2004a). According to this document the ELP arguably:

1. is a tool to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism;
2. is the property of the learner;
3. values the full range of the learner's language and intercultural competence and experience regardless of whether acquired within or outside formal education;
4. is a tool to promote learner autonomy;
5. has both a pedagogic function to guide and support the learner in the process of language learning and a reporting function to record proficiency in languages;
6. is based on the CEF with explicit reference to the common levels of competence;
7. encourages learner self-assessment (which is usually combined with teacher assessment) and assessment by educational authorities and examination bodies;
8. incorporates a minimum of common features which make it recognisable and comprehensible across Europe;
9 may be one of a series of ELP models that the individual learner will possess in the course of life-long learning (LLL). ELP models can cater for the needs of learners according to age, learning purpose, and context and background.

The above short but impressive list of claims summarises the broad and ambitious agenda of the ELP project. Each of these claims, if true, can have far-reaching repercussions for the amelioration of language education in the event of a whole-scale adoption of the ELP across Europe. However, the fact that these claims are so impressive makes the need for a principled overall evaluation of their validity and their applicability throughout Europe all the more pressing (cf. sections 1.5.2 to 1.5.6 below).

1.5.2. ELP Description

In acknowledgement of the fact that educational settings around Europe are quite diverse and that language learning may take a number of different forms across learner ages when seen from a LLL perspective, it has been recognised that the ELP also needs to be adapted to accommodate different learner needs. As a result, some core components of the ELP were defined and ELP developers were left free to explore different ELP configurations, subject to approval from a CoE validation and accreditation committee (Schneider and Lenz 2001). The fixed elements of an ELP require that it consists of three parts:

• a LANGUAGE PASSPORT which summarises the owner's linguistic identity, language learning and intercultural experience and language qualifications in an internationally transparent manner;

• a LANGUAGE BIOGRAPHY which enables the owner to assess him-/herself, set learning targets, record learning and intercultural experiences, and regularly assess his/her progress;

• a DOSSIER in which the owner keeps samples of his/her work in the language(s) he or she has learnt or is learning.

Goal setting and self-assessment are conducted on the basis of the six *'common reference levels'* (A1-C2) of second/foreign language proficiency elaborated in the CEF. As mentioned in section 1.4. above, these levels have been scaled using the Rasch statistical model (Cushing Weigle 1998; Davidson and Henning 1985), actively promoting criterion referencing in FL education (North 1993; 1994; North 2000, esp. pp.29, 33, 279, 343-9; North 2004; North et al. 2003; North and Schneider 1998).

Although all ELP models share the common core (and aims) mentioned above, they vary – sometimes widely – in relation to their specific contents and appearance. The reason for this stems from paragraph 3.5 of *Principles and Guidelines* (Council of Europe 2004a, p.4) where ELP developing authorities are urged to 'take into account the diversity of learners' needs according to age, learning purposes and contexts, and background, e.g. to develop where appropriate distinctive ELP models for different age groups whilst taking measures to ensure mutual recognition of all models and continuity between different educational institutions, sectors, regions and countries'.

1.5.3. Insights from the ELP pilot project

As noted above, the ELP was launched in 2001, which was designated by both the CoE and the EU as the European year of languages. This launch followed an extensive pilot project, in which more than 30,000 learners took part. The pilot project was documented in the *Final Report on the pilot project phase (1998-2000) of a European Language Portfolio*, by the project's General Rapporteur, Rolf Schärer. This report recognised that 'implementing an ELP widely throughout Europe is a far-reaching decision' and made the case for further research on the ELP whereby 'its feasibility, potential and effectiveness would have to be proven beyond any reasonable doubt' (Schärer 2000, p.5).

The report made a first attempt to define favourable conditions for the implementation of the ELP (ibid, p.11), and descriptive quantitative findings were offered indicating teacher and learner attitudes towards the ELP (ibid, p.14-5). These findings indicated 'that the ELPs were generally well received and that they worked satisfactorily under pilot conditions' (ibid, p.8). Although the statistical validity of the substantial findings in the report was undermined owing to the fact that 'not all participants received questionnaires, mainly for technical and time reasons', those findings were deemed to 'provide a reasonable base to pinpoint areas for further experimentation, research and development' (ibid.). Indeed, those findings informed the research questions addressed in the project documented in this thesis (cf. Chapters 2 and 3). Schärer summarised some main findings of the pilot project as follows:

> Apart from the European character and dimension of the ELP, three of its elements appeared highly valued as desirable innovations:
>
> - learner self-assessment;
> - the development of self-directed learning and learner autonomy in a life-long perspective;
> - taking account in a positive way of all learning regardless of whether gained in or outside of formal education.
>
> The quantitative and qualitative feedback gathered from the different pilot projects seemed to be sufficient to draw the following general conclusions:

- There is some evidence that the ELP will have a positive effect on learning in general.
- The ELP as learning tool is feasible from a pedagogic point of view.
- The ELP does address key educational issues.
- The ELP does foster the declared aims of the Council of Europe.
- The ELP as reporting tool still needs to stand its test in the real world and over an extended period. A valid answer can, however, only emerge once the ELP has been implemented on a large scale.
- The political feasibility depends on the value decision-making authorities place on the ELP in relation to other demands, priorities or options.
- International co-operation in the development and piloting of an ELP was essential and has paid off. Taken together, the results and insights from the individual pilot projects provide a substantial base for essential decisions in relation to dissemination and implementation of the ELP.
- Wide implementation throughout Europe seems desirable to maintain and promote linguistic and cultural diversity (ibid, p.12).

1.5.4. ELP dissemination and related CoE projects

Following the publication of the report on the ELP pilot project, the ELP was acknowledged by many language educators and policy makers across Europe as a valid pedagogical tool worth exploiting and devoting more time to. The potential impact of the ELP in revolutionising language education and activities related to it, such as benchmarking, modularisation and accreditation of language learning, teaching and assessment, was quickly realised by many national and private bodies related to language education, which started developing their own ELP models, addressed to learners of different ages, nationalities and backgrounds.

Since the official launch of the ELP in 2001, an intergovernmental CoE seminar on the ELP is organised regularly on an approximate yearly basis, documenting and consolidating developments and insights, offering help to ELP developers, monitoring ELP-related research and presenting a forum for the transfer of expertise and the

development of general strategies (cf. seminar reports: Little 2001a; 2002a; b; 2003b; Little 2004c). Additionally, the CoE portal on the ELP is a rich source of information on the ELP, research documentation, links to ELP models, etc. (Council of Europe 2000a).

Furthermore, on the basis of the insights gathered thus far, ECML set up IMPEL, a multi-faceted project on ELP implementation, with the aim to 'gather and exchange information on experience in order to provide support for the day-to-day management of ELP implementation projects on an operational level' (European Centre for Modern Languages 2003). A clear and ambitious action plan was established ranging from 2004 to 2007, and IMPEL's specific objectives to be accomplished in that period were defined as follows:

- to gather and analyse information on experience and issues in day-to-day management of ELP implementation projects;
- to elaborate sets of planning, monitoring and feedback tools;
- to test and enrich the planning, monitoring and feedback tools;
- to initiate a cascading process by making these tools available to project managers;
- to facilitate and support ELP implementation projects;
- to disseminate information, expertise and experience in support of ongoing and future projects.

A large number of insights on the ELP and ELP-related developments across Europe were summarised in the consolidated report by the General Rapporteur, Rolf Schärer, entitled *A European Language Portfolio: From piloting to implementation (2001-2004)* (Schärer 2004). According to this report, over 1,250,000 learners had already used the ELP by 2004, and feedback from them was predominantly positive. The report outlined not only many of the benefits of the ELP, but also challenges to successful ELP implementation and dissemination expressed in ELP seminars and various other publications. However, the report once again underlined the need for further research, teacher training focussing on the ELP, and well-thought-out supportive actions. It also stressed that the 'attractiveness' of the ELP seemed to grow owing to a number of factors, such as the findings of the large-scale OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2000), and the EU initiative of the European curriculum vitae,

Europass (CEDEFOP 2005), which is linked to the ELP through an abbreviated language passport.

The report raised a number of issues related to the future of the ELP and to optimal development, implementation and dissemination strategies. Tellingly, when presenting the report in the Madrid ELP seminar, its author said that despite all these positive developments, 'it is clear that the ELP needs more support, both as regards reporting and in general; otherwise it will die in a very short time' (Little 2004c, p.5).

Although the report became available only during the final stage of analysis of findings from the research project documented in this thesis, my discussion of those findings was extended in places in order to include the issues raised in the report where that was possible in the limited space available (cf. Chapters, 4, 5 and 6).

1.5.5. ELP-oriented pedagogy

The CEF/ELP project is massive in scale and has succeeded in bringing together language educationalists and policy-makers from all over Europe. For the first time in recent years, there seems to be a chance to make language education a more transparently principled and scientific discipline, where all learning is valued and fostered regardless of its geographical origin and type, where learning, teaching and assessment feed into one another and act synergistically rather than antagonistically, and where goal-setting, self-assessment and teacher assessment can be made more modular and thus more objectively benchmarked, and fruitfully combined in a virtuous circle which arguably fosters motivation, learner autonomy and higher ultimate achievement. Even those not currently aware of the ELP – such as the millions of learners and hundreds of teachers who have not used it yet around Europe – are starting to hear more about it and the benefits it offers.

However, most of the – predominantly positive – findings evaluating the effect of the ELP on learning, teaching and assessment in various projects around Europe have tended to be rather limited in their scope. This was either because of the relatively small size of the pilot projects such findings referred to, or because they tended to be anecdotal and/or only qualitative, rather than attempting a longitudinal evaluation based on a

balance of qualitative and quantitative elements which would lead to a broader understanding of ELP effects (cf. relevant discussion in Chapter 3).

Despite the limitations mentioned in the preceding paragraph, two research projects seemed to go a long way towards establishing an ELP-oriented pedagogy on the basis of findings collected from an experimentally controlled sample over a period of time: the Finnish ELP pilot project and the Irish post-primary ELP evaluation project (EE1). The latter will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, since it is the immediate precursor of the project which is the focus of this thesis.

The Finnish ELP pilot project was organised by the University of Tampere and capitalised on earlier methodological investigations carried out in that institution. Among other things, those investigations indicated that 'language learning as learner growth was recognised to be related to (whole-) school development' (Kohonen 1993). This idea was informed by Kolb's notion of experiential learning (EL, Kolb 1984). EL is an approach to LL which makes use of the 'element of learning from immediate experience and engaging the learners in the process as whole persons, [...] including the emotional, social, physical, cognitive and spiritual aspects of their personality' (Kohonen 2001d, pp.23, 27). According to Kolb, who introduced the basic model of EL in its current four-stage form, 'personal experience [...] supplies the life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to abstract concepts', providing 'a concrete, publicly shared reference point for testing the implications and availability of ideas created during the learning process' (Kolb 1984, p.21). Kohonen summarised and qualified the use of the EL model as follows:

> Only experience that is reflected upon seriously will yield its full measure of learning, and reflection must in turn be followed by testing new hypotheses in order to obtain further experience. It can be argued, in fact, that theoretical concepts will not become part of the individual's frame of reference until they have been experienced meaningfully on a subjective emotional level. Reflection plays an important role in this process by providing a bridge [...] between experience and theoretical conceptualization. The process of learning is seen as the recycling of experience at deeper levels of understanding and interpretation (Kohonen 1992, p.17).

A natural consequence of what has been said so far about EL is that the adoption of such an approach which stresses the importance of the experience of the learner is by definition learner-centred since it seeks to bring to the foreground not just the linguistic needs of the learner but also his or her whole being and aims not solely at an improvement in the learner's proficiency in the FL, but also of his or her abilities to reflect and make sense of the world and his or her immediate surroundings. When such a process is pursued in class, it empowers the learner by seeking to find ways to help him or her to become a critical thinker capable of reflection and (self-) evaluation. Such a learner can then actively seek ways to improve his or her situation and achieve self-actualization not just through an improvement in his or her proficiency in the target language (TL) but primarily through this acquired capacity for independent thinking. The ability for this kind of thinking is obviously the main characteristic and prerequisite for a learner to be truly autonomous in any significant sense.

Over the years, this project has tended to approach LL from an EL perspective and examine whether or not and under which prerequisites an EL-informed approach could be best served by a pedagogical tool such as the ELP. A strategy followed throughout the project was to foster a fertile dialogue among teachers and education specialists who offered on-going technical support to the teachers. This dialogue then served as a model for the kind of pedagogic dialogue which should take place in each classroom. Arguably, in an ELP-informed classroom, such an EL perspective can be singularly served by the support of real negotiated self-assessment and goal-setting.

As an indication of the broad research agenda of the Tampere project, insights were reported in various publications as follows:

- aspects of facilitating language learners to take charge of their learning processes, and establishing types of LL goals (Kohonen 1999);
- practices fostering ELP success: teacher support groups fostering reflection-in-action and teacher growth (Kohonen 2000a);
- authentic assessment through the dossier (ibid);
- a learner autonomy promotion list (ibid);
- issues related to ELP teacher development seminars (ibid);

- whole-school development issues (6 schools and forty teachers participating in the project, ibid);
- using teacher ELPs as teacher logs (ibid);
- promoting reflection through the use of question checklists and trying to 'ease learners into reflection' (ibid);
- fostering a negotiated curriculum based on critical reflection, and going past lower secondary learners' increased tendencies for resistance to autonomy (ibid);
- treating schools as attitude formation environments (ibid);
- promoting student reflection in portfolio assessment: increasing visibility in learning through portfolio assessment (Kohonen 2000c);
- planning where to begin with the ELP (ibid);
- providing rationale and a supportive atmosphere for reflection in small groups (ibid);
- presenting and evaluating sample student reflections (ibid, cf. also project progress reports in Kohonen and Pajukanta 1999a; b).

The findings from this project are based on data gathered from the following sources:

1. the teachers' developmental essays at the end of the project;
2. student questionnaires and interviews of a small number of students from five participating schools;
3. discussions and reporting at the intensive project evaluation seminars held in spring 2000 and 2001 (small group reports);
4. teachers' published action research papers;
5. student portfolios;
6. Kohonen's own field notes from the seminars during the 3-year project (cf. Kohonen forthcoming, p.9).

By 2000, the idea of 'portfolio-oriented FL education' became more clearly delineated and Kohonen summarised his reflections on how to optimise the use of the ELP and foster success. As regards teachers, he observed that 'teacher growth has no shortcuts' (Kohonen 2000b, p.12), adding the following:

> The ELP, like any major pedagogical innovation, will take time and require commitment. [...] I suggest that it is *mandatory for the teachers to have enough time and resources for professional preparation before they start* serious ELP work with their students, and while they are doing it (particularly for the first time). The portfolio-oriented work thus needs a great deal of long-term support, both material and professional. Asking the language teachers to undertake the work without adequate support structures may lead to disappointment and frustration. Major professional reorientation needs sustained support extending over several years (Kohonen 2000b, p.13, emphasis in the original; cf. also Kohonen 2001a).

More recent research replicated earlier insights and attempted to outline the importance of awareness in foreign language education, the teacher's role in guiding autonomy and scaffolding self-assessment in portfolio-oriented education, and to offer ELP reflection checklists (Kohonen 2001c), suggesting that the ELP does appear to support a paradigm shift from portfolio assessment to portfolio-oriented language learning, helping integrate tasks, goals and assessment, especially thanks to the dual function of the dossier as a project and product instrument (Kohonen 2002).

In my opinion, this is a very valid point, although it seems to underplay the fact that the other two parts of the ELP can also be used as process and product instruments, at times with dramatically positive effects (cf. e.g. Chapters 4-6, on how learners in Irish post-primary education tended to employ the language biography to that effect in the project documented here).

Discussing the issue of 'student autonomy and teachers' professional growth: fostering a collegial culture in language teacher education', Kohonen presented how it was dealt with in the 'Tampere OK school development project' (cf. project findings in Kohonen 2001b; Kohonen and Kaikkonen 2001) and outlined some of the challenges and pay-offs of using the ELP to promote learner autonomy as part of 'values education' in school, and the need for a new collegial culture in teacher education where all participants are seen as being equal, in the process of learning, and are being respected as individuals (Kohonen 2003).

In his latest and most comprehensive presentation of and reflection on the Finnish ELP pilot project, Kohonen offered an overview of its procedures, issues and conclusions. He stressed the pedagogical significance of the ELP and how it is especially well-suited to facilitate 'site-based curriculum development and collegial teacher collaboration'. He also repeated many themes mentioned in earlier publications, such as lower secondary learners' 'increased resistance to autonomy' and 'the teachers' perceived lack of time to reflect on the ELP and its effects on teaching and learning. Furthermore, he identified issues related to the long-term success of the ELP, which made him express the view that ELP implementation should best be gradual, since ELP-based teaching requires more time for reflection (Kohonen 2004; cf. also Kohonen forthcoming). In summary, he identified the following properties of ELP-oriented pedagogy:

1. giving students opportunities to introduce themselves in their own personal ways;
2. giving students versatile [sic.] evidence of the quality of learning and development as learners;
3. performing a number of learning tasks, with an action plan negotiated with the teacher;
4. reflecting on the content and processes of language learning;
5. involving peer assessment and teacher comments;
6. showing what the student can do with his/her language skills, in relation to the Council of Europe's proficiency level descriptors (Kohonen 2004, p.32).

Furthermore, he mentioned that 'the ELP journey evolved during the Finnish project through the following steps':

1. clarifying the participating teachers' educational orientation, their pedagogical beliefs and assumptions and conceptions of language learning, i.e., how the teachers saw their task and role in the classroom;
2. clarifying the students' views, beliefs and assumptions of themselves as language learners: how they saw their roles and responsibilities in the social classroom context;
3. working towards a supportive environment of negotiated language learning and respect for diversity;

4. working towards reflection on individual and social learning processes and increasing awareness of different aspects entailed in foreign language learning;
5. guiding the students to undertake a number of portfolio assignments each school year, carried out in the target language, and discussed and evaluated both individually and in groups;
6. learning to use the Council of Europe's self-assessment grid for assessing their language learning. In addition to task-specific assessment, the students also assessed their communicative skills in more generic terms, with the help of the checklists (Kohonen 2004, p.33).

Kohonen finally observed that a *qualitative* analysis of the findings showed that the ELP is a potentially powerful tool for promoting student autonomy in foreign language education. This central finding was due to a variety of reasons:

1. the flexibility of the ELP with regard to language skills;
2. expanding students' views of language and communication;
3. increasing students' self-understanding and ownership of learning;
4. helping students to see the progress of their learning over time;
5. giving teachers new ways of fostering language learning (Kohonen 2004, pp.33-4, emphasis added).

1.5.6. Where next? Main research question

It should have become apparent from the content of the previous sections that the 'CEF/ELP project' is quite ambitious and appears to have substantial 'subversive' potential. However, does the above-mentioned framework actively promote what it claims to promote? If so, under which prerequisites, and how does it work when it is superimposed on the language curricula currently in place? Can we *quantify and qualify* the effect of the ELP in a number of different settings? Even very thorough projects such as the Finnish one (and the EE1 presented in section 2.4.5 below) appear to focus almost exclusively on the qualitative element. In the absence of quantitative findings, how sure can we be that the predominantly positive attitudes of learners and teachers towards the

ELP are not attributable to chance, to the element of novelty, or to any other 'confounding variables' external to the ELP as a pedagogical tool?

Feeling that the best way to reach more salient conclusions on the effect of the ELP on language education is probably to evaluate its adoption in one country and explore in depth the nature of the relationship between a curriculum already in place and the ELP in a statistically controlled manner, I set up the longitudinal empirical evaluation project documented here under the supervision of Prof. David Little.

This project is also an answer to the call for a longitudinal study on the implementation of the ELP consistently voiced in ELP-related conventions, seminars, workshops and publications (e.g. Little 2001a; 2002a; b; c; d; 2003b; 2004c; e; 2005b; Little and Perclová 2001; Schärer 2000; 2004; Ushioda 2003a; Ushioda and Ridley 2002).

2. The 'LAP' ELP in its Irish context, and further theoretical background

2.1. Preamble

This chapter presents an overview of the environment, development, theoretical background and first evaluation of the ELP model for 'Learners in Irish Post-Primary Education' (hence LAP ELP, accredited as model 10.2001 Authentik 2001). The LAP ELP was developed as a product of the 'Learner Autonomy Project' (LAP). The chapter provides:

- An overview of the language provision in Irish compulsory education, which constituted the environment in which the LAP took place, and which affected the format of this ELP model in a crucial way. This overview identifies some of the strengths of and challenges to the language provision in Ireland and presents some related recent developments.
- A brief overview of the LAP, its aims, theoretical background, research instruments, as well as a first discussion of how it informed the current research project.
- A description and brief examination of the principal features of the LAP ELP.
- A presentation of the 'ELP Support Network for teachers in Irish post primary education', and its activities.
- A brief discussion of the findings of the first (2001-02) qualitative evaluation of the LAP ELP (EE1, Ushioda and Ridley 2002).
- A presentation of self-determination theory (SDT), which provided a large proportion of both the additional theoretical background and research instruments of the current research project.

2.2. Irish post-primary education and language provision

Irish post-primary education is divided into two levels: the three-year Junior Cycle for learners aged 12 to 15, at the end of which learners have to sit a Junior Certificate Examination (JC), and the two-year Senior Cycle for learners aged 16 to 18, at the end of which learners have to sit a (school-) Leaving Certificate Examination (LC). The two cycles are 'connected' through a transition year (TY), which is taken up or not by learners depending on when their birthday falls during the year and whether or not they want to have a TY. A number of post-primary schools provide additional courses after LC. These are called Post Leaving Certificate Courses (PLCs) and may be deemed to be post-second level. The project documented in this thesis spans the full range of ages in Irish post-primary education, including PLC classes (cf. Chapter 3).

Irish education has some peculiarities which are rooted in Irish history. For a number of reasons, educational provision in the past was mostly organised by religious orders and other voluntary organisations, and not directly by the state. As a result, curriculum development was also generally organised by individual schools and/or religious orders, which received methodological advice and funding from the state. This explains why schools still enjoy much more liberty in Ireland than in any other European country as regards how they structure their weekly timetables, how many subjects they offer, etc. Furthermore, Article 42.2 of the Irish Constitution states that parents are a child's primary educators and they 'shall be free to provide this education in their homes, or in private schools, or in schools recognised or established by the State' (cf. also historical overviews of curriculum development in Ireland in Crooks and McKernan 1984; also overview of the education system of Ireland in Eurydice 2000).

In general, Irish post-primary education consists of four types of schools: voluntary secondary, vocational, comprehensive and community schools. 'The dominance of the voluntary secondary schools is an unusual and historical feature of Irish education at post-primary level. The majority of these schools are Roman Catholic established with the purpose of ensuring that Roman Catholic children would have a Roman Catholic education. The Trustees of the schools (the legal representatives of the owners) act as guarantors that the school will be run in accordance with the Roman Catholic ideals and *philosophy of the founders'* (Eurydice 2000, p.58, emphasis added).

Furthermore, the historical development of voluntary secondary education in Ireland has resulted in a large number of committees and representative groups. '*While some rationalisation has occurred through amalgamation of groups, the representations and interacting continue to be complex.* Each of the four types of secondary schools (voluntary secondary, vocational, comprehensive and community) has its own organisation structure' (ibid, emphasis added).

Finally, a number of public bodies participate in the development of overarching educational policies related to all these types of post-primary schools. Principal among them is, of course, the Department of Education and Science of Ireland (DES), with the most important other bodies being the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Association of Secondary Teachers' of Ireland, the Conciliation Council for Teachers, the National Parents' Council, the National Council for Educational Awards, the Teachers' Union of Ireland, and the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals. The associations of teachers of different subjects also play an important role in maintaining a high standard across schools in the teaching of each subject. However, their efforts are hindered in that they tend to be subject-specific and not to cross-pollinate one another and strive towards an integrated curriculum.

The pre-service training of post-primary teachers in Ireland is organised around Higher Diploma in Education Courses (HDipEd), which are offered by Universities, but do not follow a set curriculum. As a result, 'in 1991 the OECD was very critical of the HDipEd as a way of preparing second level teachers at the end of the twentieth century' (Eurydice 2000, 158; cf. relevant comparison in PISA 2004d). Furthermore, of all teachers in post- primary education, *only* teachers in vocational and community schools must hold a qualification in the subjects they teach (ibid, p.161, emphasis added).

Although DES in 1996 published a discussion document on 'whole-school inspection' as a means of improving the quality of education in Irish education and introducing a system of open accountability by schools to pupils, parents, boards of management and the wider school community, the focus at second level tended to be subject-based (ibid, pp.174-5). This means that an integrative curriculum where the teaching of all subjects benefits from knowledge and approaches employed in other subjects is a minority achievement.

Ireland's participation in OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has provided some important statistics on Irish education. Irish learners appear to be optimistic but profess a low sense of belonging in school, the causes of which in my opinion need further examination (PISA 2004b, pp.46-7). Despite this state of affairs, the relationship between school performance and schools' socio-economic background shows a commendably high degree of 'socio-economic inclusion' (PISA 2004a, pp.199-200). Furthermore, there seem to be 'no significant gender differences' in learners' problem-solving skills, although such skills show that the majority of learners are 'incapable of dealing with multi-faceted problems involving multiple data sources or requiring analytical reasoning with the information provided' (PISA 2004c, pp.105, 46).

Recognising the importance of languages in European education, Eurydice recently published its 'first separate report in the *Key Data Series* devoted specifically to the teaching of languages' (Eurydice 2005), which built on and expanded earlier Eurydice efforts in this domain (e.g. Eurydice 2001; Irish Eurydice Unit 2001). In it, thirty-seven indicators were included, presenting the most up-to-date comparison of language provision in Irish education to that in other countries. This publication confirmed some challenges which remain particularly acute in 2005. In particular, Ireland and the UK are the only countries where two foreign languages are still 'not available to all pupils but *may* be offered within the flexible curriculum' (Eurydice 2005, pp.30-1), the age at which learners may start to learn a foreign language is the highest in Europe (i.e. ten, ibid, p.33), CLIL is practised in only one school in the country on a limited pilot basis and in Irish-medium schools where all subjects are taught through the medium of Irish (ibid, pp.32-3), and as regards diversification of language provision, Ireland is last of the countries which provided valid data (pp.43-4). Furthermore, no set recommendations exist for HDipEd courses related to language teaching qualifications in 2005 (ibid, pp.57-8), and the average amount of time spent on FL learning in Ireland is the smallest in Europe, corresponding to approximately 8% (ibid, p.77). Finally, no regulations or recommendations exist regarding separate maximum class sizes for foreign languages in primary [and post-primary] education; maximum class sizes are 30 learners per class, which coincides with the biggest class sizes in Europe (ibid, p.78).

2.3. Recent developments

Taking the above into account, it may have become obvious why the DES and the NCCA have started a big effort towards a critical review and amelioration of Irish education in general and language education in particular. In particular, DES has started promoting 'whole-school inspection' practices mentioned above and efforts are made towards better quality control and benchmarking of available educational provision through subject inspection guides (Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2004a), an annual DES-wide report which highlights achievements and challenges (Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2003), and annual reports on the basis of the LC examination results (e.g. Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2001), etc.

The importance placed on language education becomes evident from publications such as *Inspection of modern languages: Observations and issues,* which offers an overview of issues related to FL through a composite report which 'is the product of an analysis and synthesis of 45 individual modern language inspection reports completed between November 2001 and January 2003' (Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2004b). A further report of this type related to the teaching of the Irish language is currently in preparation (Paul Caffrey, personal communication). Furthermore, DES has invited the CoE to appoint a team of international experts to develop a country profile for language provision in Ireland and to make suggestions towards possible improvements which could promote the formulation of an integrated language policy. This profile is due in 2006 (Little 2005c, p.4).

The NCCA is working closely with the DES and other stakeholders towards achieving higher standards in Irish education through the development of a strategic plan (NCCA 2004c), and the promotion of a review of the senior and junior cycles (NCCA 2002a; 2003a; b; c; 2004c; e; 2005a). It also issued guidelines for language teachers in primary schools and commissioned a report on the feasibility of modern languages in the primary school curriculum. Languages are currently taught in primary schools only on a piloting basis (cf. also J. Harris and Conway 2003; NCCA 2001; 2005a). Of considerable interest for the purposes of this thesis is the review of languages in the post-primary

curriculum project initiated in 2003, through a discussion paper under the same title (Little 2003c).

That paper identified the main challenges facing language education in Ireland in the 21st century. Some of the main points it raised were summarized by its author as follows (ibid, p.3):

> The paper criticises the current [language] curriculum on four interrelated grounds:
>
> - There is no overarching language policy which provides for the inclusion of languages other than Irish in the post-primary curriculum. As things stand, there is nothing to guarantee that foreign languages will remain a significant part of post-primary education in the event that the National University of Ireland drops its matriculation requirement of Irish and a foreign language.
> - We do not have an integrated language curriculum, but a series of language curricula that are largely independent of one another. Arguably this leads to an impoverished educational experience; it certainly means that curriculum planning is haphazard and piecemeal.
> - The same Irish curricula are taken by the minority of students who are native speakers of Irish and/or attending Irish-medium schools and the English-medium majority for whom Irish is a second language. This situation is linguistically and educationally indefensible, and until it is remedied there is little realistic prospect of raising the levels of proficiency achieved by the non-native-speaker majority in Irish.
> - Because we have neither a language policy nor an integrated language curriculum we have no criteria by which to manage diversification, whether that involves introducing new foreign languages or accommodating the mother tongues of newcomer students.
>
> The paper also raises questions about (i) the sustainability of foreign languages in the absence of a language policy, (ii) the levels of communicative proficiency achieved by school-leavers, (iii) current language teaching methods, and (iv) current forms of assessment.
>
> It recommends that consideration should be given to:
>
> - formulating a language policy on the basis of a thorough investigation of Ireland's language needs
> - developing an integrated language curriculum [which includes English and Irish viewed as mother tongues and as TLs] based on a fixed amount of "curriculum space", perhaps divisible in a variety of different ways
> - undertaking independent measurement of the communicative proficiency achieved by students in Irish and foreign languages at Junior and Leaving Certificate levels
> - *undertaking a survey of teachers and students in order to arrive at a better understanding of what happens in post-primary language classrooms*
> - *experimenting on a small scale with projects that use the European Language Portfolio to (i) foster the development of learner autonomy, (ii) establish whole-*

school approaches to language teaching, and (iii) explore portfolio approaches to assessment

- experimenting on a small scale with projects that teach other subjects through the medium of a foreign language
- experimenting on a small scale with projects that make full use of media and information technologies to teach Irish and foreign languages.

The paper begins and ends by insisting that any proposals for change in curriculum and/or assessment should be validated in carefully controlled pilot projects before they are introduced as part of mainstream practice (Little 2003c, p.3, emphasis added on the points which are particularly related to the project documented in this thesis).

Some of the major additional points raised by this discussion paper were:

- The JC and LC exams [in English] focus on written assessment 'which leaves teachers of English with little incentive to develop, for example, their students' oral presentation skills' (ibid, pp.8-9; note that the situation is little better for other languages).
- The vagueness of 'how the senior cycle is intended to build on the junior Cycle', and anecdotal evidence which suggests that, for many teachers, the LC syllabus is quantitatively but not qualitatively different from the JC syllabus (ibid, p.12).
- The importance of CEF as a set of tools that can be used simultaneously by (i) curriculum developers, course designers and textbook authors, (ii) teachers and learners, and (iii) examination boards and other language test providers, [...] integrating curriculum, teaching and assessment as never before (ibid, p.25), and defining appropriate progression in post-primary language learning (ibid, p.28).
- Current post-primary language teaching practices. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a survey of post-primary language classrooms (Irish as well as foreign languages) would reveal that (i) a great deal of English is spoken, (ii) there is little spontaneous target language use, (iii) little attention is paid to the explicit development of learner autonomy, and (iv) only very occasional recourse is made to media and information technologies (ibid, p.35).

In response to this discussion paper, a very broad dialogue was initiated including a consultative survey (NCCA 2004b), a number of 'invitational seminars', consultation with NCCA course committees for languages, a series of meetings with schools in the Gaeltachtaí, and a call for submissions of scripted responses. This process culminated in the recently published report of the first phase of the review of languages in post-primary education (NCCA 2005b). This report generally acknowledged that the first phase of the review gave rise to significant discussion on:

- The need for a language policy and what it would comprise
- An integrated language curriculum
- Irish as a mother tongue and as a second language

- Ways of achieving greater diversity in the languages curriculum
- Patterns and practices in language teaching and learning
- Assessment of learning and proficiency in languages
- The extent of engagement with the Common European Framework for Languages and the European Languages Portfolio (ibid, p.7).

The remainder of the report discussed some of these issues in more detail. Notably, it mentioned criteria for the diversification of language provision (ibid, p.11), identified benefits and challenges of an integrated curriculum (ibid, pp.18-20), and presented the example of Wales, a country with relatively similar linguistic background to Ireland which has succeeded in developing a comprehensive language policy which fosters an integrated curriculum (ibid, p.20). The report also observed the frequent existence of relatively negative attitudes towards Irish which result in a growing number of students seeking exemptions from sitting the State examinations in Irish (ibid, p.27), and reproduced the attitude expressed in the seminars that the current provision in relation to pre-service and in-service education for teachers is inadequate (ibid, p.35), and expressed the opinion that the syllabuses for modern language subjects will most likely need to be reviewed and revised in the longer term (ibid, p.52).

The whole of section four of the report was devoted to the potential of the CEF/ELP and the European curriculum vitae, Europass, which is linked to the ELP through an abbreviated language passport, in addressing some of the issues identified above, with particular emphasis on integrating authentic assessment in language education by means of the ELP (ibid, p.60).

Section five of the report outlined recommendations for a second phase of the review of languages in post-primary education. In general terms, the recommendations of the report related to:

- A policy on languages in education
- Developments in assessment of current language syllabuses
- Developing a syllabus for native (L1) speakers of Irish
- Pilot studies related to the areas of integration, language awareness and attainment of proficiency in languages
- ICT in teaching and learning of languages

- Alignment of developments in languages in Ireland with similar developments at the European level (ibid, p.64).

A principal recommendation related to the above was a DES-funded pilot project focused on the CEF/ELP framework (ibid, pp.66-7), viewed as a step towards a comprehensive improvement and benchmarking of post-primary language provision in Ireland.

Apart from the recent developments related to Irish language education mentioned above, a small number of schools also participated in a number of pan-European projects representing Ireland. These projects did not affect Irish post-primary education in a sufficiently substantial way to merit specific reference here. In the few cases where a school/class which participated in the project documented in this thesis also took part in such a scheme, appropriate references are made in the class-specific discussion contained in Chapter 5.

2.4. Learner autonomy project

2.4.1. General

The CLCS Learner Autonomy Project (LAP; 1997–2001) was the precursor of the project documented in this thesis and served as a pilot project for the LAP ELP in its final year (cf. section 2.4.4 below). In general the LAP had two complementary aims:

- to stimulate pedagogical experimentation in a number of second-level French and German classrooms (this aim was later expanded to include all languages taught as foreign or second languages in Ireland);
- to use various empirical means to explore the impact of this experimentation on teachers and learners (Little et al. 2002, p.1).

In the introduction to the book documenting the project its theoretical outlook was made immediately clear. The project was said to have been shaped by two beliefs. First, a conviction that '*autonomy is not an optional extra [...] but an essential characteristic of all truly successful learners, regardless of their age or the domain in which they are learning.*' Secondly, that the growth of learner autonomy 'depends not on the application of a "method" but on complex interactive processes that arise from the teacher's ongoing commitment to explore and implement general principles. In other words, *the*

development of learner autonomy requires teachers to rethink their pedagogical beliefs not just once but continuously' (Little et al. 2002, pp.1-2, emphasis added).

The recurrent foci of the project were identified as follows:

- How can we bring learners to accept responsibility for their learning?
- How can we help them to develop the reflective skills on which effective exercise of that responsibility depends?
- How can we get learners to use the target language as the principal channel of learning?
- How can teachers develop their long-term planning skills?
- How can we integrate the pursuit of autonomy with the demands of the curriculum? (Little et al. 2002, pp.2-3)

To an extent, these laconically set but nonetheless ambitious foci have extended the life of the project itself as they have carved themselves into some parts of the LAP ELP, as will be discussed in section 2.4.4 below. Furthermore, the areas of pedagogical experimentation of the LAP were also focussed upon in the project documented in this thesis. The reason behind this decision was to examine whether or not the very positive findings of the LAP were stable over time and could be replicated with a more experimentally controlled sample population which would cover the whole of Irish post-primary education, rather than just the Junior Cycle (Little et al. 2002, p.34 and Chapter 3 below).

2.4.2. Theoretical background

Further to the points raised above, the project was theoretically underpinned on the one hand by the perspectives of the three researchers involved in it and on the other by the insights of visiting experts who offered workshops and public lectures to the project participants. In the introduction to the book documenting the LAP, the three researchers involved stated their own areas of research interest which were related to the work carried out in the project (Little et al. 2002, p.1).

David Little's main concern was 'to elaborate a theory of learner autonomy that is firmly rooted in contemporary understanding of the psychological and social-interactive

processes of human development and learning'. That theory was later outlined as founded on a social-interactive view of learning which was based on the socio-cultural theories of learning of Lev Vygotsky (1978; 1986), according to which learning takes place in the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), defined as 'the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers' (1978, p.86). Thus, Vygotsky identifies autonomy (independent problem solving) as the goal of learning, but insists that it grows out of dependence on others ('under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers') (Little 2000b, p.9).

This view of human learning has been expanded by educational philosophers working in the Vygotskian paradigm such as Bruner (1986; Wood, Bruner, and Ross 1976), who identified six 'scaffolding' functions which facilitate students performance while engaged in problem solving. This notion of scaffolding was further developed through Rogoff's notion of guided participation (Rogoff 1990, p.8), whereby '[f]rom guided participation involving shared understanding and problem solving, children appropriate and increasingly advance understanding of and skill in managing the intellectual problems of their community', and Lantolf's theoretical explorations of 'language learning as a mediated process' and 'collaborative learning' (cf. Lantolf 2000; Lantolf and Appel 1994a; b).

A fundamental precept of Little's theory is an understanding of learner autonomy as involving the synergistic interaction of three principles: learner empowerment, learner reflection, and appropriate target language use (summarised in Little 2001d; Little et al. 2002, pp.15-22), and being based on the notion that 'true pedagogical dialogue must always be embedded in the here and now and [...] cannot be conducted by rote or recipe: it must be invented, elaborated and explored anew in each classroom (Little 1995a; Little 2001d, p.7, 10).

Little's view of learner autonomy and the concepts outlined above has evolved over the years, as evidenced in a number of publications, partly as a result of his involvement in the LAP and ELP-related projects (cf. e.g. Little 1991; Little 1995b;

1996; 1997; 1999c; d; 2000a; 2001b; c; forthcoming; Little and Grant 1986; Little and Ushioda 1998).

Jennifer Ridley's explorations examined the relation between learners' perceptions of language learning and how they reflect on and manage the learning process (e.g. Ridley 1997a; Ridley 1997b; 2003a; b). Ridley's views were informed by Olson's notions of metalinguistic awareness and how writing can facilitate reflection and conceptual reformulation (cf. e.g. 1991; 1994a; 1994b; 1995; 1998; review in O'Rourke 2002).

Ema Ushioda's approach to the conceptualisation and investigation of learner motivation was based on the premise that motivation to learn a language is 'a dynamic phenomenon' and a 'socially mediated process', constantly affected by personal, societal and institutional factors. As a result, 'within the context of institutionalised learning especially, the common experience would seem to be motivational flux rather than stability, with high and low points' (cf. e.g. Ushioda 1993; 1994; Ushioda 1996a, pp.239-40; Ushioda 1996b; 2003b).

The LAP was further shaped by the insights on learner autonomy of other educational theorists such as Leni Dam, Lienhard Legenhausen and Hanne Thomsen, whose practical explorations exhibit the positive results of autonomy-informed practices in language education (e.g. Dam 1995; 2000; 2001; 1997; Legenhausen 2001a; b; 2003; Thomsen 2000; Thomsen and Gabrielsen 1991).

The theoretical background of the LAP (and its relationship to the ELP) was further explored in a symposium organised as a concluding event of the LAP which can be read as a companion to the book documenting the project (Little et al. 2002). All the visiting experts who offered workshops and public lectures to the project participants reviewed the insights they had offered through the workshops and public lectures in the symposium (cf. Little et al. 2002, p.33). Some additional experts were also invited to contribute their thoughts in an effort to produce a publication addressing 'the theory and practice of learner autonomy from the complementary perspectives of all the roles (learners, teachers, teacher trainers, curriculum designers, examiners) and agencies (especially curriculum and examination boards) that together make up secondary education' (Little, Ridley, and Ushioda 2003, p.3).

A final theoretical influence which conduced to the construction of a shared understanding by teachers and researchers (despite the fact that many teacher participants left the project for personal reasons and new teachers were recruited in their place) was the following 'working document' on learner autonomy, which provided 'a concise working definition of learner autonomy and spelt out its implications for pedagogical practice' (Little et al. 2002, pp.30-1):

LAP: a working document

Learner autonomy: a working definition

- Learners take their first steps towards autonomy when they begin to accept responsibility for their own learning.
- They exercise and develop their autonomy by sharing in the decisions and initiatives that give shape and direction to the language learning process.
- By planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning, they develop their metacognitive and metalinguistic capacities (their ability to reflect on the learning process, the forms of the target language, and the uses to which the target language can be put).

Pedagogical implications

- Learners must be aware of the requirements of the curriculum (what they are expected (i) to know about the target language and (ii) to be able to do using the target language).
- The curriculum should be the basis on which interim learning targets are negotiated.
- As their autonomy develops, learners should gradually be given greater freedom of choice as regards learning content and learning activities.
- Freedom of choice entails an obligation to be answerable for the consequences (responsible for one's own learning); learners must engage in regular evaluation of their progress, both as a class/group and as individuals.
- Learners will find it easier to plan and monitor their learning if they keep a formal written record of what they do, how they do it, and with what results.
- Learners must use the target language as much as possible, not only to perform communicative/learning tasks but to reflect on and evaluate their learning.
- Learners must pay explicit attention to the formal features of the target language – grammar, vocabulary but also pronunciation and intonation.
- An explicit focus on form may sometimes mean drill and practice, but this should always be related to some context of target language use.
- It is all but impossible to focus on grammar except by using written forms of the target language; thus reading and writing should play a central role from the beginning.
- Writing should also be used from the beginning to support the development of speaking skills.

This working document both affected the format of the LAP ELP model and was later employed in the EE1 and in the project documented in this thesis in the same way as it had been used in the LAP.

2.4.3. Research methods and instruments employed

The methods employed during the LAP in order to enable the participating teachers to reach their own understanding in relation to the notion of autonomy and how it can inform their own teaching practices were the following:

- attending a programme of seminars and workshops during the school year;
- engaging in various forms of pedagogical experimentation with a chosen Junior Cycle 'project class';
- accommodating members of the research team in their empirical exploration of individual classrooms (Little et al. 2002, p.29).

However, the empirical exploration undertaken by the project was constrained owing to the difficulty of securing long-term commitment on the part of the teachers. These constraints were successfully moderated by the integration of two quality-enhancing techniques in the data elicitation process:

i) analysis of events and experiences researched from both 'emic' perspectives (i.e., the analysis of events and experiences according to the participants' own interpretative framework) and 'etic' perspectives (i.e., the analysis of these same processes from the researcher's external perspective) (cf. e.g. Bailey and Nunan 1996; Ellis 1997, pp.19-20; Little et al. 2002, p.37; Schwienhorst 2002; van Lier 2000).

ii) a maximisation of the validity and reliability of the data gathered through qualitative research methods through a triangulation of findings, through working with multiple data sources (cf. e.g. Bailey and Nunan 1996, p.3, and Chapter 3 below; Little et al. 2002, p.37).

The following seven data sources were employed in the LAP:

- Attitudinal-motivational questionnaire data from all participating learners.
- Researchers' field-notes.
- Open-ended questionnaire data from learner sub-samples.

- Semi-structured interviews with eight learners.
- Semi-structured interviews with eight teachers.
- End-of-year reflections from five teachers in May 1999.
- Reflective essays from fifteen teachers (summarised from Little et al. 2002, pp.36-43).

On the basis of the findings collected through these research instruments, insights were reached regarding the effect of the LAP on both teachers and learners. All these research instruments were also adapted and employed in the current project (cf. further discussion in Chapter 3). For this reason, LAP findings will not be discussed any further here, as they will be presented and juxtaposed to relevant findings from the current project in Chapters 4 and 5 below.

2.4.4. LAP ELP

The LAP ELP was piloted in the final year of the LAP. It was specially designed in CLCS for use in Irish post-primary schools. Its detailed 'I can' checklists summarised the communicative learning goals prescribed in the Junior and Leaving Certificate post-primary syllabuses for Irish, French, German, Spanish and Italian, written in all these five (target) languages and in English, and classified according to the common reference levels established by the CoE. A preview copy of this ELP model can be viewed at the CLCS 'ELP support network' (ELP SN) site (CLCS 2003a). These TL checklists can be used quite flexibly to integrate self-assessment, teacher assessment and optimal goal-setting, and they range from A1 to B2 level, with A1 and A2 corresponding to Junior Certificate syllabus and B1 and B2 corresponding to Leaving Certificate syllabus. A teacher handbook was also developed giving guidelines and practical suggestions for ways of working with the ELP in class (cf. further discussion below).

A distinctive feature of the LAP ELP was that it was developed through the LAP, and it capitalised on some of its pedagogical concerns and findings. As a result, it was designed with a view to fostering the development of learner autonomy by trying to augment the three principles underpinning learner autonomy: learner empowerment, learner reflection, and appropriate target language use (cf. also Little et al. 2002, p.35).

This intended pedagogical impact becomes especially evident in two structural characteristics of the LAP ELP. First, the LAP ELP was designed to stimulate reflective learning and promote use of the target language in this process of reflection. Each of the three components of the ELP - the language passport, the language biography, and the dossier - is prefaced with a detailed "learning-how-to-learn" introduction which explains to learners how they can use the ELP to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning, presented bilingually in English and Irish, the two official languages of Ireland. Second, the language biography of the LAP ELP model 'was designed as a pedagogical tool to engage and support learners' reflective involvement in the learning process. It emphasises "learning-how-to-learn" skills: planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning process. It comprises the following set of pages encouraging learners to think about and cumulatively record their reflections on various aspects of their language learning and language use' (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, pp.4-6):

- My general aims and reflections
- My checklist of target skills (in five curriculum languages)
- Setting goals and thinking about learning
- Things I notice about language and culture
- How I solve communication problems
- Methods I use to learn languages
- Intercultural experiences
- Heritage languages (cf. English translations of these pages found in Appendix O and detailed discussion of how the LAP ELP was developed and its relationship with the LAP in Ushioda 2003a).

Tellingly, the LAP ELP checklists are designed in an open-ended manner which acknowledges that a certain learner or class may choose to set additional goals not currently included in the post-primary syllabus or in the ELP itself. Thus, each checklist has space available for the addition of two more descriptors per skill. For instance, Figure 2.1 contains the English translation of the checklist for listening at A1 level, together with its introductory instructions.

The intended pedagogical impact of the LAP ELP is clearly outlined in the extended quotation which follows:

It is anticipated that the ELP should help learners and teachers in a number of important ways:

- It should help learners to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning and thus become reflective learners.
- It should encourage use of the target language in the classroom, principally through its multilingual format designed to stimulate and support learners' efforts to work through the medium of the target language.
- It should foster the development of learners' awareness of the language or languages they are learning, as well as their awareness of the language learning process, by encouraging them to engage in reflection and to record their reflections on a cumulative basis.
- It should foster the development of learners' intercultural awareness, both by encouraging them to document personal intercultural experiences, and by stimulating reflection on aspects of the target language culture as they work with different texts and media.
- It should help teachers to plan the course of teaching-learning in relation to the curriculum, and to monitor the progress of individual learners.

The teachers' handbook to accompany the ELP elaborates more fully how the ELP might be exploited to maximize these intended benefits. It also illustrates a range of approaches to working with the ELP in relation to different pedagogical focuses, and contains the clear message that the ELP is designed to be a flexible process tool and that there is no single "best method". [...] How the ELP is used will depend on individual learners' developing language skills, goals and preferences, as these emerge in interaction with the teacher's own pedagogical approach within the constraints of the curriculum and the specific teaching-learning environment (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, p.11).

The far-reaching implications of the intended pedagogical impact of the LAP ELP become even clearer when one reads the above quotation in tandem with the anecdotal evidence mentioned in section 2.3 above on the prevalent practices in language teaching in Irish education and the following observation made by Ushioda:

> Learner autonomy is an explicitly stated curriculum goal, and being able to talk about one's own language learning experience is a key curriculum objective under the heading of 'language awareness'. Nevertheless, it is evident from teachers' comments that engaging learners in reflecting on the learning process and evaluating their own skills and knowledge is rarely a priority in Irish foreign language classrooms at secondary level. Teachers usually cite lack of time as the main reason for not giving much attention to learner reflection and self-evaluation: there is so much to 'get through', and lesson periods are generally no more than forty minutes long. The issue of time management seems to remain the chief

stumbling block, even among teachers who have clearly embraced the use of the ELP with open arms (2003a, p.152).

My checklist of target skills

Skill: **Listening**

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Tá na spriocanna foghlama thíos bunaithe ar na scálaí léiriúcháin i gCreatlach Coiteann na hEorpa (© Comhairle na hEorpa) ach gur cuireadh in oiriúint iad do spriocanna curaclaim an Teastais Shóisearaigh agus na hArdteistiméireachta.

When you hear the language being spoken, what kinds of things can you understand? What do you want or need to be able to understand? Below is a checklist of listening skills, based on targets set out in the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabuses. You can use this checklist **(a)** to tick your next learning goal(s), and **(b)** to record how well you can perform each particular skill:

☆ if you can do this with *a lot of help* (e.g., from your teacher) date the first box;

☆☆ if you can do it with *a little help* date the second box;

☆☆☆ if you can do it *on your own* date the last box.

Level A1 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can understand basic words and phrases about myself and my family when people speak slowly and clearly				
I can understand simple classroom instructions, directions and teacher comments				
I can understand the names of everyday objects in the classroom				
I can understand basic greetings and routine phrases (e.g., please, thank you)				
I can understand simple questions about myself when people speak slowly and clearly				
I can understand numbers and prices				
I can understand days of the week and months of the year				
I can understand times and dates				

Figure 2-1: Checklist for listening at A1 level

2.4.5. EE1 and research instruments employed

In the aftermath of the LAP and the successful piloting and accreditation of the LAP ELP, a number of teachers in Irish post-primary education started using it in their classes. As was mentioned in section 1.5.4 above, a pressing need to provide support to teachers –

especially when they first embark on using the ELP with their classes – has been identified by many theorists time and again. This was the primary incentive for the establishment of the 'ELP Support Network for teachers in Irish post-primary education' (ELP SN) which offers on-going support to teachers using the ELP in their classes.

The ELP SN was launched in October 2001, following the publication of the LAP ELP. A special teachers' conference was held in Trinity College on 19–20 October to introduce the LAP ELP, and was attended by approximately 130 language educators. At the conference, practising teachers interested in working with the ELP were invited to join the ELP Network Project. According to Ushioda and Ridley:

> 'the network project had two related aims:
> - to act as a support network for teachers experimenting with the ELP in their classrooms, enabling them to share experiences and ideas with one another;
> - to evaluate the use of the ELP in different language classrooms, with a view to reporting findings to the CoE's ELP project.
>
> Participants were invited to join the project either as network members with no specific commitment to the classroom-based evaluation process, or as network members who were actively involved in using the ELP in a particular language classroom and were willing to provide focussed evaluative feedback on a monthly basis for an ELP evaluation project' (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, p.12).

This project developed into a six-month ELP Empirical Evaluation project (EE1, documented in Ushioda and Ridley 2002).

The following eight data sources were employed in the EE1:

- monthly teacher reports on classroom experience;
- discussion and feedback during the monthly meetings (summarized in written form by a member of the research team);
- each teacher's individual retrospective analysis of the year's experiences (recorded on the final report form);
- collective retrospective analysis from the final project meeting (group discussion recorded on audiotape);
- samples of learner-produced ELP documents, texts and other materials;
- samples of learner reflections from pages in the Language Biography;
- written learner reflections from one ELP project class, elicited by means of an open-ended questionnaire;
- field-notes from the classroom visit (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, p.18).

As one can see above, efforts were made towards the engineering of an extended triangulation of research instruments. However, this triangulation was slightly moderated by a number of situational constraints, such as the relatively short total duration of the project, the inability of some teacher participants to commit to the evaluation process, funding limitations, and the fact that only one of the participating classes contributed data through all the research instruments mentioned above. Many of these challenges were later met in a more comprehensive way in the more extensive longitudinal project documented in this thesis (cf. Chapter 3).

On the basis of the findings collected through the research instruments mentioned above, insights were reached showing the predominantly positive effect of the LAP ELP on both teachers and learners. The available findings were indeed so positive cross-sectionally that the authors of the report documenting the project felt licensed to say that the various classroom experiments they conducted 'clearly indicated that the project teachers and their learners accepted the ELP, liked using it, and successfully integrated it into their teaching and learning agendas' (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, p.48).

As was the case with LAP, the EE1 research instruments were also adapted and employed in the current project (cf. further discussion in Chapter 3). For this reason, EE1 findings will not be discussed any further here, as they will be shortly presented and juxtaposed to relevant findings from the current project in Chapters 4 and 5 below.

2.5. Additional theoretical background and research instruments:

2.5.1. Self-determination theory

Just as the LAP found in the ELP an ideal pedagogical instrument with far-reaching practical applications which was very much in line with the project's aims and pedago gical concerns, so I was able to extend the theoretical outlook and research instruments this project inherited from LAP and EE1 thanks to self-determination theory (SDT).

SDT is a unified psychological theory of human action developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the University of Rochester. SDT has its roots in the classical Aristotelian view of people, according to which people are 'assumed to possess an innate active tendency for growth and integration'. SDT 'begins by embracing the assumption

that all individuals have natural, innate, and constructive tendencies to develop an even more elaborated (sic) and unified sense of the self' and assumes 'people have a primary propensity to forge interconnections among aspects of their own psyches as well as with other individuals and groups in their social worlds.' This tendency involves both 'autonomy (tending toward inner organisation and holistic self-regulation) and homonomy (tending toward integration of oneself with others). Healthy development involves the complementary functioning of these two aspects of the integrative tendency' (Ryan and Deci 2002, pp.1, 5).

Thus, 'the foundations of SDT reside in a dialectical view which concerns the interaction between an active integrating human nature and *the social contexts that either nurture or impede the organism's active nature'* (Ryan and Deci 2002, p.6, emphasis added). This process is described in SDT by positing three 'basic or fundamental psychological needs', competence, relatedness and autonomy, which 'provide the basis for categorising aspects of the environment as supportive versus antagonistic to integrated and vital human functioning (ibid). These three needs are succinctly outlined in the extended quotation which follows:

> Competence refers to feeling effective in one's ongoing interactions with the social environment and experiencing opportunities to exercise and express one's capacities. The need for competence leads people to seek challenges that are optimal for their capacities and to persistently attempt to maintain and enhance those skills and capacities through activity. Competence is not, then, an attained skill or capacity, but rather is a felt sense of confidence and effectance in action.
>
> Relatedness refers to feeling connected with others, to having a sense of belongingness both with other individuals and with one's community [...].
>
> Finally, autonomy refers to being the perceived origin or source of one's own behaviour. Autonomy concerns acting from interest and integrated values. When autonomous, individuals experience their behaviour as an expression of the self, such that, even when actions are influenced by outside sources, the actors concur with those influences, feeling both initiative and value with regard to them. Autonomy is often confused with, or meddled together with, the quite different concept of independence (which means not relying on external sources or influences), but the SDT view considers there is no necessary antagonism between autonomy and dependence. Indeed, one can quite autonomously enact values and behaviours that others have requested or forwarded, provided that one congruently endorses them. On the other hand, one can of course rely on others for directions or opinions in such a way that autonomy is not experienced, as is the case with mere compliance or conformity. In short, independence versus dependence is a dimension that is seen within SDT as largely orthogonal to the

issue of autonomy versus heteronomy (Ryan and Deci 2002, p.8).

The current format of SDT comprises four 'mini-theories'. Cognitive evaluation theory was formulated to describe the effects of social contexts on people's intrinsic motivation (Deci 1975; Deci and Ryan 1980). It describes contextual elements as autonomy supportive (informational), controlling, and amotivating (sic), and it links these types of contextual elements to the different motivations. Organismic integration theory concerns internalisation and integration of values and regulations, and was formulated to explain the development and dynamics of extrinsic motivation, the degree to which individuals experience autonomy while engaging in extrinsically motivated behaviours, and the processes through which people take on the values and mores of their groups and cultures (Deci 1971; Deci and Ryan 1985b; Ryan and Connell 1989; Ryan and Deci 2000b). Causality orientations theory (Deci and Ryan 1985a) was formulated to describe individual differences in people's tendencies to orient toward the social environment in ways that support their own autonomy, control their behaviour, or are amotivating. [...] Finally, basic needs theory (Ryan and Deci 2000a) was formulated to explain the relation of motivation and goals to health and well-being, in part by describing associations of value configurations and regulatory styles to psychological health, across time, gender, situations, and culture (Ryan and Deci 2002, pp.9-10).

Of crucial importance for the project documented here is the fact that the organismic integration theory, unlike most other theories of internalisation (e.g. Bandura 1996), views internalisation as a continuum rather than a dichotomy: 'The more fully a regulation (or the value underlying it) is internalised, the more it becomes part of the integrated self and the more it is the basis for self-determined behaviour'. At the end of the continuum is 'amotivation, the state of lacking the intention to act' (Ryan and Deci 2002, p.15). Other regulations operationalised by SDT are the ones related to the state of experiencing the intention to act (many facets of which were examined in this project; cf. Chapter 3): the external regulation, the introjected regulation, the regulation through identification and the integrated regulation (in many publications called intrinsic as it shares many qualities with naturally occurring intrinsic regulation). A large body of research (cf. overviews in Deci and Ryan 2000; 2002) has shown extrinsically motivated

behaviours that are integrated to be associated with more positive experiences than less fully internalised forms of extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci 2002, p.18).

The basic precepts of SDT outlined above are in tune with the theoretical outlook of the LAP outlined in section 2.4.2 above, which associates learner autonomy with a social-interactive view of learning linked to the socio-cultural theories of Lev Vygotsky and not with absolute independence. In that view, learner autonomy is assumed to 'thrive on interdependence' (Littlewood 2002, p.31), in the sense that 'learning arises from interaction and interaction is characterised by interdependence' (Little 1995a, p.175). In parallel to this position, Deci and Ryan have always argued that the SDT view considers there is no necessary antagonism between autonomy and dependence (cf. review in Deci and Ryan 2000, and preceding paragraphs).

Little made his view on learner autonomy even clearer as regards the assumed relationship between autonomy and interdependence by asserting the following:

> It is sometimes thought that learner autonomy necessarily entails total independence – of the teacher, of other learners and of formally approved curricula. But this is not so: *total independence is not autonomy but autism.* Allwright (1990, p.12) is surely right when he defines autonomy as 'a constantly changing but at any time optimal state of equilibrium between maximal self-development and human interdependence' (Little 1995a, p.178, emphasis added).

When I was first made aware of SDT through Ushioda's LAP-related work on motivation, I was struck by how closely the SDT and LAP paradigms complement each other. To me, the fact that Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory was also founded on an Aristotelian view of humanity was evident. SDT, however, appeared to have been developed with a different, broader theoretical outlook, since it aims to account not only for the nature and optimal nurturing of learning, but for the majority of human action as influenced by the basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy.

The broader agenda of SDT led to a state of affairs whereby a great number of researchers have been conducting research projects explicitly linked to or informed by the SDT paradigm in the past thirty years. The majority of these projects have been conducted in the field of social psychology and they tend to be additionally shaped by the rigorous statistical designs and analysis methods of that field. This situation led to the clearer delineation of aspects of SDT in a rapid succession of publications, and the development of a large number of ancillary theories, and additional research projects and

instruments, a number of which were explicitly focussed on learning and education and informed the design and explorations of the project documented here.

Furthermore, a number of language specialists have started working either under the SDT paradigm, or employing some of its rigorous research instruments and adapting them to their own purposes. In the field of LL, such efforts are a relatively recent development of the last decade and are not numerous. As a general rule, they take place outside Europe and they replicate earlier SDT attitudinal-motivational findings (e.g. overview in Noels, Clément, and Pelletier 2001).

What is more, some findings of SDT-related research of a broader scope are also applicable in LL. Thus, for instance, students are taught analytic problem-solving skills most effectively in a non-controlling way (Boggiano et al. 1987; Boggiano et al. 1993; Flink, Boggiano, and Barrett 1990). Autonomy support by parents and teachers is important across cultures (Chirkov and Ryan 2001; Levesque, Stanek, Zuehlke, and Ryan 2004) and certain behaviours seem to support autonomy, competence and relatedness (Baard 2002, pp.263, 265, 267; Skinner and Belmond 1993). Strong emotional contagion effects exist in classrooms (Wild and Enzle 2002; Wild, Enzle, and Hawkins 1992; Wild, Enzle, Nix, and Deci 1997). Parental autonomy support is an important antecedent of school performance which can be systemically explored through an SDT-informed framework of reference (Grolnick and Apostoleris 2002; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris 1997; Grolnick, Deci, and Ryan 1997; Grolnick, Kurowski, and Gurland 1999; Kasser, Koestner, and Lekes 2002).

Further to the findings presented above, some researchers have tried to establish models of contextual motivation in school subjects such as physical education using SDT constructs and elaborate statistical methods (e.g. Ntoumanis 2001; Standage, Duda, and Ntoumanis 2003), which also informed the project documented in this thesis.

Although little actual SDT-related research takes place in LL, many researchers have acknowledged the potential of the theory. Besides, known limitations to LL motivational theories and a realisation that a gap appeared to be growing between LL motivational theories and the variety of emerging concepts in mainstream motivational psychology has in recent years made many theoreticians to seek 'an expansion of the social psychological approach' and to survey a 'wide array of motivation constructs … in

order to draw on them in developing second language [learning motivation] models that would have an increased explanatory power in diverse learning contexts' (Dörnyei 2001b, p.111). Dörnyei's own review of LL motivational theories which also dedicated a section to SDT (2001b) is indicative of this emerging state of affairs.

By far the most extensive exploration of how SDT can inform LL has been attempted by Kimberly Noels, Robert Vallerand and their colleagues. In a series of research projects they replicated and extended earlier SDT-related findings (e.g. Noels 2001; Noels, Clément, and Pelletier 1999; Noels et al. 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand 2000), and they tried to outline a potential hierarchical framework of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, SDT, competence, relatedness, autonomy and academic achievement in school settings and in other domains (cf. e.g. Fortier, Vallerand, and Guay 1995; Guay, Mageau, and Vallerand 2003; Guay and Vallerand 1997; Vallerand 1997; Vallerand, Gagné, Senécal, and Pelletier 1994; Vallerand and O'Connor 1989; Vallerand, O'Connor, and Blais 1989; Vallerand and Ratelle 2002).

The project documented in this thesis was informed by and ultimately employed a number of questionnaires developed under the SDT paradigm. The questionnaires were adapted accordingly and then administered at the beginning of the year in order to attempt a mapping of learner attitudes, which was then juxtaposed to the responses of the same learners at the end of the year to elicit any changes in behaviour, regulations and by extension motivational orientations as a result of ELP use (cf. relevant discussion in Chapters 4 and 5). The research instruments employed in this project have been found to be reliable and consistently stable over time in a number of research projects (cf. relevant overview in section 3.9.2).

The reader may also wish to consult the wealth of information on SDT and downloadable versions of many research instruments and publications related to the theory found in its documentation portal (Department of Clinical and Social Sciences in Psychology 2000).

2.5.2. Further theoretical background

The broad and ambitious agenda of the ELP project was outlined in the claims made about the ELP in *European Language Portfolio: Principles and guidelines* (Council of Europe 2004a, pp.3-4). This agenda has been further reinforced by the findings gathered in pilot projects, as well as through theoretical explorations found in other publications (cf. discussion in sections 1.5 and 2.4.5 above). In the five years since the official launch of the ELP there has been growing consensus on the view that the ELP can have far-reaching repercussions for the amelioration of language education in the event of its whole-scale adoption across Europe, if employed in a principled way. I next turn to an examination of how the ELP seems geared to produce this positive effect, through a brief discussion of the statements describing the nature of the ELP found in section 2 of *Principles and guidelines* (Council of Europe 2004a, pp.3-4).

The ELP aims to be a tool to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, i.e. 'the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures' (Council of Europe 2001, p.168). This potential is expressed through the fact that the ELP aims to recognise and respect the full range of the learner's language and intercultural competence and experience regardless of whether acquired within or outside formal education. Thus, all learning and all languages and cultures are accorded respect, and plurilingualism and pluriculturalism are seen both as 'a value and a competence' (Beacco and Byram 2003b, p.8), enabling learners to communicate with and understand other peoples and cultures and promoting 'a freer, more tolerant and just society based on solidarity, common values and a [pan-European] cultural heritage enriched by its diversity' (ibid, p.35), and by democratic values.

The above point assumes particular importance if one takes into account that the intercultural competence mentioned above involves examining and appreciating the culture not only of the 'other', i.e. a TL community, but also one's own (Byram et al. 2002). Apart from the obvious benefit of raising learners' awareness to otherness and sameness (Little and Lazenby-Simpson 2003) and promoting intercultural education (e.g. Castellotti and Moore 2002; Lázár 2003; Lázár, Aleksandrowicz-Pedich, Kjartansson,

and Skopinskaja 2001), such an exercise would have to involve learners as human beings and to be based on learners' (and teachers') earlier experience if it is to be meaningful (e.g. Huttunen 2003; Kohonen 2001d; Legutke and Thomas 1991; Lentz 2000; Trebbi 2003), thus making the learning experience much more psychologically salient and meaningful and acting as a 'support for the emergence of the self' (Riley 2003). In such an arrangement, 'school knowledge' (i.e. knowledge presented to us by others) would be the subject of negotiation and productive interpretation rather than simple presentation, and based on rather than opposed to 'action knowledge' (i.e. knowledge constituting our view of the world on which our actions are based, Barnes 1976, p.81; cf. also Little 2004e, pp.4-5).

The ELP aims to be the property of the learner, thus fostering what Little (cf. e.g. Little 1999a) calls the first principle informing learner autonomy, i.e. learner empowerment. If learners feel that they are the owners of their ELPs and that they can use them in ways which suit their learning style and needs, then they are encouraged to take their first steps towards autonomy (cf. Schärer 2000; 2004).

The ELP is based on the CEF with explicit reference to the common levels of competence. It offers learners an appropriate structure which encourages learner self-assessment, especially through the 'can do' checklists of communicative competences which are supplied with the majority of ELP models. Such assessment is usually scaffolded by and combined with teacher assessment, and assessment by educational authorities and examination bodies. In doing so, it combines both a pedagogic function to guide and support the learner in the process of language learning and a reporting function to record proficiency in languages. The pedagogic function is expressed in pages which emphasise 'learning how to learn' and foster reflection based on each learner's personal understandings (Kohonen 2000c; Newby 2003) or 'personal constructs' (Boud, Keogh, and Walker 1996; G. Kelly 1955). Besides, the CEF-based checklists of communicative competence – if appropriately adapted to suit the needs of the target users of a specific ELP model – can operate as an excellent point of departure for the organisation of a course around task-based (Foley 1991; Foster 2001; Nunan 1989; 1999; Prabhu 1987; Skehan 1996; Willis 1996) collaborative group-work activities conducted mainly in the TL, in line with the social-interactive view of learning and learner autonomy presented in

section 2.4.2 (on collaboratively-organised learning cf. also Allen, Duch, and Groh 2001; Dam 2000; Donato 1994; Lantolf and Appel 1994a; Tinzmann et al. 1990).

This feature of the ELP assumes particular importance if we wish to promote learner autonomy. If learners are to become autonomous, they need to become able to reflect on and evaluate their learning and it is imperative to make more transparent to learners not only their learning progress (as with log-books/learning diaries) but also their ultimate goals in LL (curricula) (Ushioda 2003a). This leads to the ultimate democratisation of LL, whereby the rather difficult task of self-assessment is made simpler and learners are helped to understand, evaluate and adjust accordingly their performance in real-time, in what Little calls '(criterion-referenced) online self-assessment' (1999b). Besides, the engagement in 'personally relevant self-assessment and goal-setting with the help of the ELP 'allows for differentiated learning and achievement levels within the same class' (Ushioda 2003a, p.150).

Further to the previous points, the ELP incorporates a minimum of common features which make it recognisable and comprehensible across Europe, thus enabling foreign language learning attained through a certain education system interpretable throughout Europe. This point is directly linked to the reporting function of the ELP, the importance of which is multifaceted. The fact that the CEF-based descriptors have been produced with a view to exhibiting 'positiveness, definiteness, clarity, brevity and independence' (North 2000, pp.343-346; North and Schneider 1998; Schneider and Lenz 2001, p.47), makes them singularly appropriate to form the basis of a Europe-wide effort towards transparent benchmarking and rationalisation in language education. For instance, this can ultimately help secondary education learners to feel they can accomplish something in their language class even from their very first exposure to their TL (cf. e.g. A1 descriptors from the LAP ELP contained in Appendix O), and to set distal goals related not only to language learning in a specific class in preparation for university matriculation language requirements, but also to other activities they may wish to pursue later in their lives.

Furthermore, the structure offered by the ELP facilitates negotiated goal-setting and assessment in the classroom, in a manner which integrates learning, teaching and assessment and facilitates democratic assessment (Shohamy 2001), or 'authentic

assessment' defined as 'multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities' (O'Malley and Valdez Pierce 1996, p.4). According to Kohonen, for tests to be classified as authentic, they should 'evaluate student performance using activities and tasks that represent classroom goals, curricula and instruction in conditions of language use that are as realistic as possible. Authentic assessment emphasises the communicative meaningfulness of evaluation and the commitment to measure that which we value in education' (2000a, p.6) and is task-based (Bachman 2002; Byrnes 2002; Mislevy, Steinberg, and Almond 2002; Norris, Brown, Hudson, and Bonk 2002).

An ELP model which a learner uses at any given time 'may be one of a series of ELP models that the individual learner will possess in the course of life-long learning'. This state of affairs is necessitated by the fact that different ELP models can cater for the needs of learners according to age, learning purpose, and context and background. This point reinforces the need for pedagogical tools to be appropriate for their users and their background, and to initiate a pedagogical dialogue which will be appropriate for the learners, teachers, education systems and societies involved (cf. e.g. Bygate, Skehan, and Swain 2001; Lightbown 2000; Little 1995a; Tharp and Gallimore 1988; Tort-Moloney 1997).

Last but not least, the ELP aims to be a pedagogical tool which promotes learner autonomy. This aspired feature of the ELP is arguably related to all the features of the ELP mentioned earlier. Besides, as mentioned in section 2.4.2 above, learner autonomy can be operationalised as related to the three principles of learner empowerment, learner reflection and appropriate TL use, which are all advocated by the ELP (Little 2004b). Through this alleged promotion of learner autonomy the ELP helps the learners and teachers to make much more informed decisions than ever before on what their needs are, and what they must do in order to respond to them in a personally relevant and valid way. In this way, the ELP exhibits its potential to operate as a structure for a principled critical dialogue. Paolo Freire claims about this type of real dialogue that:

> '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 their turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow'. (Freire 1972, p.53).

Thus, through the application of this critical pedagogy, education becomes truly liberatory and emancipatory (Weiler 1996), and learning assumes a transformative role (Cranton 1994; Kohonen 2003; Newby 2003). Of course, the application of Freire's ideas in European language education would also entail the type of critical evaluation and principled reform of existing practices and roles envisaged by the CEF (cf. discussion in section 1.4).

2.5.3. The ELP and contemporary motivational theories

Further to what has already been said about the ELP up to this point, it appears plausible to claim that one may expect the ELP as a pedagogical tool to exert a positive influence on the attitudinal-motivational profiles of learners, where such influence is examined not only from an SDT-informed point of view, but also from the point of view of most other major contemporary motivational theories. In what follows, I attempt a brief examination of the ELP under the prism of nine such theories which according to Dörnyei are (together with SDT) the 'most well-known contemporary motivational theories in psychology' (2001a, pp.10-11; cf. also detailed discussion in Dörnyei 2001b). Although the conceptual substrate of these theories is not in antagonism to that of SDT and some of them have informed it in part, I am still of the opinion that for the reasons discussed in section 2.5.1 SDT appears to offer a specifically appropriate framework for a productive interpretation of the motivational substrate of ELP-informed settings and language learning in general.

Achievement motivation theory (Atkinson and Raynor 1974) theorises that motivation is governed by conflicting approach and avoidance tendencies. Expectancy and value of success, and need for achievement are balanced by probability and fear of failure and its avoidance. The ELP, with its positively-worded descriptors is structured around what one *can* rather than *cannot* do, thus laying more emphasis on approach elements. Its modular character breaks down competences, thus making them more achievable and maximising expectancy of success. As a result, one could argue that the ELP appears to be structured in a way which makes it maximally effective form an achievement motivation theory perspective.

Related to achievement motivation theory are 'expectancy value theories' (Brophy 1999), which view motivation to perform tasks as the product of expectancies of success in them and the values attached to that success. Thus, positive motivation to perform a task is viewed as being analogous to these two variables. Expectancy-value theory has had a profound effect on developmental psychology, and influential models have been proposed to account for the development of competence beliefs as founded on expectancy of success and task value. Some theorists have also created developmental expectancy-value models which are informed by sociocultural views of learning (e.g. reviews in Eccles and Wigfield 1995; Wigfield and Eccles 2002). The ELP, in line with what was mentioned above in relation to achievement motivation theory, is designed with a view to maximising expectancy of success through its modular character. Furthermore, ELP models such as the one evaluated in this thesis are structured in a way which aims to make learners recursively reflect and pass judgement on their learning strategies and the tasks they perform in LL. In this manner the ELP arguably aims to help learners to identify and ultimately continue to use only those tasks and strategies which they find most helpful in their learning (Wigfield and Tonks 2002, p.54). In the process, tasks with high value and high expectancy of success will be the ones to be attempted oftener by learners, thus potentially leading to greater levels of learner motivation. This potential positive effect of the ELP assumes particular importance in the light of earlier expectancy-value informed research which indicates that there is a marked decrease in motivation to perform school-related tasks over the years, especially from the beginning of secondary education onwards. Thus, from a developmental perspective, no decrease over a prolonged period in motivation to perform a task is seen as a positive result, indicative of the success of a motivational intervention (ibid, p.68).

Related to the theories mentioned above, but with an emphasis on the element of success, is the family of 'success attribution theories'. Most prominent among this family of theories are attribution theory, self-efficacy theory and self-worth theory.

Attribution theory (Weiner 1986; 1992) maintains that the causal attributions a person makes of past successes and failures (i.e. inferring why certain successes or failures have occurred) have consequences on future effort in certain tasks and actions. In educational settings, ability and effort have been identified as the most dominant

perceived attributions of success. Furthermore, Graham identified the commonest attributions in the classroom from a systemic perspective to be ability, effort, task difficulty, luck, mood, family background, and help/hindrance from others (Graham 1994). These attributions have generally informed the discussion of findings from the research project documented in this thesis, especially in the LAP-based explorations discussed in section 4.4.2. The ELP seems geared to exert a positive effect on attributions through its inbuilt learning-how-to learn element. The existence in many ELP models of pages asking the learners to reflect on the things they did in their language courses which were successful and the things which were not so successful, and further asking them to ponder the reasons for that success or failure, enables the learners to make their 'causal schemata' more effective (Fincham and Hewstone 2001), and demystify and possibly rationalise the steps they need to take in order to be successful in their LL. Thus, a virtuous circle of successful learning can be initiated, not unlike the one described by experiential learning theorists (Kohonen 2001d; Kolb 1984), wherein experience reflected upon in a systematic manner leads to maximally efficient and vibrant learning. Many educationalists have fruitfully combined such successful reflection on attributions with strategy instruction (V. Harris et al. 2001), which can be also licensed through related ELP pages (cf. e.g. a more specific discussion on the effect of the LAP ELP on perceived learners' attributions will be attempted in Chapter 4).

Self-efficacy theory (Bandura 1993; 1996) hypothesises that people's self-efficacy (i.e. their judgement of their capability to carry out certain tasks) is determined by four factors: previous performance, vicarious learning (i.e. learning through observing model behaviours), verbal encouragement by others, and physiological reactions (e.g. anxiety levels, etc.). Self-efficacy-related research indicates that self-efficacy influences student behaviours such as task choice, persistence displayed, effort exerted, and achievement (Schunk and Ertmer 2000; Schunk and Miller 2002). The ELP aims to address the first two of the four factors which are perceived as determinants of self-efficacy: learners' views on previous performance, and learning through observing model behaviours. Thus, the element of reflection mentioned in the previous paragraph helps learners to view their previous performance in a more positive eye and helps them to identify ways of reproducing positive aspects of that performance, while suppressing

other not so efficient aspects. This process could ultimately lead to an increase in self-efficacy levels and in enhanced motivation and self-regulation. According to Bandura, such an increase in self-efficacy will lead to an increase in the sense of 'agency', thus influencing their perceived autonomy and self-motivation.

Self-worth theory (Covington 1992) theorises that people are highly motivated to maintain a fundamental sense of personal value and worth, especially in the face of competition, failure and negative feedback. When these perceptions are threatened, people struggle fiercely in order to protect them, thus resolving to face-saving behaviours. The ELP, with its emphasis on reflective self-assessment, and its promotion of personally relevant goals can be argued to help learners to differentiate their learning achievements from their personal self-image, and to forestall negative self-worth tendencies. Thus, all learners are urged to *evaluate themselves* through the ELP in connection to *set criteria* (the CEF levels of communicative competence) and assess how well they have achieved these criteria at any given time of their education, rather than *be assessed* in a *norm-referenced* way which would be based on a comparison to their colleagues, and would by default initiate social comparison phenomena. According to self-worth theory such phenomena tend to challenge the person's sense of competence and self-worth with destructive effects.

Goal setting theory (Locke and Latham 1990) theorises that human action is caused by purpose, and that for action to take place, goals have to be set and pursued by choice. Optimal goals are those which are specific and difficult within reason. When people commit to such goals, their performance tends to be quite high. Such commitment is attained when people are convinced that goals are both *important* and *attainable* (cf. also summary in Dörnyei 2001b, pp.25-6). The ELP can be argued to offer a very good goal framework linked to the CEF, which has the potential to inspire learners to commit to their LL. This framework operates on two levels. It helps learners to set long-term or 'distal' goals through the self-assessment grid, as well as specific and attainable short-term or 'proximal' goals through the language biography checklists of communicative competence which are included in many ELP models (cf. Appendix O for LAP ELP checklists). Each of the CEF-based communicative competence descriptors contained in the ELP is arguably highly specific and concrete, since the five main principles which

were employed in their creation are 'positiveness, definiteness, clarity, brevity and independence' (North 2000, pp.343-346; North and Schneider 1998; Schneider and Lenz 2001, p.47). According to goal-setting theory, these characteristics should make the descriptors extremely suitable for use in goal-setting. Furthermore, the fact that there are many descriptors on every level makes the whole goal framework a lot more modular and hence more attainable.

Goal orientation theory (Ames 1992) asserts that motivation in school settings is dominated by two different types of achievement goals: mastery and performance goals. Mastery goals focus on the learning aspect of achievement, whereas performance goals focus on the demonstration of high ability and on getting good grades. Mastery goals have been associated with greater intrinsic motivation levels and overall positive attitudes towards learning, and a preference for challenging work (Molden and Dweck 2000). Pintrich's impressive review of research on performance and mastery goals shows the clear benefits mastery goals have in relation to performance goals, as well as the potentially deleterious effect of performance goals on motivation, which can ultimately result even to the adoption of self-handicapping face-saving strategies (Pintrich 2000). From a goal orientation perspective, the ELP harbours a considerable advantage over LL settings which are not informed by it, owing to its definition of communicative competence on the basis of CEF levels. These communicative competences, especially when worded in positively-worded checklists in the language biography, arguably 'force' learners to adopt what goal orientation theorists call 'approach mastery goals', i.e. learning goals associated with competences to be acquired rather than with the avoidance of learning deficits. This type of goals has been found to exert the most positive influence on motivation in comparison to all other types of goals and they boost self-regulation (cf. review in Pintrich 2000, p.484).

Social motivation theory (Weiner 1994) has its roots in achievement motivation theory and attribution theory mentioned above. However, it assumes a broader perspective and, in common with sociocultural theories, it asserts that the sociocultural environment exerts substantial influence on the motivational orientations of the individual. In line with the CEF, the ELP assumes an explicitly action-oriented socioculturally-informed approach to LL. Typical examples of this are the five language

skills which are used to model *communicative* language competence; they place great emphasis on interaction with others, thus paying homage to the social-interactive character of language as a means of communication. Besides, ELP models which contain checklists of communicative competence such as those found in the LAP ELP lend themselves to learning through collaborative practices in the classroom (e.g. Bejarano and Klein-Wohl 1990; Donato 1994; Lantolf and Appel 1994a; Littlewood 2002; Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachur, and Prendergast 1997; Tinzmann et al. 1990), including even a negotiation of the processes and contents of the set curriculum (Kohonen 2000a, cf. more discussion of this in Chapter 6).

Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1988) builds on the earlier theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and claims that attitudes exert a *directive influence* on behaviour, in the sense that our attitude towards a goal affects our pattern of responses/reactions to that goal. Attitude impact is in turn influenced by our *subjective norms* (i.e. perceived social pressures) and *perceived behavioural control* (i.e. perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour) (cf. summaries in Dörnyei 2001a, p.11; Dörnyei 2001b,p.29). The aspired influence of the ELP from a planned behaviour theory perspective is primarily related to the first and third influences hypothesised by the theory. Thus, the modular character of the positively-phrased goal framework proposed by the ELP which was mentioned earlier in connection to other motivational theories arguably goes some way towards making LL goals more attainable. In this manner, the learners may arguably enter a virtuous motivational circle, whereby their perceived behavioural control of their learning is maximised. In time, one might expect this state of affairs to also have a greater positive effect on the attitudes of learners towards LL as a goal, helping them to perceive LL as a challenging activity which they can become competent in, if they make a consistent effort to that end.

Naturally, the aspired positive effects of the ELP on the motivation to learn a language mentioned above cannot be taken for granted. The fact that the ELP appears to constitute a pedagogical tool which is geared to produce positive motivational norms as examined in connection with some of the most well-known contemporary motivational theories in psychology does not guarantee that its actual application in language classrooms across Europe will automatically have a radically positive effect on learner

attitudes and overall motivational orientations. As with all pedagogical tools, the nature of the tool is important, but it has to be combined with appropriate use, if its effectiveness is to be optimised. Thus, in the remainder of this thesis, I will present a longitudinal empirical evaluation of how the ELP seemed to work in practice in a number of different settings in Irish post-primary education, trying to evaluate the effectiveness of the ELP when combined with various strategies of use, learner ages, target languages, learner populations, etc.

3. Methodology

3.1. Preamble

In this chapter, the rationale, methodology, environment, limitations and expected outcomes of the current research project are discussed in some depth. Options followed related to the data elicitation instruments, confidentiality issues and extended triangulation techniques are examined in considerable detail. The format of this chapter has been informed by procedures followed in applied ethnography (Byrne 2002; Chambers 2003; Gebhard 1999c; Harackiewicz and Barron 2004). In particular, I have adhered to principles of 'CAP' ethnography, whereby 'the process and product of enquiry are considered intertwined' and thus supplied together (Angrosino and Mays de Pérez 2003; Cook and Groom 2004; Richardson 2003, pp.510-1). In cases where I felt my own input and potential influencing of project participants might be deemed possible, I chose to borrow reporting methods from 'autoethnography', retracing the processes I employed in certain points of the project, and trying to 'relate the personal to the cultural' (Richardson 2003, pp.512-3). Thus, whatever biases exist owing to administrative constraints and choices are stated as explicitly as possible.

3.2. Project overview

In summary, this project is a longitudinal examination of how the introduction of the Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio has affected foreign/second language teaching and learning in a limited number of Irish Post-Primary Schools. It examines and evaluates the nature and implications of the experience of a number of teachers and learners who used the ELP in their classes.

3.3. Timescale

This project started in October 2002, when the ELP SN entered its second phase, and I took over as network co-ordinator. The main activities of the network during that time included providing on-line methodological support to teachers using the ELP for the first time and holding monthly network seminars for all teachers using the LAP ELP model. In those seminars, group discussions and exchange of ideas, as well as presentation and evaluation of new materials and classroom activities were encouraged. At the same time, some dissemination activities such as presentations to practising and aspiring language educators and student teachers were organised (for an overview of ELP SN activities over time see Sisamakis 2002a; b; c; 2003a; b; c; d; e; f; g; h; 2004a; b; c). Some teachers who participated in those seminars helped in the pre-piloting and piloting of the data elicitation instruments later used in the research project.

The main phase of the empirical project lasted from September 2003 to May 2004. This phase involved collecting data in all the forms described below, as well as continuing with other ELP SN connected duties and setting up and updating on a weekly basis a project site (i.e. the ELP SN site mentioned earlier, CLCS 2003a). This site contains information on the ELP and the project, as well as a wealth of additional methodological resources and sample learner-produced material (cf. section 3.9.7 below). The empirical findings documented here were statistically consolidated and analysed from June 2004 onwards.

3.4. Rationale and relation to LAP and EE1

This research project constitutes in a way the natural evolution of the two previous CLCS research projects, the LAP and its successor project, the six-month ELP Empirical Evaluation (EE1, documented in Ushioda and Ridley 2002) in more ways than one.

As regards the LAP, the extensive nature of its attitudinal-motivational findings was quite helpful in mapping out affective aspects of behaviours of learners and teachers in Irish post-primary education. However, its target population was limited to the junior cycle, whereas the LAP ELP is addressed to the whole Irish post-primary cycle. Thus, a research project that would involve a more representative sample of the LAP ELP target

population was needed and this project attempts to cover that gap. Also, it was felt that the findings of the LAP would have to be submitted to a thorough replication study which would enable us to draw conclusions on a more diachronic basis. Such conclusions could then be taken into account when examining potential options related to language policy and language curriculum development. As a result, I opted to reuse – among other data-elicitation instruments – most of the research instruments employed in the LAP, thus facilitating comparisons between the LAP findings and those of the current project. Furthermore, many of the instruments were extended and modified to facilitate more qualitative conclusions to be reached.

As regards the EE1, again the findings were such that licensed one to claim that the ELP exerted a markedly positive influence in Irish post-primary education. However, the findings were limited in their scope by the number of data elicitation instruments used and by the fact that there was no research instrument that addressed all the student participants. Of course, it has to be acknowledged that despite the limitations mentioned above, EE1 was the most systematic attempt at an empirical evaluation of a validated ELP model to date. Again the current research project attempts to go beyond the above-mentioned limitations by collecting both qualitative and quantitative data of various types from *all* the project participants; i.e. students and teachers.

3.5. Sample used: general

The sample used consists of fourteen (14) teachers and three hundred and sixty four (364) learners who have been using the ELP in nineteen (19) classes, taken from a wide variety of post-primary settings: e.g. junior-/senior-cycle, vocational, all-boys/girls, co-educational, etc., examined from multiple perspectives when possible. The sample was opportunistic in the sense that participation in the project was entirely voluntary and not remunerated in any way. Teachers were free to leave the project during the year if they so wished. Despite that, only two teachers left the project, owing to health reasons. All the rest of the participants stayed in the project for its whole duration.

Additionally a relatively big geographical dispersion and relative gender balance was 'engineered'. The following tables offer a breakdown of the sample used according to

these categories as follows: Table 3.1 gives an overview of the project participants divided by gender. Table 3.2 presents a breakdown by target language, Table 3.3 by class name, Table 3.4 by school year, Table 3.5 by school type according to gender streaming, Table 3.6 by teacher participant, and Table 3.7 by school. More sample divisions were visualised when the project was designed. However, they either did not yield significant results, or the sample employed proved not big enough to yield the statistical power needed to reach salient conclusions; these divisions are not shown here in tabular form for reasons of brevity. Examples included the presence vs. absence of choice in TL studied, the teacher's sex, and further differences between different types of schools (e.g. denominational vs. non-denominational, urban vs. rural, 'Irish-medium vs. non-Irish-medium, etc.).

Each table is followed by a brief illustrative commentary. Further comments on the sample will be supplied in Chapter 4, vis-à-vis the participation of project participants in different questionnaires.

Learner's sex					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	boy	154	42,3	42,3	42,3
	girl	210	57,7	57,7	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.1:Overview of project participants classified by gender

Although Table 3.1 shows that the sample was somewhat biased in favour of girls, all the categories listed in the tables that follow contain representatives from both sexes. This statement is true even for the extreme case of class #11 (cf. Table 3.3 below) which consisted of two learners.

A first look at Table 3.2 might seem to show an imbalance between the representation of the five different TLs. However, this imbalance depicts the current situation in Irish post-primary schools, whereby most learners study Irish as a compulsory second language, and the majority of learners study French. Fewer learners study German, whereas the numbers of learners studying Italian and Spanish are smaller.

Other languages such as Japanese and Russian are currently being piloted in a number of schools, but at the time the project was designed they were not offered to significant enough numbers of learners, so they were not included in the sample.

Target Language					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Irish	127	34,9	34,9	34,9
	French	120	33,0	33,0	67,9
	German	61	16,8	16,8	84,6
	Italian	32	8,8	8,8	93,4
	Spanish	24	6,6	6,6	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.2: Overview of project participants classified by target language

Table 3.3 depicts to a certain degree how the sample was formed. The nineteen classes which made up the sample are indexed according to year, language and index number, so that the reader can get a more spherical overview of the sample employed. Some classes are shown here somewhat smaller than their actual size. This is explained by the fact that some of their members did not contribute to the data (cf. relevant discussion below).

Table 3.4 shows that the majority of project participants came from the junior cycle. In a way this was expected as it was hypothesised that it is easier to introduce the ELP to younger rather than older learners, as older learners (and their teachers) face more severe constraints related to the school-leaving exams, and may be less willing to take up an alternative way of learning to what they are already used to. This notion is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, in connection with the challenges that teachers and learners mentioned they felt they had to meet.

Class name or code					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1st year German-1	30	8,2	8,2	8,2
	1st year Irish-2	30	8,2	8,2	16,5
	2nd year French-3	22	6,0	6,0	22,5
	2nd year Irish Honours-4	24	6,6	6,6	29,1
	4th year Irish-medium Irish honours-5	12	3,3	3,3	32,4
	5th year Italian-6	12	3,3	3,3	35,7
	2nd year German-7	29	8,0	8,0	43,7
	1st year Irish-8	13	3,6	3,6	47,3
	2nd year Irish-9	27	7,4	7,4	54,7
	1st year French-10	17	4,7	4,7	59,3
	Post LC German-11	2	,5	,5	59,9
	2nd year French-12	7	1,9	1,9	61,8
	3rd year French-13	18	4,9	4,9	66,8
	1st year Irish-14	21	5,8	5,8	72,5
	3rd year French-15	16	4,4	4,4	76,9
	2nd year French-16	21	5,8	5,8	82,7
	1st year French-17	19	5,2	5,2	87,9
	2nd year Spanish-18	24	6,6	6,6	94,5
	2nd year PLC Italian-19	20	5,5	5,5	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.3: Overview of project participants classified by class name and index number

Class year					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1st year	111	30,5	30,5	30,5
	2nd year	173	47,5	47,5	78,0
	3rd year	34	9,3	9,3	87,4
	Transition year	12	3,3	3,3	90,7
	5th year	12	3,3	3,3	94,0
	2nd year Post-Leaving Cert	22	6,0	6,0	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.4: Overview of project participants classified by class year

Class type: sex streaming					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	co-educational	137	37,6	37,6	37,6
	all-boys	81	22,3	22,3	59,9
	all-girls	146	40,1	40,1	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.5: Overview of project participants classified by school type according to gender streaming

Table 3.5 depicts how the sample was broken down according to gender streaming. The sample was biased against 'all-boys' schools. This was rectified by statistical weighting – as was also the case when the sample was subjected to parametric statistical testing and the subsamples employed did not satisfy the Levene test of normality (following Norušis 1998; Peck 2004).

Tables 3.6 and 3.7 depict how the sample was broken down according to teacher and school. Notably, two teachers who taught in two different schools each participated in the project with one class from each school, while one school had two teacher representatives. This accounts for the fact that there are more participating schools listed here than teacher participants. One aspect of the sample which was partly engineered by

the researcher was that project participants were encouraged to join the project with one project class from each language they taught, if they taught more than one language. Also, teachers of one language were encouraged to join with one or two classes from different years (e.g. a second-year and a third-year class). The rationale behind this was to facilitate conclusions on how the success of ELP implementation varies as a composite outcome of many potential combinations of teacher, target language, school, class year, school type, etc. It was speculated that the more comparisons we could make and statistically juxtapose on the basis of the sample, the more salient we could hypothesise our conclusions to be.

Teacher's pseudonym					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Frances	19	5,2	5,2	5,2
	Clara	16	4,4	4,4	9,6
	Emer	24	6,6	6,6	16,2
	Michael	22	6,0	6,0	22,3
	Sarah	24	6,6	6,6	28,8
	Brendan	40	11,0	11,0	39,8
	Lorna	25	6,9	6,9	46,7
	Maria	20	5,5	5,5	52,2
	Jean	21	5,8	5,8	58,0
	Seán	24	6,6	6,6	64,6
	David	19	5,2	5,2	69,8
	Kate	29	8,0	8,0	77,7
	Martha	60	16,5	16,5	94,2
	Hugh	21	5,8	5,8	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.6: Overview of project participants classified by teacher [pseudonym]

School index number					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	40	11,0	11,0	11,0
	2	16	4,4	4,4	15,4
	3	12	3,3	3,3	18,7
	4	22	6,0	6,0	24,7
	5	24	6,6	6,6	31,3
	6	40	11,0	11,0	42,3
	7	25	6,9	6,9	49,2
	8	20	5,5	5,5	54,7
	9	21	5,8	5,8	60,4
	10	24	6,6	6,6	67,0
	11	2	,5	,5	67,6
	12	29	8,0	8,0	75,5
	13	60	16,5	16,5	92,0
	14	12	3,3	3,3	95,3
	15	17	4,7	4,7	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 3.7: Overview of project participants classified by school index number

3.6. Sample used: exemptions and reporting conventions

The number of learner participants mentioned above does not refer to all the students who participated in the project, but only to the students who participated in the main data collection in a sufficient way for their answers to qualify for contribution to the findings. Thus, four hundred and seventeen (417) learners were initially registered in the project classes. Thirty two of them were withdrawn from their language classes for a variety of reasons which were not related to the project. The main reasons for these withdrawals were:

- changes to the school weekly timetable effected mainly in September and October 2003 [n=16];
- the withdrawal of certain students from foreign language classes in order to provide them with support tuition in English and/or Mathematics [n=9];
- parental statement claiming that the learner is facing psychological angst related to his/her studying Irish [n=7].

Additionally, four students were registered in the project classes but did not contribute at all to the findings in hand, since they were absent during all data collection visits. Six students were frequently absent from the classes and participated too erratically for their contribution to be interpreted in any meaningful way. Finally, eleven students participated in the data collection but were disqualified from the sample. Reasons for this varied from lack of proficiency in English of newly arrived immigrant pupils whose answers seemed to lack comprehension of the question items [n=4], severe dyslexia [n=1], inappropriate/uncouth language used in the open-ended sections of one or more questionnaires [n=3], answering of the questionnaires in a 'random' fashion (all answers in a questionnaire were vertically aligned) [n=1] or all question items answered negatively [n=2]. The last three categories occurred in a single class.

Three more classes not included here participated in the piloting phase of the project. All statistical or qualitative analyses and references to the sample employed in the remainder of this thesis refer to the 'salient' 364-student sample of students, or the parts thereof that participated in the collection of a certain kind of data.

3.7. General reporting conventions

The names of teachers mentioned in the appendices and the discussion of findings are all fictional. Where individual references are made to learners in a class, these learners have been indexed according to letters of the Latin alphabet. Each learner is given a specific letter which is kept constant throughout the thesis. For instance learner #11A is the first learner from class 11 who was interviewed or made specific reference to in the main text of the thesis. In general, every effort was made to adhere to a policy of strict confidentiality as regards project participants' personal demographic information.

In the preparatory phase of the project and when the approximate format of the project was finalised, a meeting of the ELP SN was summoned and prospective teacher participants were given information about the format, duration, related obligations, procedures, research instruments and reporting conventions. They were given copies of questionnaires, material produced by ELP SN in the previous year, a copy of the LAP ELP and its companion teacher handbook, as well as copies of the *ELP Guide for teachers and teacher trainers*, the book documenting LAP and the CLCS Occasional Paper documenting EE1 (Little and Perclová 2001; Little et al. 2002; Ushioda and Ridley 2002).

There were no active ELP SN members at that time from two types of Irish post-primary language education:

- teachers of Spanish;
- teachers of a FL who were also native speakers of that language.

As a result we opted to recruit a few more teachers if possible. In an early summer recruitment meeting, a teacher of Spanish, a teacher of Italian who was also a native speaker of Italian, and four more teachers joined the project. After that a letter was sent to the principals of all schools involved, informing them of the project, its aims, procedures to be employed, as well as of the names of project participants from their schools. Some of the principals asked for additional procedural information which was supplied to them immediately. No schools withheld their permission for the project participants to proceed with their participation in the project.

3.8. General procedural strategy

During my first visit to each project class, students were informed of the project in very general terms. Throughout this introduction and the questionnaire surveys, I tried to maintain a neutral tone of voice.

In my introduction the learners were told that:

- they were one of nineteen classes trying out the ELP in Ireland this year;
- the purpose was to see if the ELP could help 'make their learning a language better or more fun or not';

- they could ask any question they wanted in relation to the project and the ELP;
- they would receive help from their teacher in using the ELP to see if they could 'make their learning easier or more fun or not';
- their names would not be disclosed to their teachers, parents or class-mates in relation to any of their personal answers, unless they gave me their permission for something to be shown to others. However, their names were needed and would be written on the questionnaires only so that I could index them in my database and index all their answers from the beginning and end of the year together;
- it was ok to stop me at any time and ask me what a question meant if they did not understand exactly what it meant;
- I would read all the questions out to them slowly.

After that I answered any questions they had and started talking them through the questions of the SDT-based questionnaire (cf. section 3.9.2 below). At the beginning of each new section of a questionnaire I gave them an example and then asked them to supply one example of their own to secure they comprehended what was needed.

3.9. Data elicitation instruments

3.9.1. Introduction

Although the major thrust of this project is qualitative in nature, it was felt that an extended quantitative element should be included, in order to enable more salient conclusions to be reached. Since two of the main pillars of the theoretical background of the project are the LAP and SDT (cf. chapter 2), I decided to adapt accordingly and use the majority of questionnaires from both the LAP project and related SD studies, as well as the open-ended questionnaires from the six-month EE1 (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, pp.16-9) and devise observation guides and semi-structured interview scenarios for the learner and teacher interviews.

Thus, the design of the project benefits from the use of extended triangulation in such a way that licenses salient conclusions to be reached through the following nine data elicitation instruments:

1. Attitudinal-motivational questionnaire data from all participating learners elicited at the beginning and end of the school year
2. End-of-year open-ended questionnaire data from all participating learners
3. Researcher's field-notes from classroom observations and monthly workshops for teachers
4. Beginning and end-of-year semi-structured interviews with learner sub-samples
5. End-of-year semi-structured interviews with all teachers
6. Semi-structured monthly teacher reports
7. End-of-year semi-structured reflective essays from all teachers
8. End-of-year reflections from all teachers collected in a group discussion
9. Extensive sampling of all learners' ELP entries

Each data elicitation instrument is presented in turn below. The presentation follows the following pattern:

- acknowledgement of the source of the instrument;
- brief discussion of how it was adapted to suit the purposes of this project and why;
- overview of changes made to the instrument after its piloting, if any.

Additionally, an overview of how the instrument was implemented is supplied along with any supplementary measures taken to maximise objectivity (cf. also related discussion and reliability analyses in Chapter 4).

3.9.2. Attitudinal-motivational questionnaire data from all participating learners elicited at the beginning and end of the school year

General

The instruments used for the collection of these attitudinal findings constitute the most extensive quantitative instrument employed in the project. Two composite questionnaires were employed in this category; one based on various questionnaires

developed by researchers subscribing to SDT (cf. following section) and one based on the main questionnaire employed in the LAP. At the beginning of the year the questionnaires were administered in order to attempt a mapping of learner attitudes, which were then juxtaposed to their responses at the end of the year to elicit any changes in behaviour (cf. discussion of findings in Chapter 4).

In the piloting phase, the full administration of the SDT-based composite questionnaire and of the LAP-based questionnaire were completed in 18 and 21 minutes respectively, but extra time was deemed necessary so that learners would not feel pressed for time and answer some items mechanically. It was thus decided that the questionnaires were to be administered during four teaching hours; two at the beginning and two at the end of the school year. Those were to be the only four hours of class time lost on account of the project. The teacher participants and school principals involved were informed of and agreed to that.

However, at the end of the year, timetabling changes in participating schools, increasing pressure not to lose any precious time before the end-of-year exams, as well as time pressure on me to visit all the schools in a very short period of time meant that the second round of questionnaires was administered on a single school visit, in approximately 45 to 50 minutes. The time pressure on the questionnaire administration that resulted from this state of affairs was moderated by the fact that:

- the format of the questionnaires was not so novel to them any more;
- most of them could ask me general – i.e. not questionnaire-related – questions during my other visits to their school, and/or immediately after the administration of the questionnaires;
- I made better arrangements with the teachers, so that the questionnaires were not administered in class periods immediately after PE or wood-work – which had been a common cause for students coming late to class – or at times that school announcements would take place (with the exception of one school, where the latter situation could not be avoided, despite our best intentions).

SDT-related questionnaire

The SDT composite questionnaire (Appendix A, pp.3-7) was based on an amalgamation of five different questionnaires. It contained in its final form sixty one Likert-scale items. Each component part of this questionnaire is discussed in order of appearance in the composite questionnaire. Information on reliability analyses and comparisons with findings of other projects which used these or suchlike instruments are presented in Chapter 4, where the findings of this project are presented in aggregate form:

a) Academic self-regulation questionnaire (SRQ-A). This questionnaire comprises 24 4-point Likert items. It was developed and validated by Ryan and Connell (1989) and was addressed to late primary and secondary school learners. Several studies of the academic motivation of adolescents have employed the questionnaire and it has been found to be consistent in various settings: for instance in Israeli public education (Assor, Kaplan, and Roth 2002; cf. also Assor, Roth, and Deci 2004), in a comparison between American and Russian adolescents (Chirkov and Ryan 2001), in a comparison of adolescents from various eastern and western cultures (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan 2003), in order to profile the academic motivation of students who drop out of school versus their non-dropping out colleagues (Hardre and Reeve 2003) and in Japanese high-schools (Hayamizu 1997). Thus, it was not necessary to simplify it in any way, apart from changing some items of American English vocabulary to preferred Hiberno-English alternatives.

The SRQ-A attempts to assess the reasons behind a number of activities by measuring the relative strength of four different motivational orientations behind a number of activities which are related to course work in the (project) language class (SRQ-L; items 1.1-1.16) and school work in general (SRQ-S; items 1.17-1.24). The four motivational orientations were 'external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic' (items 1.2, 6, 12, 16, 17, 20,24 correspond to the external orientation, items 1.1, 4, 9, 10, 18, 21, 23 correspond to the introjected orientation, items 1.5, 8, 13, 15, 22 correspond to the identified orientation, and items 1.3, 7, 11, 14, 19 correspond to the intrinsic orientation; cf. also Appendices H and I for additional information).

Ryan and Connell – in common with all more recent research projects which employed SRQ-A – found that the inter-correlations among the above motivational orientations 'form an ordered pattern in which those categories that are adjacent along a theoretically specified continuum of autonomy correlate more highly than those more distant along the continuum'; they named this type of ordered pattern 'simplex-like' (Ryan and Connell 1989, p.752).

Ryan and Deci review Ryan and Connell's position by positing that the four orientations (i.e. extrinsic/external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic/integrated) form a simplex-like order from the least to the most fully internalised, whereby introjection refers to taking in a regulation for an activity but not accepting it as one's own, identification refers to accepting the value of the activity as personally significant, and integration refers to 'integrating that identification with other aspects of one's self'. External and introjected orientations are considered relatively controlled forms of extrinsic motivation, whereas identified and integrated (or intrinsic) orientations are considered relatively autonomous (e.g. Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, and Leone 1994; Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 2001; Deci and Ryan 1980; 2000; Deci, Ryan, and Williams 1996; Ryan and Deci 2000a).

On the basis of the above – and the further evidence supplied by the majority of research projects which have employed their questionnaires since their original conception and replicated the existence of the simplex-like order from the least to the most fully internalised – Ryan and Connell claim that a 'relative autonomy index' (RAI) can be computed for every domain of activities SRQs are used in, showing the extent to which a motivation for an activity is internalised or not,

Following Ryan and Connell, I adopted a format which contains a Likert scale with four points only (measuring the strength of a particular orientation on a scale from 0 to 3, whereby 'Not at all true' stood for 0, 'Not very true' stood for 1 'Sort of true' stood for 2, and 'Very true' stood for 3 (cf. Appendix A, pp.3-5). I did this in order to accommodate especially 1st-year learners who may have not been able to discriminate reliably between more than four points (Ryan and Connell 1989) and to facilitate a quicker response time to the questionnaire. For these reasons, the same

format was also employed for the SRQ-P, PCSL, PCSELP, and LCQ questionnaires presented below.

Also, each of the four motivational orientations was covered by two items, thus enabling me to draw inferences about whether a respondent was answering the questionnaire coherently or not and how reliable a scale employed was. A five-point Likert questionnaire was piloted along with the four-point one and subsequently dropped, as response time was shown to be substantially longer even for adult respondents.

The format employed assesses the reasons for two activities related to the (project) language class only, namely for 'doing course-work (i.e. class-work and homework)' and for 'answering hard questions in class', and one to school in general, namely for 'trying to do well in school'. It was hoped that this format would enable a mapping of the motivation orientations of learners, and possibly allow us to compare motivational orientations in the project language classes as opposed to school in general. Also the 'relative autonomy index' (RAI) related to each student and each class would be calculated at the beginning of the year and would be compared to the RAI in the end of the year.

In the case of SRQ-A and its SRQ-L extension developed for this project, the RAI was computed through the calculation rules offered in the online documentation of the SRQ:

> To form the RAI, the external subscale is weighted -2, the introjected subscale is weighted -1, the identified subscale is weighted +1, and the intrinsic subscale is weighted +2. In other words, the controlled subscales are weighted negatively, and the autonomous subscales are weighted positively. *The more controlled the regulatory style represented by a subscale, the larger its negative weight; and the more autonomous the regulatory style represented by a subscale, the larger its positive weight* (Deci and Ryan 2001, p.2, emphasis added).

An example of the computation rule above applied in this project expressed in SPSS syntax terms is aRAIL (i.e. the Relative Autonomy Index in LL which corresponded to round a). The mathematical equation employed for its computation was [(2 * aSRQLint) + aSRQLide - aSRQLinr - (2 * aSRQLext)], with the additional proviso

that for this calculation to be made, all the variables involved should have valid non-missing values. In this way, wherever a RAI was calculated, we were certain to have a value that would be comparable to all other related values. It should be apparent from the equation offered above that a RAI can represent only the perceived overall tendency for intrinsic versus extrinsic motivational orientations behind an activity. Thus, the higher the value of a RAI, the more autonomously/intrinsically motivated to carry out a related activity we could expect a person to be and vice versa.

b) Pro-social self-regulation questionnaire (SRQ-P). This questionnaire was also developed by Ryan and Connell (1989). In its current format it follows the simple format of SRQ-A and consists of nine 4-point Likert items (items 1.25-1.33) which examine the strength of the motivational orientations mentioned above to pro-social activities according to the measurement rules employed for the SRQ-A. Its only difference in format to the SRQ-A is that because at this age pro-social kinds of behaviours 'result from internalization rather than being done naturally, there is not an intrinsic motivation subscale' (Ryan and Connell 1989). Thus, the three motivational orientations were 'external, introjected, and identified' (items 1.25, 29, 32 correspond to the external orientation, items 1.27, 28, 33 correspond to the introjected orientation, and items 1.26, 30, 31 correspond to the identified orientation; cf. also Appendices H and I for additional information).

The format employed assesses the reasons for three activities related to school in general, namely 'not making fun of another student for making a mistake', 'being nice to other students', and 'helping someone who is in distress'. Two more categories contained in the original Ryan and Connell questionnaire were dropped at the pre-piloting stage following the advice of a consulting educational psychologist, who found them potentially contentious; they were: 'hitting someone when you are mad at them' and 'keeping a promise to friends'.

c) Perceived competence in learning scale (PCSL). This is a simplified version of a questionnaire developed by Williams and Deci (G. C. Williams and Deci 1998) consisting of three 4-point Likert items (also G. C. Williams 2002; G. C. Williams,

Cox, Kouides, and Deci 1999; G. C. Williams et al. 1996). The revised format (items 1.34, 36, 37) mirrors that of the questionnaires above. The questionnaire measures how competent learners perceived themselves to be in relation to personally set and institutionally set goals in the language course. One item of the same format was added to this questionnaire in relation to perceived competence in using the ELP (PCSELP). This item was included in the questionnaires even for the beginning of the year administration as some of the classes had started using the ELP the year before the beginning of the project. The rest of the classes were asked *not* to answer this item. In this way, if one of the classes that had previous experience with the ELP left the project, we would still have some indication of how its learners felt towards using the ELP. No changes were made to this questionnaire following the piloting.

d) Perceived autonomy support: learning climate questionnaire (LCQ). This questionnaire is a simplified 6-item version (items 1.38-43) of the short Black and Deci questionnaire (Black and Deci 2000) under the same name (also Hardre and Reeve 2003; Ntoumanis 2002; G. C. Williams et al. 1996). It measures how much autonomy support respondents perceive they are getting from their teacher. This questionnaire, though simplified, presented the most conceptual problems to the learners. Following a piloting phase which made this clear, I resolved to offer a short explanation for each item, in order to reinforce the meaning of the question. The explanations were set from the beginning, though they were not printed on the questionnaire. They were:

- Item 38: 'For example, in relation to the things you do in class. Do you have *options* about what you do?'
- Item 39: 'In *general*, do you *feel* that, or not?'
- Item 40: 'Did he/she say for example that, yes, you *can* learn French, or do you think he/she thinks you are *not that good*?'
- Item 41: '*Can you* ask questions? Does he/she *answer* them?'
- Item 42: 'In *projects* and *tasks*, for example; *can you* do it a bit *different* if you want to, or do you all have to do it in the *same way*?'

- Item 43: 'Again, for example when you want to do an *activity* or something else by doing it in a way you find *easier*, or more *beautiful*, or *better*, does he/she *encourage* you to do that?'
  (The use of italics above seeks to capture the emphasis employed when making these clarifications.)

Of course, one may argue that with these explanations students were answering slightly different questions from the ones posed in the questionnaire. For this reason, the explanations were kept uniform, so that any bias which might exist in the research design would affect all respondents equally. In this, I took into account epistemological concerns mentioned in a number of publications. Again, the format employed mirrors that of the questionnaires described above. It was loosely hypothesised that if the ELP was used in a way which fostered learner autonomy, then at the end of the year respondents might also come to view their teacher as more autonomy-supportive.

e) Aspirations index (AI). This questionnaire has a different, more sophisticated format. It consists of eighteen 3-point Likert items (items 1.2.1-18) which assess learners' general attitudes to the pursuit of six basic life aspirations. Following an SDT-informed paradigm, three of them are classified as extrinsic and three as intrinsic (Kasser and Ryan 1993). The three extrinsic ones are fame, wealth and image, and the three intrinsic ones are personal growth, meaningful relationships and community contribution. Each aspiration orientation was assessed for its perceived importance, perceived likelihood and perceived current attainment. The reason for using this short questionnaire was that I wanted to examine the effect of ELP use on the learners' aspirational profiles in the light of previous social psychological research which has consistently shown that extrinsic aspirations are strong precursors of negative effects on mental health and well-being, whereas intrinsic aspirations tend to have positive effects on mental health and well being (Kasser and Ahuvia 2002; Kasser and Ryan 1996; Koestner and Losier 2002; Ryan et al. 1999; Ryan and Deci 2001; 2002; Sheldon and Kasser 2001; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci and Kasser 2004).

It has to be noted that a mapping of the aspiration orientations of Irish teenagers of this magnitude has not been previously attempted to the best of my knowledge. Thus it was felt to be important in its own right. For this reason, the version of the questionnaire employed in the pilot phase was double in size, containing two items per aspiration. That format would license more statistically reliable conclusions. Unfortunately, it had to be abandoned owing to administration time concerns.

LAP-based questionnaire

The Learner Autonomy Project composite questionnaire (Appendix A, pp.8-11) was adapted from Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002, pp. 156-9). Language-specific wording was employed throughout the questionnaire to optimise speed of administration. The appended version is related to Italian. It contained 70 closed items while 55 more items were added by the learners).

a) Its first section consists of two twin sub-sections which attempt to map how students perceive what they do in their language classes. They are asked two things about twenty activities:

   I. Their perceived frequency. How often they do them in – or for – this language class. The following options were given: 'at least once a lesson', 'once a week', 'never', 'other'. At the beginning of the administration of this section, learners were shown how to write answers in shorthand for the 'other' box: the examples supplied were '1/m' which stands for once a month, '2/y' for twice a year, and '2/w' for twice a week. They were also advised that they could use 'always' if they wanted to. No such guidance was offered *during* the administration of this section, to ensure the respondents were not influenced in favour of any particular response.

   II. Their perceived or aspired satisfaction. Here they were called to say whether they enjoyed doing these activities or not. In the case of activities that they stated that they never did, they were asked to answer whether they would have liked to do them or not.

At the end of this section the learners were told that they could add to the questionnaire any other activity they are doing in their language class which we had not included in the list provided, or any activity they had not been doing in their class but would like to do. In that case they were advised to tick the 'never' box in the frequency subsection and the 'yes' box in the satisfaction subsection. As a prompt for this they were told: 'for example games, or anything else'. In this way, all the respondents were prompted in a uniform way and the activity of games was expected to occur oftener than other non-prompted activities. They were then given roughly a minute to think about this subsection before we moved on to section two.

b) Section 2: Statements about learning languages (ten items)
This is the only part of the current project where a five-point Likert scale was employed. This was necessary in order to be able to compare the current findings with the LAP ones. The same applies to sections c and d below.

c) Section 3: Perceived effort in learning
This section consists of ten 3-point Likert items.

d) Section 4: Reasons for learning the target language
Semi-open format: ten indicative items were supplied, with implied options: Yes/No/Not sure. Additional open-format item: 'If you have any other reasons for wanting to learn this language, please tell us'. They were given approximately two minutes to fill in anything they wanted. They were asked to write 'None' if they had no other reasons, and return their questionnaires to me. This section was *not* contained in the end-of-year administration of the questionnaire as it was considered that a school year is not sufficient time for reasons for learning a language to change albeit minimally when they are defined in such broad terms.

One of the problems that had not been anticipated was that in the Irish-medium project class, half the students answered in Irish. Thus, a minor 'breach of confidentiality' occurred as their answers had to be shown to Irish-speaking colleagues in Trinity College

(TCD), who subsequently translated them into English. Of course, the learners' names remained hidden throughout this procedure. This was the only case where answers to questionnaire items have in fact been translated. The following times I visited that class, I let them know that we preferred to have all answers to the questionnaires in English, so that we would not need to translate them into English to make them comparable to the answers of other learners. Concerned not to let this admonition affect their motivation inversely, I congratulated the class for the wealth of ideas they had written in their questionnaires (some had indeed been prolific).

3.9.3. End-of-year open-ended questionnaire data from all participating learners

This questionnaire was taken from the EE1 evaluation and it asked learners to assess whether they:

- generally like working with the ELP or not and why;
- find it helps them and how;
- have a favourite section and why;
- have a least favourite section and why;
- have focussed on a specific skill in their class more than others and tick one to five skills;
- have enjoyed setting their own goals or not and why;
- do any goal-setting in other subjects.

This questionnaire was not further piloted owing to time constraints, but it was shown to four colleagues, who were asked to say what they would change, if anything, and why. Three said it was 'fine', whereas the fourth commented that the initial EE1 format of the narrative employed by the researcher to introduce each question 'could be argued to be a little positively skewed' in the second item. To be on the safe side, I changed the format to make it more neutral (and hence non-leading). However, I felt that if the ELP is experienced as positive and helpful, then the effect of this change in wording shouldn't be great. I also changed items 4 and 5, making them more compact and taking out

references to the teachers and thus focussing the questions more on the ELP itself. In the appendix one can find the questionnaire itself and the introductory narrative employed (Appendix A, pp.15-6). It was administered embedded to the LAP-based questionnaire at the end-of-year administration, in the place freed by section 4 (cf. d above and Appendix A, pp.12-6).

The answers to this questionnaire were analysed by both indexing them in an SPSS 12.0 database, so that they could be viewed along with and juxtaposed to the rest of the responses as a whole, and through a detailed qualitative correlation matrix using NVivo 2.0 (Roumazeilles 2002) that facilitated further qualitative analysis not possible through ordinary statistical analysis software packages.

3.9.4. Researcher's field-notes from classroom observations, seminars and monthly workshops for teachers

This was the most 'open-plan' instrument used in this project. A series of observations conducted in ELP classes in the piloting year of the project made me understand that no predefined format could accommodate the rich variety of things which took place in ELP classes. Counting the number of learner and teacher utterances or attempting a lesson analysis based on segment types (J. Harris and Murtagh 1996) would be no good in a class where, for instance, four groups work on their own projects and at least four people are talking simultaneously at any given time. As a result, I opted to develop a minimalistic observation guide which focussed on some objectively desirable features of the lesson and related classroom arrangements, and after that just record everything I could from the things that took place in the class.

The above was not as straightforward as may appear at first glance, as I had refrained from asking for the project participants' (i.e. teachers and students) permission to video- or audio-record them. The reason for this was that previous experience from the LAP and EE1 projects had indicated that a number of learners appeared to be intimidated by the presence of a camera or tape-recorder in their classroom and did not seem capable of working on their set tasks as usual (Jennifer Ridley, personal communication). As a result, I sketched out everything I could in shorthand during class time and then word-

processed my notes when back from school. On a number of occasions (n=5), I had difficulty grasping what was said in an Irish class. This was caused by my very limited proficiency in Irish. In those cases, I took down teacher and learner utterances in phonetic script, and when back in TCD, I asked Irish-speaking colleagues to furnish me with the parts I was missing each time, be it spellings, definitions, and/or idiomatic meanings.

Finally, I felt it was only right that teacher participants should be given a chance to read what I had observed in their classes. Accordingly, I always sent my observations to each participant in question shortly after the actual class visit. I opted to comment on how effective I felt some aspects of the lesson were, and how they could possibly be made even more functional. Fortunately, the overall quality of teaching and learning that I witnessed was such as to make my work in feedback provision a non-disagreeable one. In this, I saw my role of researcher as supplementary if not subordinate to the role of 'fellow teacher who would offer a second opinion' to project participants on their classes, as I feel this element is by and large absent from Irish post-primary education. Furthermore, I asked teacher participants to respond to my feedback and let me know if they thought my view of their classes was not correct in places; some participants took up the chance to do so through their monthly reports, also presented in the appendices (cf. presentation in Chapter 4).

The original research design as regards class observations contained a minimum of three observations of each class during the year, yielding approximately one observation per term. This would give a more tightly-knit longitudinal outlook to the project. However, as it happened, many procedural setbacks led to cancellations and deferrals. For instance, at times teacher participants were away on sick leave or attending in-service days, while oftentimes school timetables would be upset in one or another way. This state of affairs resulted in most classes being observed only twice, and two classes observed on three occasions. Additionally, in one class, six cancellations and deferrals left us with no time for a second observation.

3.9.5. Beginning and end-of-year semi-structured interviews with learner sub-samples, and End-of-year semi-structured interviews with all teachers

The interviews followed a semi-structured format (Appendix A, pp.17-9) developed on the basis of an analysis of a number of interview-based studies of learners and teachers and on relevant instruments from LAP and EE1. Five principles informed this format:

- the teacher and learner interviews should have approximately the same format so that comparisons between teacher and learner beliefs could be made;
- a slightly enlarged format would be used for an interview with two PLC learners who had also used the ELP during a trans-national work placement in Austria (Appendix A, p.19);
- the interviews should be short, thus minimising disruptions to school timetabling, etc.;
- the researcher would follow up on potentially interesting things an interviewee may have referred to in passing (this caused the resulting format of each interview to be more personalised and hence true to its qualitative outlook, but also not so straightforwardly comparable to other project interviews as was initially hoped);
- any dialect-specific vocabulary items and syntactic structures, as well as any idiosyncratic syntax used by the interviewees would be rendered verbatim, unless it could hinder comprehension greatly.

The piloting phase was conducted by using two different formats for each proposed question item. Two volunteers (members of the ELP SN not participating in this project) made suggestions on what they thought should be added, removed or modified. Also, network members were asked to express their opinion on the criterion we should employ in selecting which learners would be interviewed. Building on the experience of EE1, where time and administrative constraints had precluded the use of learner interviews on a large scale, and seeking to further qualify the positive findings of that project, it was agreed that three learners from every participating class would be interviewed. In this way disruption to the project classes' lessons would be kept to a minimum, while class-specific conclusions could be attempted. The learners to be interviewed would be: the one

who would have the best/most effective ELP, the learner who would have the most original idea related to language learning, and the learner who would have exhibited the greatest achievement through the course of the year. The last category of interviewees was a particularly interesting one as it would enable us to interview learners who might not have been particularly effective or interested in their language learning before (cf. Appendix G).

It was decided that the interview agendas would not be disclosed to the project participants in advance, in order to avoid related biases. However, on the day each interview took place, each interviewee was given the provisional agenda and was given ample time to read through it and ask for clarifications on certain items if needed. The whole interview was video-taped to ensure that I would be able to transcribe what was said verbatim, and possibly use these interviews as teacher training instruments in the future. I felt that unedited interviews are one of the best instruments to bring to the foreground the feelings of ELP users in a compact, concrete and graphic way. For these reasons, it was later decided to post on the project site all the interviews of teachers and learners who had given us permission to.

The transcription conventions employed were quite broad. Paralinguistic features of the interviewer's and interviewee's discourse, such as nods, laughter and related gestures, silence, etc., were recorded only when they contributed to an understanding of the intended meaning of an interlocutor's elliptically phrased utterances. The same rule was applied to prosodic features of discourse such as marked changes in rhythm, voice pitch and voice quality. Pauses were recorded when they were longer than a second in duration and/or they contributed to an expression of hedging, uncertainty or reflection-in-progress. In retrospect, having watched the interviews a good few times, I came to the conclusion that the most frequent cause of pauses was the need to reflect on the question asked. During an interview, if I understood this to be the case, I waited for an answer. If, however, a pause seemed to signify bemusement at the content of a question – especially in learner interviews – I either volunteered a rephrasing of the question in simpler terms which frequently employed analogies, or commented that it was ok to answer anything one felt.

At times, the quality of video was moderately compromised by background noises or 'white noise' related to my equipment, interruptions, etc. This resulted in my not being able to decipher some utterances unambiguously. In those cases, this was explicitly noted and I refrained from supplying a guess. Half-uttered words were also weeded out of the transcripts to facilitate comprehension.

An original quality-enhancing feature I introduced into the interview routine was that each interviewee was asked at the very end of the interview whether 'it is ok with [him/her] if parts of this interview are shown to other teachers/ learners who are thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time'. I thought this added an element of honesty and transparency to the research procedure, as the participants knew they could answer the questions addressed to them freely, and if they thought something they had said during the interview should be kept private, they always had the right to ask that it should stay so. During the preliminary part of the interview and after I had attended to any queries the interviewees might have had, I brought their attention to this fact to emphasise that they had every right to exercise their right to privacy. A small number of learners expressed uncertainty about whether their interviews should be made public or not. We decided to keep those private as well. All but one of the teacher participants gave permission for their interviews to be made public.

Furthermore, the interviewees were asked before the end of the interview whether they had any questions for me to answer (on issues related to interviewing cf. Keats 2000; J. Miller and Glassner 2004). Quite a few of them had as is apparent from the interview transcripts (cf. Appendices D and G). Finally, each interviewee kept a copy of the interview scenario when the interview was completed. Again, I feel this reinforces an element of equality of the researcher and the researched (on ethical issues in behavioural research with students cf. Foot and Sanford 2004; Kimmel 1996).

To my knowledge, such quality-enhancing measures have not been employed before in a linguistic research project.

3.9.6. Semi-structured monthly teacher reports

The format of the reports of the EE1 project was retained, to facilitate comparisons between the current findings and the EE1 ones. In Appendix A (pp.21-7), one can see the original paper format of the reports as well as the electronic format, which was employed for indexing reasons.

3.9.7. End-of-year semi-structured reflective essays from all teachers, and End-of-year reflections from all teachers collected in a group discussion

At the end of the data elicitation, teachers were asked to respond to a number of questions on the basis of their experience with the ELP during the whole year and submit their written reflections on the ELP. The questions were structured in a way which would facilitate a holistic view of how the ELP did or did not 'work out' for them and their project classes, and to elicit whether they thought that the project classes were in fact representative of the post-primary classes they taught or whether they were aberrant in any marked way that influenced the use they made of the ELP, and hence the research findings. Crucially, they were also asked 'what they would do differently next year on the basis of their experience of using the ELP this year'.

Additionally, the reflective essay was supplemented with a last ELP SN meeting to mark the closing of the project, where the themes examined in the essay were discussed in the group, and teachers and researchers were be able to summarise their reflections on the year to one another, and further reflect on how the knowledge they gained during the year could inform their teaching practice in the future (cf. presentation of Appendix E for further discussion).

There was an intentional degree of partial overlap between the scenario of the interviews and this reflective essay, to facilitate the elicitation of more detailed and reflected-upon answers than are possible in an interview setting. In a sense this choice mirrors my siding with the argument of Olson that we usually reflect more on something that we write by the very process of writing, i.e. 'writing is essentially metalinguistics' (Olson 1995, p.117).

3.9.8. Extensive sampling of all learners' ELP entries

During my frequent class observations, even from the piloting phase, I had ample opportunity to watch how learners worked with their ELPs, and I was able to witness their enthusiasm grow and their TL proficiency develop. On a personal level, it gave me great courage and a belief that the ELP has a positive influence on language education. I felt elated to be present during ELP-facilitated autonomously oriented group work. However, I was not sure how best to document that further, in the mandatory absence of any video-taping (owing to the reasons mentioned in the section related to classroom observations above). The solution employed in a way 'presented itself' in the form of a number of students showing me some of their dossier work in the pilot phase. As a result of this, I actively encouraged teacher participants to bring to the monthly meetings any samples their learners produced that other ELP SN members might get ideas and benefit from. All project participants responded to this and some samples of ELP-based work were posted on the site, after we were granted permission from their copyright holders, i.e. the learners, to do so. In early October, during a visit to a project class, a learner told me she saw the samples on the site and had produced two samples on the same themes. This was a revelation for me as her class was working on something entirely different and it showed me that the site could be employed as a tool not only for teachers to be informed on how the ELP can be used, but also for autonomously-oriented learners.

The outcome of this is that 1,961 samples have been posted on the project site in an effort to create a point of reference for other teachers and learners using the ELP. The samples were either chosen by the learners themselves or by the whole class; in two cases where learners wanted to submit something but could not decide what to submit, choices were assisted by the teacher. Although our first thought was to include only representative samples from each language or task type, it was then felt that there should be *no vetting* of the samples posted. The rationale for this was a desire to celebrate the multiplicity of ways the ELP is used, and to show how even samples produced on the first day of a learner's contact with the target language can become a part of the ELP and contribute to a sense of achievement in the language classroom (cf. CLCS 2003c).

3.10. Limitations

The research design employed is naturally not without its limitations. The fact that the data elicitation, quality control and subsequent analysis were conducted by a single person had of course the benefit of enhanced consistency in coding employed, minimisation of analysis variation and 'emic' outlook discrepancies; however, it also meant that all the above procedures would be restricted by the finite mental resources of one person, with everything that entails. I opted to submit my data to a rigorous and on-going quality control, whereby no piece of data would inform the findings unless checked twice following coding. As a result, I was able to discover and rectify, for example, instances of miscoding which would distort the data. Still, I may have erred in places, though the data gathered are valid and reliable to the best of my knowledge and ability.

Additionally, the fact that the majority of project participants started using the ELP for the first time as they entered our project increased the challenge they had to meet in order to implement the ELP fruitfully in their classes. As a result, they were naturally in need of more methodological support. The fact that in all cases apart from one they were the only ones in their school using the ELP, introduced an additional strain which made it difficult to embed the ELP in the school reality and to share their joys and anguishes with their immediate peers.

Crucially, there was no official support structure in place to support teacher participants. Thus, they had to teach full hours, to face suspicion from learners (and at times peers) who could not understand why a specific class 'is doing this when all others aren't', and had to commute to Dublin for the ELP SN meetings. These meetings had to take place in the evening to ensure that participants from schools in the midlands would have time to finish their teaching day and then drive to Dublin. This list of challenges could continue with a good few other items, which might explain why the majority of language teachers in Ireland have not yet started using the ELP.

A further limitation of this project is that, owing to lack of space, it is not sadly possible to dedicate a section in Chapters 4 and 5 to findings related to the project learners' intercultural competence and how it developed during the year; however, the

reader may form an idea to that effect on the basis of a number of related findings found in other sections.

Finally, owing to the extended triangulation policy followed, the data collected are indeed massive for a project of this type. However, their very bulk means that they could be either analysed in brief, or in an extended fashion that would exceed the limits set for a PhD thesis. As a result, I am keenly aware that a judicious and selective analysis of the findings is called for here. This I attempt to do in the following chapter.

4. Aggregate findings

4.1. Preamble

This chapter presents and critically examines the project findings in aggregate form. It attempts an analysis of the findings ordered according to data-elicitation instrument in the order these instruments were described in Chapter 3. This chapter draws from and should be read in tandem with the extensive appendices to the thesis.

4.2. Discussion structure employed

The arrangement mentioned above was employed since the large number and elaborate nature of the data elicitation instruments resulted in 'raw data' exceeding six thousand pages after a first 'data-reducing' codification of responses. The majority of these are included in the appendices, which amount to 5,884 pages (cf. overview of appendices).

The omitted parts of the data were not included in the appendices owing to confidentiality concerns, and are related to answers to open-ended questions and other 'stand-alone' qualitative material which has been collected and indexed through NVivo. Had it been included in its entirety, this material would have to be appended in either a contextualised format which would give away the identity of respondents, or in a de-contextualised format which would render it all but indecipherably meaningless. Hence, it is omitted from the appendices and appears only in the discussion offered in the main body of the thesis.

Further to the above, I feel it would be all but impossible to discuss the totality of the data gathered in this research project in any meaningful way in the space available. Nevertheless, I think that transparency and objectivity are best served by the current arrangement, where both the full recoded responses appear in the appendices for the interested reader to peruse at length, and a critical analysis and discussion of the findings appears in the main body of the thesis, focusing on the themes that come out of the findings as most prominent and/or statistically significant.

Finally, in order to simplify the discourse employed in this and the following chapter, I chose to abstain from statistical jargon whenever possible. In order not to unnecessarily inflate the text, I briefly explain each statistical concept which informs this discussion only the first time it is employed.

4.3. Overview of appendices

The appendices to this thesis are presented preceded by an introduction which operates as a guide to the appendices and aims to make them more readily accessible). In fifteen pages, that introduction attempts to outline how the appendices are structured and what the contents of each appendix are.

```
a1.1.3 (33) Why do I do my course work? Because it's fun a.
    Measurement Level: Ordinal
    Column Width: 8  Alignment: Right
    Print Format: F8
    Write Format: F8
    Missing Values: 4 thru 9

        Value    Label

            0    Not at all true
            1    Not very true
            2    Sort of true
            3    Very true
            4 M  Not applicable
            7 M  No response
            8 M  I am not sure
            9 M  Absent
```

Table 4.1: Data dictionary variable summary for variable 'a1.1.3'.

In brief, the appendices to this thesis are divided into three categories. The first category is the shortest one and contains only Appendices A and O. Appendix A contains the data-elicitation instruments employed in the research project in the form they were administered in the main part of the project. Appendix O contains the Appendix of the LAP ELP and it is offered in order to familiarise the reader with the format of the ELP

model examined. Appendices B to G contain the qualitative findings of this research project, and Appendices H to N contain the quantitative findings.

The reader is advised to read the introduction to the appendices prior to reading the discussion of project findings, as it contains information not only on how the findings were gathered, as well as examples and information on how they were codified, indexed and reduced. The discussion of project findings which takes place in the remainder of the thesis employs the same codification and indexing system so that the reader may cross-check at will the discussion of the findings with the relevant appendices and thus gain a more holistic understanding of the project, its measures and findings.
As an example of the codification and analysis employed, Table 4.1 exhibits a sample 'variable summary' of a variable named 'a1.1.3' contained in the SPSS data dictionary of the database which resulted from this project. More information on how to interpret Table 4.1 and all other variable related names and tables contained in this thesis and its appendices is once more offered in the introduction to the appendices.

4.4. Project findings: general discussion

4.4.1. Introduction

Discussion structure

Owing to the longitudinal character of this project and to the fact that it seeks to test, replicate and further substantiate findings of earlier research projects, as well as to the intended partial overlap which exists between some of the data-elicitation instruments employed (cf. discussion in Chapters 2 and 3), I feel that a purely thematic discussion of the findings would not sufficiently capture their essence. As a result, the findings are discussed in a bidimensional manner, such that a thematic breakdown is attempted on the basis of each data-elicitation instrument, interwoven with a temporal dimension where such exists. Thus each 'family' of findings is in turn:

- presented and discussed in brief;
- juxtaposed to earlier findings of this project which have already been presented;

- compared to relevant findings of other projects which have employed the same data-elicitation instruments; and
- compared to/linked with other findings gathered through a data-elicitation instrument which has already been discussed.

Additionally, the above analysis is further informed by an examination of environmental factors which may have affected the findings in a substantial way. This examination attempts to offer some first steps towards an understanding of the distinctive features of the class microcosms (Shoda 2004) related language teaching and learning in Irish post-primary education. It is my belief that only through such an understanding can we claim that our findings are ecologically valid, and hence reliably interpretable. This examination is based among other things on a relevant archival log I kept while I was conducting the field-visits to the participating schools, as well as on additional information volunteered by project participants without my soliciting it through a data elicitation instrument, for instance through e-mails they sent me or through the discussions and presentations that took place during the monthly meetings of the ELP SN in parallel to this project.

In an attempt to make the discussion of project findings more transparently accessible and coherent, the structure of the discussion of findings presented in this section of the thesis (i.e. section 4.4) approximately mirrors the structure of section 3.9, where the various data elicitation instruments were presented. The only difference between sections 3.9 and 4.4 is that in the latter section, learner and teacher interviews are each allocated a separate subsection. The same philosophy informed the class-specific discussion found in Chapter 5, although no subsection numbering was employed. For instance, section 3.9.2. presented the instruments which were used to collect 'attitudinal-motivational questionnaire data from all participating learners elicited at the beginning and end of the school year', section 4.4.2. discusses general aggregate findings related to those instruments, while Chapter 5 contains notable related class-specific findings. Where a finding is related to more than one item from a quantitative research instrument, reliability analyses are offered at the beginning of the discussion of that finding (cf. e.g. section 4.4.2 below).

Post-primary education environment

The vast majority of studies on motivation in a school setting bear witness to the fact that when learners enter secondary education, their motivation starts declining. Time and again, projects have replicated this finding in different settings (cf. review in Roeser and Galloway 2002). Transition from primary school leads to decrease in perceived appeal of academic subjects and gradual decline in every domain in all post-primary grades (Wigfield and Tonks 2002, p.61). This decline has been observed both in overall motivational levels (e.g. Lepper and Henderlong 2000, pp.279-80) and in intrinsic motivation levels (e.g. La Guardia and Ryan 2002, p.201).

On the basis of these findings, several theorists argue that when a given intervention in secondary education is evaluated, no significant decline in motivation is a desirable result (Wigfield and Tonks 2002, p.68). It seems that this drop in motivation is most marked in the early years of secondary education. Allegedly most learners find it difficult to acclimatise to a more impersonal environment than that of primary school, where they are frequently faced with the task of accumulating chunks of knowledge they are not interested in (Hidi and Ainley 2002, p.253), offered through a highly fragmented curriculum which offers little chance of putting knowledge gained from one subject to practical use in other subjects (cf. Chapter 6).

In addition to the above, post-primary schools make great demands for self-regulation on their students. Many students respond to these increasing demands for self-regulation by adopting effective learning strategies, but a significant number of students fail to do so (Zimmerman 2002, p.3; Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons 1990). This increase in demands for self-regulation coincides with many maturational changes which take place in adolescence. These changes present challenges and make adolescents' self-efficacy particularly vulnerable (Schunk and Miller 2002, p.30), and their need for peer approval more pronounced (Juvonen and Cadigan 2002, pp.282-3).

Although when these challenges are met the outcome is increased academic achievement and 'subjective well-being' (Kaplan and Maehr 2002, p.157), many theorists have observed the frequent failure of formal schooling (Little 2000b), where traditional school settings are mostly transmission-oriented (Boekaerts and Niemivirta 2000, p.417), 'self-assessment is little practiced' (Little 2001a, p.7), and schools as a whole are equated

to 'boredom' and offer limited optimal challenge to learners (Lepper and Henderlong 2000, pp.281 & 287-8). Since schools are attitude-formation environments which influence the experience of learning in a profound way (Kohonen 2000a), it is critically important that they foster – rather than hinder – practices related to greater learner and teacher autonomy. Currently, that is not the case. Lower post-primary learners have been observed to exhibit increased resistance to autonomy (Kohonen 2004, p.37; Kohonen forthcoming, p.13), possibly as a result of the 'shock' of transition to the post-primary environment. The prevalent situation is not better as far as teachers are concerned. The establishment of peer networks among teachers which would offer assistance where and when needed is rare and 'most teachers work alone, in splendid isolation' (Tharp and Gallimore 1988, p.190 cited in; Tort-Moloney 1997, p.51). Wolff summarises this state of affairs quite succinctly in the following statement:

> The organisational structure of our school systems, with their inflexible time schedule, a randomly ordered sequence of subjects during the day and the learning and teaching of these subjects in isolation from one another, poses [...] problems. In short, *as constituted at present our school systems do not provide a suitable framework for the development of learner autonomy* (2003, p.211, emphasis added).

On the whole, research indicates that the state of affairs presented in this section tends to make teenage post-primary students less intrinsically and more extrinsically motivated. As a result, when this project was designed, I hypothesised that the comparison of attitudes at the beginning and at the end of the year would be likely to show a downward trend in motivation. I speculated, however, that the use of the ELP in an autonomy-supportive climate could make that trend less pronounced or even forestall it under favourable conditions. In the following section these hypotheses are examined in the light of project findings presented according to research instrument.

4.4.2. Attitudinal-motivational questionnaire data from all participating learners elicited at the beginning and end of the school year

Introduction

Eight variables were added to the attitudinal-motivational data, summarising the participation of learner respondents in the various phases of quantitative data elicitation and are presented below. Thus in sections 3.5 and 3.6 I presented an overview of how the learner sample of the project (n=364) came about. However, not all the members of the sample were present in all questionnaire administrations. Tables 4.2 to 4.9 below depict this state of affairs by offering an overview of instrument-specific participation and related sample size. In all these tables the value of zero indicates non-participation, whereas the value of one indicates participation. Each table is followed by a brief illustrative commentary.

The respondent answered questionnaire 1 [Round A1]					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	29	8,0	8,0	8,0
	1	335	92,0	92,0	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.2: Learner participation in round a1

Table 4.2 depicts participation in the first part of round a). This round took place in September 2003 and it involved only the SDT-based composite questionnaire. From the above one can see that 92% of the total sample participated in this round. This represents the highest participation achieved for any given questionnaire.

Table 4.3 depicts participation in the second part of round a). This round took place in late September and early October 2003 and it involved only the LAP-based questionnaire. As in round a1) presented above, a very high percentage of learners (86.3%) from the total sample participated in this round.

The respondent answered questionnaire 2 [Round A2]					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	50	13,7	13,7	13,7
	1	314	86,3	86,3	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.3:Learner participation in round a2

The respondent answered questionnaires b1 and b2 [Round B]					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	87	23,9	23,9	23,9
	1	277	76,1	76,1	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.4: Learner participation in round b

Table 4.4 depicts participation in round b). This round took place in late April and early May 2004 and it involved all the questionnaires administered in the end-of-year administration (cf. section 3.9.2). From the above one can see that 76.1% of the total sample participated in this round. Although this percentage is generally satisfactory for a longitudinal project where participation is voluntary, it does represent a significant drop from round a). This drop came about for a number of reasons. First, two classes had to leave the project before the administration of the second round (cf. reasons for this in section 3.5 above). Second, as the end of the year was drawing near, a few of the learner participants were occasionally excused from some of their classes in order to represent their schools in various competitions, festivals, debate contests, etc. Third, a minority of absences was attributed to some learners' being out sick for the day.

Whereas Tables 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4 show the participation in rounds a1), a2) and b) respectively, Tables 4.5 to 4.9 show how that participation affected the sample in statistical calculations. Table 4.5 shows that approximately two thirds (n=251, or 69%) of learners from the total sample responded to both administrations of the SDT-based

composite questionnaire and thus informed our understanding on how attitudes expressed through this questionnaire changed over time for our sample.

The respondent answered questionnaires a1 and b1. The respondent's answers are included in the data analysis related to those two questionnaires.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	113	31,0	31,0	31,0
	1	251	69,0	69,0	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.5: Learner participation in SDT-related sample

The respondent answered questionnaires a2 and b2. The respondent's answers are included in the data analysis related to those two questionnaires.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	109	29,9	29,9	29,9
	1	256	70,1	70,1	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.6: Learner participation in LAP-relate d sample

The respondent answered questionnaire b2.4. The respondent's answers are included in the data analysis related to that questionnaire.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	50	13,7	13,7	13,7
	1	314	86,3	86,3	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.7: Learner participation in 'Reasons for learning the target language' sample

Table 4.6 shows that approximately two thirds (n=255/70.1%) of learners from the total sample responded to both administrations of the LAP-based composite questionnaire (questionnaire sections 1-3) and thus informed our understanding on how attitudes expressed through this questionnaire changed over time for our sample.

Table 4.7 shows that 86.3% of learners from the total sample responded to questionnaire b2.4 (i.e. section 4 of the LAP-based questionnaire). This percentage corresponds to participation in round a2), since this questionnaire was administered only once at the beginning of the year. As a result, all the participants in round a2) were by default valid members of this sub-sample.

The respondent answered questionnaire b2.5. The respondent's answers are included in the data analysis related to that questionnaire.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	87	23,9	23,9	23,9
	1	277	76,1	76,1	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.8: Learner participation in 'End-of-year open-ended questionnaire' sample

Table 4.8 shows that 76.1% of learners from the total sample responded to questionnaire b2.5, which had been embedded in the LAP-based questionnaire as section 4 in round b). As for the above table, this percentage corresponds to participation in round b), since this questionnaire was administered only once, at the end of the year. Consequently, all the participants in round b) were by default valid members of this sub-sample.

Table 4.9 shows that 68.1% of learners from the total sample responded to all the questionnaires. This percentage was not used in any calculation, but is given here as a yardstick of total questionnaire participation. Had this sample been used, we would have possibly been able to make further inferences from a smaller sample in a compact way, since all the computations would be based on a unitary sample. However, that would have been achieved at the cost of statistical power, exclusion of entirely valid parts of each sub-sample, and a potential positive distortion of the findings, since we could expect to find that learners who had not been absent from any questionnaire administration,

would also the ones who were in general more positively disposed towards school and dedicated to their language learning and their learning achievement, made a greater effort to attend school/did not play truant, and exhibited greater motivation and perceived satisfaction levels. Besides, the application of 'SPSS computing rules' presented in section 4.3 above would render the use of that type of sample superfluous – not to mention potentially unscientific for the reasons supplied above. In order to illustrate this claim further, I would argue that there would be no justification for the exclusion of a learner from the sample presented in Table 4.7, which was related to the reasons why learners were learning their TL, on the grounds that that learner was absent from round b), since round b) contained only questionnaires which were entirely unrelated to this research topic.

The respondent answered all questionnaires. The respondent's answers are included in the data analysis related to all questionnaires.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	116	31,9	31,9	31,9
	1	248	68,1	68,1	100,0
	Total	364	100,0	100,0	

Table 4.9: Learner participation in all questionnaire-based samples

Further to the above, four different sub-sample clusters were identified and employed in the current setting (cf. Tables 4.5-4.8 above), after they were found to be statistically reliable. They form part of a whole but can arguably also operate relatively independently of each other. As a result, the analysis of findings attempted in the remainder of the thesis is made on an instrument-specific – and hence sample-specific – basis and the discourse that accompanies all claims and inferences that stem from these findings has been modified accordingly.

In order to make the presentation of findings more readable and space-efficient a minimalistic narrative technique was followed, whereby findings of a certain type were presented in more detail at earlier stages, thus enabling the reader to understand the logic

behind, for instance, tables, figures or charts, but presented in a progressively more compact style in later stages of the thesis.

SDT-related questionnaire

a) Academic self-regulation questionnaire (SRQ-A)

Reliability analysis

As mentioned in Chapter 3 the SRQ-A attempts to measure the relative strength of four different motivational orientations (external, introjected, identified, and intrinsic) behind a number of activities which were related to course work in the (project) language class (SRQ-L; items 1.1-1.16) and school work in general (SRQ-S; items 1.17-1.24). The reliability of the subscales that form SRQ-A was measured through the calculation of a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for each subscale (hence A). A coefficients range from 0 to 1 and present an estimate of the relative reliability of a scale. In the case of the SRQ-A A's ranged from 0,62 to 0,82 in the original validation of the instrument (ibid., p.752), which makes the scale relatively reliable.

Later research projects also found SRQ-A scales to be internally reliable and valid (e.g. Black and Deci 2000; Chirkov and Ryan 2001; Hayamizu 1997; Miserandino 1996). This proves the relative diachronic stability of this scale.

Of course, the scale employed in the current project is slightly smaller than the original, and the population it is addressed to is different. Unfortunately, no other research project appears to have used the SRQ with a European post-primary learner sample. This further reinforced the need to adhere to a policy of thorough reliability analysis for every scale employed (cf. for instance Table 4.10 and its discussion below).

It was initially envisaged when this project was designed that we would be able to make comparisons between perceived motivational orientations in language classes (SRQ-L) and in school in general (SRQ-S). Since it was not possible to conduct reliability analysis tests related only to the SRQ-S scale owing to the small number of items in it (cf. discussion of questionnaire space limitations in Chapter 3), I resolved to conduct reliability analyses for the four subscales in the SRQ-L scale, and for all four subscales which made up the composite SRQ-A scale which contained all the items of

SRQ-L and SRQ-S. However, I also computed SRQ-S-specific variables, which were employed as a diagnostic tool which was more sensitive to discrepancies between attitudes to schoolwork and language learning class-work. These variables do not appear in the main body of the thesis, though they are contained in the appendices for the interested reader to peruse at length.

Owing to the fact that most analyses are based on less than ten items per (sub-) scale, A's were expected not to be very high. Following the advice of Pallant, when coefficients were found to be above 0,7, they were considered to be stable. Furthermore, inter-item correlations were calculated for all scales which appear in this thesis, to supplement reliability estimates based on A coefficients, especially where A coefficients were found to be less than 0,7 (Pallant 2001, p.87). All A coefficients which appear in this thesis are standardised ones, and all scales exhibit an adequate degree of variability which is evidenced through sufficiently large standard deviations. Furthermore, no ceiling or floor effects which would compromise the validity of trends in the findings were evidenced.

All scale reliability analyses were conducted in triplicate, to allow for the scales produced in the two administration rounds and for an aggregate analysis on the basis of the scales from both administration rounds. In all these analyses, no A's were found to increase significantly when one item was deleted (through the computation of item-deletion reliability tables) and inter-item correlation matrices did not indicate that such deletions were necessary. Thus earlier research was replicated in that all items were found satisfactory and were eventually retained in the analysis of findings. The fact that no item was discarded is extremely positive as it lends additional support to the alleged scale reliability. Summaries of key reliability statistics are offered in the tables which follow. Descriptive statistics (i.e. means, variances, standard deviations, and number of valid cases) related to these scales can be found in Appendix I, and additional information in the rest of the quantitative appendices, where all scale variables that contributed to the findings were included as 'basic numeric variables'. Additionally, summary statistics are offered in the discussion of main findings which follows this reliability analysis where appropriate.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
aSRQLext	4	,518
aSRQLinr	4	,606
aSRQLide	4	,643
aSRQLint	4	,755
aSRQAext	7	,657
aSRQAinr	7	,722
aSRQAide	5	,705
aSRQAint	5	,768

Table 4.10: SRQ-A Scale Reliability Summary for Round a

Table 4.10 offers the reliability coefficients of scales related to SRQ-A for the first round of questionnaire administration. Thus 'aSRQLext' corresponds to the external motivational orientation scale of the first round. That scale consists of four items. Incidentally it is also the scale with the lowest A coefficient (A= 0,518), which means that it is the least reliable one. However, the inter-item correlation for this scale showed that none of the four items stood out for measuring something different to the scale. In order to be certain about this, an exploratory factor analysis was also conducted for all 24 SRQ-A items. The principal component analysis (and related graphic 'scree' test) confirmed the existence of four motivational orientation clusters, which corresponded to the original four clusters hypothesised by SDT (these procedures were conducted in a manner which followed procedures based on the work of Bryant and Yarnold 1995; Kaiser 1960; 1974; Russell 2002).

An important thing to note about the first four scales of Table 4.10 – as well as of Table 4.11 – is that only four items contributed to make up each subscale (cf. 'N of items' column). This may partly account for the fact that A coefficients tended to be quite low for these scales. All three tables related to SRQ-A (i.e. Tables 4.10-4.12) seemed to confirm that scales that were made up of more items tend to acquire bigger A values.

Another notable thing is that intrinsic motivational orientation scales were more reliable than the other three orientations, whereas external motivational orientation scales tended to be the least reliable (cf. relevant findings in Villacorta, Koestner, and Lekes 2003).

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
bSRQLext	4	,567
bSRQLinr	4	,626
bSRQLide	4	,672
bSRQLint	4	,784
bSRQAext	7	,696
bSRQAinr	7	,763
bSRQAide	5	,711
bSRQAint	5	,795

Table 4.11: SRQ-A Scale Reliability Summary for Round b

Table 4.11 offers the reliability coefficients of scales related to SRQ-A for the second round of questionnaire administration. A closer look at this table shows that all the scales appeared to be more reliable in the second round than the responses of the first round had already shown them to be. As in the first round, external orientation scales were the least reliable and intrinsic orientation scales were the most reliable; however, all scales exhibited proportionate gains in reliability.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
SRQLext	8	,683
SRQLinr	8	,740
SRQLide	8	,762
SRQLint	8	,840
SRQAext	14	,781
SRQAinr	14	,834
SRQAide	10	,793
SRQAint	10	,853

Table 4.12: SRQ-A Aggregate Scale Reliability Summary (Rounds a & b)

Table 4.12 offers the reliability coefficients of scales related to SRQ-A for aggregate scales from both rounds of questionnaire administration. Since this table is

directly related to the two previous ones, it exhibits the same tendencies by default. However, because the number of items which composed each scale doubles the equivalent numbers of the previous two tables, all the aggregate scales have even bigger A's. This is natural, since the algorithm for the calculation of A favours scales with more items (cf. discussion above).

On the basis of all three tables (4.10-4.12) it seems permissible to claim that the SRQ-A in the modified format employed in this project appeared to be on the whole quite reliable and stable over time both as a whole (SRQ-A), and in the part related only to the project (language) classes (SRQ-L).

Findings

The findings gathered through the quantitative data elicitation instruments in this project were subjected to a number of diagnostic tests not discussed in detail here for reasons of brevity. However, a number of tables are offered below which contain data related to one-way between groups analyses of variance (1-way ANOVA). Each row of these tables contains summary data gathered from one or more 1-way ANOVAs. In successive columns, it contains the name of the scale it is related to, the observed mean, the scale's standard deviation (SD), the degrees of freedom applicable (DF), the degree of observed difference in the means of the different groups examined (F) followed by the grouping variable which determines the groups in question. Two additional columns offer the observed significance of the ANOVA (p) which gives us the level of confidence with which we can claim whether or not the observed sample is contained in the population examined and can be used to make statistical inferences about that population, and finally 'eta squared' (H^2), a measure of the effect size for the result (i.e. between-groups difference) examined. When p was calculated by SPSS and presented as 0,000, I rectified the logical fallacy of presenting it as 0,000 (which would signify a level of confidence equal to 100%) by adding a digit and presenting it as 0,0005. Grouping variables employed in the ANOVAs presented in this chapter are sex of respondent, target language and class year (cf. Appendices I, J, L, M and N).

Additionally, means were plotted for all ANOVAs to help us discern differences not immediately discernible through the quite long data-rich ANOVA tables. References

are made to these plots only where information gleaned from them was deemed conducive to a better understanding of the main body of findings. Unfortunately, SPSS currently (i.e. version 12.0.1) does not have a facility for calculating H^2 after an ANOVA. Consequently, I resolved to complement the ANOVAs I conducted with H^2 calculations made through Microsoft Excel XP (Microsoft Corporation 2002), where it was deemed appropriate (i.e. when p was equal to or smaller than 0,05 and hence the effect represented by H^2 would be significant at the 0,05 level). For the interpretation of an observed H^2 the guidelines supplied by Cohen (1988) were employed, whereby the value of 0,01 is taken to represent a small effect, 0,06 a moderate effect, and 0,14 a large effect. The design and analysis of the ANOVAs conducted in this research project was informed by advice offered in a number of publications (Aron and Aron 2002; Graziano and Raulin 2004; Grimm and Yarnold 1995; 2000; Haslam and McGarty 2003; Hinton 1995; Murphy and Myors 2004; Newton and Rudestam 1999; Stevens 1986; Weinfurt 1995; Weitzman 2003).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
aSRQLext	1,8687	,58226	1, 333	,872	,351	-
aSRQLinr	1,3460	,60960	1, 333	,081	,777	-
aSRQLide	2,1692	,54278	1, 333	,167	,683	-
aSRQLint	1,0179	,65019	1, 333	,609	,436	-
aSRQAext	1,8348	,52659	1, 333	,224	,636	-
aSRQAinr	1,6812	,52641	1, 333	,831	,363	-
aSRQAide	2,2555	,50544	1, 333	,010	,921	-
aSRQAint	1,1907	,61524	1, 333	,449	,503	-

Table 4.13: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round a

Table 4.13 contains a summary of the results from eight 1-way between-groups ANOVAs. It depicts the observed impact of respondent gender on the findings in round a) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A. As can be seen from the DF column, 334 respondents participated. DF=1, 333 means that the genders of the participants could differ in one way, i.e. participants were either male or female, and the number of the participants could differ in 333 ways, i.e. there were 334 participants). No significant F

was observed in any ANOVA. Hence we can conclude that there were no statistically significant gender differences in the responses in round a) as regards extrinsic, introjected, identified and intrinsic motivational orientations. There was however a consistent – although small and thus not statistically significant – global tendency for girls to appear more extrinsically motivated than boys. Thus, the observed means of responses related to extrinsic and introjected orientations were higher for girls, and the means of responses related to identified and intrinsic orientations were higher for boys. Additionally, a close look at the means of all eight ANOVAs presented above shows that there was a tendency for respondents to be more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated across ANOVA categories. This is in keeping with earlier research (cf. section 4.1 above).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
bSRQLext	1,7175	,55030	1, 275	,175	,676	-
bSRQLinr	1,2503	,58206	1, 275	,092	,761	-
bSRQLide	2,0373	,54817	1, 275	3,986	,047	0,014
bSRQLint	,9943	,63816	1, 275	5,907	,016	0,021
bSRQAext	1,7077	,52476	1, 275	,001	,981	-
bSRQAinr	1,5507	,55124	1, 275	,107	,743	-
bSRQAide	2,1164	,51628	1, 275	3,658	,057	-
bSRQAint	1,1332	,61206	1, 275	4,441	,036	0,016

Table 4.14: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round b

Table 4.14 depicts the observed impact of respondent gender on the findings in round b) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A. As can be seen from the DF column (DF=1, 275), 276 respondents participated. Although no significant gender differences were observed for extrinsic and introjected orientations, differences were observed for identified and intrinsic orientations. More specifically, boys perceived themselves as significantly more intrinsically motivated than girls in their language classes. The F for the identified motivational orientation was 3,986, exhibiting a gender difference significant at the 0,047 level. However, the effect of this difference was small (H^2=0,014). Furthermore, the intrinsic motivational orientation F was 5,907, exhibiting a gender difference significant

at the 0,016 level. Once more, the effect of this difference was rather small (H^2=0,021). As regards the perceived motivation in school classes in general, gender differences followed the same pattern, albeit in a less pronounced way. The only ANOVA which depicted a statistically significant difference was related to the intrinsic orientation (F=4,441), and it was statistically significant at the 0,036 level. The effect size was 0,016.

A word of caution is in order at this point. One cannot use tables 4.13 and 4.14 presented above (and by extension any other pair of ANOVA or cross-tabulation tables referring to rounds a) and b) to make direct comparisons of perceived motivational changes between observed attitudes at the beginning and end of the year, owing to the reasons examined in detail in chapter 3. Table 4.15 below and by extension any other ANOVA or cross-tabulation table referring to 'round' c) arguably caters more objectively for all suchlike comparisons (cf. Chapter 3).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
cSRQLext	-,1906	,57284	1, 249	1,869	,173	-
cSRQLinr	-,1491	,57989	1, 249	1,006	,317	-
cSRQLide	-,1617	,52873	1, 249	7,434	,007	0,029
cSRQLint	-,0322	,58208	1, 249	4,565	,034	0,018
cSRQAext	-,1740	,51335	1, 249	1,991	,159	-
cSRQAinr	-,1882	,48351	1, 249	,774	,380	-
cSRQAide	-,1600	,51202	1, 249	7,111	,008	0,028
cSRQAint	-,0647	,55049	1, 249	3,192	,075	-

Table 4.15: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round c

Table 4.15 depicts the change in the observed impact of respondent gender on the findings between rounds a) and b) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A. As can be seen from the DF column (DF=1, 249), the responses of only 250 participants are examined here. A first look at the table shows that although all orientations seem to follow a general downward trend which is consistent with the motivational literature, the orientation-specific constituents of that trend are the reverse of what would be expected across different orientations. In particular, intrinsic motivations seem to resist the strongly negative longitudinal trends which are the norm. The fact that this state of affairs

appears somewhat more pronounced in language classes (SRQ-L) than in motivation in school in general (SRQ-A) arguably offers an indication of the positive effect the use of the ELP had on the intrinsic motivation of participants (cf. further discussion on this point in the section on the relative autonomy indices [RAIs] below).

Furthermore, the intrinsic motivation of boys seems to have benefited more from the intervention. The F for the identified motivational orientation in LL was 7,434, exhibiting a gender difference significant at the 0,007 level. The effect of this difference was rather small (H^2=0,029). Furthermore, the F for the intrinsic motivational orientation was 4,565, exhibiting a gender difference significant at the 0,034 level. Once more, the effect of this difference was small (H^2=0,018). As regards the perceived motivation in school classes in general, the only ANOVA which depicted a statistically significant difference was related to the intrinsic orientation (F=7,111), significant at the 0,008 level. The effect size was 0,028.

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	p	H^2		DF	F (year)	P	H^2
aSRQLext	4, 330	4,822	,001	0,055		5, 329	6,015	,0005	0,084
aSRQLinr	4, 330	3,467	,009	0,040		5, 329	4,310	,001	0,061
aSRQLide	4, 330	1,054	,380	-		5, 329	3,082	,010	0,045
aSRQLint	4, 330	2,190	,070	-		5, 329	4,137	,001	0,059
aSRQAext	4, 330	3,133	,015	0,037		5, 329	3,949	,002	0,057
aSRQAinr	4, 330	3,894	,004	0,045		5, 329	4,747	,0005	0,067
aSRQAide	4, 330	,620	,648	-		5, 329	3,321	,006	0,048
aSRQAint	4, 330	2,210	,068	-		5, 329	4,125	,001	0,059

Table 4.16: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round a

Table 4.16 contains a summary of the results from sixteen 1-way between-groups ANOVAs. It depicts the observed impact of target language (TL) studied and class year of the respondents on the findings in round a) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A. Naturally, the ANOVAs related to TL and class year are multiple-comparison ones, since they examine the motivational orientations of respondents broken down in more than two categories (notice e.g. in Table 4.16 that the DF column for TLs shows that we have four degrees of freedom, i.e. five different TLs). In order to maximise statistical objectivity,

Bonferroni multiple-comparison post-hoc tables were calculated for all multiple comparison ANOVAs. In order to make sure that no statistically salient differences between specific compared groups (e.g. different TLs) were missed, Bonferroni tables were calculated even for between-groups ANOVAs which were significant at the 0,05-0,07 level. In this way, some limited and/or group-specific phenomena were identified.

As regards the impact of the target language studied, significant differences were found in the four ANOVAs related to external and introjected orientations, as can be seen above. In particular, The F for between-TLs comparisons for the extrinsic motivational orientation in LL was 4,822, exhibiting a TL difference significant at the 0,001 level (H^2=0,055). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were traced to the fact that learners studying Italian had lower extrinsic motivation levels than learners of all other languages (Italian-Irish p=0,0005; Italian-French p=0,008; Italian-German p=0,032).

Spanish is not explicitly mentioned here or in any of the comparisons presented below as learners of this language did not differ in any significant way to learners of any other language. This fact is particularly significant for this research project, as it licenses us to claim that, to a certain degree, we would expect learners of Spanish to have reacted to the intervention examined (i.e. the use of the ELP) in the same way as learners of other languages did, and hence aggregate findings based on the other four languages in round b) may be generalised to include this language. In simpler terms, although the respondents studying Spanish had to drop out of the project before the administration of round b) and hence did not participate in that round, we could expect them to have generally exhibited the same broad tendencies as those observed for other TLs following a year of ELP use.

For the remainder of this thesis, only significant between-groups differences are mentioned for reasons of brevity. Hence, wherever a possible comparison has not been mentioned in the text, it is because it did not yield statistically significant results.

As regards the introjected motivational orientation in LL, the observed F was 3,467, exhibiting a between-TLs difference significant at the 0,009 level (H^2=0,018). Post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons showed that the mean for Italian was significantly lower than that for Irish (p=0,005). As regards the perceived motivation in

school classes in general, the F for between-TLs comparisons for the extrinsic motivational orientation was 3,133, exhibiting a TL difference significant at the 0,015 level (H^2=0,037). As above, Bonferroni comparisons revealed that the mean for Italian was significantly lower than that for Irish (p=0,016). Furthermore, introjected motivational orientation F was 3,894, exhibiting a TL difference significant at the 0,004 level (H^2=0,045). Bonferroni comparisons once more revealed that the mean for Italian was significantly lower than that for Irish (p=0,002), and German (p=0,045).

A first look at the means of all eight TL-based ANOVAs presented above shows that there was a tendency for respondents to be more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated across TLs initially (i.e. in round a). However, it also seems that learners of Italian appeared to be more intrinsically motivated to study that TL than learners of other languages were to study their respective TLs. Furthermore learners of Italian exhibited the same positive motivational tendencies as regards school in general. Exactly the reverse situation seemed to hold true for the numerous learners of Irish. The majority appeared to be primarily extrinsically motivated to learn Irish.

First, both Italian classes that participated in this project were made up of older learners (i.e. 5th- and PLC2-year learners) who exhibited high degrees of independence. This is a characteristic inherent in all PLC classes, since the great majority of the learners who make up these classes are young adults who have just taken their Leaving Certificate examinations.

Second, owing to a variety of reasons the authority of the teacher in both those classes was frequently challenged during the year by many learners who were not keen to follow instructions unless they felt they were personally relevant and meaningful. As a result, a significant proportion of class time had to be devoted to the establishment of this relevance on a continuous basis, owing to the very acute absenteeism problems related to these classes. Thus, whatever motivational patterns learners in these classes adopted were in a sense more voluntary than in other classes (cf. more detailed discussion in sections 5.4.6 and 5.4.17).

As regards the impact of the class year, significant differences were found in all eight ANOVAs, as can be seen on the right side of Table 4.16. Thus, all Fs for between-years comparisons ranged from a minimum of 3,0 to above 6,0 with all differences being

highly significant (p=0,0005 – 0,010) and H^2s exhibiting effects ranging from medium to large (cf. details in Table 4.16 above). Significant between-years differences were identified through post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons. As regards the motivational orientations related to effort in the language classroom, the following between-years differences were found to be statistically significant. First-year learners were significantly more extrinsically motivated than fifth-year learners (p=0,009) and second-year Post Leaving Certificate (PLC2) learners (p=0,001). As regards the introjected motivational orientation, first-year learners were significantly more motivated than second-year learners (p=0,031) and fifth-year learners (p=0,014). As regards the identified motivational orientation, no significant differences were found after the Bonferroni multiple-comparison normalisation was calculated. As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation, first-year learners were significantly more intrinsically motivated than second-year learners (p=0,028).

As regards the motivational orientations related to effort in school in general, the following between-years differences were found to be statistically significant. First-year learners were significantly more extrinsically motivated than PLC2 learners (p=0,008). As regards the introjected motivational orientation, first-year learners were significantly more motivated than fifth-year learners (p=0,002). As regards the identified motivational orientation, PLC2 learners were significantly more motivated than fifth-year learners (p=0,041). As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation, first-year learners were significantly more intrinsically motivated than second-year learners (p=0,037), whereas PLC2 learners appeared to be significantly more intrinsically motivated than second-year learners (p=0,005) and third-year learners (p=0,020).

In summary, the above findings seem to show that in general the initial round of this research project confirmed the findings of earlier research suggesting that learners get progressively less motivated over time in post-primary education (Wigfield and Tonks 2002, p.61). It would appear that this state of affairs held both for LL motivation and motivation towards school in general. Only one exception was evidenced, whereby PLC2 learners seemed to be consistently low in extrinsic motivation and high in intrinsic motivation across categories. This may be due to two different reasons. First, the participating PLC2 learners came from classes which had a real choice of TL to be

studied. Second, one of the two PLC2 classes had already been using the ELP for a year at the time round a) was administered. Thus there is a possibility that their motivational orientation profiles had already been modified under the influence of ELP-supported teaching to become more intrinsic (cf. learner comments in the sections dealing with PLC2 classes in Chapter 5 which seem to lend further evidence to this point).

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	p	H^2		DF	F (year)	P	H^2
bSRQLext	3, 273	6,099	,0005	0,063		5, 271	6,903	,0005	0,113
bSRQLinr	3, 273	,207	,891	-		5, 271	,938	,457	-
bSRQLide	3, 273	,728	,536	-		5, 271	1,010	,412	-
bSRQLint	3, 273	4,654	,003	0,049		5, 271	2,069	,070	-
bSRQAext	3, 273	4,891	,003	0,051		5, 271	5,293	,0005	0,089
bSRQAinr	3, 273	,307	,820	-		5, 271	1,226	,297	-
bSRQAide	3, 273	,755	,520	-		5, 271	,968	,438	-
bSRQAint	3, 273	3,939	,009	0,041		5, 271	1,826	,108	-

Table 4.17: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round b

Table 4.17 contains a summary of the observed impact of target language (TL) studied and class year of the respondents on the findings in round b) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A.

As regards the impact of the target language studied, significant differences were found in the four ANOVAs related to external and intrinsic orientations, as can be seen above. In particular, the F for between-TLs comparisons for the extrinsic motivational orientation in LL was 6,099, exhibiting a TL difference significant at the 0,0005 level which had a medium to large effect (H^2=0,063). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were traced to the fact that learners studying Italian had lower extrinsic motivation levels than learners of all other languages (Italian-Irish p=0,0005; Italian-French p=0,002; Italian-German p=0,003). Naturally, Spanish is not mentioned here as the Spanish class had already dropped out of the project before round b) was administered (cf. discussion of Table 4.16 above). As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation in LL in round b), the observed F was 4,654, exhibiting a between-TLs difference significant at the 0,003 level. The effect size of this difference

was H^2=0,049. Bonferroni multiple post-hoc comparisons showed that the mean for Italian was significantly higher than that for Irish (p=0,007).

As regards the perceived motivation in school classes in general in round b), the F for between-TLs comparisons for the extrinsic motivational orientation was 4,891, exhibiting a TL difference which was significant at the 0,003 level (H^2=0,051). As above, Bonfrerroni comparisons revealed that the mean for Italian was significantly lower than that for Irish (p=0,001), French (p=0,011) and German (p=0,006). Furthermore, the F for intrinsic motivational orientation was 3,939, exhibiting a TL difference significant at the 0,009 level (H^2=0,041).

On the whole, these TL-based findings depict a tendency for learners of Italian to be more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated than learners of other languages in round b).

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	p	H^2		DF	F (year)	P	H^2
cSRQLext	3, 247	,423	,737	-		5, 245	2,390	,039	0,047
cSRQLinr	3, 247	4,207	,006	0,049		5, 245	2,532	,029	0,049
cSRQLide	3, 247	1,942	,123	-		5, 245	3,152	,009	0,060
cSRQLint	3, 247	5,180	,002	0,059*		5, 245	2,220	,053	-
cSRQAext	3, 247	,616	,605	-		5, 245	1,899	,095	-
cSRQAinr	3, 247	3,879	,010	0,045		5, 245	2,454	,034	0,048
cSRQAide	3, 247	1,783	,151	-		5, 245	3,701	,003	0,070
cSRQAint	3, 247	5,102	,002	0,058		5, 245	2,222	,053	-

Table 4.18: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round c

As regards the impact of the class year of learners in round b), significant differences were found only for the extrinsic motivational orientation. In particular, the F for between-years comparisons for the extrinsic motivational orientation in LL was 6,903, exhibiting a between-years difference significant at the 0,0005 level which had a very large effect (H^2=0,113). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were found between Junior and Senior Cycle classes. Learners in Junior Cycle classes were quite extrinsically motivated. The following differences were found to be significant: first-year and PLC2 (p=0,0005), second-year and PLC2 (p=0,0005), and

second-year and fourth-year (p=0,013). The trend was the same as regards motivation in school in general. The F for the extrinsic motivational orientation was 5,293, and was significant at the 0,0005 level. As for LL, the between-years effect size was large (H^2=0,089). Clearly statistically significant differences were identified between PLC2 and first year (p=0,001), and PLC2 and second year (p=0,0005).

Table 4.18 depicts the change in the observed impact of TL studied and class year on the findings between rounds a) and b) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A.

As regards the impact of the target language studied, significant differences in perceived motivation were found in the four ANOVAs related to introjected and intrinsic orientations, as can be seen above. In particular, the F for between-TL comparisons for the introjected motivational orientation in LL was 4,207, exhibiting a TL difference significant at the 0,006 level which had a medium-sized effect (H^2=0,049). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were traced to the fact that learners studying Irish had proportionally larger increases to their introjected motivation levels than learners of all other languages (Italian-Irish p=0,019; Irish-German p=0,016). As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation in LL, the observed F was 5,180, exhibiting a between-TLs difference significant at the 0,002 level. The effect size of this difference was H^2=0,059. Bonferroni multiple post-hoc comparisons showed that the mean for German was significantly higher than that for Irish (p=0,001).

As regards SRQ-A-measured motivation, the F for between-TLs comparisons for the introjected motivational orientation was 3,879, exhibiting a TL difference significant at the 0,010 level which had a medium effect (H^2=0,045). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, the following significant differences were found (Italian-Irish p=0,024; Irish-German p=0,040). As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation in LL, the observed F was 5,102, exhibiting a between-TLs difference significant at the 0,002 level. The effect size of this difference was H^2=0,058. Bonferroni multiple post-hoc comparisons showed that the mean for German was significantly higher than that for Irish (p=0,002).

On the basis of the findings discussed above as well as the relevant plotted means charts related to the ANOVAs, it seems that the observed change in perceived motivation between rounds a) and b) was relatively uniform in that it was not affected by different

TLs in a consistently or markedly different way, at least on the level of the four discrete motivational orientations (i.e. extrinsic, introjected, identified, and intrinsic).

As regards the impact of the class year of the respondents, significant differences in perceived motivation were found in five out of eight ANOVAs. However, as regards motivation in LL, the observed differences disappeared when subjected to a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison. The same holds true for the introjected motivational orientation related to SRQ-A (i.e. motivation in school in general). As regards the identified orientation, the F for between-years comparisons was 2,454, exhibiting a difference significant at the 0,034 level which appeared to have a medium-sized effect (H^2=0,048). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were found only between the (high) mean of fifth-year learner responses and that of first-year responses. Additionally, although the ANOVA related to the intrinsic motivational orientation was marginally not significant at the 0,05 level (p=0,053), a significant difference was found between second (high mean) year and first year. Following a Bonferroni post-hoc multiple comparison, this difference was found to be significant at the 0,033 level.

On the basis of the above-discussed findings and the related plotted means charts, it appears that the observed change in perceived motivation between rounds a) and b) was relatively uniform in that it was not affected by different years in a consistently different way, at least on the level of the four discrete motivational orientations examined here. However, some of these findings inform the class-specific discussion of findings in Chapter 5.

SRQ-A-based Relative Autonomy Indices

Up to this point, the discussion of the findings has been limited to each one of the four specific motivational orientations operationalised by Ryan and Connell discussed on its own terms. This is the approach adopted by a number of researchers who find that it is worthwhile to examine how each of these four orientations behaves on its own in comparison to the other three motivational orientations. Such an approach is underpinned by the theoretical assumption that human motivation is optimally operationalised in no more aggregate terms than those represented by these orientations. Some theoreticians have gone so far as to suggest that holistic autonomy indices can be misleading as they

are 'too composite' (cf. review in Koestner and Losier 2002, especially pp.117-8). On the other hand, Ryan and Connell – and the majority of researchers who have employed their questionnaires since their original conception – claim that since the four motivational orientations form a simplex-like pattern which shows the extent to which a motivation for an activity is internalised or not, a 'relative autonomy index' (RAI) can be computed for every domain of activities SRQs are used in. In an attempt to maximise the objectivity of the presentation of findings in this thesis, I decided to offer a brief discussion of both orientation-specific and RAI-type findings.

What follows below is a number of tables depicting the RAIL and RAIA indices for rounds a) to c). Two types of tabularised data are offered for each index. First, summaries of 1-way ANOVAs related to each RAI depicting the potential impact of gender, TL, and year on the findings are offered. Second, the assumption of simplex-like order which had been observed to be true in previous projects was examined through the calculation of inter-correlations among the four subscales for each RAI which resulted from rounds a) and b), and the related correlation matrices were offered. As noted in section 3.9.2 above the higher the value of a RAI, the more autonomously/intrinsically motivated to carry out a related activity we could expect a person to be and vice versa. Each table is followed by a brief commentary.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	p	H^2
aRAIL	-,8784	1,92655	1, 333	1,685	,195	-
bRAIL	-,6594	1,91573	1, 275	5,476	,020	0,020
cRAIL	,3041	1,75892	1, 249	,988	,321	-

Table 4.19: Relative Autonomy Index in LL: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 4.19 shows that respondents were in general more extrinsically than intrinsically oriented in the first round of questionnaire administration as measured by SRQ-L (M= -0,8784). In the second round this state of affairs seemed to become positively moderated. This is confirmed by the cRAIL which is positive (M= 0,3041), thus depicting a change towards more intrinsic motivational orientations in LL. On the basis of these findings it seems safe to argue that the perceived motivation of respondents seemed to have developed towards greater autonomy during the year. Whereas if no

intervention were attempted we would expect learners to be more extrinsically motivated at the end of the year than they had been at the beginning, we see that they actually became more intrinsically motivated, focussing on personally relevant rather than externally imposed reasons for learning a language.

Table 4.19 also contains a summary of the results from 1-way between-groups ANOVAs, depicting the observed impact of respondent gender on the findings. On the whole significant differences were found only in round b) (F=5,476) which showed that at the end of the year boys became significantly more intrinsically motivated (p=0,020). The effect of this difference was relatively limited (H^2= 0,02). Tellingly, no significant gender differences were observed in overall motivational orientation change during the year (round c). On the basis of this we can conclude that there were no significant gender differences in the positive motivational change trend as measured by RAIL which was found for the project classes after a year of work with the ELP.

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	P	H^2	DF	F (year)	P	H^2
aRAIL	4, 330	7,635	,0005	0,085	5, 329	7,728	,0005	0,105
bRAIL	3, 273	9,348	,0005	0,093	5, 271	6,990	,0005	0,114
cRAIL	3, 247	1,435	,233	-	2, 245	,576	,718	-

Table 4.20: Relative Autonomy Index in LL: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 4.20 depicts the observed impact of target language (TL) studied and class year of the respondents on the findings in rounds a) to c) as measured by RAIL. As regards the impact of TL studied, significant differences were found in the ANOVAs related to rounds a) and b), as can be seen above. In particular, the F for between-TLs comparisons for aRAIL was 7,635, exhibiting a TL difference highly significant at the 0,0005 level with a large effect (H^2=0,085). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were traced to the fact that learners studying Italian were more intrinsically motivated than learners of all other languages (Italian-Irish p=0,0005; Italian-French p=0,0005; Italian-German p=0,0005; Italian-Spanish p=0,023). The situation was largely the same for bRAIL (F=9,348; p=0,0005), with the TL difference appearing to have a slightly bigger effect (H^2=0,093). A Bonferroni post-hoc comparison showed that learners studying Italian were again more intrinsically motivated

than learners of all other languages (Italian-Irish p=0,0005; Italian-French p=0,001; Italian-German p=0,006). Learners of Irish appeared to be less intrinsically motivated in both rounds a) and b) than learners of all other languages, but this was not found to be statistically significant in relation to any other language, with the exception of the comparisons already mentioned above in relation to Italian. The ANOVA related to cRAIL did not show any significant between-TLs differences. On the whole, cRAIL tells us that learners became more intrinsically motivated during the year (cf. discussion of Table 4.18) across TLs, and that the learners of all TLs were affected in more or less the same way.

As regards the impact of class year, significant differences were once again found in the ANOVAs related to rounds a) and b). In particular, The F for between-years comparisons for aRAIL was 7,728, exhibiting an overall year difference highly significant at the 0,0005 level with a large effect (H^2=0,105). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were traced to the fact that PLC2 learners were more intrinsically motivated than learners in all other years. This difference was highly significant between PLC2 and JC years (PLC2-1st p=0,0005; PLC2-2nd p=0,0005; PLC2-3rd p=0,0005). The situation remained largely the same for bRAIL (F=6,990; p=0,0005), with the year difference appearing to have a slightly bigger effect (H^2=0,114). A Bonferroni post-hoc comparison showed that PLC2 learners were again more intrinsically motivated than JC learners (PLC2-1st p=0,0005; PLC2-2nd p=0,0005). The ANOVA related to cRAIL did not show any significant between-years differences. On the whole, cRAIL tells us that learners became more intrinsically motivated during the year (cf. discussion of Table 4.18) across years, and that the learners of all years were affected in more or less the same way. The only year in which learners did not appear to gain in intrinsic motivational outlook was TY. It has to be acknowledged though that learners in this year had already been working with the ELP for a year, and their intrinsic motivation had already in round a) been measured to be relatively high.

Table 4.21 contains the matrix of inter-correlations among the four motivational orientation subscales related to the RAIL. This table contains the inter-correlations related to both rounds a) and b). The top triangle (where numbers are presented shaded in grey) refers to round a) whereas the bottom triangle refers to round b). Each subscale is

correlated with the other three, and each cell contains two values: the Pearson correlation coefficient which tells us how much of the variability of two subscales is shared, and the level of significance (i.e. p for the 2-tailed significance) of this correlation.

RAIL	1	2	3	4
1.SRQLext	1,00	,416/,0005	,207/,0005	,006/,915
2.SRQLinr	,430/,0005	1,00	,439/,0005	,406/,0005
3.SRQLide	,147/,014	,414/,0005	1,00	,441/,0005
4.SRQLint	,039/,522	,424/,0005	,586/,0005	1,00

Table 4.21: Relative Autonomy Index in LL: Subscale inter-correlation matrix

As can be seen from the rows of the two different triangles, the subscales followed a simplex-like pattern as expected, thus replicating the relevant claims of relevant studies (e.g. Black and Deci 2000; Chirkov and Ryan 2001; Hayamizu 1997; Miserandino 1996; Ryan and Connell 1989, p.752). Thus, respondents who appeared to Furthermore, the extrinsic and intrinsic orientations exhibited so little shared variability in both rounds, that their correlation was not statistically significant. No exceptions were observed. Finally, all the differences observed were roughly equivalently significant between rounds.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	p	H^2
aRAIA	-,7138	1,79706	1, 333	1,065	,303	-
bRAIA	-,5832	1,83341	1, 275	4,239	,040	0,015
cRAIA	,2467	1,59436	1, 249	,810	,369	-

Table 4.22: Relative Autonomy Index (Academic): Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	P	H^2	DF	F (year)	p	H^2
aRAIA	4, 330	5,519	,000	0,063	5, 329	6,582	,000	0,091
bRAIA	3, 273	8,178	,000	0,082	5, 271	6,104	,000	0,101
cRAIA	3, 247	1,726	,162	-	2, 245	,713	,614	-

Table 4.23: Relative Autonomy Index (Academic): TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Tables 4.22 and 4.23 depict the observed impact of gender, TL studied and class year of the respondents on the findings in rounds a) to c) as measured by RAIA. Impressively, the ANOVAs related to RAIA mirrored the trends measured by RAIL in *every* respect. Thus, the between-groups differences that were found to be statistically significant were the same ones, and the level of that significance was the same with differences between RAIL and RAIA Bonferroni comparisons either being zero or differing less than 0,006. The only difference between RAIL and RAIA was that the mean for cRAIL was greater than the mean for cRAIA (mean 0,3041 vs. 0,2467). This result means that learners using the ELP became more intrinsically motivated during the year both towards school in general and LL. However, their motivation increase was greater for LL. This finding is important in its own right as it reinforces the fact that the proposed pedagogical intervention was largely successful in two ways. First, it reversed the prevalently negative general motivational trends. Second, it affected the motivations towards the subject in question even more positively throughout a big sample. Thus, it seems safe to argue that the source of the positive motivational trend observed lies in what took place in the language classroom during the year and it should not be attributed to other positive changes related to school in general or to chance.

RAIA	1	2	3	4
1.SRQAext	1,00	,426/,0005	,141/,010	,004/,939
2.SRQAinr	,480/,0005	1,00	,506/,0005	,457/,0005
3.SRQAide	,132/,028	,513/,0005	1,00	,502/,0005
4.SRQAint	,030/,614	,469/,0005	,619/,0005	1,00

Table 4.24: Relative Autonomy Index (Academic): Subscale inter-correlation matrix

Table 4.24 contains the matrix of inter-correlations among the four motivational orientation subscales related to the RAIA. This table contains the inter-correlations related to both rounds a) and b). The top triangle (i.e. the one whose cells appear shaded in grey) refers to round a), whereas the bottom triangle refers to round b). As was the case for RAIL, the subscales followed a simplex-like pattern as expected. No violations

to the pattern were observed. In fact, all the differences observed were roughly equivalently significant between rounds.

b) Pro-social self-regulation questionnaire (SRQ-P)

Reliability analysis

The SRQ-P attempts to measure the relative strength of three different motivational orientations behind a number of pro-social activities that are related to school life in general (items 1.25-1.33). It is slightly different in format to the SRQ-A in that 'there is not an intrinsic motivation subscale, because at this age pro-social kinds of behaviours are considered to 'result from internalization rather than being done naturally' (cf. section 3.9.2 and Ryan and Connell 1989). As with SRQ-A, the motivational orientations examined here allegedly follow a 'simplex-like' pattern (Ryan and Connell 1989, p.752). In the case of the SRQ-P As in the original validation of the instrument ranged from 0,62 to 0,65 for the external orientation, from 0,69 to 0,82 for the introjected orientation, and from 0,67 to 0,86 for the identified orientation (ibid, p.758), which makes the scale relatively reliable. In the tables that follow, summaries of key reliability statistics related to the format of the SRQ-P employed in this project are offered and discussed briefly.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
aSRQPext	3	,687
aSRQPinr	3	,717
aSRQPide	3	,704

Table 4.25: SRQ-P Scale Reliability Summary for Round a

Table 4.25 offers the reliability coefficients of scales related to SRQ-P for the first round of questionnaire administration. Thus 'aSRQPext' corresponds to the external motivational orientation scale of the first round. That scale consists of three items. Incidentally it is also the scale with the lowest A coefficient (A= 0,687). Once more the A reliability coefficients show that the most intrinsic motivational orientation scales (in this case the identified orientation scales) seem to be the most reliable of the three

motivational orientations, whereas external orientations tend to be the least reliable for the sample examined in this research project.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
bSRQPext	3	,734
bSRQPinr	3	,756
bSRQPide	3	,768

Table 4.26: SRQ-P Scale Reliability Summary for Round b

Table 4.26 offers the reliability coefficients of scales related to SRQ-P for the second round of questionnaire administration. The tendencies observed in SRQ-A were also valid for SRQ-P, with all scales gaining proportionately in reliability as was the case for SRQ-A.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
SRQPext	3	,786
SRQPinr	3	,794
SRQPide	3	,804

Table 4.27: SRQ-P Aggregate Scale Reliability Summary (Rounds a & b)

Table 4.27 offers the reliability coefficients for aggregates of scales related to SRQ-P from both rounds of questionnaire administration. On the basis of all three tables (4.25-4.27) one may be licensed to claim that the SRQ-P in the modified format employed in this project appears to be on the whole quite reliable and stable over time.

Findings

The aggregate findings from SRQ-P are presented through the use of summary tables followed by a brief commentary below.

Table 4.28 contains a summary of the results from nine 1-way between-groups ANOVAs related to the perceived motivational orientations behind learners' pro-social behaviour. It depicts the observed impact of respondent gender on the findings in rounds a) to c) as measured by SRQ-P. Owing to the fact that the format of the SRQ-P employed examined pro-social behaviour in general without differentiating its expressions in LL

and school in general, it was possible to include all the ANOVA summaries in one – not prohibitively large – table.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
aSRQPext	1,1373	,77235	1, 333	,020	,887	-
aSRQPinr	1,6299	,81628	1, 333	,597	,440	-
aSRQPide	2,7582	,39572	1, 333	30,336	,000	0,083*
bSRQPext	1,0827	,77675	1, 274	2,019	,156	-
bSRQPinr	1,5278	,80931	1, 274	1,829	,177	-
bSRQPide	2,6691	,45482	1, 274	47,877	,000	0,149*
cSRQPext	-,0900	,76778	1, 248	,551	,459	-
cSRQPinr	-,1853	,80153	1, 248	,383	,537	-
cSRQPide	-,0947	,41868	1, 248	10,505	,001	0,041*

*Levene test of normality indicated not enough variability

Table 4.28: SRQ-P Motivational Orientations: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

As can be seen in Table 4.28, respondents on the whole exhibited quite positive pro-social orientations. More specifically, in both rounds a) and b) their identified orientation was stronger than their introjected orientation, which was yet stronger than their external orientation. And although round c) exhibits the expected fall in all three orientations, that fall does not follow the expected negative maturational trend whereby identified orientation should be negatively affected the most and external orientation the least. This might be a first tentative indication of a positive influence of an ELP-informed classroom on pro-social behaviour.

Additionally, we can see that the F's of most ANOVAs in Table 4.28 are not significant. Hence we can conclude that there were no statistically significant gender differences in responses as regards extrinsic, introjected and identified motivational orientations. Although the ANOVAs related to the identified orientations at first glance appear to depict a significant gender difference (presented here with an asterisk following their theoretical effect size), in fact that difference was quite small, as the related Levene tests of normality showed insufficient variability which may be attributed to a ceiling effect, significant at the 0,0005 – 0,007 level. In other words, learners seemed to adopt

pro-social behaviours across ANOVA categories (i.e. genders) primarily out of their own volition and not because they felt they were under external pressure to do so. There was however a consistent – although small and thus not statistically significant – global tendency for girls to appear more intrinsically motivated towards pro-social behaviours than boys. Thus, the observed means of responses related to extrinsic orientations were lower for girls, and the means of responses related to identified orientations were lower for boys. This provides some support to the findings of earlier research on gender stereotypes (Chirkov et al. 2003; Ryan and Deci 2002; Wigfield and Tonks 2002; M. Williams and Burden 1997).

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	p	H^2		DF	F (year)	P	H^2
aSRQPext	4, 330	,824	,511	-		5, 329	2,658	,023	0,039
aSRQPinr	4, 330	,499	,737	-		5, 329	1,458	,203	-
aSRQPide	4, 330	2,468	,045	0,029*		5, 329	7,141	,000	0,098*
bSRQPext	3, 272	2,886	,036	0,031		5, 270	3,106	,010	0,054
bSRQPinr	3, 272	1,896	,131	-		5, 270	,587	,710	-
bSRQPide	3, 272	4,193	,006	0,044*		5, 270	4,614	,000	0,079
cSRQPext	3, 246	2,855	,038	0,034		5, 244	1,139	,340	-
cSRQPinr	3, 246	2,908	,035	0,034		5, 244	,927	,464	-
cSRQPide	3, 246	2,257	,082	-		5, 244	2,730	,020	0,053**

*Levene test of normality indicated not enough variability

Table 4.29: SRQ-P Motivational Orientations: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 4.29 depicts the observed impact of TL studied and class year on the findings in rounds a) to c) related to the perceived motivational orientations behind learners' pro-social behaviour as measured by SRQ-P.

As was true for Table 4.28 some ANOVAs at first glance appear to depict a significant gender difference (presented here with an asterisk following their theoretical effect size). However in fact that difference is quite small, as the related Levene tests of normality showed insufficient variability which can be attributed to a ceiling effect, significant at the 0,0005 – 0,037 level.

As regards the impact of TL on motivational orientations behind pro-social behaviours, after the above considerations were taken into account, no significant effects

were found for round a). In round b), following a post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparison, a significant difference was found between the quite low extrinsic orientation of learners of Italian and learners of other TLs (Irish-Italian, p=0,039; French-Italian, p=0,045; German-Italian, p=0,039). As mentioned in the preceding section related to SRQ-A (cf. discussion of Table 4.16), where a similar motivational pattern for learners of Italian was observed, this state of affairs may be explained by two facts. First, both Italian classes that participated in this project were made up of older learners (i.e. 5th- and PLC2-year learners) who exhibited high degrees of independence. Second, owing to a variety of reasons the 'pro-social authority' of the teacher in both those classes was frequently challenged during the year by many learners who were not keen to follow instructions unless they felt they were personally relevant and meaningful. As a result, a significant proportion of class time had to be devoted to the establishment of this relevance on a continuous basis, owing to the very acute absenteeism problems related to these classes. Thus, whatever pro-social behaviours learners in these classes adopted were in a sense more voluntary than in other classes (cf. Chapter 5). No significant between-TLs differences were found in round c).

As regards the impact of class year on motivational orientations behind pro-social behaviours, after the considerations mentioned above were taken into account, no significant effects were found for round a). In particular, the significance of the F for the extrinsic orientation (p=0,023) disappeared in the post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparison, while the Levene test of normality for the identified orientation was so highly significant (p less than 0,0005) that all between-TLs differences were discredited by default. In round b), following a post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparison, a significant difference was found between the quite low perceived identified orientation of third-year learners and that of learners of other years (3rd-1st, p=0,0005; 3rd-2nd, p=0,012; 3rd-PLC2, p=0,003). In round c), the ANOVA related to identified motivation orientation showed a substantial fall in that orientation for 3rd-year learners, which was particularly significant in comparison to 5th-year learners (p=0,005). This state of affairs related to the 3rd year may be explained by the fact that 3rd-year learners exhibited higher levels of stress towards the end of the year, which in my opinion were linked to pre-exam stress caused by the JC examination. They had to take the JC shortly after the second round of

questionnaires was administered. This pre-exam stress effect was further confirmed by findings gleaned from classroom observations and other self-report data-gathering instruments (cf. relevant sections below and in Chapter 5).

With the exception of the cases mentioned above, on the basis of the aggregate findings presented here one is licensed to claim that the impact of TL and class year on pro-social motivation was on the whole small. Additionally, ELP-informed classes across these categories seemed to exhibit a relatively larger preservation of positive pro-social norms in this project in comparison to earlier research findings (cf. discussion in section 4.4.1 above), providing further support for claims that autonomy orientation and autonomy support have important effects on pro-social behaviour (Gagné 2003).

SRQ-P-based Relative Autonomy Indices

The aggregate findings related to RAIP are presented through the use of summary tables followed by a brief commentary below.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	p	H^2
aRAIP	4,3701	2,38487	1, 333	9,133	,003	0,027
bRAIP	4,3140	2,54440	1, 275	24,212	,000	0,081
cRAIP	,0813	2,22116	1, 248	4,423	,036	0,018

Table 4.30: Relative Autonomy Index (Pro-social): Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 4.30 shows the motivational orientations of learners towards pro-social activities as measured by SRQ-P. In general, the table shows that learners became slightly more intrinsically motivated towards pro-social activities during the year. This is confirmed by the cRAIP which is positive (M= 0,0813). This finding weakly reinforces the argument raised earlier on the basis of the cRAIL and the cRAIA that the perceived general motivation of respondents seemed to have developed towards a more autonomous direction during the year (cf. discussion on cRAIA above).

As regards the impact of gender on the findings, it seemed to be significant and consistent in all three rounds. On the whole girls perceived their motivational orientations behind pro-social activities as being significantly more intrinsic. The effect of this difference was most pronounced in round b) (F=24,212; p=0,0005; H^2= 0,081).

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	P	H^2	DF	F (year)	p	H^2
aRAIP	4, 330	1,265	,284	-	5, 329	3,038	,011	0,044
bRAIP	3, 272	4,026	,008	0,043	5, 270	3,564	,004	0,062
cRAIP	3, 246	3,751	,012	0,044	2, 244	2,318	,044	0,045

Table 4.31: Relative Autonomy Index (Pro-social): TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 4.31 depicts the observed impact of TL studied and class year of the respondents on the findings in rounds a) to c) as measured by RAIP. More specifically, as regards the impact of TL, no significant differences were observed in round a). However, in round b) learners of Italian were significantly more intrinsically motivated than learners of other languages (F=4,026; p=0,008; H^2=0,043). Following a post-hoc Bonferroni multiple between-groups comparison, this difference was found to be significant at the 0,007 level. Round c) findings reinforced these results with Italian once more appearing to be significantly different to all other languages. Following a Bonferroni comparison, this difference remained significant (Italian-Irish p=0,009; Italian-French p=0,010; Italian-German p=0,018).

As regards the impact of year, significant differences with medium effects were found in all rounds. Following a post-hoc Bonferroni multiple between-groups comparison, the main difference was traced to the PLC2 learners' being more intrinsically motivated towards pro-social activities in comparison to learners in other years. In round a), the Bonferroni showed that this difference was significant at the 0,036 level in comparison to 5th-year learners, and in round b) it was significant at the 0,004 level in comparison to 3rd-year learners. Also in round a), the plotted means charts exhibited that there was a substantial though non-significant difference between the more intrinsically oriented TY learners and the rest of the years. I think this may depict a positive influence of the ELP-informed classroom, in the sense that the TY and PLC2 years consist of three different classes, two of which are the ones that had already been using the ELP for a year when round a) was administered (cf. further discussion in Chapters 5 and 6).

Table 4.32 contains the matrix of inter-correlations among the four motivational orientation subscales related to the RAIP. This table contains the inter-correlations related

to both rounds a) and b). The top triangle (i.e. the one whose cells appear shaded in grey) refers to round a), whereas the bottom triangle refers to round b). As was the case for RAIL and RAIA, the subscales followed a simplex-like pattern as expected. No exceptions to this were observed. In fact, all the differences observed were roughly equivalently significant between rounds.

RAIP	1	2	3
1.SRQAext	1,00	,530/,0005	,003/,951
2.SRQAinr	,557/,0005	1,00	,051/,356
3.SRQAide	-,088/,145	,104/,084	1,00

Table 4.32: Relative Autonomy Index (Pro-social): Subscale inter-correlation matrix

c) Perceived competence in learning scale (PCSL)

Reliability analysis

The PCSL attempts to measure through three questionnaire items (1.34, 1.36 and 1.37) how competent learners perceived themselves to be in their language classes (cf. section 3.9.2 and G. C. Williams and Deci 1998). In the original validation of the instrument (ibid., p.758), A's related to all orientations were above 0,80, which makes the scale relatively reliable.

Later research projects also found the PCSL scale to be internally reliable and valid (e.g. Black and Deci 2000; Hardre and Reeve 2003). Again, this proves the relative diachronic stability of this scale. Summaries of key reliability statistics related to PCSL are offered and discussed briefly in Table 4.33 that follows.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
aPCSL	3	,782
bPCSL	3	,825
PCSL	6	,831

Table 4.33: PCSL Scale Reliability Summary

According to Table 4.33 the format of PCSL employed in this project appears to be more reliable in the second than in the first round of questionnaire administration. On the basis of all three A's presented above one may be licensed to claim that the SRQ-P in the modified format employed in this project appears to be on the whole quite reliable and stable over time, despite the fact that it is based on only three items. The PCSELP item was left out of the reliability analysis to maintain comparability of A's with those observed in other research projects.

Findings

The aggregate findings from PCSL and PCSELP are presented through the use of summary tables followed by a brief related commentary below.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	p	H^2
aPCSL	2,2189	,57793	1, 333	1,766	,185	-
bPCSL	2,0152	,66230	1, 273	7,264	,007	0,026
cPCSL	-,2027	,61336	1, 248	2,546	,112	-

Table 4.34: Perceived Competence in LL: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	P	H^2	DF	F (year)	P	H^2
aPCSL	4, 330	,293	,882	-	5, 329	5,644	,0005	0,079
bPCSL	3, 271	1,119	,342	-	5, 269	1,466	,201	-
cPCSL	3, 246	,447	,719	-	2, 244	1,866	,101	-

Table 4.35: Perceived Competence in LL: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Tables 4.34 and 4.35 depict the observed impact of gender, TL studied and class year of the respondents on how competent learners perceived themselves to be in their language classes as measured by PCSL. In general, as we can notice above, learners expressed a very high degree of perceived competence in round a) (mean =2,2189), which was slightly lower in round b) (mean=2,0152).

Furthermore, *no significant differences were found* across any of the related ANOVA categories after post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons were carried out, apart from a non-significant tendency for boys to perceive themselves as more competent in both rounds a) and b). In fact, although we can notice a small decline in perceived

competence as measured by cPCSL (mean= -0,2027), it seems that girls expressed a greater decline than boys. Boys were almost stable in their perceived competence between rounds (note however that this gender difference was not statistically significant). This general trend for a small drop in perceived competence during the year will be further examined in the discussion of other more qualitative research findings below and in Chapter 5, where learners' and teachers' views are offered in an effort to understand its causes.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
aPCSELP	1,9615	,88476	1, 50	,557	,459	-
bPCSELP	1,6642	,85829	1, 272	,370	,544	-
cPCSELP	-,4516	,96051	1, 29	,464	,501	-

Table 4.36: Perceived Competence in Using the ELP: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	P	H^2		DF	F (year)	P	H^2
aPCSELP	3, 48	2,266	,093	-		3, 48	2,266	,093	-
bPCSELP	3, 270	2,346	,073	-		5, 268	1,625	,154	-
cPCSELP	3, 27	1,778	,175	-		3, 27	1,778	,175	-

Table 4.37: Perceived Competence in Using the ELP: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Tables 4.36 and 4.37 depict the observed impact of gender, TL studied and class year of the respondents on how competent learners perceived themselves to be in using the ELP as measured by PCSELP. In general, as we can notice above, learners felt relatively but not highly competent in using the ELP in round a) (mean =1,9615), and felt slightly less competent in round b) (mean=1,6642).

Furthermore, *no significant differences were found* across any of the related ANOVA categories after post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons were carried out, apart from a non-significant tendency for boys to perceive themselves as more competent in both rounds a) and b) as was the case for PCSL. Once again, although we can notice a small decline in perceived competence as measured by cPCSELP (mean= -0,4516), it seems that girls expressed a greater decline than boys. This general trend for a small drop in perceived competence during the year will be further examined in the discussion of

other more substantial qualitative research findings below, which focus explicitly on the respondents' feelings towards the ELP and various aspects of its use in LL.

d) Perceived autonomy support: learning climate questionnaire (LCQ)

Reliability analysis

The LCQ attempts to measure through six questionnaire items (items 1.38-1.43) how much support learners perceived they were getting from their language teachers (cf. section 3.9.2 and G. C. Williams and Deci 1998). In the original validation of the instrument which was conducted in health care settings, the instrument was used with a variety of samples and Cronbach's As remained over 0,80 for all of them, which makes the scale quite reliable.

More recent research projects related to education also found the LCQ scale to be internally reliable and valid (e.g. Black and Deci 2000; Hardre and Reeve 2003; Ntoumanis 2002). Again, this proves the relative diachronic stability of this scale. Summaries of key reliability statistics related to LCQ are offered and discussed briefly in Table 4.38 which follows.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
aLCQ	6	.,806
bLCQ	6	,893
LCQ	12	,876

Table 4.38: LCQ Scale Reliability Summary

According to Table 4.38 the format of LCQ employed in this project appeared to be more reliable in the second than in the first round of questionnaire administration. On the basis of all three A's supplied above one may be licensed to claim that the LCQ in the modified format employed in this project appears to be on the whole quite reliable and stable over time.

Findings

The aggregate findings from SRQ-P are presented through the use of summary tables followed by a brief commentary below.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
aLCQ	1,7628	,64551	1, 331	,014	,904	-
bLCQ	1,7542	,75012	1, 273	,749	,387	-
cLCQ	-,0444	,71911	1, 247	1,392	,239	-

Table 4.39: Learning Climate Questionnaire: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	p	H^2	DF	F (year)	p	H^2
aLCQ	4, 328	1,438	,221	-	5, 329	8,823	,0005	0,119
bLCQ	3, 271	3,695	,012	0,039	5, 269	2,187	,056	-
cLCQ	3, 245	2,907	,035	0,034	5, 244	2,846	,016	0,055

Table 4.40: Learning Climate Questionnaire: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Tables 4.39 and 4.40 depict the observed impact of gender, TL studied and class year of the respondents on how much support learners perceived they were getting from their language teachers as measured by LCQ. In general, as we can see in the tables, learners felt they were relatively (but not highly) supported by their teachers on a scale from zero to three in both round a) (mean =1,7628) and round b) (mean=1,7542).

Although *no significant differences were found* across any of the related ANOVA categories after post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons were carried out, it has to be acknowledged that owing to the sensitive nature of the computations needed to calculate LCQ, some Bonferroni comparisons were not possible. This was caused by the fact that when list-wise deletion was applied to ensure comparability between comparisons, some groups (that would have been used in the Bonferroni comparisons) were left with a prohibitively small number of cases, and the comparison had to be abandoned. Once again, we can notice a small decline in perceived competence as measured by cLCQ (mean= -0,0444). However, this time the decline was so small that it may be attributable to chance factors. LCQ-related issues will be further examined in the discussion of other more qualitative research findings below and in Chapter 5.

Tables 4.41 and 4.42 depict the observed impact of gender, TL studied and class year of the respondents on a measure devised to offer an overview of how positive

perceptions of learners were in general. This measure was named 'positive perceptions index' (coded in SPSS as PosPerI). It is an aggregate measure combining PCSL, PCSELP and LCQ, where all these three measures had valid values. Although it was envisaged that this measure would contribute significantly to the aggregate project findings, its sensitive nature meant that the majority of cases had to be excluded from most of the computations deriving from it (as can be seen in the DF columns above). Furthermore, post-hoc Bonferroni comparisons were severely hampered for more than half of the related ANOVAs, and yielded non-significant between-groups differences for the remaining ones. On the basis of the above, it is envisaged that such a measure may contribute significantly to the findings of a smaller more controlled project where all the participants contributing to the findings will also contribute to all measures by never being absent. However, its contribution to our discussion is not possible, since only two classes contributed to the c) measures. It is offered above without further comments as a suggestion for possible future small-scale research projects carried out under favourable conditions that may accommodate this type of measurement.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
aPosPerI	3,7763	1,11524	1, 50	1,350	,251	-
bPosPerI	3,5933	1,23861	1, 273	,164	,686	-
cPosPerI	-,3290	1,07437	1, 29	1,285	,266	-

Table 4.41: Positive Perceptions Index: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	p	H^2	DF	F (year)	p	H^2
aPosPerI	3, 48	3,859	,015	-	3, 48	3,859	,015	-
bPosPerI	3, 271	1,631	,182	-	5, 268	2,152	,060	-
cPosPerI	3, 27	3,046	,046	-	3, 27	3,046	,046	-

Table 4.42: Positive Perceptions Index: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

e) Aspirations index (AI)

Reliability analysis

The AI attempts to assess learners' general attitudes to the pursuit of six basic life aspirations; three of them are classified as extrinsic and three as intrinsic (cf. section 3.9.2 above and Kasser and Ryan 1993). The three extrinsic ones are fame, wealth and image, and the three intrinsic ones are personal growth, meaningful relationships and contribution to the community. Each aspiration orientation was assessed for its perceived importance, perceived likelihood and perceived current attainment (items 1.2.1 to 1.2.18). In the original validation of the instrument As ranged from 0,59 to 0,86 (Kasser and Ryan 1996, p.282), which makes the scale relatively reliable.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
WealthI	2	,762
WealthL	2	,635
WealthA	2	,546
GrowthI	2	,511
GrowthL	2	,505
GrowthA	2	,232*
RelatI	2	,357
RelatL	2	,587
RelatA	2	,554
ImageI	2	,575
ImageL	2	,634
ImageA	2	,564
FameI	2	,706
FameL	2	,541
FameA	2	,321*
CommunI	2	,543
CommunL	2	,367
CommunA	2	,604

Table 4.43: Aspirations Index Scale Reliability Summary

Later research projects also found the AI scale to be internally reliable and valid (cf. reviews in Kasser and Ahuvia 2002; Ryan and Deci 2002; Sheldon and Kasser 2001; Sheldon et al. 2004; Vansteenkiste et al. 2004) . Again, this proves the relative diachronic stability of this scale.

Summaries of key reliability statistics related to AI as employed in this project are offered and discussed briefly in Table 4.43 which follows. Since there was only one item assessing perceived importance, one item assessing perceived likelihood, and one assessing perceived current attainment per aspiration in the questionnaire employed, the only way to examine the reliability of this questionnaire was by using each item in rounds a) and b) as two items that form one scale. This state of affairs allows us to make inferences on the diachronic but not on the synchronic reliability of the items in question.

Table 4.43 depicts the As of each two-item scale related to each aspiration that resulted from this type of reliability analysis. Since the number of items for each AI scale was the minimum possible for a scale (i.e. two) we expected most As to be quite low. The As are supplied above. Thus, 'WealthI' for instance stands for the perceived importance learners attached to becoming wealthy. 'WealthL' stands for the perceived likelihood, and 'WealthA' stands for the perceived current attainment of that aspiration. Despite the low As, all the scales exhibited satisfactory inter-item correlations. Only the two items that are presented asterisked above exhibit limited reliability *and* below ideal (i.e. less than 0,200) inter-item correlations. The inter-item correlations were 0,131 and 0,191 for the perceived current attainment of 'growth as a person' and 'fame' respectively. Consequently, claims made through these two items would have to be more tentative and should be read with relative caution.

Table 4.44 offers the reliability coefficients of aggregate scales related to AI. Thus 'ExtrAsI', for instance, corresponds to the scale of 'perceived importance of extrinsic aspirations'. Each of the scales presented here consists of six items. Cronbach's A coefficients for three of the six scales were rather low (A= 0,513 - 0,548), which means that these scales did not seem to be entirely reliable. However, the inter-item correlation for these scales showed that none of their six constituent items stood out for measuring something different to the scale. In order to be certain about this, two exploratory factor analyses were conducted; one was based on the 12 items measuring perceived likelihood

and another was based on the 12 items measuring perceived current attainment. The principal component analysis (and related graphic 'scree' test) largely confirmed the existence of two discrete aspiration orientation clusters, which corresponded to the original two clusters hypothesised by Kasser and Ryan (1996).

A subscale inter-correlation matrix confirmed this further, but also showed that attitudes to extrinsic aspirations could possibly be subdivided into two groups, one related to wealth and one related to image and fame.

Scale name	N of items	Cronbach's A
ExtrAsI	6	,771
IntrAsI	6	,696
ExtrAsL	6	,548*
IntrAsL	6	,513*
ExtrAsA	6	,561
IntrAsA	6	,547*

Table 4.44: Aspirations Index Aggregate Scale Reliability Summary

Findings

Owing to space restrictions, and given that the main purpose of the thesis is to discuss in greater detail those issues most closely related to the ELP, I decided it was not feasible to discuss each separate aspiration in detail here, offering ANOVAs depicting a breakdown of response patterns according to respondent sex, TL studied, class year, and class index number, as was the case for the rest of the SDT-related findings discussed above. Instead, I opted to offer a summary of responses related to each aspiration in tabular form below, and then discuss aggregate aspiration-related findings in more detail. Round b) is not presented separately hereafter in the thesis, since the discussion of rounds a) and c) was deemed to cover the most important parts of the findings.

Table 4.45 offers a summary of learner responses related to the life goal of wealth. The mean, SD and DF related to each aspect of this aspiration are offered. The row entitled aWealthI contains figures related to the importance learners placed on this aspiration in round a). The row directly under that offers the change in responses during

the year. The same system is followed throughout all AI-related tables. Consequently, each table can be conceptually divided in pairs of rows. As an example of how these pairs should be interpreted, aWealthI and cWealthI are presented here in more detail.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aWealthI	1,1012	,65234	336
cWealthI	,0720	,59686	250
aWealthL	,9821	,49443	336
cWealthL	,0480	,55037	250
aWealthA	,4345	,56926	336
cWealthA	-,0200	,63023	250

Table 4.45: Wealth Aspiration Overview

In the aWealthI row we can see that on the scale from zero to two – which was employed throughout this questionnaire – the mean for this variable was 1,1012. The SD was 0,65234, which seems to indicate that learner responses for this item were rather heterogeneous, and in any case more heterogeneous than the responses related to the other aspects of this aspiration examined in this project, namely perceived likelihood that this aspiration would be fulfilled, and perceived current attainment of this aspiration at the time the questionnaire was administered. The second row (i.e. cWealthI) offers a summary of how responses found in the first row changed during the course of the project year. It seems that the learner sample at the end of the year felt that wealth was more important than what they had stated at the beginning of the year. This observed change was based on the responses of 251 learners who responded to this item in both rounds as one can see from the DF column (DF=250).

Similarly, aWealthL tells us that learners felt they were likely to become wealthy during their lifetime, but they were less certain about that than what they were about how important wealth was. During the year they became more optimistic and their responses showed they on average believed more in the likelihood of their getting rich in their lifetime. Additionally, at the beginning of the year they tended to think they had not attained a lot of this aspiration, and the mean of their responses was very low. This belief

was even stronger at the end of the year, when even more learners stated they had not attained this goal at all.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aGrowthI	1,7649	,45195	336
cGrowthI	,0040	,50299	250
aGrowthL	1,7232	,48641	336
cGrowthL	,0160	,55946	250
aGrowthA	1,3542	,52077	336
cGrowthA	-,0240	,67024	250

Table 4.46: Growth Aspiration Overview

Table 4.46 offers a summary of learner responses in relation to the life goal of growing as a person by learning new things. On the basis of the numbers contained in this table we can see, for instance, that learners generally found this goal to be a lot more important than wealth, more likely to be fulfilled in their lifetime than becoming wealthy, and felt they had achieved this goal substantially more in round a) than they felt about being wealthy.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aRelatI	1,9583	,21452	336
cRelatI	,0200	,27551	250
aRelatL	1,7173	,48910	336
cRelatL	,1040	,50418	250
aRelatA	1,7024	,51322	336
cRelatA	,0600	,56005	250

Table 4.47: 'Relationships' Aspiration Overview

Table 4.47 offers a summary of learner responses in relation to the life goal of establishing good relationships with others through making good friends that one can count on. We can see from the responses in the table above that this is clearly a very important goal for the great majority of learners. They felt they were quite likely to

achieve it in their lifetime, and the majority of them said they had achieved it already. These feelings increased further during the course of the year.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aImageI	,8720	,68567	336
cImageI	-,0160	,76030	250
aImageL	,9911	,63943	336
cImageL	,0280	,66103	250
aImageA	,8571	,66275	336
cImageA	,0400	,72699	250

Table 4.48: Image Aspiration Overview

Table 4.48 offers a summary of learner responses in relation to the life goal of having a positive personal image as evidenced by having people comment often about how attractive one looks. This item was slightly modified following the pilot phase, which showed that some learners (especially boys) did not take too well to the term 'attractive'. Thus, in the main phase of the project, when I read out this item I said 'attractive or trendy' instead of only 'attractive'. From the summary of responses above one can for instance see that learners did not consider image to be an important life goal and generally felt their own image was moderately high, and moderately likely to become high in terms of attractiveness in the future.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aFameI	,8780	,76490	336
cFameI	-,1400	,72837	250
aFameL	,6399	,69417	336
cFameL	-,0520	,74533	250
aFameA	,2798	,54005	336
cFameA	-,0640	,66155	250

Table 4.49: Fame Aspiration Overview

Table 4.49 offers a summary of learner responses in relation to the life goal of being famous. This life goal was the one which learners felt they had attained the least of all the life goals examined in this project, and had very slim chances of attaining in the future.

Although there was great heterogeneity in responses and in the way they changed during the course of the year, learners' views in general changed in that they attached even less importance to this aspiration, and they felt even more pessimistic about its perceived likelihood and their current attainment of it.

Table 4.50 offers a summary of learner responses in relation to the life goal of helping the community by helping others to improve their lives. Learners perceived this aspiration to be quite important and their views on this generally remained stable over time. Although they felt this aspiration was more than moderately likely to be fulfilled in their future life and this view had become more pronounced by the end of the year, they felt they had less than moderately achieved it so far. At the end of the year they thought they had achieved it slightly more.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aCommunI	1,5119	,54074	336
cCommunI	,0000	,63372	250
aCommunL	1,1637	,57302	336
cCommunL	,1160	,68734	250
aCommunA	,7083	,63108	336
cCommunA	,0520	,65957	250

Table 4.50: Community Aspiration Overview

The six aspirations briefly presented above fall into two opposite broad categories: extrinsic (consisting of wealth, image and fame) and intrinsic (consisting of growth, relationships and community; cf. relevant discussion in section 3.9.2 above). One of the things this project attempted to elicit through this questionnaire was an overview of the attitudes of learners in Irish post-primary education towards these six aspirations in terms of their perceived importance, perceived likelihood and perceived attainment. Another goal was to measure the relative strength of the attitudes of these learners towards extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations. Finally, in the light of earlier research which suggests that extrinsic aspirations exhibit a tendency to become more prominent than intrinsic aspirations over the lifespan, to measure how this relationship evolved in the ELP-informed classes in the year that this project took place.

Tables 4.51 and 4.52 offer a summary of learner responses in relation to the three extrinsic and the three intrinsic life goals respectively. When read together the two tables show that learners felt that intrinsic aspirations were substantially more important and had been attained more at the time round a) was administered, and were more likely to be fulfilled in their lifetimes than extrinsic aspirations. Additionally, the perceived importance, likelihood and attainment of intrinsic aspirations increased during the year, whereas the perceived importance and attainment of extrinsic aspirations decreased, and their perceived likelihood increased approximately three times less than the equivalent perception of intrinsic aspirations did.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aExtrAsI	2,8512	1,53619	336
cExtrAsI	-,0840	1,34319	250
aExtrAsL	2,6131	1,32226	336
cExtrAsL	,0240	1,20883	250
aExtrAsA	1,5714	1,16962	336
cExtrAsA	-,0440	1,25873	250

Table 4.51: Extrinsic Aspirations Overview

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF
aIntrAsI	5,2351	,83653	336
cIntrAsI	,0240	,92240	250
aIntrAsL	4,6042	1,03427	336
cIntrAsL	,2360	1,11772	250
aIntrAsA	3,7649	1,11493	336
cIntrAsA	,0880	1,17890	250

Table 4.52: Intrinsic Aspirations Overview

In these findings we already witness a reversal of the expected trends. However, in order to measure the exact effect of this reversal in different post-primary settings, one-way ANOVAs were conducted examining how the balance of intrinsic minus extrinsic

aspirations differed between categories. Each row of the two following tables contains an overview of such ANOVAs related to aspects of 'autonomous aspirations' (i.e. the sums of the three intrinsic aspirations minus the sums of the three extrinsic aspirations).

Table 4.53 shows that respondents were in general more intrinsically than extrinsically oriented in their life goals in the first round of questionnaire administration as we can see by the fact that the means for perceived importance (M=2,3839), perceived likelihood (M=1,9911) and perceived current attainment (M=2,1935) were all substantially above zero. By the end of the year this positive state of affairs seemed to have become even more pronounced. On the basis of these findings it seems safe to argue that the general life-goal orientations of respondents appeared to have developed towards a more autonomous direction during the year. Thus, whereas if no interventions had been attempted we would expect learners to be less autonomously oriented at the end of the year than they had been at the beginning, we see that the learners in our project classes clearly became more autonomously oriented. Since this positive reversal of negative predominant trends was observed for learners whose demographic substrate was quite varied and who were rather geographically dispersed, it appears plausible to argue that it may have been the outcome of the overall positive climate of the ELP-informed classes, which was the common feature of these learners. The fact that the observed positive changes in the means of autonomous aspirations are based on a big sample of learners arguably lends some weight to the above claim.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
aAutAsI	2,3839	1,75981	1, 334	2,039	,154	-
cAutAsI	,1080	1,63064	1, 248	1,456	,229	-
aAutAsL	1,9911	1,53270	1, 334	3,793	,052	-
cAutAsL	,2120	1,59790	1, 248	4,155	,053	-
aAutAsA	2,1935	1,39340	1, 334	7,258	,007	0,021
cAutAsA	,1320	1,48438	1, 248	,255	,614	-

Table 4.53: 'Autonomous' Aspirations: Gender Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 4.53 also contains a summary of the results from 1-way between-groups ANOVAs, depicting the observed impact of respondent gender on the findings. On the whole

significant differences were not found apart from the case of perceived current attainment (F=7,258), which was significantly higher for girls at the beginning of the year (p=0,007). The effect of this difference was relatively small (H^2= 0,021). An examination of the plotted means for perceived importance and perceived likelihood for both genders showed that rest of the means were also higher for girls than for boys, even though this difference was not statistically significant. No significant gender differences were observed in overall change during the year (round c). On the basis of this we can conclude that there were no significant gender differences in the way learner aspirations were affected by the intervention.

Table 4.54 depicts the observed impact of TL studied and class year of the respondents on the findings in rounds a) and c). On the whole significant differences were not found apart from the case of perceived current attainment (F=2,454), which was marginally significant at the beginning of the year (p=0,046). The effect of this difference was relatively small (H^2= 0,029). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, this effect disappeared and no significant between-TLs differences were found. This was confirmed by an examination of the ANOVA charts containing the plotted means. No significant TL differences were observed in overall change during the year (round c), so we can conclude that there were no significant TL differences in the way learner aspirations were affected by the intervention, and that the learners of all TLs were affected in more or less the same way.

Scale name	DF	F (TL)	p	H^2	DF	F (year)	p	H^2
aAutAsI	4, 331	1,998	,095	-	5, 330	1,335	,249	-
cAutAsI	3, 246	,260	,854	-	5, 244	1,796	,114	-
aAutAsL	4, 331	,460	,765	-	5, 330	2,532	,029	0,037
cAutAsL	3, 246	1,355	,257	-	5, 244	,959	,443	-
aAutAsA	4, 331	2,454	,046	0,029	5, 330	2,532	,029	0,052
cAutAsA	3, 246	1,094	,352	-	5, 244	1,146	,337	-

Table 4.54: 'Autonomous' Aspirations: TL & Class Year Impact (ANOVA) Overview

As regards the impact of class year, significant differences were found in the ANOVAs related to round a) responses only. In particular, one can see from the table that the F for

between-years comparisons for aAutAsL was 2,532, exhibiting an overall year difference significant at the 0,029 level with a rather limited effect (H^2=0,037). Following a Bonferroni post-hoc comparison, significant differences were traced to the fact that 5th-year learners felt they were less likely to achieve their intrinsic than their extrinsic aspirations than learners in all other years. A Bonferroni post-hoc comparison showed that this difference was significant between the PLC2 and 5th years (PLC2-5th p=0,033). A similar situation seemed to apply for aAutAsA (F=2,532; p=0,029), with the year difference appearing to have a slightly bigger medium-sized effect (H^2=0,052). A Bonferroni post-hoc comparison showed that significant differences were traced to the difference between 5th-year learners' responses to those of learners in other years. This difference was statistically significant for the following pairs (5th-PLC2 p=0,010; 5th-2nd p=0,047). The ANOVAs related to round c) did not show any significant between-years differences. On the whole, c) round ANOVAs confirmed that learners became more intrinsically motivated during the project year across years (and ages), and that the learners of all years were affected in more or less the same way (cf. class-specific discussion in Chapter 5).

LAP-based questionnaire

Owing to the nature of the questionnaires related to LAP and EE1, no reliability analyses were possible for the scales contained in them. In fact, the authors of the original LAP questionnaire stated in the publication which documented it:

> Descriptive rather than predictive in its scope, the questionnaire was not designed to provide valid and reliable measures of particular variables. Rather, it offered a means of characterizing general patterns in the attitudes, motivations and perceptions brought by learners to the study of foreign languages, specific classroom activities and teaching-learning processes, and of making cross-comparisons between learners in different categories (Little et al. 2002, p.51).

Of course, the modified version employed in this project was designed to be more robust in its examination of classroom activities. It expanded the original version which focused only on whether an activity took place during the course of the year or not and whether learners enjoyed the activities they had experience of or not. The current version allowed learners to state *how often* each activity took place, as well as express their feelings

towards activities they were doing and activities they would like to do. Crucially, it was also administered twice, thus making it possible to identify changes in the pattern of activities employed in the ELP-informed classrooms and attitudes towards them.

The following discussion of findings related to the LAP-based questionnaire starts off with a presentation of findings from section 2.4 of the questionnaire (related to the reasons learners gave for learning a given TL), which was administered only once, at the beginning of the year. The remaining sections are discussed serially after that.

Wishing to make the findings related to the LAP-based questionnaire as comparable as possible to the relevant original LAP findings, and recognising that readers with an interest in Irish language education may also wish to consult the book documenting the LAP for further details (i.e. Little et al. 2002, pp.52-68), the following discussion is modelled around that found in the LAP book.

a) Section 4: Reasons for learning the target language

Ten items were supplied in this section and the learners had to tick the ones they felt corresponded to their feelings. Nine items represented a variety of reasons while one item (number 8) represented a wish not to learn the language. Additionally, learners were free to add other reasons. Through this procedure, fifteen more reasons were added and are listed in Table 4.55 below.

Table 4.55 offers a breakdown of stated reasons for learning a TL according to TL studied. Each reason in the table is discussed in turn. References to TL-specific responses are made only when this adds to the general discussion. Additionally, since no significant gender differences were found, responses are not further broken down according to gender. Furthermore, although some small differences emerged for class year, they were rather inconclusive and for that reason are not reported here. The same applies for project class differences, which consequently will not be discussed further in Chapter 5. Naturally, the findings discussed below are not related to the ELP since they were elicited at the beginning of the school year. They offer however a rare glimpse of stated reasons for learning a TL in Irish post-primary education, especially when combined with relevant earlier findings from the LAP.

The findings indicated that learners were in general positively oriented towards learning a language. More specifically, Table 4.55 shows that the majority of learners thought it is great to be able to speak another language (93% of 313 respondents). This reason was phrased in a very broad fashion which allows us to tap into the general outlook of learners towards LL and not just the specific TL they studied in the project class. Thus, this finding arguably licenses us to claim that most learners were quite positively disposed towards LL. This finding replicates the very positive ratings observed in LAP (i.e. 94.3% Little et al. 2002, pp.52-4). In general, as regards all ten questionnaire items, LAP findings were replicated, although percentages were slightly lower in the current project. This is true even for differences across languages and genders briefly presented in LAP and not discussed here owing to restrictions of space. Once more, this may be attributable to the greater variety of ages involved in this project and the fact that the sample in this project has a higher mean age, since it consists not only of junior cycle, but also of TY, senior cycle and PLC learners. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, older learners have generally been found to have lower motivational levels (e.g. Lepper and Henderlong 2000, pp.279-80) and exhibit less interest towards learning (Wigfield and Tonks 2002, p.61).

In item two, the majority of learners stated that they wanted to learn this TL in order to understand people when they went on holiday abroad or in the Gaeltacht (64,2%). However, we can also see that this reason was clearly not so important for learners of Irish (42,7%), who arguably did not seem to learn Irish in order to communicate with native speakers of Irish.

55,3% of learners said they liked learning their project-class TL. However, once more, learners of Irish seemed to differ from other learners in that only a strong minority of them liked learning it (42,2%). The difference becomes even clearer when one compares the percentage for Irish to the percentages for other languages which ranged from 57,1% to 74,1%. I believe this finding should be a cause for concern, as it seems to indicate that in general Irish does not appeal to post-primary learners. The reasons for this should possibly be explored further and potentially minimised through appropriately supportive policies.

Reasons for learning this TL	Irish	French	German	Italian	Yes	N
1. I think it's great to be able to speak another language	94,0%	90,9%	98,3%	85,7%	93,0%	313
2. I want to learn this TL so that I can understand people when I go on holiday abroad/in the Gaeltacht	42,7%	76,4%	82,8%	67,9%	64,2%	313
3. I like learning this TL	42,2%	58,7%	74,1%	57,1%	55,3%	313
4. I'd love to have a good TL accent	50,4%	40,9%	46,6%	39,3%	45,4%	313
5. I want to be able to speak this TL so that I can show off in front of other people	7,7%	14,5%	25,9%	14,3%	14,1%	313
6. I think it's fun to speak in this TL	28,2%	42,7%	56,9%	46,4%	40,3%	313
7. I want to learn this TL so that I can use it as a secret code with friends	19,7%	14,5%	19,0%	7,1%	16,6%	313
8. I wish I didn't have to learn this TL	50,4%	24,8%	22,4%	35,7%	34,9%	313
9. My parents encourage me to learn this TL	70,9%	75,2%	44,8%	39,3%	64,7%	313
10. I think that learning this TL is useful because I want to make friends with people from other countries/the Gaeltacht	43,6%	66,4%	67,2%	60,7%	57,5%	313
11. A member of my family is a native speaker of this TL	1	2	2	1	6	
12. A member of my family is a teacher of the TL	0	0	2	0	2	
13. I have relatives (or very close friends) who live in the TL community	1	4	5	0	10	
14. Work-related reasons/it will be good for my CV	6	12	4	7	29	
15. It is a compulsory subject	4	5	0	0	9	
16. I want to do well in my Junior/Leaving/Post-leaving Certificate Exams (and/or get to a good college)	9	11	1	0	21	
17. It is important for me to learn the language of my country/my native language	27	0	0	0	27	
18. It is good/advisable to learn the language of my country	17	0	0	0	17	
19. My brother(s)/sister(s) did it before me and liked it	0	0	5	0	5	
20. My brother(s)/sister(s) did it before me and can offer me their help	0	1	4	0	5	
21. I think this language is v. beautiful/great	0	2	5	2	9	
22. I think this FL is the best one among the FL options available in my school	0	8	8	0	16	
23. It will help know more about the interesting/appealing culture of the TL community	3	14	5	2	24	
24. I will be (very) proud of myself if (I can prove to myself that) I can do it	3	4	2	0	9	
25. I would like to move to a TL community	4	3	1	2	10	

Table 4.55: Reasons for learning the TL studied in the project class

Only 45,4% of the respondents stated that they would 'love to have a good TL accent'. This in a way reflects what I also witnessed in my earlier classroom observations, where most learners seemed to place considerably less importance on TL accent than on other

elements of TL proficiency and needed continuous support if they were to keep on working to improve their accent. Perhaps not surprisingly, learners of Irish were the most strongly positively-disposed ones towards TL accent (50,4%). This might be due to the fact that Irish learners acknowledge that Irish is a significant part of their heritage and they feel the need not to sound like 'educated foreigners' in it.

Wanting to be able to speak the TL in question so as to show off in front of other people was the reason least subscribed to by the learners (14,1%), with 7,7% of the learners of Irish and 25,9% of the learners of German being the two extremes. Although it is a quite positive sign that the great majority of learners did not seem to be motivated to learn the TL because of extrinsic aspirations related to image, I was not able to pinpoint the reason why learners of German and Irish seemed to differ so substantially in this respect. Possible explanations could be related to the status these languages have in Ireland, with Irish being important for national heritage and German being a 'major' language which is widely considered a language of 'business' and a potential job qualification but is *not* taken up by the majority of learners studying FLs, who usually take up French.

40,3% of the respondents found it 'fun to speak in this TL'. This shows that in general the majority of learners *did not* think speaking in a TL was fun and probably had negative preconceptions and/or negative previous learning experiences as regards learning to speak a language. This is particularly true for learners of Irish, who found speaking Irish substantially less fun than the learners of other TLs (28,2%). Taking into account that 99,13% of the learners that participated in our project had already studied Irish in the past (i.e. n=361 out of 364), this finding seems to indicate that the great majority of learners of Irish had not enjoyed speaking in Irish in their previous Irish classes. On the other hand, learners of German seemed to enjoy speaking in the TL the most (56,9%).

Only 16,6% of the respondents said they wanted to learn this TL so that they could use it as a secret code with friends. A substantial difference was observed only between learners of Italian, who least identified with this reason (7,7%), and learners of other languages.

34,9% of the respondents said they wished they didn't have to learn their TL. This percentage is rather quite negative; one out of three learners did not seem to enjoy learning the TL in question. It is also negative in comparison to item 1, which showed that learners were predominantly in favour of LL in general. However, a look at the TL-specific percentages tells us that this negative attitude seemed to be mostly related to Irish. The percentage of learners of Irish who ticked this item (50,4%) was more than double the percentages for French (24,8%) and German (22,4%), whereas the percentage for Italian was averagely negative (35,7%). However, this percentage was arguably inflated owing to some rather extreme negative situational factors related to one of the two Italian classes that participated in this project (cf. Chapter 5). In all, this finding reinforces the more negative attitudes learners of Irish expressed towards their TL in comparison to learners of other TLs. One notable exception to this is the solidly positive attitudes towards Irish expressed by learners in the Irish-medium class. No learners in that class ticked this item; this might lend some support to the claim that Irish-medium schools are successful in sustaining positive attitudes towards Irish.

64,7% of the respondents said their parents encouraged them to learn their TL. This percentage is the only one of this section which was more positive than the equivalent LAP one. This may be accounted for by the fact that learners of Irish said their parents were quite supportive (70,9%). This possibly affected the findings in this study, especially since Irish classes were not included in the LAP sample. As in LAP, learners of French were the ones who were encouraged by their parents to study French in greater numbers (75,2%).

57,5% of the respondents said they thought that learning their TL was useful because they wanted to make friends with people from other countries/the Gaeltacht. Again, this reason appeared to be less important to learners of Irish (43,6%) who seemed to think that learning Irish was not so important in helping them make friends with native speakers of Irish.

What follows offers a summary of additional reasons learners themselves (i.e. without being prompted through a related questionnaire item) mentioned as important to them for learning their TL. In Table 4.55 above as well as in the discussion which follows, these reasons were codified through the observed number of people who

mentioned a reason as important to them rather than through percentages of the total sample that did so. This approach was adopted as it would make little sense to codify these reasons through percentages, since the responses had not been prompted through the questionnaire in any way. The numbers of respondents who quoted these reasons are small, hence the findings cannot form a salient basis for large-scale comparisons. However, they do offer an indication as to what reasons for LL further to the ones already mentioned might be important for learners in Irish post-primary education. Since each language was represented by a different number of learners in the project sample, these numbers should be read in conjunction to Table 3.2, which offers a breakdown of the learner population according to language.

Six learners said that at least one member of their family was a native speaker of their TL, while two more said a member of their family was a teacher of the TL. Taking into account that only one of these answers was related to Irish, we can see how Irish society has become a lot more ethnically mixed than it used to be. In fact, according to the demographics in the project database, twenty-nine more learners had at least one parent who was not an Irish national and was a native speaker of a language not taught on a large scale in Irish post-primary schools. Nineteen of these learners themselves did not have English as a mother tongue. This state of affairs in a way mirrors the situation in primary schools described by Little, who notes that '[t]here are no official records of the number of L1s represented in the school system, but surveys of the newcomer population suggest that there must be at least 70; some informed estimates put the number as high as 120' (Little 2005b).

Ten learners said they had relatives (or very close friends) who lived in the TL community. Items 11 and 13 mirror the rising mobility of populations which is the outcome of globalisation trends. In fact, geographical proximity might have played a part in how these responses were broken down by target language, seeing that Italian was clearly underrepresented in this respect in comparison to other TLs.

The most prominent additional reason across languages was learning a language for 'work-related reasons'. Twenty-nine learners said that it would help them get a better job, or that it would 'be good for their CV'. Surprisingly, this reason was not mentioned primarily by older learners as I had initially expected. However, one of the characteristics

of learners who mentioned this reason was that they seemed to have similar reactions to the ELP. Thus, at the end of the year they were extremely favourable towards the ELP because they felt it helped them to 'become more organised' and 'learn something tangible' rather than for any other reason (cf. discussion in section 4.4.3 below).

Four learners of Irish and five learners of French mentioned that they were learning these TLs because they were a compulsory subject. Importantly, learners who quoted this reason seemed also to share negative views towards LL and school in general and they reported making less effort to succeed in LL than the rest of the learners.

Twenty-one learners mentioned they were studying their TL because they wanted to do well in their Junior/Leaving/Post-leaving Certificate Exams (and/or get to a good college). Nine of them were learners of Irish and eleven were learners of French. The number of learners who mentioned this reason was double that observed in LAP. Again this could be attributable to the sample population spanning a greater age range. We would expect older learners to naturally think about their academic achievement more than younger learners.

A very important reason for studying Irish quoted by many learners of Irish is that they considered it part of their heritage. Out of a total of 127 learners of Irish who participated in this project, twenty-seven said that it was *important* for them to learn the language of their country. Some of these learners (n=5) called Irish their native language. Seventeen more learners said they found it *good or advisable* to learn the language of their country. In a few cases, learners used emphatic devices such as multiple exclamation marks or drawings of Irish flags to show their strong feelings on this issue.

Two related reasons mentioned mostly by some learners of German was that their brother(s)/sister(s) did it before them and liked it (n=5), or that their brother(s)/sister(s) did it before them and thus could offer them help if they found something difficult along the way (n=4). One learner of French mentioned this latter reason as well.

Nine learners mentioned that they studied a TL because they found it very beautiful/great. Alarmingly, no learners of Irish mentioned this reason. On the other hand, the two learners of Italian and five learners of German who mentioned this reason represent a higher proportion of the sample related to these two TLs in comparison to the two learners of French who seemed to share their feelings.

Eight learners of French and eight learners of German said they felt that their TL was the best one among the FL options available in their school. Unfortunately, no learner elaborated more on why they said this, although some learners spoke about this at some length in their interviews (cf. section 4.4.5 below).

Another reason which was endorsed by a rather large number of learners (n=24) of all TLs was that they felt LL would help them know more about the interesting/appealing culture of the TL community. Proportionately, this reason was endorsed the most by learners of French (n=14) and the least by learners of Irish (n=3). Taking into account that Irish has a very big cultural significance for Ireland, I tried to tease out the reasons behind this lack of motivation to study Irish for cultural reasons. Following a number of discussions with some learners and teachers of Irish, there were two main findings. First, 'many' textbooks of Irish seemed to offer an aspect of Irish culture which appears a little dated and does not appeal to teenagers. Second, many learners seemed to think that the culture presented to them in the classroom was 'not much'. Fortunately, the fact that the LAP ELP had a very explicit and prominent intercultural element embedded in it apparently facilitated learners' becoming more positively disposed towards Irish and what some called 'Gaeltacht culture' by the end of the year (cf. Appendices B, D, E and G and related sections below).

Nine learners said they would be (very) proud of themselves if (they could prove to themselves that) they could learn their TLs. These learners seemed to have attached personal importance to achieving a challenging task such as learning a language. No learners of Italian endorsed this reason.

Finally, ten learners said they were learning their TLs because they would like to move to a TL community.

On the basis of the reasons for learning a TL mentioned above, it seems plausible to suggest that learners had *proportionately* more reasons for studying languages such as French, German and Italian, than they did for studying Irish, especially if one takes into account the numbers of learners who contributed to these findings broken down by TL (cf. Table 3.2). I think this situation may be the composite outcome of a variety of reasons. One of them could be related to the fact that Irish tended to be seen by learners as 'a given they did not need to make any decisions about', which presented a challenge

to their feelings of autonomy and made it slightly more difficult for them and their teachers to remain motivated and feel autonomous. Whatever the cause, it seems that the situation as far as attitudes to Irish needs urgent attention, if Irish is to survive in the long run.

b) Section 1: Classroom activities

Section one of the LAP-based questionnaire tried to elicit how often learners perceived they were taking part – or not – in certain activities related to LL in their project class and how they felt towards these activities. More specifically, through a rather elaborate questionnaire design which was based on the original LAP one, learners were allowed to state the perceived frequency of each activity and the perceived satisfaction they got from each activity, as well as how they felt towards activities they were not doing in their project class. In this way, we hoped to elicit not only how learners experienced what took place in their language classes, but also what they felt should change in the various activities which took place in their classes, which activities they liked and felt they would like to experience more, and which ones they did not like and would like to experience less. When round a) was administered, learners could respond only on the basis of their previous experience in language classes and the few lessons they had in the project class, while the second round aimed to show how those perceptions may have changed during the year on the basis of their experience in the project classes (cf. Chapter 3 for questionnaire design and administration-related issues).

Twenty activities were listed in the questionnaire, and space was provided for learners to add other activities. Following a broad codification of responses twenty more activities were added to the list by the learners themselves. Although an alternative narrower codification criterion may have been possible, I decided against it as the findings would have become less amenable to analysis had it been adopted. Furthermore, although some of the activities added by learners partially overlapped with other activities, they were retained. For instance, 'playing games' and 'playing bingo' were two activities which I opted to keep separate following classroom observations which showed that in certain classes learners considered different types of word bingo equally akin to games and tests.

Although only two slots for additional activities were in theory available per learner, all the activities mentioned by the learners were included in this discussion even when that number was exceeded. As it happened, some learners mentioned no additional activities apart from the questionnaire-prompted ones, whereas others added up to four activities to their lists.

I. Perceived frequency

The perceived frequency of various activities mentioned by the learners was coded on the basis of their responses on a twelve-point scale. The points were the following: 0=Never; 1=Once a year; 2=Rarely/Twice a year; 3=Once a month; 5=Twice a month; 6=Sometimes/Three times a month; 10=Once a week; 12=Twice a week; 13=Three times a week; 14=At least once a lesson; and 15=Always, with the following coded as missing values: 7=M No response; 8=M I am not sure; and 9=M Absent.

Owing to the fact that this twelve-point scale is quite big, I decided to do all *calculations* related to frequencies on its basis, thus reaching more precise conclusions and not making any concessions as far as accuracy is concerned, but to write all *frequency reports* on the basis of a more compact six-point scale, thus offering a more compact discussion of findings. For the purposes of that discussion, I recoded frequencies as follows: 0=Never; 1=At least once a year; 3=At least once a month; 10=At least once a week; 14=At least once a lesson; and 15=Always, retaining the same missing values as above.

When this project was designed, it was visualised that we would be able to not only offer an overview of activities carried out in Irish post-primary education in general, but also make comparisons of activity frequencies for different types of learners broken down by gender, class year, TL and project class. Unfortunately, this proved to be impossible for the vast majority of findings for a variety of reasons. The principal reason was related to the fact that schools in Irish post-primary education enjoy significant freedom as regards how their curriculum is shaped (cf. sections 2.2 and 2.3 above). Hence there was no set amount of time spent studying the TL in this project, even for classes of a similar type across schools. For instance, when two learners said they listened to tapes once a week, the relative frequency of this activity was proportionately different

when one of them received five hours of tuition per week and the other received two hours of tuition per week or less (cf. Chapter 5 for further discussion). Although no further discussion of category-specific findings is attempted in the main body of the thesis, the reader may wish to peruse Appendices K, L, M and N which contain raw data cross-tabulated by respondent gender, target language studied, class year, and project class to obtain an overview of data related to more specific categories which may be of personal interest to him/her.

Even through the analysis scheme ultimately adopted in the main body of this thesis, however, the mapping of activity frequencies attempted to the best of my knowledge exceeds all previous attempts carried out in Irish post-primary language education. Unfortunately, the frequencies reported here cannot be directly juxtaposed to LAP findings, since the researchers who carried out that project did not include explicit references to activity frequencies in their discussion, but focused their examination on the perceived satisfaction for each activity, regardless of how often it took place in class. However, some minor frequency comparisons can be made through Figure 3.5 of LAP (Little et al. 2002, p.58), which summarises the percentage of learners who said they liked an activity. However, the percentages offered in the figure were not normalised ones and they represented both learners who said they liked an activity and learners who said they did not like it as percentages of the total sample; thus, if we added the two percentages we would come up with the percentage of learners in the learner population who said they did a certain activity in class. Although this represents just a binary indication of frequency, it at least offers a basis for basic comparisons, between the two projects.

A summary of perceived frequencies of activities as stated in the current project is presented through Tables 4.56 and 4.57. The frequencies have been checked using statistical normalisation techniques to accommodate learners who may have failed to respond to an item, but responses have *not* been further 'imputed' through missing value substitutions or in any other way.

Table 4.56 offers a summary of the perceived frequency of activities in round a). 314 learners offered valid responses after being prompted to state how frequently they experienced the first twenty of these activities. Each one of the remaining twenty

activities was mentioned by a different number of learners, since they were not prompted and had been volunteered by the learners themselves. For this reason, the percentages related to these activities refer to percentages of only the number of learners who mentioned each activity and not percentages of the total sample. This is mirrored in the numbers contained in the N column.

One crucial further point about these perceived frequencies is that they are based on self-report measures, and thus they should not be considered entirely objective (Manstead and Semin 2001, p.98; S. Miller 1986; Smith and Deemer 2003; Wegener and Fabrigar 2004). However, additional steps were taken to check the relative objectivity of responses. Thus, there was an observed overall agreement between learners in one class about how often an activity took place in that class. When there was an observed within-class disagreement, it was predominantly related to activities which learners could experience in variable frequency such as 'giving answers in class when the teacher asks a question' or activities related to things they did in their spare time for their language class, and not for activities such as 'working with the textbook', of which we would expect classes to have rather uniform frequency of experience. Furthermore, where such an inconsistency *was* observed, it was mainly limited and logically congruent. For instance, two activities which many learners in the same class mentioned they had experience of either 'at least once a lesson' or 'always' were 'listening to the teacher talk in the TL' and 'doing TL homework'. No marked inconsistencies were observed in the sample: different learners in the same class did not mention *sharply contrasting* frequencies for a given 'communal' activity such as 'listening to tapes' (e.g. frequencies such as 'always' and 'once a year'/'never').

The bigger the observed percentages towards the left side of Table 4.56 are, the fewer learners perceived they had experience of a given activity, and the bigger the percentages towards the right side of the table are, the more learners perceived they had experience of a given activity. In fact, we can see that there are some activities which appeared to be clearly under-practised in Irish post-primary classrooms and there are other activities which learners felt were a permanent part of their lesson routine and they claimed they 'always' experienced them. In the interest of brevity, only the most prominent themes which appear in this table will be discussed below.

Classroom Activities: Perceived Frequency a	Never	At least once a year (1-3 times)	At least once a month (1-3 times)	At least once a week (1-3 times)	At least once a lesson	Always	N
1. Working with the textbook	13,7%		1,9%	16,9%	64,5%	2,9%	314
2. Listening to tapes	34,7%	,6%	11,9%	39,9%	12,9%		314
3. Watching a video	76,6%	4,5%	9,3%	5,8%	3,8%		314
4. Working at the computer	94,2%		,3%	3,5%	1,9%		314
5. Working in the language lab	95,2%			2,3%	2,3%	,3%	314
6. Listening to the teacher talk in the TL	2,2%		1,3%	6,4%	80,2%	9,9%	314
7. Writing in the TL	,6%		,6%	14,1%	80,8%	3,8%	314
8. Speaking in the TL	2,2%		2,2%	16,9%	75,2%	3,5%	314
9. Reading the TL	9,6%		1,9%	30,5%	55,6%	2,3%	314
10. Learning things off by heart (when the teacher tells me)	11,6%	1,3%	7,1%	46,3%	30,5%	3,2%	314
11. Learning things off by heart (even when the teacher doesn't tell me)	66,8%	,6%	4,2%	22,7%	5,8%		314
12. Looking things up in a dictionary	43,5%	1,0%	2,9%	35,8%	16,9%		314
13. Doing TL homework	7,7%		1,9%	22,8%	62,2%	5,4%	314
14. Looking at videos or photos of the main TL-speaking country/the Gaeltacht	74,4%	2,3%	3,6%	11,0%	8,4%	,3%	314
15. Working with a partner in class	34,4%	1,6%	12,2%	36,3%	15,4%		314
16. Doing homework with a friend	76,7%	1,3%	4,5%	12,6%	4,9%		314
17. Giving answers in class when the teacher asks questions	6,1%		3,2%	24,6%	64,2%	1,9%	314
18. Working in a small group	63,9%	1,3%	6,7%	18,2%	9,6%	,3%	314
19. Having to be quiet in class	10,8%		1,3%	17,8%	62,7%	7,3%	314
20. Speaking or reading out loud in front of the class	28,2%	1,0%	4,8%	45,5%	20,2%	,3%	314
21. Games	68,4%	8,2%	7,1%	11,2%	5,1%		98
22. Tests	17,6%		52,9%	29,4%			17
23. Pen-pals	100%						4
24. Songs (and/or prayers)	37,5%			62,5%			8
25. Projects	41,2%	11,8%	29,4%	17,6%			17
26. Reading and writing stories	50,0%			50,0%			4
27. Phrase practice	28,6%			14,3%	42,9%	14,3%	7
28. Group-speaking practice/ acting out plays	66,7%		16,7%	16,7%			18
29. Doing workbook exercises				60,0%	40,0%		5
30. Writing about ourselves				66,7%	33,3%		3
31. Spelling practice				20,0%	60,0%	20,0%	5
32. (exchange) visits abroad/ visits to TL-speaking environments	85,7%	4,8%		9,5%			21
33. Sport-related activities (& discussion topics)	84,0%		8,0%		8,0%		25
34. Competitions	33,3%				66,7%		3
35. Having a lesson outside the classroom	45,5%	45,5%		9,1%			11
36. Drawing /making cartoons or posters	40,0%	6,7%	13,3%	33,3%	6,7%		15
37. Playing bingo	5,0%	40,0%	50,0%		5,0%		20
38. Quizzes	33,3%	50,0%	16,7%				6
39. Translating	100%						2
40. Working with the ELP	20,0%			80,0%			5

Table 4.56: Classroom Activities: Perceived Frequency- Round A

For each of the twenty questionnaire-prompted activities, there were at least seven learners who said they never did that activity. The only exception to this was 'writing in the TL', for which only two learners (from the fifth-year Italian class) said they never wrote in the TL. However, these learners said they did not take part in most of the activities their class participated in and generally expressed quite negative attitudes towards school and LL. It seems safe to argue at least for some of the activities that they did take place in all language classrooms, but to such a degree that a few learners did not consider it significant. Furthermore, my classroom observations confirmed that learner responses were broadly correct as far as their classes were concerned (cf. Appendix C).

An analysis of the responses for the questionnaire-prompted activities revealed that they could be categorised into six bands according to their frequency.

The activities which seemed to be practised most frequently were 'listening to the teacher talk in the TL', 'writing' and 'speaking in the TL'. The large majority of learners (78,7% or more per activity) said they did these activities either at least once a lesson or always in their project classes.

Some activities practised quite frequently were 'working with the textbook', 'reading in the TL', 'doing TL homework', 'giving answers in class when the teacher asks questions', and 'having to be quiet in class'. The majority of learners (from 57,9 to 70,0% per activity) said they did these activities either at least once a lesson or always in their project classes.

A number of activities took place in a more limited fashion. These were 'listening to tapes', 'learning things off by heart (when the teacher tells me)', 'looking things up in a dictionary', 'working with a partner in class', and 'speaking or reading out loud in front of the class'. A large minority of learners (from 12,9 to 37,7% per activity) said these activities took place either at least once a lesson or always in their classes, while the responses of the rest of the student sample were somewhat equally divided across frequency categories.

Learners felt they had limited experience of activities such as 'watching a video', 'learning things off by heart (even when the teacher doesn't tell me)', 'looking at videos or photos of the main TL-speaking country/the Gaeltacht', and 'working in a small

group'. The majority of learners (from 65,2 to 81,1% per activity) said these activities took place either never or once a year in their project classes.

Classroom Activities: Perceived Frequency c	Lower Frequency	No change	Higher Frequency	C N
1. Working with the textbook	23,8%	57,4%	18,8%	255
2. Listening to tapes	32,3%	40,2%	27,5%	255
3. Watching a video	11,8%	62,6%	25,6%	255
4. Working at the computer	4,7%	90,2%	5,1%	255
5. Working in the language lab	2,4%	90,0%	7,6%	255
6. Listening to the teacher talk in the TL	12,1%	74,2%	13,7%	255
7. Writing in the TL	16,8%	72,7%	12,5%	255
8. Speaking in the TL	24,6%	64,8%	13,5%	255
9. Reading the TL	26,9%	45,8%	27,3%	255
10. Learning things off by heart (when the teacher tells me)	29,8%	42,5%	27,8%	255
11. Learning things off by heart (even when the teacher doesn't tell me)	18,8%	62,1%	19,1%	255
12. Looking things up in a dictionary	25,0%	38,3%	36,7%	255
13. Doing TL homework	22,0%	63,4%	14,6%	255
14. Looking at videos or photos of the main TL-speaking country/ the Gaeltacht	16,3%	62,9%	20,7%	255
15. Working with a partner in class	29,9%	35,4%	34,6%	255
16. Doing homework with a friend	19,3%	66,3%	14,5%	255
17. Giving answers in class when the teacher asks questions	27,8%	56,1%	16,1%	255
18. Working in a small group	17,0%	42,7%	40,3%	255
19. Having to be quiet in class	27,3%	55,1%	17,6%	255
20. Speaking or reading out loud in front of the class	35,4%	43,3%	21,3%	255
21. Games	17,1%	31,7%	51,2%	82
22. Tests	60,0%		40,0%	20
23. Pen-pals			100,0%	2
24. Songs (and/or prayers)	21,1%		78,9%	19
25. Projects	32,3%	3,2%	64,5%	31
26. Reading and writing stories	14,3%		85,7%	7
27. Phrase practice	33,3%		66,7%	9
28. Group-speaking practice/ acting out plays	42,9%		57,1%	14
29. Doing workbook exercises	66,7%		33,3%	9
30. Writing about ourselves	57,1%		42,9%	7
31. Spelling practice	66,7%		33,3%	6
32. (exchange) visits abroad/ visits to TL-speaking environments	30,0%		70,0%	10
33. Sport-related activities (& discussion topics)	70,0%	10,0%	20,0%	10
34. competitions			100,0%	1
35. Having a lesson outside the classroom	83,3%		16,7%	6
36. Drawing /making cartoons or posters	16,0%	4,0%	80,0%	25
37. Playing bingo	36,0%	16,0%	48,0%	25
38. Quizzes	20,0%		80,0%	20
39. Translating	42,9%		57,1%	7
40. Working with the ELP	10,0%		90,0%	10

Table 4.57: Classroom Activities: Perceived Frequency-Round C

Two activities formed a category of their own. Most learners said they had no experience of 'working at the computer' and 'working in the language lab'. The majority of learners (94,2 and 95,2% respectively) said these activities never took place in their classes. In fact, some learners volunteered comments as regards these two activities, which reveal the reasons behind their responses. Thus, it seems only school 11 had a functional language/computer laboratory available to language classes on demand. The rest of the schools did not have any provision in place for language classes to make use of computers, the internet, or information and communication technology (ICT). In fact, some of the learners who had experience of these activities mentioned that they did so at home, following encouragement from their parents.

As regards activities not prompted by the questionnaire, it seems that certain types of responses were loosely correlated with project class and school, thus suggesting that different teachers (and/or schools) possibly encouraged different activities and tended to employ/encourage them throughout the year. However, taking into account the large size of the sample and the fact that responses in round a) were based on the experience of learners prior to their using the ELP, it is reasonable to conclude that the responses in Table 4.56 depict activities which took place in many more classes than the ones which participated in this project. Thus, for instance, some first-year classes were made up of learners who came from as many as nine different primary schools, so the activities mentioned offer an overview of the frequency of activities which took place in at least nine different 'feeder' classes.

For the reasons outlined above, no further comment is offered at this point as regards the perceived frequency of activities 21 to 40, apart from the observation that a big number of learners seemed to mention that they never experienced some activities (cf. also discussion on Table 4.57 below).

Table 4.57 offers a breakdown of how learners' perceptions changed during the year they were using the ELP as far as activity frequencies are concerned. This table in based on the 255 learners who participated in rounds a) and b). The table offers three percentages: the percentage of learners who felt they had experience of an activity less often this year than they had stated in round a), the percentage of those who stated the same average frequency for an activity, and the percentage of those who mentioned they

had more/less experience of an activity this year than they had stated in round a). Table 4.57 is brief and it does not show *the degree of frequency change* learners perceived. It only gives us the *percentage of respondents experiencing change or not, and whether that change corresponded to increased or decreased perceived frequency.*

In general, learners felt they had more experience of some activities, less experience of others, and approximately the same for a number of activities. This was to be expected, as in the limited time available for LL in Irish post-primary education, it would make sense that if learners spent more time on a particular activity they would by default have to spend less time on something else. Broadly speaking, as far as the first 20 activities were concerned, no marked changes in perceived frequency were observed, apart from 'working in a small group', which seemed to have occurred oftener. This positive change was also widely confirmed from what I witnessed in my classroom visits.

As far as activities 21 to 40 are concerned, more changes in perceived frequencies were observed. Naturally, the changes presented in Table 4.57 may not refer to substantial actual changes for a great part of the learner sample, since they were based on smaller numbers of respondents as one can see from the N column above. That said, learners said they had more frequent experience of 'playing games', 'having pen-pals', 'singing songs and/or prayers', 'doing projects', 'reading and writing stories', 'doing phrase practice', 'having exchange visits abroad/visits to TL-speaking environments', 'competitions', 'drawing/making cartoons or posters', 'having quizzes', and 'working with the ELP'. On the other hand they said they had less frequent experience of 'doing workbook exercises', 'spelling practice', 'sport-related activities (& discussion topics)', and 'having a lesson outside the classroom'. On the basis of the above, it appears safe to say that the activities which took place in the ELP-informed classes examined in this project were quite diverse, if not more diverse than learners had experienced *in all their previous language learning experience.*

One further point needs to be raised here. During my classroom visits, I observed a variety of activities taking place in the ELP-informed classrooms and recorded them in Appendix C. Some of those activities have not been mentioned at all here or have been underrepresented, such as general project work, making tests, or working on mini-projects related to other subjects. Following a series of discussions with learners, I am

inclined to think that learners considered that once some activities had already been made public through the project site, they no longer needed to mention them in their questionnaires. A striking example of this is related to making tests. Three classes did this at least once a week from January onwards and some learners designed more tests in their free time to post on the site, but no learner mentioned this activity at all. More discussion of these activities will be provided in the later sections of Chapter 4.

II. Perceived and aspired satisfaction

The second part of section 1 of the LAP-based questionnaire depicts how satisfied learners were with each activity they had mentioned in the first part discussed above. Although in LAP learners expressed their satisfaction only in relation to activities they had first-hand experience of, in the current project they were asked to do the same even for activities they stated they did not have any experience of. In this way, we were able to find out if learners would like to do a certain activity they had no experience of. In simpler terms, the questionnaire design employed in this project operated as a voting system which enabled learners to express their feelings towards any activity, whether they had first-hand experience of it or not. It is hoped that this may offer a more accurate depiction of the feelings and desires of the learner population in Irish post-primary education, and possibly offer assistance to post-primary language teachers in relation to which activities may be more or less popular with their students. In doing this, I do not wish to suggest that we should aim always to follow the opinions expressed by our learners in order to make our teaching more popular with them. I rather try to present some findings which attempt to offer an overview of these opinions as I feel that they should enable us to understand the feelings of our learners better, and adjust our teaching practices to acknowledge those feelings more.

Table 4.58 contains a summary of findings related to three different types of perceived satisfaction/enjoyment of classroom activities. The first column of the table contains the activities in the order in which they were presented in the section related to activity frequencies presented above. Columns two and three offer a summary of perceived satisfaction of activities learners had first-hand experience of as measured in round a). These two columns are directly equivalent to the relevant ones reported in LAP;

column two shows the percentage of respondents who answered 'no' (i.e. that they did not enjoy doing this activity), whereas column three shows the percentage of learners who answered 'yes' (i.e. that they did enjoy doing this activity). Columns four and five offer a summary of *perceived or aspired* satisfaction with activities, showing how learners felt towards doing a particular activity, regardless of whether they had experience of it in class or not. Columns six and seven summarise the change between perceived satisfaction as observed in rounds a) and b). However, since some learners in at least one of these two rounds mentioned that they never did some activities, they were by default excluded from the calculations which produced the findings in these columns. For this reason, the last column (marked N) was added; it offers the number of learners that informed columns six and seven.

In general, columns two and three appear to depict a positive picture as far as perceived satisfaction with activities is concerned. The majority of learners appear to have either liked or not minded doing most of the activities contained in the questionnaire. In fact, the only activities a clear majority of learners (75% or more) said they disliked were 'learning things off by heart (when the teacher tells me)', 'doing TL homework', and 'having to be quiet in class'. From the activities they added, they expressed a similar dislike only for tests. On the basis of these findings it seems that learners in round a) mentioned that they liked proportionately less those activities which might have needed them to make a bigger effort or might have been seen as constraining their need for autonomy and self-expression in the classroom.

On the other hand, a clear majority of learners said they liked activities such as 'watching a video', 'working at the computer', 'looking at videos or photos of the main TL-speaking country/the Gaeltacht', 'working with a partner in class', 'doing homework with a friend', and 'working in a small group'. The same situation holds true of most of the learner-added activities. A clear majority liked 'playing games', 'singing songs (and/or prayers)', 'working on projects', 'group-speaking practice/acting out plays', 'doing workbook exercises', 'exchange visits abroad or to TL-speaking environments', 'sport-related activities (and discussion topics)', 'having a lesson outside the classroom', 'drawing/making cartoons or posters', 'playing bingo', 'working on quizzes', and 'working with the ELP'. It seems that learners enjoyed most those activities which they

Classroom Activities: Perceived/Aspired Satisfaction	Perceived A NO	Perceived A YES	Perceived & Aspired A NO	Perceived & Aspired A YES	Perceived C Negative	Perceived C Positive	C N
1. Working with the textbook	46,2%	51,5%	47,6%	50,5%	19,0%	19,0%	210
2. Listening to tapes	44,7%	55,3%	45,4%	53,9%	14,2%	20,9%	134
3. Watching a video	8,6%	91,4%	6,2%	93,1%	2,7%	13,5%	37
4. Working at the computer	5,9%	94,1%	8,4%	89,9%			3
5. Working in the language lab	7,1%	92,9%	17,0%	83,0%	25,0%		4
6. Listening to the teacher talk in the TL	50,5%	47,1%	51,0%	46,7%	11,6%	20,2%	233
7. Writing in the TL	45,4%	53,0%	45,8%	52,6%	15,5%	21,8%	239
8. Speaking in the TL	39,8%	58,5%	40,7%	57,7%	13,5%	20,0%	230
9. Reading the TL	39,1%	59,1%	41,4%	56,6%	17,8%	17,3%	202
10. Learning things off by heart (when the teacher tells me)	77,9%	20,3%	77,5%	20,8%	12,2%	9,3%	205
11. Learning things off by heart (even when the teacher doesn't tell me)	50,5%	46,4%	79,9%	19,0%	10,5%	15,8%	38
12. Looking things up in a dictionary	37,8%	59,9%	44,7%	52,3%	18,1%	12,8%	94
13. Doing TL homework	78,6%	20,7%	79,1%	20,3%	8,6%	12,7%	220
14. Looking at videos or photos of the main TL-speaking country/the Gaeltacht	15,8%	84,2%	14,8%	84,2%		11,1%	27
15. Working with a partner in class	7,1%	91,9%	7,4%	91,0%	8,9%	3,3%	123
16. Doing homework with a friend	5,6%	93,1%	25,6%	73,0%		5,3%	19
17. Giving answers in class when the teacher asks questions	31,1%	65,7%	33,2%	63,8%	15,6%	11,8%	212
18. Working in a small group	11,9%	88,1%	12,8%	86,6%	7,0%	8,8%	57
19. Having to be quiet in class	76,1%	21,6%	77,1%	20,9%	12,8%	11,8%	195
20. Speaking or reading out loud in front of the class	57,6%	37,8%	63,3%	33,1%	15,7%	11,9%	134
21. Games	3,4%	96,6%	2,0%	98,0%			17
22. Tests	75,0%	25,0%	71,4%	28,6%		50,0%	2
23. Pen-pals	-	-	-	100,0%			-
24. Songs (and/or prayers)	25,0%	75,0%	14,3%	85,7%			-
25. Projects	11,1%	88,9%	6,3%	93,8%		33,3%	3
26. Reading and writing stories	50,0%	50,0%	25,0%	75,0%			-
27. Phrase practice	60,0%	40,0%	42,9%	57,1%			-
28. Group-speaking practice/ acting out plays	-	100,0%	5,3%	94,7%			1
29. Doing workbook exercises	20,0%	80,0%	20,0%	80,0%			-
30. Writing about ourselves	33,3%	66,7%	33,3%	66,7%			-
31. Spelling practice	60,0%	40,0%	60,0%	40,0%			-
32. (exchange) visits abroad/ visits to TL-speaking environments	-	100,0%	-	100,0%			1
33. Sport-related activities (& discussion topics)	-	100,0%	-	100,0%			-
34. Competitions	-	100,0%	-	100,0%			-
35. Having a lesson outside the classroom	-	100,0%	-	100,0%			-
36. Drawing /making cartoons or posters	22,2%	77,8%	14,3%	85,7%			3
37. Playing bingo	-	100,0%	-	100,0%			7
38. Quizzes	-	100,0%	-	100,0%			-
39. Translating	50,0%	50,0%	50,0%	50,0%			-
40. Working with the ELP	-	100,0%	-	100,0%			-

Table 4.58: Classroom Activities: Perceived/Aspired Satisfaction-Rounds A & C

felt were most aesthetically appealing (such as designing TL posters or colourful TL material for the ELP dossier), or which offered them a degree of freedom to express themselves in a task-based learning environment.

In comparison to LAP findings, learners in the current project appeared to be somewhat less positively disposed towards the twenty activities examined in both projects, but followed the same overall pattern of responses as regards which activities they liked the best and which ones they liked the least. The difference in responses between the two projects may be attributed to a number of factors related to the differences between their samples (cf. discussion of SDT-related questionnaire findings above).

Columns four and five, related to perceived or aspired satisfaction, seem to present a picture closely resembling that summarised in columns two and three. The only marked difference is related to item 11, 'learning things off by heart (even when the teacher doesn't tell me)', where the percentage of learners who said they liked this activity and practised it (i.e. 46,4) was a lot higher than the percentage of all learners who said they liked this activity (i.e.19,0%). This difference shows us that although learners who already followed this practice (which is closely related to autonomous learning) said they enjoyed it, the majority of learners who did not follow it clearly did not feel positively disposed to taking such an activity up at the beginning of the year. In general, the same was true, albeit to a lesser degree, in the case of all activities for which the percentage in column five was smaller than the percentage found in column three. By the same token, the majority of learners who did not have experience of an activity were arguably positively disposed towards taking it up where the percentage found in column five was greater than that found in column three.

Columns six and seven are of particular interest for the purposes of this project since they summarise the change between perceived satisfaction as observed in rounds a) and b), and thus offer an overview of how attitudes towards various activities changed in ELP-informed classrooms during the year. In general, it seems that there were no markedly measurable attitude changes for any particular activity. However, the majority of activities for which a change was observed appeared to gain rather than lose in popularity.

The findings presented in this section assume particular significance when read in tandem with the findings related to the frequencies for the same activities which were presented in the previous section. For instance, we can see that although a clear majority of learners at the beginning of the year never watched a video in their language class (76,6%), most of the learners would clearly like to do so (93,1%). At the end of the year, approximately one in four learners (25,6%) said they watched videos more frequently than they had stated at the beginning of the year. The percentage of learners who said they liked this activity more than they did at the beginning of the year was greater than the percentage of learners who said they liked it less than they said at the beginning of the year (13,5 vs. 2,7%). On the basis of all the above we can argue that during the year learners experienced more of an activity they were initially positively disposed to, and their experience seemed to have been on the whole positive enough to affect their overall attitudes to that activity in a positive manner.

Statements about learning languages	I strongly disagree	I don't agree	I'm not sure	I agree	I strongly agree	C Negative	C Positive	C N
1. Learning a foreign language is very difficult	4,0%	18,8%	18,1%	43,7%	15,5%	23,8%	33,6%	256
2. It is helpful when the teacher speaks in this TL in class as much as possible	5,4%	19,1%	21,7%	35,4%	18,4%	23,4%	37,9%	256
3. It is better not to say anything at all in this TL, rather than make mistakes	45,3%	34,3%	13,5%	4,7%	2,2%	31,0%	20,6%	252
4. The most important part of learning this TL is concentrating hard on grammar	2,5%	18,4%	46,6%	26,4%	6,1%	28,0%	27,2%	254
5. It is easier to read and write this TL than to speak and understand it	8,7%	22,7%	24,5%	31,4%	12,6%	33,6%	25,8%	256
6. It is easier to learn this TL than Irish/Irish than French or German	24,5%	21,3%	17,7%	17,3%	19,1%	29,6%	26,9%	253
7. Learning this TL is more difficult than learning other subjects at school	8,7%	22,7%	21,3%	30,3%	8,7%	26,6%	36,7%	256
8. You have to be really clever to learn this TL	23,5%	49,8%	15,5%	8,7%	2,5%	20,4%	33,7%	255
9. Intelligence is something you are born with and you cannot change it	38,3%	28,9%	15,2%	12,6%	5,1%	33,6%	22,3%	256
10. You need to do some learning outside class if you are going to be good at this TL	2,5%	13,4%	21,0%	46,0%	17,0%	30,5%	30,9%	256

Table 4.59: Statements about learning languages

Further findings related to each of the other activities seem to indicate positive results for the majority of activities. The reader can examine the effects related to any particular activity further by following the procedure outlined in the previous paragraph.

c) Section 2: Statements about learning languages

Following LAP, section 2 of the questionnaire attempted to capture a constellation of additional beliefs learners might have had in connection with learning a language. These beliefs were summarised through ten statements, and learners were asked to state their degree of agreement with each statement. Each belief is valuable in its own right and may be read as a stand-alone item. In the discussion which follows a summary of findings is presented according to the grouping of items employed in LAP: 'beliefs about the difficulty of L2 learning (items 1, 6, 7); beliefs about language learning processes and skills (items 2, 3, 4, 5, 10); beliefs about the role and nature of intelligence (items 8, 9) (Little et al. 2002, p.65).

Table 4.59 offers a summary of learner beliefs in tabular form. The pattern of overall responses replicated the LAP findings. Indeed, it seems that the two learner samples' responses for this section were closer than for any other section.

As far as the difficulty of LL is concerned (i.e. items 1, 6, 7), the majority of learners seemed to believe that it was difficult rather than easy; they also felt it was rather more difficult than other school subjects, and expressed rather mixed feelings in relation to whether the TL they were studying in their project class was more difficult than Irish. In the case of learners of Irish, they also seemed to have equally mixed feelings about whether learning Irish was more difficult than learning French or German, or any other language they may have been learning as their L3. Taking into account that the sample was not big enough to license large-scale category-specific conclusions, the only substantial difference which was observed was that learners of the Irish-medium class understandably felt Irish was substantially easier than other TLs in comparison to what learners of Irish in non-Irish-medium schools felt.

When one examines the six percentages related to how the learners' feelings changed during the year, it seems that there was a strong tendency for learners to think in round b) that learning the TL in question was more difficult than they thought it was in round a). This may be attributed to two reasons. First, many learners mentioned in the open-ended end-of-year questionnaire that thanks to the ELP they understood the complexity of LL and the many things they needed to do in order to become more proficient in the TL. Second, some learners mentioned in their interviews that they were learning more in the project class as the ELP helped them organise their learning better and realise what they needed to work on the most, but they actually felt they were also making a greater effort in this class in order to learn some of the things needed to be able to perform some of the tasks described in the language biography checklists (cf. sections 4.4.4 and 4.4.5 below).

In relation to beliefs about LL processes and skills (i.e. items 2, 3, 4, 5, 10), the majority of learners seemed to recognise the positive impact of exposure to TL use in the classroom as they mostly believed that it was helpful when the teacher spoke in the TL in class as much as possible. They also tended to disagree with the statement that 'it is better not to say anything at all in this TL, rather than make mistakes', thus exhibiting positive attitudes towards language use and taking minor risks in the classroom. This is quite important when one contemplates that language classrooms can be face-threatening environments. Learner responses were quite mixed on whether the most important part of learning their TL was concentrating hard on grammar or not, with a slim minority tending to be in favour of this statement. An equally mixed pattern of responses can be observed in relation to whether it was easier to read and write their TL than to speak and understand it. Finally, the majority of learners agreed with the statement that 'you need to do some learning outside class if you are going to be good at this TL', once again reinforcing their belief in the positive impact of exposure to the TL.

The feelings of learners seemed to have been affected in a positive manner during the year. More learners subscribed to the positive effect of exposure to the TL inside the classroom (item 2) and outside it (item 10). More learners appeared ready to take the risk of making mistakes in the class when using the TL rather than not using it at all. Learner feelings about the importance of grammar in LL (item 4) changed only marginally, but in

a way which acknowledges that LL should be more balanced between grammar learning and focusing on form, and language use. Furthermore, substantially more learners seemed to acknowledge the complexity of oral communication in comparison to written communication in the TL (item 5).

In relation to beliefs about the role and nature of intelligence in LL, the large majority of learners did not agree with the statements that 'you have to be really clever to learn this TL' (item 8), or that 'intelligence is something you are born with and you cannot change it' (item 9). In relation to these two items, one must bear in mind that theorists such as Dweck and her colleagues claim that learners' views of intelligence and/or ability may affect their behaviours and their academic achievement, since people who hold the view that intelligence and/or ability is 'incremental' (i.e. malleable) compare favourably on many levels to people who hold an 'entity' (i.e. fixed) view of intelligence and/or ability (Dweck and Leggett 1988; Molden and Dweck 2000, p.140). As a result, the responses documented here arguably showed a tendency for learners to feel LL was within their reach and that they believed in the malleability of intelligence, which shows they may have been more willing to grow as people and learn how to become more effective.

In the course of the year the feelings of learners seemed to change in two separate ways. On the one hand the belief that 'you have to be really clever to learn the TL in question' was endorsed by more learners in round b) than in round a); on the other hand fewer learners felt that 'intelligence is fixed' in round b) than in round a). I would argue that the combination of these two responses shows us the positive effect of the ELP on learners in two ways.

First, during the course of the year, learners used the LAP ELP and especially its language biography section in order to structure their learning. The predominant attitude endorsed by project teachers, which they tried to pass on to their students, was that if they took a bit of time to reflect on what they already knew and what they needed to do in order to get where they wanted to at the end of a given period, they could make their learning easier and more enjoyable. Learners during the year practised this structured reflection on many levels. For instance, they devised mnemonics, as well as study and testing routines. This process was one that needed them to devote mental energy to their

LL, and to try to come up with more effective ways of learning which were better suited to their individual learning styles. Second, learners seemed to understand that the modularity of learning they were arguably able to establish through the use of the ELP arguably helped them develop the first seeds towards an understanding that most things in life can be learned in an equivalently modular way. These two claims were further validated by what was mentioned in the great majority of learner interviews, and what a great number of learners wrote in their Language Biographies about LL and the ELP (cf. related sections below).

A sharp drop was observed in the number of learners who believed that intelligence is something fixed and non malleable. This last observation assumes further significance in the light of earlier research which seems to indicate that learners who believe that intelligence is fixed also tend to be less motivated (Kruglanski et al. 2002; Molden and Dweck 2000; Reeve 2002), tend to 'run out of breath' quicker, tend to place less importance on a subject they do not experience immediate success in, and often adopt self-handicapping strategies which lead to substantially lower achievement levels (Fincham and Hewstone 2001; Knee and Zuckerman 1998; Pintrich 2000).

d) Section 3: Perceived effort in learning

As regards the effort learners perceived they put into their LL, responses tended to show quite high perceived effort levels and to more or less replicate the findings of the LAP. Once more, however, learners in the current project said they put slightly less effort into their LL than learners in LAP said they did.

Table 4.60 summarises the learner responses in round a) on a three-point scale that tells us whether learners perceived they 'never, usually, or always' made a certain type of effort in LL. It also shows the percentage of learners who revised their perceptions positively and negatively for every item between rounds. Additional aspects of effort in LL not covered here are discussed in later sections of Chapter 4.

In round a) learners' responses showed them to be more favourably disposed towards certain types of effort. The fact that this pattern of responses replicated that of responses from the LAP (Little et al. 2002, pp.63-4) with an even more varied post-primary sample seems to suggest that general patterns of effort made in Irish post-

primary education tend to be rather uniform and remain stable over time. The ten items are presented in descending order of popularity below.

Perceived effort in learning the TL in question. How often do you:	Never A	Sometimes A	Usually A	C Negative	C Positive	C N
1. I make an effort to think about what I've learned in this (FL/SL) class	7,0%	60,7%	32,3%	25,4%	12,9%	256
2. If the teacher asks the class a question, I try to think of the right answer	,6%	16,6%	82,7%	16,0%	10,2%	256
3. If I don't understand something we are learning in this (TL) class, I ask for help	10,2%	47,0%	42,8%	20,7%	21,1%	256
4. If I don't know the TL word for something, I try to find out what it is	4,8%	34,2%	61,0%	21,9%	18,0%	256
5. I write down new TL words in a notebook so that I can remember them	23,1%	31,7%	45,2%	29,0%	18,0%	256
6. I put as much effort as possible into doing my TL homework	7,7%	49,2%	43,1%	27,0%	17,2%	256
7. When I get my FL/SL class homework back, I look carefully at my mistakes and the teacher's comments	19,3%	45,0%	35,7%	26,3%	17,3%	256
8. When the teacher asks us, I make an effort to talk in the TL in class	9,0%	45,5%	45,5%	24,0%	24,4%	255
9. I try to learn things off by heart that I know will be useful	17,6%	50,6%	31,7%	25,4%	23,0%	254
10. I look for chances of speaking, reading or listening to this TL outside school (e.g. meeting TL students or tourists, watching satellite/cable TV, watching TL films, surfing the Internet, etc.)	68,6%	25,6%	5,8%	13,3%	19,9%	256

Table 4.60: Perceived frequency of effort in learning the TL in question

An overwhelming majority of learners (82,7%) said that if the teacher asked the class a question, they always tried to think of the right answer (item 2), and a clear majority (61%) said that if they didn't know the TL word for something, they always tried to find out what it was (item 4). In a way, the fact that these two items were quite popular was to be expected, since they were mostly related to general attentiveness in class and willingness to learn, but they did not generally entail any great amount of effort or any concrete action.

For the remainder of items, learners seemed to perceive themselves as making an effort, although they seemed to be on the whole most positively disposed towards those items which needed less concrete effort. Thus, the majority of learners said that when the teacher asked them, they made an effort to talk in the TL in class (item 8), fewer learners said they wrote down new TL words in a notebook so that they could remember them

(item 5), and even fewer said they put as much effort as possible into doing their TL homework (item 6). Learners seemed positively disposed towards item 3 ('If I don't understand something we are learning in this [TL] class, I ask for help'), but on the whole it seems that in the majority of cases (57,2%) they usually or never asked for such help. This state of affairs was even more acute for item 7 ('When I get my FL/SL class homework back, I look carefully at my mistakes and the teacher's comments'), with 19,3% of learners saying that they never looked at their mistakes or their teacher's comments. I consider this percentage to be rather alarming, as it clearly indicates the need for teachers to better communicate to their students the significance of the homework they assign them, and the purpose of teacher comments and feedback. Correcting homework and spending long hours writing helpful comments is pointless if nobody benefits from it.

Furthermore, the majority of learners said they usually made an effort to think about what they had learned in their (FL/SL) classes (item 1), and tried to learn things off by heart which they knew would be useful. One of the most disturbing findings of this section was related to item 10, where learners said how often they looked for chances of speaking, reading or listening to the TL in question outside school (e.g. meeting TL students or tourists, watching satellite/cable TV, watching TL films, surfing the Internet, etc.). As one can see from Table 4.60, slightly more than two thirds of the learners (i.e. 68,6%) said they never did so, 25,6% said they usually did so, and only 5,8% always did so. These percentages arguably show that although learners seemed disposed to make some effort in LL, the majority of them were not motivated enough to look for chances of furthering their TL proficiency outside the classroom. Such an effort would be proof of a truly successful autonomous learner who enjoys their LL and seek to further their proficiency in their TL in personally relevant ways.

Interestingly, the second part of Table 4.60, which contains three columns which are related to how learner beliefs changed during the year, shows us that in general learners said they were making relatively less – or at best approximately the same amount of – effort as far as items 1 to 9 were concerned, but more as far as item 10 was concerned. These findings caused me a degree of unease at first sight, as they seemed to indicate that although the effect of one year using the ELP increased the learners'

autonomous effort outside the classroom, it also seemed to have a negative effect on the effort expended inside the classroom. However, following a close examination of the parts of learner interviews where learners mentioned how their perspectives had changed during the year, it seems that at least some learners came to realise through their use of the language biography of the ELP that they had initially been prone to overestimate both their proficiency in the TL and the effort they were making. As a result, findings based on this section can be offered here only as an indication and not as evidence of how learner effort changed in class during the year. Item 10 seemed to be less affected by this 'constraint', since the majority of learners said that they never looked for chances of speaking, reading or listening to the TL in question outside school in round a). As a result, the positive change is more likely to have been true and not a matter of a change in the perspectives of learners.

Substantial further proof to that effect can be found in the almost two thousand scanned samples of learner material submitted for inclusion in the project site, more than a third of which was produced outside class time without teacher input, and at times without direct relevance to the material covered in class (cf. section 4.4.8) and in the open-ended questionnaire findings contained in the following section.

4.4.3. End-of-year open-ended questionnaire findings from all participating learners

This section contains a summary of the findings related to the EE1-based questionnaire assessing whether learners:

- generally liked working with the ELP or not and why;
- found it helped them and how;
- had a favourite section and why;
- had a least favourite section and why;
- had focussed on a specific skill in their class more than others and ticked one to five skills;
- had enjoyed setting their own goals or not and why;
- did any goal-setting in other subjects.

Findings related to each of these research questions are presented in the tables that follow (cf. further findings in sections 4.4.4-4.4.9). Each table is followed by a brief commentary. Although it was initially envisaged that we would be able to further substantiate the findings statistically through chi square (X^2) tests of independence, in the great majority of cases this was not possible owing to the elaborate coding schemes employed, which resulted in minimum expected counts at times being below five, thus precluding the use of X^2 tests.

Table 4.61 offers a gender breakdown of learner responses to the question of whether they liked working with the ELP or not. As we can see, the majority of learners (60,2%) liked working with the ELP, some learners expressed mixed feelings, and approximately only one in four learners did not. Boys were slightly more positive in their responses, although no significant differences were observed between genders.

Do you like working with the ELP in your class? * Learner's sex Crosstabulation					
			Learner's sex		Total
			boy	girl	
Do you like working with the ELP in your class?	No	Count	27	43	70
		% within Learner's sex	22,9%	27,6%	25,5%
	I am not sure	Count	17	22	39
		% within Learner's sex	14,4%	14,1%	14,2%
	Yes	Count	74	91	165
		% within Learner's sex	62,7%	58,3%	60,2%
Total		Count	118	156	274
		% within Learner's sex	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.61: Do you like working with the ELP in your class? * Learner's sex Crosstabulation

Table 4.62 offers a breakdown of learner responses according to TL studied. On the basis of this, it seems learners of Irish were the ones who were least favourably disposed to the ELP with only half of them saying they liked working with it, while learners of Italian and French were the most favourably disposed to it. This finding may indicate that the general attitudes learners expressed towards their TL and activities related to LL (cf.

discussion in section 4.4.2 above) seem to also have affected – or at least generally correlated with – how much they said they liked the ELP.

Do you like working with the ELP in your class? * Target Language Crosstabulation							
			Target Language				Total
			Irish	French	German	Italian	
Do you like working with the ELP in your class?	No	Count	40	16	11	3	70
		% within Target Language	34,8%	17,8%	22,4%	15,0%	25,5%
	I am not sure	Count	16	10	10	3	39
		% within Target Language	13,9%	11,1%	20,4%	15,0%	14,2%
	Yes	Count	59	64	28	14	165
		% within Target Language	51,3%	71,1%	57,1%	70,0%	60,2%
Total		Count	115	90	49	20	274
		% within Target Language	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.62: Do you like working with the ELP in your class? * Target Language Crosstabulation

Table 4.63 offers an overview of learner responses to whether or not they liked working with the ELP, broken down by class year. On the basis of this we can see that senior cycle learners seemed to like working with the ELP more in comparison to junior cycle learners. Additionally, 3rd-year learners who were preparing for their Junior Certificate examination were the ones least favourably disposed to it, possibly as a result of the time pressure they felt they were under in order to 'cover more of' the exam material, just like the rest of the classes in their school did (cf. also section 4.4.5).

		Class year						Total
		1st year	2nd year	3rd year	Transition year	5th year	2nd year Post-Leaving Cert	
Do you like working with the ELP in your class?	No	29	28	8	2	0	3	70
		31,9%	21,2%	44,4%	18,2%	,0%	20,0%	25,5%
	I am not sure	13	19	4	0	1	2	39
		14,3%	14,4%	22,2%	,0%	14,3%	13,3%	14,2%
	Yes	49	85	6	9	6	10	165
		53,8%	64,4%	33,3%	81,8%	85,7%	66,7%	60,2%

Total	91	132	18	11	7	15	274
	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.63: Do you like working with the ELP in your class? * Class Year Crosstabulation

Table 4.64 offers an overview of learner responses to the question of whether they liked working with the ELP or not, cross-tabulated with the reasons they mentioned for doing so. The positive reasons contained here in a way replicated the positive findings of EE1 (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, pp.39-40). Note, however, that the current findings acquire particular importance in the light of the fact that they were not based only on the positive reasons for which learners liked working with the ELP, but also on the negative reasons which made learners not to like working with it. As one can see from the table, many more positive rather than negative reasons were mentioned, although learners were actively prompted to mention negative reasons in an effort to understand which parts of the ELP could be further optimised and how and to inform pedagogy (cf. discussion in Chapters 3 and 6). As in all the open-ended parts of this questionnaire, each learner was allowed to write as many related reasons as they wanted to in bullet-point or in paragraph format. Following a codification of responses, it seems that each of the learners justified their opinions with up to three different reasons for every question asked. The codification employed replicates any observed conceptual overlaps in the learners' responses.

In summary, most (n=140) of the 274 learners who responded to this question cited one main reason for liking or not liking the ELP. Forty learners mentioned no specific reasons for their opinions, while seventy learners mentioned two and ten learners mentioned three reasons. All the reasons cited have been aggregated into Table 4.64 and are briefly discussed below.

By far the most frequently cited reason was that the ELP 'helps me learn this TL/makes learning easier'. This reason in a way mirrored the observed success the ELP had in this project in 'scaffolding' LL. Mainly through the elaborate language biography which structured and organised their learning and through the ELP dossier which provided an added incentive to produce more work in the TL and have an overview of one's achievements in hand, learners arguably started to experience LL as something modular and attainable, which was not as difficult as they initially thought it would be.

Most of them said that it helped them to become more effective language learners, capable of self-assessment and personally relevant goal-setting (cf. also Appendix D). The validity of this point is further reinforced by the fact that the second and third most frequent reasons cited were: 'It helps with revision/helps me see what I know and what I need to learn' and: 'It helps with goal-setting/monitoring and self-evaluation', which are closely related to a perceived improvement in study structure, modular goal-setting and self-assessment, and by extension strategies closely linked to the practices followed by autonomous learners.

Do you like working with the ELP in your class? Why? 'Aggregate' cross-tabulation	**No**	**I am not sure**	**Yes**	**N**
1. No reason given	4	5	31	40
2. It helps me learn this TL/makes learning easier	0	5	59	64
3. It's fun	0	1	22	23
4. It helps with goal-setting/monitoring and self-evaluation	0	2	28	30
5. It's *not* the textbook	0	0	6	6
6. It gives a sense of creativity/helps me be creative	0	2	7	9
7. It allows learning at my own pace	0	0	1	1
8. It allows choice of activity	0	1	16	17
9. It involves other languages/subjects	0	0	0	0
10. It is motivating	0	0	0	0
11. It helps with revision/helps me see what I know and what I need to learn	0	3	38	41
12. It is time-saving	0	0	2	2
13. It acknowledges *my* feelings/It helps me identify what *I* want to learn	0	0	8	8
14. It makes me work more/harder/do my best	4	2	5	11
15. It does not help me learn this TL/make learning easier	8	1	0	9
16. It is boring	9	0	2	11
17. It has no importance for my final exam grade	2	2	0	4
18. It is a bit confusing/difficult to understand	15	3	1	19
19. It is too big/bulky	10	3	4	17
20. We rarely use it	6	1	2	9
21. It is time-consuming/distracts from exams (e.g. JC)	17	3	0	20
22. I don't like anything related to this TL, including the ELP	6	3	0	9
TOTALS	81	37	232	350

Table 4.64: Do you like working with the ELP in your class? * 'Aggregate reasons why' Crosstabulation

Arguably, one can also see from this table that at least some of the learners started acknowledging their ownership of the responsibility for their learning while using the ELP, since they said that they liked the ELP because it acknowledged *their own* feelings and helped them identify what *they* wanted to learn. Five of the learners were quite emphatic about this last point, using additional colours, underlining or highlighting personal references, or adding exclamation marks to show their feelings.

In general, learners' responses show that they had positive attitudes towards the ELP, finding it fun and helpful. Summarising the most frequent remarks learners made, one sees that many said that they enjoyed the fact that it added an element of variety to their classes, an element not linked to the ever-present textbook, as well as that it made them feel creative, helped them with their revision, fostered choice of activities, and helped them become better focused on what they needed to improve on, etc.

However, an interesting additional finding is that even some of the learners who said they did not like – or had mixed feelings about – working with the ELP, were keen to acknowledge some of the benefits they had experienced in using it. Tellingly, some learners mentioned how it made them 'work harder and learn more', which they felt was not good. Table 4.64 shows this quite graphically.

Furthermore, a number of learners said they liked working with the ELP in general terms but after stating so went on to pinpoint only the things they found problematic about it. This was partially caused by my anxiety to better identify any parts of the ELP learners felt could be made better or more functional. Thus, during the questionnaire administration, in four different classes I was asked about what they should write, if they generally liked working with the ELP but could not think of a reason why. I said they could write about what *they* thought of the ELP and add what they thought *could be made better* in it. As a result, for instance, a number of learners observed that they liked the ELP, but also said they felt the folder was too big to fit in their bags, or that it was flimsy, or that the language biography was too big/too boring. Most of the suggestions learners made through this question (such as changes to the binder which contained the ELP, to the colour scheme employed in the design of the ELP, etc.) were also made in learner interviews, and thus have been indexed in the table but are not discussed further in this section.

Out of all the learner participants, only nine mentioned that they did not think the ELP helped them to learn the TL as a reason. The rest of the learners who said that they did not like the ELP mentioned reasons related to the physical size and shape of the ELP, the substantial length of its language biography which made it a bit confusing to them, feelings of boredom, concerns about their grades, or the fact that they found using the ELP time-consuming. This latter reason seems to indicate the negative wash-back effect final exams arguably have on post-primary education in Ireland. Exams tend to be considered such an important indication of success in a subject, that they can overshadow other considerations in a language classroom and generate feelings of anxiety in learners, parents and teachers.

Additionally, it seems that learners who said they rarely used the ELP, tended to like it the least and find it the least helpful. It seems that for the ELP to be successfully implemented and not to be seen as an extra chore by the learners, it has to be used as an integral part of a class routine, and not as an add-on to be used rarely.

One further reason deserves to be discussed separately. Nine learners expressed negative attitudes towards the TL they were studying, and mentioned they didn't like anything related to it. Some of them mentioned that they hated being in the classroom, or that they had no interest in the TL whatsoever and/or that they did just enough to stay out of trouble. These learners resented the ELP as well, as they simply saw it as extra work related to something they did not like. These responses were related to Irish, French and German, but not Italian. A closer look at how responses were dispersed among different groups of learners indicates that the reason for this seemed to lie not in the TLs themselves, but in the degree of choice learners had in selecting which language they would study. They were observed in junior cycle classes from three schools where learners had severely restricted choice in deciding which TLs they would take up. School 13 followed a policy of having its 1st-year students take two obligatory FLs for a 'taster year'. At the end of the year, they all had to choose which of the two TLs they liked the most and which they liked the least, and subsequently continue studying only the TL they liked the most. Five learners from that school mentioned that they did not like their TL at all, which might be an indication that the system followed did not make learners positively disposed towards LL and plurilingualism.

Finally, no learners mentioned items 9 and 10, but they have been included here for comparability purposes. Thus, it was observed that many learners mentioned similar – or even the same – reasons when they justified their answers both to 'why they liked/did not like working with the ELP in their class' and to 'why they thought the ELP might actually help them – or not – to learn the TL'. As a result, the same codification and presentation system was employed for Tables 4.64 and 4.68, which contain 'aggregated reason' cross-tabulations for both items.

Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL? * Learner's sex Crosstabulation					
			Learner's sex		Total
			boy	girl	
Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL?	No	Count	17	34	51
		% within Learner's sex	14,9%	22,5%	19,2%
	I am not sure	Count	11	13	24
		% within Learner's sex	9,6%	8,6%	9,1%
	Yes	Count	86	104	190
		% within Learner's sex	75,4%	68,9%	71,7%
Total		Count	114	151	265
		% within Learner's sex	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.65: Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL? * Learner's sex Crosstabulation

Table 4.65 offers a breakdown according to gender of learner's thoughts on whether or not the ELP might help them learn their TL. As we can see, the majority of learners (71,7%) responded positively to this question. This percentage is larger than the equivalent one documenting whether or not learners liked working with the ELP (cf. discussion above). Arguably, this minor disparity in the two percentages shows that a number of the learners who either did not enjoy or had mixed feelings about how they liked working with the ELP recognised the potential it had for helping them to learn their TL. This was also mirrored in the reasons they gave to justify their opinions, which were substantially more positive for this item. Once again, boys were slightly more positive in their responses, although not significantly so.

Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL? * Target Language Crosstabulation							
			Target Language				Total
			Irish	French	German	Italian	
Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL?	No	Count	28	14	7	2	51
		% within Target Language	24,8%	16,3%	14,6%	11,1%	19,2%
	I am not sure	Count	11	6	6	1	24
		% within Target Language	9,7%	7,0%	12,5%	5,6%	9,1%
	Yes	Count	74	66	35	15	190
		% within Target Language	65,5%	76,7%	72,9%	83,3%	71,7%
Total		Count	113	86	48	18	265
		% within Target Language	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.66: Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL? * Target Language Crosstabulation

Table 4.66 offers a breakdown of responses according to TL studied. In general, this table shows that learners across TLs found the ELP helpful. However, learners of Irish were the ones who found the ELP the least helpful. As suggested earlier, this may be related to the negative attitudes to Irish which they had expressed even as early as round a).

		Class year						Total
		1st year	2nd year	3rd year	Transition year	5th year	2nd year Post-Leaving Cert	
Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL?	No	18	23	7	1	0	2	51
		20,7%	17,8%	38,9%	9,1%	,0%	13,3%	19,2%
	I am not sure	13	8	2	0	1	0	24
		14,9%	6,2%	11, 1%	,0%	20,0%	,0%	9,1%
	Yes	56	98	9	10	4	13	190
		64,4%	76,0%	50,0%	90,9%	80,0%	86,7%	71,7%
Total		87	129	18	11	5	15	265
		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.67: Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL? * Class Year Crosstabulation

Table 4.67 offers a breakdown of responses according to class year. From this table one can see that learners across years found the ELP helpful, but also that senior cycle learners seemed to think more so in comparison to junior cycle learners. Once again, 3rd-year learners gave the least positive responses in comparison to all other years (cf. discussion of probable causes above and in section 5.4.13 below).

Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn this TL? Why? 'Aggregate' cross-tabulation	No	I am not sure	Yes	N
1. No reason given	6	0	8	14
2. It helps me learn this TL/makes learning easier	1	1	44	50
3. It's fun	0	0	6	6
4. It helps with goal-setting/monitoring and self-evaluation	1	2	70	73
5. It's *not* the textbook	0	0	1	1
6. It gives a sense of creativity/helps me be creative	0	0	4	4
7. It allows learning at my own pace	0	0	0	0
8. It allows choice of activity	0	0	5	5
9. It involves other languages/subjects	0	0	2	2
10. It is motivating	0	0	1	1
11. It helps with revision/helps me see what I know and what I need to learn	0	4	76	80
12. It is time-saving	0	0	0	0
13. It acknowledges *my* feelings/It helps me identify what *I* want to learn	0	0	12	12
14. It makes me work more/harder/do my best	0	0	14	14
15. It does not help me learn this TL/make learning easier	22	2	1	25
16. It is boring	1	0	0	1
17. It has no importance for my final exam grade	0	0	0	0
18. It is a bit confusing/difficult to understand	5	2	0	7
19. It is too big/bulky	3	0	1	4
20. We rarely use it	6	5	1	12
21. It is time-consuming/distracts from exams (e.g. JC)	4	0	1	5
22. I don't like anything related to this TL, including the ELP	2	0	0	2
TOTALS	51	16	251	318

Table 4.68: Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL? * 'Aggregate reasons' Crosstabulation

Table 4.68 shows that learners generally exhibited the same positive tendencies as those presented in Table 4.64. However, Table 4.68 differs from Table 4.64 in that learners tended to use proportionately more positive reasons to justify their opinions. Also,

learners tended to base their responses on reasons which were more specific/concrete than general. A telling example of this state of affairs was that the greatest change in responses was observed in relation to item 13, 'it acknowledges *my* feelings/it helps me identify what *I* want to learn'. Eighty learners mentioned this reason, compared to forty-one who did so in justification to their opinions in question one. These eighty learners corresponded to a large percentage of the learner sample.

Most favourite ELP sections: * Learner's sex Crosstabulation					
			Learner's sex		Total
			boy	Girl	
Most favourite ELP sections:	Language Passport	Count	4	7	11
		% within Learner's sex	4,3%	5,3%	4,9%
	Language Biography	Count	20	26	46
		% within Learner's sex	21,3%	19,7%	20,4%
	Dossier	Count	44	73	117
		% within Learner's sex	46,8%	55,3%	51,8%
	I like no particular section best	Count	10	9	19
		% within Learner's sex	10,6%	6,8%	8,4%
	I like all sections equally	Count	11	11	22
		% within Learner's sex	11,7%	8,3%	9,7%
	Pa+Bi	Count	1	0	1
		% within Learner's sex	1,1%	,0%	,4%
	Pa+Do	Count	1	0	1
		% within Learner's sex	1,1%	,0%	,4%
	Bi+Do	Count	3	6	9
		% within Learner's sex	3,2%	4,5%	4,0%
Total		Count	94	132	226
		% within Learner's sex	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.69: Most favourite ELP sections: * Learner's sex Crosstabulation

This finding is particularly significant as it indicates that learners perceived the discernibly positive contribution of the ELP in the development of learner autonomy in LL. It reinforces the positive findings presented earlier gleaned from the 'perceived autonomy support' questionnaire and establishes more firmly that learners started acknowledging their ownership of responsibility for their learning while using the ELP, since they said that they liked the ELP because it acknowledged *their own* feelings and

helped them identify what *they* wanted to learn. Learners felt arguably more respected and able to provide input to the things they would focus their study on. These positive attitudes were further substantiated through the views learners expressed in their interviews (cf. relevant discussion below).

Most favourite ELP sections: * Target Language Crosstabulation							
			Target Language				Total
			Irish	French	German	Italian	
Most favourite ELP sections:	Language Passport	Count	2	3	5	1	11
		% within Target Language	2,2%	3,9%	11,1%	8,3%	4,9%
	Language Biography	Count	24	15	5	2	46
		% within Target Language	26,1%	19,5%	11,1%	16,7%	20,4%
	Dossier	Count	42	43	27	5	117
		% within Target Language	45,7%	55,8%	60,0%	41,7%	51,8%
	I like no particular section best	Count	7	8	2	2	19
		% within Target Language	7,6%	10,4%	4,4%	16,7%	8,4%
	I like all sections equally	Count	14	4	2	2	22
		% within Target Language	15,2%	5,2%	4,4%	16,7%	9,7%
	Pa+Bi	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		% within Target Language	,0%	1,3%	,0%	,0%	,4%
	Pa+Do	Count	0	0	1	0	1
		% within Target Language	,0%	,0%	2,2%	,0%	,4%
	Bi+Do	Count	3	3	3	0	9
		% within Target Language	3,3%	3,9%	6,7%	,0%	4,0%
Total		Count	92	77	45	12	226
		% within Target Language	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.70: Most favourite ELP sections: * Target Language Crosstabulation

Table 4.68 offers an overview of learner responses to the question of whether they thought the ELP might actually help them to learn their TL or not, cross-tabulated with the reasons they mentioned for saying so. The positive reasons contained here replicated

and extended the positive findings of EE1 (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, pp.40-1). In summary, most (n=179) of the 265 learners that responded to this question cited one main reason for finding or not finding the ELP helpful. Fourteen learners mentioned no specific reasons for their opinions, while fifty-five learners mentioned two and five learners mentioned three reasons. All the reasons mentioned have been aggregated into Table 4.68 and are briefly discussed below.

		Class year						Total
		1st year	2nd year	3rd year	Transition year	5th year	2nd year Post-Leaving Cert	
Most favourite ELP sections:	Language Passport	4	6	0	0	0	1	11
		5,4%	5,4%	,0%	,0%	,0%	9,1%	4,9%
	Language Biography	18	21	4	1	0	2	46
		24,3%	18,9%	22,2%	11,1%	,0%	18,2%	20,4%
	Dossier	32	63	10	6	1	5	117
		43,2%	56,8%	55,6%	66,7%	33,3%	45,5%	51,8%
	I like no particular section best	8	5	4	0	0	2	19
		10,8%	4,5%	22,2%	,0%	,0%	18,2%	8,4%
	I like all sections equally	12	7	0	1	2	0	22
		16,2%	6,3%	,0%	11,1%	66,7%	,0%	9,7%
	Pa+Bi	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
		,0%	,9%	,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	,4%
	Pa+Do	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
		,0%	,9%	,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	,4%
	Bi+Do	0	7	0	1	0	1	9
		,0%	6,3%	,0%	11,1%	,0%	9,1%	4,0%
Total		74	111	18	9	3	11	226
		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.71: Most favourite ELP sections: * Class Year Crosstabulation

Tables 4.69, 4.70 and 4.71 offer an overview of which sections of the ELP learners identified as their most favourite ones, broken down by gender, TL studied and class year. Although a number of small differences seemed to emerge between groups, we were not able to pinpoint large differences in responses between groups which would depict a consistent group tendency not related to chance. This state of affairs was caused

largely by the small number of learners involved in each of the groups examined, as well as by the fact that only 226 out of 274 learners answered this question.

In general terms, the dossier seemed the most favourite section of most learners (51,8%), with the language biography being the favourite section of 20,4% of the learners, and the language passport appearing to be the least favourite part of the ELP, being the favourite section of only 4,9% of the learners. A small number of learners said they favoured two of the three sections, while 41 learners said they liked all sections equally or liked no particular section best.

Least favourite ELP sections: * Learner's sex Crosstabulation

			Learner's sex		Total
			boy	girl	
Least favourite ELP sections:	Language Passport	Count	6	14	20
		% within Learner's sex	8,6%	14,3%	11,9%
	Language Biography	Count	33	33	66
		% within Learner's sex	47,1%	33,7%	39,3%
	Dossier	Count	7	14	21
		% within Learner's sex	10,0%	14,3%	12,5%
	I dislike no particular section	Count	12	27	39
		% within Learner's sex	17,1%	27,6%	23,2%
	I dislike all sections equally	Count	3	5	8
		% within Learner's sex	4,3%	5,1%	4,8%
	Pa+Bi	Count	8	5	13
		% within Learner's sex	11,4%	5,1%	7,7%
	Pa+Do	Count	1	0	1
		% within Learner's sex	1,4%	,0%	,6%
Total		Count	70	98	168
		% within Learner's sex	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.72: Least favourite ELP sections: * Learner's sex Crosstabulation

Tables 4.72, 4.73 and 4.74 offer an overview of which sections of the ELP learners identified as their least favourite ones, broken down by gender, TL studied and year. Only 168 learners answered this question. In general terms, the language biography seemed the least favourite section of most of the learners (39,3%), with the dossier being the least favourite section of 12,5% of the learners and the language passport the least

favourite section of only 11,9% of the learners. A small number of learners said they liked the least two of the three ELP sections (note also that *no* learners mentioned liking the least the 'language biography plus dossier' combination). Furthermore, 23,2% of the learners said 'they disliked no particular section of the ELP'. This compares quite favourably to the 4,8% of the learners who said 'they disliked all sections equally'.

Least favourite ELP sections: * Target Language Crosstabulation

			Target Language				Total
			Irish	French	German	Italian	
Least favourite ELP sections:	Language Passport	Count	3	7	10	0	20
		% within Target Language	4,6%	12,3%	26,3%	,0%	11,9%
	Language Biography	Count	24	27	12	3	66
		% within Target Language	36,9%	47,4%	31,6%	37,5%	39,3%
	Dossier	Count	8	7	6	0	21
		% within Target Language	12,3%	12,3%	15,8%	,0%	12,5%
	I dislike no particular section	Count	19	8	8	4	39
		% within Target Language	29,2%	14,0%	21,1%	50,0%	23,2%
	I dislike all sections equally	Count	3	3	1	1	8
		% within Target Language	4,6%	5,3%	2,6%	12,5%	4,8%
	Pa+Bi	Count	8	4	1	0	13
		% within Target Language	12,3%	7,0%	2,6%	,0%	7,7%
	Pa+Do	Count	0	1	0	0	1
		% within Target Language	,0%	1,8%	,0%	,0%	,6%
Total		Count	65	57	38	8	168
		% within Target Language	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.73: Least favourite ELP sections: * Target Language Crosstabulation

An overview of the findings contained in Tables 4.61 to 4.74 shows that learners were in generally positively disposed towards the ELP as a whole. Also attitudes to each individual section seemed to be largely positive. This finding is particularly important as it replicated the EE1 findings (Ushioda and Ridley 2002, pp.41-2) and further extended

them in the sense that in this research project we focus not only on positive but also on negative attitudes and attempt a comparison of the two.

		Class year						Total
		1st year	2nd year	3rd year	Transition year	5th year	2nd year Post-Leaving Cert	
Least favourite ELP sections:	Language Passport	4	14	1	1	0	0	20
		7,7%	15,2%	11,1%	20,0%	,0%	,0%	11,9%
	Language Biography	13	40	6	3	0	4	66
		25,0%	43,5%	66,7%	60,0%	,0%	44,4%	39,3%
	Dossier	6	14	0	1	0	0	21
		11,5%	15,2%	,0%	20,0%	,0%	,0%	12,5%
	I dislike no particular section	22	12	0	0	1	4	39
		42,3%	13,0%	,0%	,0%	100,0%	44,4%	23,2%
	I dislike all sections equally	3	3	1	0	0	1	8
		5,8%	3,3%	11,1%	,0%	,0%	11,1%	4,8%
	Pa+Bi	4	8	1	0	0	0	13
		7,7%	8,7%	11,1%	,0%	,0%	,0%	7,7%
	Pa+Do	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
		,0%	1,1%	,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%	,6%
Total		52	92	9	5	1	9	168
		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Table 4.74: Least favourite ELP sections: * Class Year Crosstabulation

Tables 4.75 to 4.77 offer an overview of which language skills learners ticked in order to indicate they focussed more on them in their classes, broken down by gender, TL studied and year. Forty learners did not tick any specific item and wrote comments such as 'all equally/all/I am not sure/more or less all'. Hence their responses did not inform the findings. In general, learner responses indicated that writing seemed to be the most prominent focus in project classes, while listening and reading were also ticked by many learners. It seems that the least focussed upon language skills were the ones related to speaking, namely spoken interaction and spoken production. This state of affairs might be linked to the relatively limited input speaking has in Irish post-primary public exams. Especially in the JC, the oral part of the examination was still optional at the time of writing up this thesis (October 2005), and most schools did not hold it at all (cf.

discussion in sections 2.2 and 2.3 above). A further analysis of responses indicated that the between-groups variation observed was mostly school and class-based and as such it will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

	Learner sex		Total
Language Skill focus	**Boy**	**Girl**	N=274
Listening	87	102	189
Reading	75	92	167
Spoken interaction	63	83	146
Spoken production	52	57	109
Writing	98	136	234

Table 4.75: Language Skill Focus * Learner's sex Crosstabulation

	Target language				Total
Language Skill focus	**Irish**	**French**	**German**	**Italian**	N=274
Listening	82	61	37	9	189
Reading	76	56	25	10	167
Spoken interaction	61	37	33	15	146
Spoken production	41	31	23	14	109
Writing	105	82	38	9	234

Table 4.76: Language Skill Focus * Target Language Crosstabulation

	Class year						Total
Language Skill focus	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**TY**	**5th**	**2PLC**	N=274
Listening	77	76	17	8	7	4	189
Reading	49	89	11	8	6	4	167
Spoken interaction	45	73	2	9	2	15	146
Spoken production	37	47	4	7	2	12	109
Writing	83	116	16	8	7	4	234

Table 4.77: Language Skill Focus * Class Year Crosstabulation

Tables 4.78 to 4.80 offer an overview of learner responses related to goal setting, broken down by gender, TL studied and year. Learners were asked whether they did any goal-setting in other subjects or not. Furthermore, they were asked to say whether they had enjoyed setting their own goals through the help of the ELP or not and why. Only 22 out

of 274 learners (i.e. approximately 8%) said they did any goal-setting in other subjects. This represents a distressingly small percentage of the learner population, especially in the light of research which shows the benefits of practices of enhanced learner autonomy (cf. e.g. section 2.4.2 above).

In answer to the second question, the vast majority of learners said they enjoyed setting their goals through the ELP and found such goal-setting to be important. The reasons they gave in support of their opinions varied. Some learners mentioned more than one reason to justify their opinions. By far the two most frequent reasons mentioned by the learners were that 'it is useful in language learning' (n=119) and that 'it helps you organise yourself more' (n=112). Although nine of the learners who mentioned these reasons also expressed their unease about the fact that setting one's own goals 'is/can be too time consuming', responses on the whole suggest that learners clearly felt they benefited from their participation in the goal-setting involved in LL.

Two more related reasons mentioned by a sizeable number of learners were that 'it gives you (more) freedom/independence' (n=50) and that 'it is (more) fun' (n=23). These reasons reinforce the positive attitude formation that autonomous practices such as participation in goal-setting can have in a classroom. Finally, 55 learners either gave no specific reason for their opinions or gave reasons I coded under this heading, such as 'I really think it is important'.

Goal setting	**Learner sex**		**Total**
N of learners who said 'yes'	**Boy**	**Girl**	
Perceived frequency in other subjects	13	9	22
It is important-No specific reason	27	28	55
It gives you (more) freedom/independence	23	27	50
It is (more) fun	5	18	23
It is useful in language learning	47	72	119
It helps you organise yourself more	47	65	112
It is too time consuming	4	5	9
It is too difficult for students/ teachers know better	4	5	9

Table 4.78: Goal setting * Learner's sex Crosstabulation

Goal setting	Target language				Total
N of learners who said 'yes'	Irish	French	German	Italian	
Perceived frequency in other subjects	13	2	3	4	22
It is important-No specific reason	21	21	10	3	55
It gives you (more) freedom/independence	15	13	19	3	50
It is (more) fun	5	6	12	0	23
It is useful in language learning	48	37	26	8	119
It helps you organise yourself more	52	26	27	7	112
It is too time consuming	7	2	0	0	9
It is too difficult for students/ teachers know better	4	3	2	0	9

Table 4.79: Goal setting* Target Language Crosstabulation

Goal setting	Class year						Total
N of learners who said 'yes'	1st	2nd	3rd	TY	5th	2PLC	
Perceived frequency in other subjects	6	6	1	4	2	3	22
It is important-No specific reason	22	27	1	2	3	0	55
It gives you (more) freedom/independence	9	30	1	5	1	4	50
It is (more) fun	0	20	0	2	0	1	23
It is useful in language learning	35	63	6	5	1	9	119
It helps you organise yourself more	37	55	5	6	1	8	112
It is too time consuming	0	9	0	0	0	0	9
It is too difficult for students/ teachers know better	2	6	1	0	0	0	9

Table 4.80: Goal setting * Class Year Crosstabulation

4.4.4. Researcher's field-notes from classroom observations, seminars and monthly workshops for teachers

This section presents a discussion of findings gathered through a series of observations of the project classes. Although the complexity of what went on in those classrooms defied my best intentions to try and record everything that took place in an objective way (cf. discussion in section 3.9.4), I was able to document in a reasonably adequate way information (and offer appropriate feedback to each teacher participant) in relation to the following:

- learner membership and broad absenteeism trends;

- number of learners of non-Irish origin that were present in the class observed;
- class seating, group- and pair-work trends;
- percentage and functions of use of the TL by the teacher and by the learners;
- discipline issues and how they were dealt with by teachers;
- structure of the lesson in terms of time and textbook and blackboard/whiteboard use;
- further general points not mentioned in the previous sections;
- things to be further examined; and
- teacher's response to the feedback.

Of course the common thread which links all the above aspects in the discussion offered is how the practices of project classes were informed by the use of the ELP and how they changed during the year.

As discussed in the Introduction to the Appendices, Appendix C contains the text of my feedback to each teacher participant following an observation of their class/classes after names and other personal identification references were deleted. However, three additional types of data have informed my understanding of what went on in project classes, but had to be omitted from Appendix C for technical reasons: any handouts given to the class on the day of my visit; emails of teachers which contain references to the classroom observations and my feedback to them; and additional relevant material not contained in the two previous types (e.g. newspaper clippings, realia used during a lesson, and opinions of other teachers and principals on the project's success in their school). Selective references to data which fall into these categories will be made in the discussion of findings which follows.

In general, many different methods of lesson organisation and ELP use were observed in the project classes. The ELP seemed to be optimally effective for those classes and learners that used it more often, and in a more systematic manner. In a way this was to be expected, since what I witnessed in these observations suggested to me that the major facilitative effect of the ELP in LL is that it offers learners the ability to perceive and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, reflect on them and thus understand their nature better, and set modular goals of optimal difficulty. In my opinion, this procedure can be effective only if it is practised systematically in a modular way,

especially since its acquisition is bound to involve some time during which different learners will develop different systems and routines to better suit their own learning styles and preferences. What I witnessed in the project classes convinced me that the learning curve involved in this process can vary widely for different individuals and can be further influenced by other situational factors, such as the approach a teacher adopts in mediating it to his/her learners, etc.

Learner membership in the project classes was quite varied, ranging from two to thirty learners. In general terms, the ELP seemed to assist large and small classes equally well and modify learner attitudes in a positive manner accordingly (cf. discussion on statistical trends in section 4.4.2 above). However, the ability of teachers to offer help focussed on individual learners' or groups' needs during the lesson appeared to be a function of class size and net number of contact hours (after lost lessons were taken into account) per week. This was made obvious both during classroom observations and through opinions expressed in teacher reports. Absenteeism seemed to be a big problem for senior cycle and PLC classes. Especially in PLC classes where attendance was not mandatory, absenteeism was quite high; in the Italian PLC class, it was rare to have a lesson with more than half the registered learners present, whereas in the German class a scheduled observation did not take place as learners did not turn up for the lesson that day.

An issue examined which is related to class membership was the number of learners of non-Irish origin who were members of the classes observed, and how well they integrated into the class. I decided to add this research focus following the pilot project, during which I noticed that there were a few learners in the pilot classes who had just arrived in Ireland and had very limited proficiency in English. These learners obviously had to face additional hurdles to operate effectively as class members. In the pilot project, two of these learners were interviewed and they both expressed very positive views on the ELP and their classes. They seemed to particularly appreciate how the multilingual checklists found in the LAP ELP helped them to use more of the TL in the class, how they felt *less obstructed by their lack of English in the project classes where use of English was not encouraged* (and every learner had to overcome the same problems in order to communicate their thoughts), but also how they could get help in

their effort to become better in their English through their use of the ELP appendix which contained the English translations of the checklists.

In the main part of the project, the proportion of learners of non-Irish origin who had limited proficiency in English was substantially smaller than in the pilot project, as a result of the geographic dispersion of project classes which I had engineered. If the demographics collected in the project database is anything to go by, it seems that migrant communities with children in Irish post-primary education were more populous in urban than in rural areas in the school year 2003-04.

Despite the limitation mentioned above, I was still able to witness how four learners with very limited proficiency in English operated in their TL classes and how well they used the ELP. In general, they very quickly adjusted to their new environment, tended to be quite industrious, and used the ELP approximately as effectively as their peers did. The only marked differences were that they tended to fill in the learner biography sections in a minimalistic fashion, especially during the first half of the year, and that they were not keen to ask for help unless actively encouraged to. This latter state of affairs seems to be a common feature of all learners of this type when they find themselves for the first time in a new school environment where their mother tongue is not a dominant community language (cf. e.g. Baker 2000a; Baker 2000b; 2001; Tabors 1997, p.39). It was observed in our project that three of the four of learners of this kind who participated in this project benefited greatly from a judicious use of the ELP and their teachers' strategic use of pairing/grouping strategies, which enabled them to receive help in a non-face-threatening manner by their peers. Selected further case-specific information related to these learners will be offered in the relevant class-specific sections (cf. Chapter 5).

Class seating arrangements varied at the beginning of the year from learners seated in individual desks which were fixed to the floor, thus making pair- and group-work very difficult, to having learners seated in groups of three or four and frequently engaging in task-based group-work conducted mainly in the TL for at least a third of the lesson. Following a screening of a video exhibiting co-operative learning practices in LL (Thomsen and Gabrielsen 1991) which was followed by a discussion of the merits of small-group work when conducted in the TL and of how the ELP could facilitate the

creation of such a dynamic learning environment, all the teachers introduced more pair- and group-work in their project classes. This becomes particularly evident when one reads my teacher feedback reports related to consecutive observations of the same class side by side. On the basis of this it can be argued that all teachers to a substantial degree recognised the fact that the ELP facilitates group-work of a more autonomous structure and orientation. Furthermore, learners seemed to become more fluent, at ease with using the TL and working in effective groups in their project classes.

Generally speaking, project classes changed in many ways during the year. One of the facets of this change which was made evident through the classroom observations was related to the ratio of use of the TL to use of English inside the classroom. This was exhibited in the fact that the overall percentage of TL use by the teacher and by the learners in relation to total class time tended to become substantially higher. The degree of change was in all but one of the classes markedly greater than what would be expected as a result of learner maturation and expected improvement if the ELP had not been used. Even in the cases where teachers tended to use the TL as the sole language of instruction from the beginning of the year, such a positive change was evident in the way *learners* tended to use the TL a lot more and in more diverse ways towards the end of the year. Vivid examples of this were for instance the marked increase in the use of classroom phrases and other formulaic expressions in the TL – at times borrowed directly from the checklists – which minimised the occurrence of classroom instructions being given in English by the teachers and group leaders during group-work.

Furthermore, the use of the TL was expanded to include a number of additional functions, such as learners asking for permission to do something, asking the teacher or one of their colleagues for help or for further clarification of something said to them and which they had not (entirely) understood, asking for more time to complete a given task, etc. Crucially, teachers used the ELP during the year to facilitate a qualitative change in their classes which fostered maximal TL use for real communication, focussed on themes which were either introduced by or of immediate interest to the learners, such as sports they liked, games they played, ideas they had on certain issues, the weather of the day, hobbies they would like to take up, holidays they had or were about to have, etc. The focus on real communication situated firmly inside the learners' reality was evident in the

fact that, especially in the second half of the project year, even most of the disciplinary issues that had to be faced from time to time were dealt with by teachers in a very quick and natural fashion in the TL, and learners responded to their teachers' admonitions in the TL.

The positive effect of the ELP was not only evident in the lesson aspects mentioned above, but also in the fact that the structure of the lessons in the great majority of the project classes changed to include:

- short reflection sessions where learners exchanged study ideas and learning-how-to-learn tips, ELP-routine tips, etc. (n=18)
- project work parts/activities initiated by the learners (n=8);
- flexible use of the ELP in tandem with one or more textbooks and other learning resources such as video, audio and Internet material (n=13);
- time for the learners to come up with ideas on how to test previously learned material, and how to prepare tests for their class (n=14);
- creative use of the blackboard/whiteboard in order to raise morphological and phonological awareness (n=13).

In addition to the points mentioned above, one of the things which stood out quite clearly was that teachers and learners gradually became more efficient in their management of time and effort expended; in a very real sense, they devised their own customised ways of using the ELP and conducting a lesson which was informed by it and maximal TL use and autonomous work. Of course, the degree to which such maximisation was achieved varied as a result of different personality traits of teachers and learners. What I witnessed in my observations (cf. Appendix C) convinced me of the positive direction of the changes to what went on in the classrooms. However, changes of this type were happening in varying paces. It has to be further noted that *all* teacher participants at the end of the year seemed to have many ideas on how they would 'do things differently' in the coming year, in the face of the experience they gained from the project year. Thus, we would expect to have even more positive results when teachers became more accustomed to the use of the ELP and the types of learning it facilitates. Indeed, evidence towards this expected positive development lies in the fact that the classes of all but one of the teachers who had already been using the ELP for one year

when the project started tended to be more systematic in the manner they used it in class and in how individual learners used it inside and outside the classroom to support their learning.

Learners in project classes also seemed to gradually become more efficient in dealing with problems in their learning and developed coping strategies in order to deal with communication breakdowns. Additionally, although in the beginning of the year most of the teachers seemed to employ humorous devices in varying degrees in order to make their lessons more enjoyable and help their learners to assume a more positive frame of mind, towards the end of the year some of the learners in three classes also started to try and maintain the positive atmosphere of their classes by making use of humorous devices in the TL.

At times, my feedback to the teachers contained not only my observations of what went on in their class/classes, but also minor suggestions and queries related to some ELP-related issues on which I had not been able to form a clear view. These queries were necessitated by two facts. First, some of the lessons I observed were dedicated to specialised purposes such as pre-exam revision before a school-wide mock-exam, or a lesson on a particular element of TL grammar which learners were finding troublesome. Second, there were days where consecutive observations of project classes placed constraints on my ability to look more closely at some of the ELPs in order to get a better idea of how learners were using them at a given time. As teachers generally responded to these queries through their monthly reports and/or in their interviews, they will be discussed in further detail in the relevant sections below.

A further point which is worth mentioning at this point is that, on the basis of what the teacher participants said in their interviews and in their monthly reports, it transpired that most of them found the classroom observations to be helpful as they offered them a second view of and helped them reflect further on the effectiveness of their teaching practices. In fact all the teachers recognised that the observations offered them some thing or other, and all but three were quite enthusiastic about them. The three teachers not wholly in favour of classroom observations who experienced the greatest doubts on how effective in situ classroom observations might be as a way through which they could receive assistance in their reflection on their teaching were also the three newly-qualified

teachers who participated in the project. These three teachers were the only ones who expressed negative (as well as some positive) feelings about the classroom observations, claiming that they felt – or claimed to have discerned – that some of their students viewed them somewhat suspiciously as a result of the observations, probably thinking that their teachers were not yet fully qualified, and were probably trainee teachers fulfilling the obligation of a Higher Diploma in Education for a period of 'monitored' teaching experience.

I must admit that when I designed this research project, I had not anticipated that observations might create such a challenge for newly-qualified teachers. Instead, I tended to think that the notion of classroom observations would be most welcome to newly-qualified teachers, especially since the pre-service teacher training they had just completed employed a great number of observations, making the benefits of such practices more obvious to them than to other participants. On the other hand, I feared that teachers who had been teaching for a longer time might be less likely to welcome classroom observation and related feedback from a younger language teacher such as me with less teaching experience than their own (my teaching career started in June 1992, whereas the teacher participant with the longest teaching experience had been teaching since 1968). However, it seems that teachers with more years of teaching experience were more assured of their place in their school (and possibly of their teaching abilities), and thus were not opposed to and/or threatened by the observation procedure. In fact, I think it seems fair to claim that these teachers responded more actively to my feedback and to suggestions brought forward by other network members during the monthly ELP network support seminars. They did that mostly by encouraging learner autonomy more actively and trying out different teaching techniques and other ideas which may not have been part of their teaching routines before, such as making more active use of certain sections of the ELP to facilitate more TL use, fostering more autonomously oriented group-work, and encouraging self-assessment and goal-setting practised outside the classroom. An example of this latter activity was evidenced in my observation of the developing competence of learners in group-work and by noticing that some of them were adding information they had researched on their own at home in anticipation of a certain descriptor that they saw in their ELP and found particularly interesting, or

important, etc. (cf. also discussion of learner and teacher interviews and teacher end-of-year reflective essays below for further discussion).

4.4.5. Beginning and end-of-year semi-structured interviews with learner sub-samples

As mentioned in section 3.9.5, two types of learner interviews were conducted in this research project. Each type will be discussed below in the following manner: a presentation of the semi-scripted interview scenario which was used to guide the interview, and a very brief discussion of the most important or most striking findings. As for all other research instruments, limitations of space mean that findings which have been presented in earlier sections of the thesis will not be discussed in full.

The first type of interview was developed for one interview conducted at the beginning of the year with learners A & B from class 11, school 11 on 26/9/2003. These learners had started using the ELP the previous year, experienced the benefits of its use and later decided to take it with them as a means of providing more focus and structure to their learning when abroad. Thus, when the interview took place, they had already used the ELP for one whole year: eight months in class, and four months on their own during their trans-national placement in Vienna, Austria. The provisional agenda/semi-scripted scenario of this interview included some questions which examined issues specific to this class, and the trans-national placement. Prior to the interview, I had already visited their class twice during my visits to their school at the piloting phase of this research project. As with all other visits to classes which took place during the pilot phase, no records were kept, since those visits were conducted for me to get a more comprehensive idea of the things which were taking place in different ELP-informed classes and explore possible formats I could employ in recording them.

The second type of interview employed was not class-specific and was employed very near the end of the year the main phase of the project took place (cf. more on this type of interview in the relevant section below).

Learner interview semi-scripted scenario following a trans-national placement during which the ELP was used, followed by discussion of related findings

1. Interview introduction: provisional agenda given to B and A
2. Two minutes free for them to read through the agenda and ask questions, if any (in German or English).
3. *David* introduces himself, his class (duration of the course so far: month the course started, approximate date of ELP introduction to this class).
4. A and B greet TCD and introduce themselves.

Main Interview:

5. Do you like using the ELP in your course? Do you find it helpful? (Yes/No and why)
6. How do you usually use it?
7. How often?
8. Do you think the ELP has helped you learn more German than if you were not using it in your course?

   A) Did it help you organise your learning better?

   B) Did it help you understand your stronger and weaker points in language learning?

   C) Do you think you know how to learn languages better now than you did before?

   D) Do you think you can apply the organising and reflective skills used in the ELP in other things in your life? Where?
9. Did you like going abroad? Why? What did you like best? What did you like least?
10. What did you find particularly interesting?
11. What do you think could be made better in such visits abroad?
12. Do you think more learners should be given the chance to go abroad on such trips? Why?
13. Would you like to go on another trip if you were given the chance? Why?

14. Do you think it is a good idea for learners of a foreign language to visit a country where that language is the main language of communication? Why?
15. Do you think your knowledge of German is better now than before going to Austria? Can you prove it? (Please indicate: ELP pages that contain related information; your own intuitions; accuracy and fluency in German, etc.)
16. Did you use the ELP while you stayed in Austria?
17. How did you use it?
18. How often?
19. Do you think the ELP has helped you learn more German than would have been the case without it? A) Did it help you organise your learning better?
    B) Did it help you understand your stronger and weaker points in language learning?
    C) Do you think you know how to learn languages better now than you did before?
20. Did you use the supplementary *Learning Progress & ELP Use Checklist*? Did you find it helpful? Why/why not?
21. What will you try to achieve in your course this year? Do you think the ELP can help you achieve that? Yes/ No. How?

When the above interview format was developed, I was hoping that the learners would agree to take the interview in German, in which case it would furnish us with not only the learner responses to the various themes examined in the interview, but also with an indication of the learners' ability in spoken interaction after one year of ELP use. To this effect, a German translation of the semi-scripted scenario for the interview was prepared by *David*, their teacher. However, this idea was deemed impractical and had to be abandoned for four reasons: the learners said they would be more comfortable to give the interview in English; it was easier for me to understand what was said in English as my proficiency in English is superior to my proficiency in German; it would arguably be pointless to try and tease out how much of their improvement up to that moment could be attributed to the assistance of the ELP, since the proficiency of the learners must have been greatly affected by their trans-national experience; finally, the learners said they

would not mind if this interview were shown to other teachers/learners who were thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time, and posted to the ELP SN site for all interested to access. As a result, it was agreed that holding the interview in English was the best option, since it would bypass the issues identified above and make it 'maximally accessible' to all teachers and learners in Irish post-primary education (and beyond).

Both learners were interviewed together, whereas in the end-of-year interviews they were interviewed individually, as all other interviewees. Both learners expressed very similar views on most of the questions which were employed in the interview. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the opinions presented depict views they held in common. As for all interviews transcribed for this project, the transcription employed was very broad (cf. Chapter 3 and Appendix G) and some common affirmations made through nodding and/or gestures expressing emphasis, etc. have not been noted. The reader of this thesis may wish to watch the interview along with all those interviews which I was given permission to upload to the ELP SN site (cf. CLCS 2003b).

In general, both learners said they:

- enjoyed working with the ELP, found it showed them their strengths and their weaknesses, and in general helped them self-assess and set personally optimal goals;
- used the ELP *as often as they felt they needed to* in order to make their learning easier;
- reflected on the ELP at home as well as in class;
- felt they had learnt more as a result of their using the ELP, because it made them reflect more on their current level;
- became better in learning languages than before;
- felt the organising skills advocated by the ELP could be applied to any subject;
- enjoyed their trans-national placement and the chance to become immersed in the TL and to use it for real communication;
- found the working culture a bit difficult to cope with, though interesting;
- felt more (financial and general) support should be given to learners travelling abroad, but also that more learners should be given the chance to do so;

- would like to take up another placement, if given the chance, as they liked it and it made them more confident in using the TL and better in listening and in 'understanding dialect';
- used the ELP on their own when abroad (learner A less often than learner B, mostly as a result of time constraints) to keep on track and avoid 'becoming lost in the language' and 'just [...] gently going along', and they kept a diary (in the TL);
- felt the LAP ELP could probably become better if there were 'more examples [i.e. checklist descriptors] of things in B1. We've got five or six per skill [...]. There could have been a part on when you are totally abroad [...]'
- found that other potential modifications to this ELP model could be the addition of visual elements and of more pages fostering reflection;
- believed that all learners learning languages should use it, as it would be beneficial to them, helping them to 'reflect and go forward. Move forward and progress very fast. It's a good way of progressing at a good steady pace through a language [...]'

Most of the positive views expressed by these two learners remained largely stable over time, as evidenced both by their end-of-year interviews and by findings gathered with the rest of the research instruments (cf. also Chapter 5). In the following section, general findings from all learners' end-of-year interviews are presented in brief.

End-of-year learner interview semi-scripted scenario, followed by discussion of related findings

Interview introduction: provisional agenda given to the learner

Two minutes free for the learner to read through the agenda and ask questions.

The learner greets TCD and introduces him/herself.

Main interview:

1. Do you like learning Irish/Italian/French/German/Spanish?
2. Do you like using the ELP in your course? Do you find it helpful? (Yes/No and why)

3. How do you usually use it?
4. How often?
5. How easy do you think it is to judge what you're good at in Irish/Italian/French/ German/Spanish, and what you can do and can't do?
6. Do you think the ELP has helped you learn more Irish/Italian/French/German/Spanish than if you were not using it in your course? How can you tell?

   A) Did it help you organise your learning better?

   B) Did it help you understand your stronger and weaker points in language learning? What are they?

   C) Do you think you know how to learn languages better now than what you did before? Can you prove it? (Please indicate: ELP pages that contain related information; your own intuitions; how you feel your accuracy and fluency in Irish/Italian/French/German/Spanish has changed, etc.)

   D) Of the five language skills contained in the ELP, which one(s) are you best at? What do you find hardest?

   E) Do you think you can apply the organising and reflection skills used in the ELP in other things in your life? Where?
7. What will you try to achieve in your course this year? Do you think the ELP can help you achieve that? Yes/No and How?
8. Do you think the ELP should change in any way to become more effective?
9. Do you think the ELP should be used by all the learners learning foreign languages in Ireland? Yes/No and Why?
10. If you were to give a message to other learners of foreign languages in relation to the ELP, what would it be?
11. What do you think makes a really good ELP?
12. What's your favourite subject in school and why?
13. Did you find this interview: very difficult/ somewhat difficult/ not very difficult/ not at all difficult.
14. Would you like to ask anything?

15. Is it ok with you if parts of this interview are shown to other teachers/ learners who are thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time?

As one can see from this provisional interview scenario, an effort was made to keep the wording employed as simple and straightforward as possible for the benefit of younger learners, and to ensure that there would be no excessive delays caused by learners reading through the agenda and asking many clarification questions. However, as I hope is apparent from the interview videos, I tried to help learners feel at ease and not be intimidated by the video-taping of the interview, while I aimed to facilitate their comprehension of all the questions I asked.

Notwithstanding the above, the overall procedure employed in conducting the interviews was influenced by the learners' degree of extroversion and/or familiarity with being recorded. As a result, findings were by default influenced to a minor degree. Unless a specific reference is made to the number or proportion of interviewees for which a certain finding statement applies, the following findings depict the feelings of the majority of the learners who were interviewed. Because of the nature of the interviews and their qualitative character, the learners were allowed to supply as long answers to a question as they were inclined to, thus precluding the verbatim presentation of such answers in the main body of the thesis (cf. Appendix G). Finally, a lot of the findings gathered from the interviews will not be discussed here as they seemed to depict class-specific tendencies. As a result they will inform the class-specific discussion in Chapter 5.

The findings from learner interviews are presented in brief below, arranged in bullet points which roughly correspond to the questions contained in the semi-scripted scenario offered above. On the basis of the interviews, it appears that:

- learners generally coped well with the relative complexity of some questions, and some of them exhibited greater insight in their responses than I would have expected from their age groups;
- most learners stated they liked learning their TL, considered it generally easier than other TLs and had fun in class, though many recognised that 'language learning can be hard at times'. This arguably felicitous state of affairs was more

emphatically apparent for those learners who had *actively chosen* to learn a certain language over another. On the other hand, three out of the forty-seven learners who were interviewed said they did not like their TLs (two learners of Irish found doing so pointless and/or boring, and one learner of French did not like learning languages but found it necessary in order to enter university); the two learners of Irish mentioned that although they did not like their Irish classes, at least the ELP and the activities they did in and/or for it made those classes more interesting and less boring;

- interviewees liked using the ELP in their course, claimed it made language learning easier and more enjoyable, and thus helped them to learn more. Many learners qualified their statements by adding that it helped them to understand 'what language learning is about' and to improve, with approximately two fifths of them professing their enthusiasm quite emphatically and only two stating that they found it just 'ok', and one more learner stated that he 'just tried out' any system his teacher would use in a class. The reasons learners used to justify their views were mostly related to the way it appeared to them to have assisted, organised and boosted their learning;
- ways of using the ELP ranged in individuality in a pattern which somewhat mirrored how often the ELP was used in their class and could also be mildly correlated with their class year/age. It seems that most learners felt confident enough to customise their use of the ELP in a way which best suited their needs after an initial 'teacher-assisted' familiarisation period which lasted one to three months. Arguably, the teacher's input in inspiring enthusiasm for LL and exhibiting how the ELP could help learners become more effective, etc. seemed to be the single most important element which ultimately affected learner attitudes;
- many learners mentioned that the ELP got a lot easier to use after a while (responses indicated that for different learners this period ranged from one to three months);
- some learners found LL in general and the ELP to be good challenges;
- the most prevalent way of using the ELP to make their learning easier mentioned by learners may be summarised through the following cycle: self-assessment and

recognition of weaker points, goal-setting which was informed by the product of that self-assessment and by the descriptors of the ELP checklist descriptors, nomination of next goal, activities (and homework) carried out in pursuit of that goal, addition of material to their dossiers, reflection on how effective those activities were and what more they needed to do to cover a 'theme/descriptor' completely, testing oneself and testing peers or sitting a teacher-set test to examine how effectively new knowledge was learnt, and finally a beginning of a new learning cycle through self-assessment, etc.;

- a large number of learners claimed the ELP helped them a lot in learning their TL and started to use strategies and skills inspired by it in their other language subjects (they frequently alluded to other foreign and second languages they were learning and somewhat less often English). A further practice mentioned by learners in nine different project classes was to also fill in – to varying degrees – the sections in their ELPs which were related to those languages, thus bringing into existence a truly integrative language curriculum;
- in classes where the teacher had employed many humorous devices while teaching prior to the introduction of the ELP (such as Seán's class), some learners mentioned it helped them learn more/better, and they 'still had a lot of fun';
- in general terms, it appears that learners tended to use the ELP more or less often as a result of the project class they were a member of. It seems plausible to assume that the way each teacher mediated the ELP to their classes and the routines they established in class radically affected the frequency and character of practices learners followed when they used the ELP autonomously. If this assertion is correct then it may also go some way towards explaining why the great majority of learners said that they felt they used the ELP approximately as often as they needed to, regardless of whether they used it once a month or four times a week, with a minority saying they would like to use it oftener and no learner saying they would like to use it less often. On average learners claimed they used the ELP from as often as three or four times a week to as infrequently as once a month or slightly less, with the norm being once a week or slightly

more. Some learners said they recognised the need to use some sections more than others in order to achieve maximum efficiency and best suit their learning styles;

- the learners who were members of classes where LL had been most challenging prior to the beginning of the research project mentioned that they became aware of and were better able to develop survival skills such as using a dictionary in a helpful manner, and mentioned feeling that 'their classes' became easier thanks to the ELP. Additionally, two of the learners – from different schools – who fell into this category mentioned that they now knew what to do 'without working too much', whereas before they viewed LL as needing so much effort that they 'didn't bother';
- most of the interviewees who had won the class prize for 'most improved learner' had usually been among the weakest learners in their classes at the beginning of the year. They mentioned that they were able to improve a lot as they were enabled by the ELP to believe they could become better 'little by little' in a modular way, and they felt they could learn at a pace which suited them better – usually slightly slower than the rest of the class;
- it was felt that it is generally not easy to judge 'what you're good at in the TL and what you can and can't do', but that *it becomes (substantially) easier to self-assess thanks to the checklists and the reflection pages in the language biography.* Thus it was also seen to 'help you notice more things' and 'see clearly what you are up against' in preparation for the public examinations;
- some learners mentioned feeling more successful, less bored and learning more in ELP-informed than in non-ELP classes as they could see even from day one of their learning that there were many things they could do and document in the star system which formed the basis for the LAP ELP checklists (even though some of them with a lot of help; cf. Appendix O and Figure 2.1). Many said that they consequently did their best in their ELP classes. Moreover, favourable comparisons were made by some learners between the learning experiences they had in their project classes and those they had in primary school, previous years, other language classes, other subjects they studied this year, and the learning experiences their siblings and friends had;

- the majority felt that the ELP helped them to learn more of the TL than they would if they had not been not using it in their course (with the exception of two learners who felt that they could not say for certain), and they raised many arguments to justify their opinion. Some attributed this to their using the TL a lot more both in and out of class;
- many said the ELP helped them to organise their learning better and keep track of what they were doing since they kept everything related to their LL together and easily accessible in the ELP folder. However, three learners added that it always 'is up to the learner' to use the ELP truthfully and well to benefit the most;
- most learners mentioned that the ELP enabled them to understand their stronger and weaker points in language learning, intensify and focus their efforts on their weakest points and experience satisfaction from being able to improve on those weak points, rather than lose time in broad revisions of everything they had covered in the project year, which would cover a much greater spectrum than needed; to this effect, all the learners were also able to name their strongest and weakest points in language learning and those of the five language skills they were strongest and weakest in respectively;
- most learners claimed they *knew how to learn languages better* now than they did before, and backed up their claims by providing examples of activities they were able to do in the TL, strategies they had developed or adopted and learning-how-to-learn skills which they had developed, thus making things which were difficult to learn a lot easier. Many maintained their claims were further validated by the improvement in their grades this year, the fun they were able to have while learning, their confidence in using the TL, and the greater ease with which they were able to acquire different skills in the TL. Some also indicated ELP pages that contained relevant information or alluded to parts of their dossier which I had already seen during my previous visits to their classes or on the ELP SN site; furthermore, approximately half the respondents made statements indicating that over the time they used the ELP their accuracy in the TL improved and *nearly all* claimed their fluency improved (dramatically so in some cases);

- some learners mentioned that they saw their learning organised around the ELP checklists as more meaningful than textbook-based learning, as they could see its applications immediately;
- they generally felt they could apply the organising and reflection skills used in the ELP in other things in their life. When asked where, most mentioned other languages, a strong minority added other school subjects, while some said they could and/or did start to use this type of organising and modularisation in (learning) everything;
- further to the point raised above, a third-year learner of French made the impressive claim that he found the ELP so helpful in learning French that he *independently developed* an ELP of his own for his other favourite subject, English. He said the success of his two ELPs was evident in that French and English were not only his favourite and strongest subjects, but also his grades were highest in these two subjects;
- in answer to the questions 'What will you try to achieve in your course this year?' and 'Do you think the ELP can help you to achieve that? Yes/ No and How?' most learners said they would try to become better/more fluent in the TL, achieve good results in their year-final exams and/or in the Leaving and Junior Certificate, or said they would try to improve on specific points which they had found more challenging this year (e.g. grammatical accuracy, spoken production, vocabulary on a certain theme, etc.);
- somewhat surprisingly, most learners stated that they did not think the ELP should change in any way to become more effective, and said they found it easy to use as it is. Those who said the current model could benefit from some changes, mentioned things like rectifying the flimsiness of the ring binder, making page numbering more prominent and easier to use, adding more colour to make some sections look 'less serious' and more aesthetically appealing, adding space in some pages of the language biography for teachers' opinions, and rewriting the introductory paragraphs of each ELP section to provide more guidance on ELP use and/or some (more) examples;

- an overwhelming majority felt that the ELP should be used by all the learners learning (foreign) languages in Ireland, because they could reap great benefits from doing so. Examples of reasons included: that it would enhance their ability to organise their learning more flexibly, that in the worst-case scenario trying it out could anyhow be no harm, that it could inspire them and boost their learning dramatically, etc. Some learners felt it would also be better for them if all their friends and other classes in their school used the ELP, as they would not be feeling what some described as 'lonely'. Six learners, however, added that only learners who wanted to should use the ELP as it is not something which could help you if you do not *want* to use it and to put some effort into your learning;
- most interviewees did not generally come up with a message to other learners of (foreign/second) languages in relation to the ELP when asked if they would like to do so; those who did, advised others to try it out as it helps and/or its use did not entail any risk and it could offer ideas to make their learning easier, tidier and more enjoyable;
- three learners said (without having been prompted to do so) that they would bring the ELP along with them when on holidays or in future visits to countries where their TL is spoken, as they felt it would be of help to them;
- more than half of the interviewees said that a really good (learner's) ELP is one which shows clearly that its owner has made a consistent effort, is tidy and has put some thought into their learning, and shows improvement. Six learners qualified their statements by saying that the self-assessment and reflection on one's learning *must* be honest if it is to be effective; in that way any mistakes and 'weakest points' can be worked upon and progress made;
- learners mentioned various subjects as being their favourite ones in school, with approximately a third of the interviewees mentioning the subject in which the ELP was used as being their favourite one; the reasons for the opinions expressed were in general too opaque to licence their use in drawing any additional salient general conclusions at this point;
- further to the preceding point, a strong minority of learners mentioned enjoying the fact that they could integrate their art, or themes/activities related to their

favourite pastimes into their language classes. A number of learners also mentioned enjoying using art/drawing and computers to help them reprocess and better remember things they had learnt;

- four learners mentioned that using the ELP every day in their free time and at home along with the textbook, other class material, instructional CD-ROMs, the Internet, etc. in order to learn more, and produced more material for their dossier in an autonomous fashion;
- three learners felt that the main advantage using the ELP had for them was that it 'asked good questions' and made them think (i.e. reflect on their learning) and see how they were doing;
- two learners from different schools who perceived the main function of the ELP to be as a revision tool and not as something which would help them substantially in monitoring their learning and learning in a more effective way, were also the only ones who expressed their concern that the ELP, though 'good', was somewhat 'slowing their classes down';
- all learners found the interview either 'acceptably' or not at all difficult; most learners did not ask questions, while the few who did, did not ask for clarifications of things said earlier in the interview. The questions asked were focussed on the total number of other learners using the ELP in Ireland and in Europe, on the expected impact of this research project in Irish education, on when I thought all students in Ireland would start using the ELP, and on whether or not they could use their ELP in college after their Leaving Certificate. I was pleasantly surprised by this pattern of learner questions as I had known from my classroom observations and from discussions with teachers and principals, that three of the learners interviewed had learning difficulties and attention problems not only in their language classes, but in all the subjects they studied. In fact, I think that it seems justified to argue that all three learners seemed able to generally respond coherently and thoughtfully and in my opinion had made substantial progress in their conversational skills during the year.

The above points aim to capture the essence of the content of learner interviews. I tried to keep my own commentary in them limited in order to let the reader reach their

own conclusions. The reader may wish to also consult Appendix G and/or the videos of those of the interviews we were given permission to upload to the ELP SN site (cf. CLCS 2003b) in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the content of the interviews.

4.4.6. End-of-year semi-structured interviews with all teachers

As with learner interviews which were discussed earlier, teacher interviews in this research project were conducted in order to supplement and further qualify the opinions of teachers collected through other research instruments. As a result, interviews did not follow a strictly set pattern and were only guided by the semi-scripted scenario I had developed for them. Teacher interviews will be generally discussed below in the following manner: a presentation of the interview semi-scripted scenario which formed the backbone of the interview, and a very brief discussion of the most important or most striking findings. A conscious effort was made to include as many common questions as possible in the learner and teacher interview semi-scripted scenarios, thus ensuring easier juxtaposition of learners' and teachers' views on the same phenomena, etc.

End-of-year teacher interview semi-scripted scenario, followed by discussion of related findings

Interview introduction: provisional agenda given to the teacher

1. Two minutes free for the teacher to read through the agenda and ask questions.
2. The teacher greets TCD and introduces him/herself.

Main Interview:

3. Do you like using the ELP in your course? Do you find it helpful? (Yes/No and why)
4. How do you usually use it and how often?
5. Do you think the ELP has helped your learners learn more Irish/Italian/French/ German/Spanish than if you were not using it in your course? How can you tell?
6. How easy do you think it is to judge if your learners are good at in Irish/ Italian/ French/ German/ Spanish, and what they can do and can't do? Does the ELP help in that? How?

    A) Did it help them organise their learning better?

B) Did it help them understand their stronger and weaker points in language learning? How?

C) Do you think they know how to learn languages better now than they did before? Can you prove it?

D) Do you think the ELP helped the learners become more reflective and autonomous? Yes/No and why?

E) Do you think they can apply the organising and reflection skills used in the ELP in other things in their life? Where?

F) Do you think their motivational levels have been affected by the use of the ELP? How can you tell?

H) Are there any particular features of this class that may have affected your use of the ELP with them in a significant way?

7. Do you think the ELP should change in any way to become more effective?
8. Do you think the ELP should be used by all the language teachers in Ireland? Yes/No and Why?
9. What supportive actions do you think are needed for the teachers who are using the ELP?
10. Do you think your outlook towards teaching (and learning) languages has changed since you started using the ELP? Yes/No, and how?
11. If you were to give a message to other language teachers in relation to the ELP, what would that be?
12. What do you think makes a really good ELP?
13. Did you find this interview: very difficult/ somewhat difficult/ not very difficult/ not at all difficult.
14. Would you like to ask something?
15. Is it ok with you if parts of this interview are shown to other teachers who are thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time?

As in the learner interviews, the overall outcome of the interviews was influenced by each interviewee's personality and, to a minor degree, by their sense of political

correctness and/or familiarity with being recorded. As a result, findings were also influenced to a degree. Unless a specific reference is made to the number or proportion of interviewees to whom a certain finding applies, the following findings depict the feelings of a strong majority of the teachers who were interviewed. Findings gathered from the interviews which appeared to depict teacher- or class-specific tendencies do not appear in this section but will inform the class-specific discussion of findings offered in Chapter 5. Furthermore, when no findings are presented here in relation to one point of the scenario, it is implied that teachers mostly confirmed what they had expressed through the rest of the research instruments, adding more or less emphasis to the points they wanted to.

The findings are presented arranged in bullet points which roughly correspond but are not limited to the questions contained in the semi-scripted scenario offered above. On the basis of the interviews, it appears that:

- teachers who had the general tendency to write longer texts reflecting on their practices and their classes' use of the ELP in their monthly reports and in their end-of-year reflective essays, also tended to give longer and more diversified replies to the interview questions, and gave answers which – at least at times – showed considerable reflection, and 'made me' invite them to elaborate on particularly novel or interesting points they may have raised;
- most interviewees liked using the ELP in their classes and found it helpful, especially for their students, if not for themselves;
- the frequencies of use of the ELP mentioned by different teachers varied significantly but were always commensurate with the frequencies mentioned by their learners, if not slightly lower; this is fully consistent with a pattern whereby learners use the ELP in a communal way in class, and use it in an autonomous way at home on their own;
- ways of using the ELP varied considerably in the intensity and sequence of use of different sections as a means to make learners reflect more, assess and set goals related to their learning;
- all but two teacher participants said they thought the ELP seemed to have helped their learners learn more of the TL than if they had not been using it in their course and generally said the learners' ELPs (and in some cases their grades)

offered significant evidence to that effect; the two who said that they felt their learners would have probably learnt the same even without the ELP, mentioned that they could see many advantages to the ELP, but also observed that one of the two classes they used the ELP with did not benefit so substantially because either a) the teacher had not (spent enough time to) set up the ELP properly with them or, b) they were generally a very weak class who found most of the ELP to be 'beyond them' and had their ELP folders vandalised during the year by learners from 'non-ELP' classes, with all the demoralising effects that entailed for them;

- most teachers felt it was generally easy for them to judge what their learners were good at in their TL, and what they could and couldn't do; all but one said that the ELP helped to make learner abilities clearer to themselves, and had a profound effect on learners, who usually became more motivated as a result (cf. the discussion on 'motivational changes which took place during the year' in section 4.4.2, which appears to provide further support for this point);
- teachers mentioned that – to varying degrees – learners had begun to organise their learning better, using the checklists and the reflection-fostering pages in the language biography; an additional point raised was that classes and individual learners found it a lot easier to integrate different resources in order to learn more;
- further to the previous point, approximately half of the interviewees said that both their learners and they themselves assumed a broader perspective on what could be used in learning and viewed the textbook as an important but not definitive resource, which could be interfaced productively with a number of other activities;
- all but one of the teachers said the ELP helped their students to understand their stronger and weaker points in language learning; the main reason mentioned in justification to this claim was that the ELP made those points 'easier to spot' through the language biography checklists;
- they also generally agreed that at least some/most of the learners in their project classes knew how to learn languages better than they did before; to justify their answers teachers mentioned how most learners seemed to have improved during the year, how some learners had developed their own learning and studying

strategies and routines, how they were more confident in '*using the TL in real communication*', and how they were able to view LL as a modular activity they could take in small steps;

- teachers thought that the ELP helped the learners to become more reflective and autonomous, but many also added that not all learners took up the chance to do so willingly; some teachers felt that their learners were used to being 'spoon-fed' and reacted against the promotion of learner autonomy, which usually appeared to them as extra effort which they were often not prepared to put into their LL;
- teachers were divided as to whether or not learners could apply the organising and reflection skills used in the ELP in other things in their life; those in favour of this statement said that 'embedded learning skills' and organising and thinking skills could be of use in all fields of learning, while those who were against this statement said that some or all of their learners were too young to 'see the bigger picture' and realise the significance of the ELP and the future applications of the organising and reflection skills it fostered; three teachers mentioned that they felt this kind of realisation would eventually develop in learners' minds following appropriate additional teacher guidance and the natural course of maturation;
- further to the preceding point, four teachers mentioned how the ELP could be used as a 'bridge' between subjects and become the means towards an integrated curriculum, linking different languages studied by the learners, as well as languages and subjects such as geography, art, science and computer education in innovative and effective ways;
- most teachers felt the motivational levels of the learners in their project classes had been improved – at times dramatically – by their use of the ELP, while five teachers mentioned that their own appetite for and faith in the effectiveness of teaching had improved; arguments used by some teachers to justify their claims included the following: learners did not mind staying in class a little after the bell had rung in order to finish some of the activities they were working on; learners became less rebellious (and in the case of one class substantially less abusive, and with a lower tendency to drop out of the course); there was a more positive atmosphere of acceptance and cooperation in class; more homework was done,

and some learners worked at home more than they had generally tended to in previous years; etc.;

- teachers said that approximately two thirds of the project classes were generally representative of classes of their respective class year and ability level; hence there were no particular features in those classes which may have affected their use of the ELP in a significant way (more on this point in the class-specific discussion of Chapter 5);
- teachers raised the same points as in their reflective essays on whether or not the LAP ELP should change in any way to become more effective, whether or not it should be used by all the language teachers in Ireland, and the type of supportive actions they thought were needed for the teachers who are using the ELP;
- all teacher participants felt their outlook towards teaching (and learning) languages had changed since they started using the ELP as a result of many different things, such as the exchange of views with similarly-minded teachers who wanted to find ways of helping their learners more, the surprises they had from some learners who learnt a lot following their own – at times quite unorthodox – systems, the insightfulness of the things they saw written in some learners' biography pages, the speed and ease with which their classes adjusted to more cooperative and/or more autonomous ways of learning, especially after an initial 'trial and error' familiarisation phase of approximately one month, etc.;
- teachers mentioned approximately the same things as in their reflective essays in answer to 'what message they would give to other language teachers in relation to the ELP' and 'what they thought makes a really good ELP';
- those participants who did ask questions appeared to be mostly preoccupied with finding out what would happen in the ELP SN in the following year, and what measures would be taken to publicise the ELP with language teachers, principals, parents and the general public;
- all but one of the interviewees said it was ok with them if parts of their interviews were shown to other teachers who were thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time, while one teacher expressed reservations and asked to read the transcript of her interview first (cf. Appendix D) and then decide; having done so,

she gave her permission for her interview to be used and/or uploaded on the ELP SN site to that effect.

4.4.7. Semi-structured monthly teacher reports

The monthly teacher reports were of the same format as the reports employed in the EE1 project. This format was retained to facilitate comparisons between the current findings and the EE1 ones. The reports contained demographic information on the project classes, as well as space where teachers could fill in a variety of additional information related to their project classes and offer their views of how using the ELP affected them as professionals and how it affected their classes. The reports were semi-structured through the use of open-ended questions functioning as subsection headings to which teachers were asked to respond.

The first section contained headings which were related to permanent features of each project class, such as teacher's name, report date and/or month, project class year, TL taught, ability level of students (note that in Irish post primary education languages can be offered by schools at three different levels: 'Foundation, Ordinary, and Higher'), number of lessons per week and lesson duration, number of learners and weekly TL timetable. When the project was planned, it was envisaged that this section would be filled in only once. However, the situation in most project classes was less stable than we had hoped, with timetables being reshuffled, lessons lost owing to a variety of reasons, some learners being withdrawn from the study of a language, etc. (cf. discussion in Chapter 3). This reality was reflected in a number of the consecutive reports related to a specific class, which occasionally contained revised information on the classes they referred to.

Section two contained headings related to the more dynamic features of the experience of learning a TL in a school environment with the added help of the ELP. These headings were:

- Please give a detailed account of what you did with your class this month in relation to the ELP.
- Please describe how you think this helped your learners to:

- plan and organize their learning
- set learning goals
- monitor and evaluate their learning
- think about the target language
- think about problems in learning

- How well did things work for you this month? Please give examples
- What problems, if any, did you experience?
- What problems, if any, did your learners experience?
- Additional comments or reflections

As one can see above, these headings attempted to 'engineer' a comprehensive yet brief depiction of what went on in the project classes on a monthly basis and how the use of the ELP affected them. The headings enabled the teacher participants to voice their opinions on the ELP, their classes, their schools, the project, and Irish post-primary language education in general, in the degree they felt inclined to.

In general, teacher participants used the monthly reports in quite diverse ways. Some felt compelled to respond to each report heading in considerable detail, which resulted in their submitting multi-page reports each month which they at times supplemented with handouts they had used or specimens of work their learners had produced for their colleagues to work on (such as tests, revision sheets, or thematic posters), while others felt they had to 'repeat themselves' in their reports and thus resolved to write very brief responses to each report heading and/or similar responses to each heading across months.

Teachers were asked to submit a report every month, but they were not guided in any way in what to write. Of course, some of the teacher participants used the reports to phrase some of the persistent challenges they had to face. These challenges were collected and discussed in one of the ELP support network monthly meetings, and informed the discussions of other network meetings, etc. (cf. discussion in Sisamakis 2003g; Sisamakis forthcoming).

However, regardless of the variety in the manner teacher participants responded to the monthly teacher reports mentioned above, reports proved to be a data elicitation

instrument of undoubtedly substantial weight among the qualitative data elicitation instruments employed in this research project for a variety of reasons.

First, reports presented an interface for systematic teacher reflection on how different classes were influenced by their use of the ELP. Thus, when one reads the reports of any given teacher serially, one sees how teachers reflected on their classes, their own teaching, the ELP, etc., and more importantly, how their own understanding of what went on in their classes developed. In a way these reports operated as a 'teacher's ELP', which helped them to *reflect more explicitly* on and thus better identify the strengths and weaknesses of their learners and themselves as teachers.

Second, because of the fact that this project took place in many diverse settings where many different factors – some of which were not explicitly examined by other research instruments – affected the use of the ELP, the monthly reports gave teachers the opportunity to make reference to those factors and to bring to the foreground their views on things which were especially important for their own classes.

Third, the reports somewhat reinforced the longitudinal character of the project as they explicitly highlighted different aspects of what went on in the classes where an innovation such as the use of the ELP was introduced for the first time. On the basis of these reports one can see that the adoption of the ELP seemed to create in learners, teachers and parents feelings of anxiety as to whether they 'were doing the right thing or not', or how 'they were to explain to others what they did in class, why it was important, and what they were hoping to achieve by the end of the year'. Especially as far as teachers were concerned, one of their main anxieties seemed to be how to explain the ELP and its intended benefits to their students and to their colleagues, while at the same time being aware that learners would wonder why no other classes in their school were using the ELP 'if it was so good', and that their fellow-teachers might be 'willing to hear, but not to listen', disillusioned as they were by other educational fads in LL, such as the audio-lingual method and various 'miracle cures' which some of those language teachers had to teach through in the past, etc. However, these anxieties proved to be generally short-lived.

Although some project participants still harboured feelings of anxiety at the end of this project, the majority of learners (and teachers) reported that such feelings tended

to decline substantially after the Christmas holidays, when the use of the ELP was systematised to suit the needs of the class it was used in, teachers became more skilled at mediating its use to the learners, and learners seemed to take it in their stride and reap the benefits of more systematic learning which they also generally experienced as more enjoyable. The only particularly persistent anxiety was associated with the teachers' need to make sure they had *covered* a substantial part of the material they had set out to cover for the year. They attributed the persistence of this anxiety mainly to the fact that they were they only ones in their schools to be using the ELP (cf. further discussion in Chapter 6).

Fourth, the reports provided a great boost to the objectivity of this research project, since they allowed an extensive triangulation and comparison of findings which were related to what went on in a class *for the duration* – rather than only at the beginning and end – of a whole school year. The reports offered an overview of a whole school year as seen from the teachers' perspective. This allowed a juxtaposition of teachers' perspectives to learners' perspectives as highlighted through learner questionnaires, and to my own classroom observations. Significantly, it was pleasantly surprising to see through this juxtaposition that what I witnessed in my observations corresponded quite closely to what teachers wrote in their monthly reports, which corresponded to the lessons I observed. Also, learners' views were more often than not in line with their teachers' views. I think this state of affairs lends support to the felicitous fact that the views of teachers and learners in Irish post-primary education more or less coincide with each other and with those of an independent observer of their classes. This finding might also lend additional support to the claim that self-report measures such as these teacher reports and the learner questionnaires seem not to deviate substantially from third-party observations and may be safely employed in research projects of this type. However, if one wanted to err on the side of caution, a more conservative reading of this situation might be to argue that since teachers (and learners) knew they were going to be observed 'in action' by another teacher (in this case, me), they may have tended to reflect even more on what took place in these classes and be more objective in their own accounts than they might have tended to be if no observations were employed.

Last but not least, through the reports, and as a direct result of a series of events which I had not anticipated when I designed this project, some striking findings of a very original nature were collected, which lend substantial support to the claim that a systematic use of the ELP actively promotes the development of learner autonomy in a very real and immediate sense. Thus, when four of the teacher participants were out sick for extended periods of time and their classes had to proceed with their learning without them, learners were, to a significant degree, able to organise their learning on their own, self-assess in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses and go on to set their next learning goals on the basis of their self-assessment, and help one another to overcome problems in learning.

The most striking example of this type was related to a teacher of Irish, Seán, who was out of school on sick leave on three occasions of approximately one week each time in the first half of the year, and then had to be hospitalised for seven weeks shortly after the beginning of the second half of the year. Although *no substitute teacher* was found to teach his 2nd-year Irish project class, according to his reports, the class continued working on new themes during his absence (he kept on correcting their weekly homework from hospital and during his convalescence), and learners managed to use their ELPs to organise their learning and to keep on practising speaking and writing in the TL, with group-work continuing at a moderate level but at a more or less steady pace. This positive state of affairs was confirmed by a further examination of the learners' ELPs which showed that during this period learners kept on using the language biography self-assessment checklists and 'my next goal' section to self-assess and then set optimal personal goals approximately with the same frequency they did while their teacher was present. Tellingly, learners in this class set personal goals approximately on a weekly basis, while some individual students set supplementary mini-goals in the middle of the week, if they felt they had achieved their main goal earlier than planned (cf. Appendix F for samples and learner interviews). This high frequency of personal goal-setting arguably helped them to remain focused and organised even in the absence of their teacher. To my mind, this situation speaks volumes on: a) how effective Seán was in mediating the use of the ELP to his learners quite early in the year and setting up an autonomously-oriented class through the ELP, as well as on b) the potential the ELP may

hold for the promotion of effective teaching and learning of languages and the development of learner autonomy.

In the remaining part of this section, a brief summary of main findings from the monthly teacher reports will be presented. The presentation follows the order of subsections in section two of the reports (cf. discussion above). Owing to the fact that this part of the discussion is related to so many different reports, only points which were either common among sizeable numbers of reports or particularly striking will be presented.

The first subsection asked the teachers to 'give a detailed account of what they did with their class in a given month in relation to the ELP'. The heading of this section was very generally phrased. As a result, teachers used this section to include a lot of information not necessarily related to the ELP as such, but which is of help in enabling us to get a more concrete idea of the 'operating substrate' to what went on in the project classes. Such information included the themes and/or checklist descriptors a class had set as their next goals, activities the class worked on, what worked out well and what not so well for them, 'coverage' and class effectiveness issues, techniques teachers used to mediate the ELP to the learners, notable occurrences, disruptions of the class tuition, information related to the 'catchment area' of a school (i.e. geographic areas which contributed to a school population and related socio-cultural information'), particularities of a class in relation to other classes a teacher had taught so far, etc.. The main findings related to this subsection were that:

- Learners' reactions to the ELP varied at first from very enthusiastic to perplexed, as a result of the big size of the folder and the big number of sheets related to other TLs, both of which many learners found intimidating. They tended to become a lot more positive as the months passed and they became more skilled at using it, and reaped greater benefits from it. A feeling of success became widespread as even the weakest learners became aware of the fact that LL can be 'attacked' in a modular way, and that everybody can learn a little every day. Learners became generally more motivated and were proud of their ability to achieve some of their goals even 'with a lot of help' (cf. also relevant statistics in section 4.4.2 above).

- Some teachers found the ELP too bulky for comfort. They despaired of the technical problems they had to deal with from time to time, such as carrying the ELPs to the classroom, as well as ensuring the availability of proper storage and safekeeping, dealing with folders whose binders broke and they had to fix using pliers, putting back in place sheets which fell out of the ELP, etc. This changed substantially following the January 2004 network meeting, which was devoted to a great extent to a presentation of the challenges different teachers using the ELP faced, and exchanging ideas based on how each network member dealt with those challenges. Many of the ideas mentioned in that meeting were adopted by most of the project participants, making the technicalities associated with using the ELP a lot easier.
- The main challenge teachers had to face was related to covering as much exam material as possible in the teaching time available, since that was what every other stakeholder (i.e. parents, learners, principals and fellow teachers) expected of them, while at the same time allowing the learners some time to reflect on their LL, consider what their own learning needs were and set their own goals through the ELP, and fostering small-group work and cooperative learning in a positive atmosphere. Some teachers felt the burden of this more keenly than the rest, and mentioned that they found that using the ELP took its toll as far as time management was concerned, worthwhile though it was. Most teacher participants responded to this challenge quite effectively by introducing the ELP quite gradually over a period of a few weeks and thus helping learners to become gradually accustomed to it. Others introduced the ELP and its use in general terms and then helped learners to get used to the idea of self-assessment and personally relevant goal-setting through the use of one of the two 'intermediate' thematic two-page lists which epitomised the main points of the ELP checklists but focussed solely on the Junior or Leaving Certificate syllabus levels (i.e. A1 and A2 or B1 and B2 respectively). These thematic lists had been developed by members of the ELP SN as additional ELP-mediation tools in previous years. Whatever the method they employed, it appears that all the teachers at the end of

the year were confident that they had established a personally-convenient manner of introducing the ELP and subsequently using it with a class.

- The majority of teachers felt that the learners they taught were well able to cope with the ELP with considerable ease, but three teachers felt that some of their weakest and youngest learners were finding it hard. Thus, although most teachers were of the opinion that it is generally most effective to introduce learners to the ELP in their first year and then help them use it up to their Leaving Certificate to produce best results, some teachers remarked that the ELP in its current format should be used by senior cycle learners, and a separate, simpler ELP model should be developed to be used by learners in the senior cycle (but see also counter arguments in section 4.4.6).

The second subsection of the main part of the reports asked the teachers to 'describe how they thought what they had mentioned in the first subsection helped their learners to plan and organize their learning, set learning goals, monitor and evaluate their learning, think about the target language, and think about problems in learning'.

The majority of participants felt that during the months that this project lasted, learners became more able to take better control of their learning, especially as regards planning and organisation. Especially through their use of the checklists and through the rest of the pages in the LAP ELP language biography, they were a lot more aware of what they could do in the TL, how well they could do it, and what they needed to work more on. Although some teachers mentioned that their learners found self-assessment and goal-setting difficult, especially in the first few months of the school year, all teacher participants agreed that the TL checklists helped the learners significantly in their ability to do so. As months progressed, learners were reported to have become more confident and comfortable with this process and they started to exhibit considerable initiative and maturity in the way they organised their learning. In every class there were learners who used the ELP to autonomously organise additional studying activities for themselves, set personalised goals, and reflect on problems they were experiencing and try to find ways of dealing with them. Most teachers also claimed that most of their students understood to some degree that LL is not a unitary activity, but a 'constellation of things' which can be attempted in various ways and degrees in order to lead to success in LL. As Michael

put it quite succinctly, his learners reached a point where they better understood the 'geography of learning'.

The third subsection asked the teachers to express their feelings on how well things worked out for them in a given month, by supplying what examples they deemed necessary. The responses to this subsection arguably indicate that the great majority of teacher participants were happy with the way their classes were using the ELP. Teachers generally also mentioned that they found it useful and in some cases cited some anecdotes from what went on in their classes in order to illustrate their points further. Some teachers also used this section to reinforce the apprehensions they had mentioned in earlier parts of their reports. Most of the teachers seemed to develop over the months an ability to better mediate the ELP to the learners during the year, and thus the views expressed in this section became increasingly positive. Also, they mentioned how learners generally tended to become more perceptive of similarities and differences between their TL and English, and how they shared tips on the 'embedded skills' associated with 'learning how to learn'. What jumped out of the pages of many reports, especially towards the end of the year, was that project classes developed a very productive atmosphere of co-operation and sharing of learning tips and other learning resources. In many cases, teachers seemed to have gradually come to believe more in their learners' ability to be more in charge of their learning. Six of the teachers expressed 'genuine amazement' at how well learners could organise their learning when given the chance, and how much happier they seemed to be as a result of doing so in comparison to other classes of the same level which had not been using the ELP. Three of the teachers had positive feelings about this, whereas the three newly-qualified teachers had reservations on how effective the weakest among their 1st- and 2nd-year learners could be in self-assessing and goal-setting in an 'autonomous cum independent' fashion.

The fourth subsection of the reports asked the teachers to identify the problems, if any, which they experienced in a given month. Many teachers repeated some of the issues presented in the previous subsections, such as the need for more time in order to help learners reflect on their learning, or their 'professional loneliness' in being the only teachers in their school working with the ELP and the problems caused by that. Some of the teachers mentioned problems which were related to the nature of a specific class (cf.

Chapter 5 for class-specific discussion). Finally, some teachers said that they experienced problems as challenges to be met and they enjoyed responding successfully to such challenges and finding ways to deal with them, or mentioned that they experienced no problems.

The fourth subsection of the reports asked the teachers to identify the problems, if any, which their students experienced in a given month. All teacher participants used this section at least once during the year to speak about the fact that learners seemed to find the folder very big/difficult to carry around in their bags and very flimsy. They also made comments on navigational improvements certain learners suggested which were of great help, and made suggestions on what a future version of this ELP model could look like. Some of those changes which were identified in the reports submitted in 2003 were taken into account in March 2004 when a second reprint of the ELP came into circulation. This version did not come with a ring-binder (cf. Chapter 6 for further discussion).

The fifth and last subsection of the reports provided space for the teachers to include any additional comments on or reflections and/or notable occurrences in the month they wanted to, if they had not done so thus far. In this subsection, teachers generally reinforced arguments raised in the previous subsections, while some of them mentioned how their thinking on how to present the different language biography pages to the learners helped them realise that they might have 'become too set in their ways over the years' and that they could further diversify the teaching techniques they employed. Most of them also mentioned that they realised that it was feasible and perhaps advisable to 'let go' of the learners in 'baby steps', rather than in decisive swoops which could create a degree of confusion, and thus help their learners to gradually accept more responsibility for their learning. These teachers claimed that the supportive framework provided by the language biography and the dossier enabled learners to make some real decisions on their learning. Thus, the fact that these decisions had been 'scaffolded' by the checklists and other pages in the language biography which promoted reflection enabled learners to reach and/or negotiate with their class-mates and with help from their teachers personally-relevant decisions. In turn, those decisions were in line with their ultimate learning goals usually related to the Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations, without everything in class degrading into chaos.

Although the findings briefly presented above proved the monthly teacher reports a very effective data elicitation instrument, one of the main problems associated with this instrument was precisely that it tried to elicit the teachers' views on what went on in their project classes during rather than after the project year. Thus, the reports were focused on the immediate past and tracked how teacher perceptions changed, but arguably could not provide us with the teachers' 'final' views on how the ELP affected their classes *after* one year. Considering these views to be of great importance as they would tell us what teachers felt about the ELP after their initial enthusiasms might have died out and they had gone through one year of seeing how the ELP worked out for them and their classes in practice, three data elicitation instruments were employed to elicit them. Findings from these instruments will be presented in the following sections.

4.4.8. End-of-year semi-structured reflective essays from all teachers and End-of-year reflections from all teachers collected in a group discussion

The research instrument which was closest in type to the monthly teacher reports was the 'end-of-year reflections' essay which teachers had to write and submit at the end of the project. Owing to this close relationship between the two research instruments and after seeing that many of the things which teachers wrote in their reports were in fact summarised and repeated in the 'end-of-year' reflective essays, I decided to present the essays related to each project class immediately after the monthly reports which referred to it in Appendix B.

In order to make this reflective essay more structured and help teachers to focus more on the themes which constituted my main research focus, I developed section headings which extended the ones employed in the monthly reports, but also added a number of new headings aimed at eliciting the perceived summative effects the ELP had on them, their students as individuals, and their classes as productive groups. The headings employed in the reflective essay were the following:

- What difference has working with the ELP made to you as a teacher in relation to:

- planning (courses, lessons), time management
- classroom management (organising activities, groups, etc.)
- use of the textbook and other teaching-learning materials
- your personal view of the learning process
- your view of how your learners are getting on in developing their L2 proficiency

- What differences has working with the ELP made to your learners in relation to:
  - interest, motivation, attitudes to learning
  - development of skills in self-management (planning, monitoring, evaluating learning)
  - development of L2 proficiency (overall proficiency levels, focus on particular skills)
- What do you think you gained from your participation in the project? What has been particularly helpful or less helpful?
- What were your own and your classes feelings in relation to:
  - the questionnaire surveys;
  - classroom observations and related feedback;
  - teacher reports
- What type of support actions do you think are needed for the successful adoption of the ELP?
- What particular difficulties did you experience this year? What challenges did you have to successfully meet?
- On the basis of your experience using the ELP so far, do you think the model for learners in Irish post-primary education can be improved in any way?

- Would you do something in a different way in relation to what you did this year, were you to use the ELP in a class like the one(s) which participated in this project?
- What advice would you give to language teachers who have not yet used the ELP?
- Further comments.

In general, most teacher participants responded to these questions along similar lines to what they had already mentioned in their monthly reports. A substantial proportion of the responses given by the teachers exhibited aspects of genuinely critical reflection and great insight on the teaching practices they employed, their learners and their feelings, and the ELP and its application in the classes they taught. Unfortunately, some of the most interesting specimens of such insightful responses were quite lengthy, spanning several paragraphs and thus precluding their fuller presentation and a more comprehensive discussion of findings resulting from them in the main body of this thesis.

In some cases the responses teachers gave in connection with a number of headings overlapped. Most essays tended to generally exhibit their authors' considerable confidence in the ELP as a substantially effective pedagogical tool which fosters teacher and learner reflection and can be of considerable assistance in establishing a more principled framework to mediate to the learners what the prescribed/aspired syllabus is in practice. Thanks to the ELP, teachers mentioned that they were better equipped to help the learners to understand what they needed to be able to do in a given TL at the end of a year of study and at the end of their post-primary language education in general. One of the things which was mentioned quite often and at times very enthusiastically was that through the ELP learners could see *for the first time* exactly what the ultimate goals of post-primary language education were, and to draw analogies and find connections between the TL they studied in their project class and other languages they were studying.

In the remaining part of this section, a brief summary of main findings related to each section of the reflective essays will be presented. As was the case for the reports, only themes which were either most prevalent among the essays of different teachers or

appeared to be most noticeable will be presented here. Once again, findings which were already discussed in the previous section will not be elaborated at great length in this section owing to space constraints. The reader may refer to Appendix B for more details. The discussion of findings has also been informed by a discussion conducted in an ELP SN meeting which took place on the 4th of May 2004. The section headings from the 'end-of-year reflections' essay were used as a template for the group reflection carried out in that meeting. Teachers were encouraged to use what they had written in their essays as a springboard for collective reflection and to compare their views with those of their colleagues (cf. sections 3.9.7 and 4.3.2 for further discussion).

In the first section of the essay, where teachers had to reflect on the differences which working with the ELP made to them 'as a teacher' in relation to a number of headings, all teacher participants felt that working with the ELP did have a significant impact on them. Teachers experienced this impact in a variety of ways and felt it more keenly in one or another of the aspects examined by the subheadings of this section.

In relation to 'planning (courses, lessons), and time management', the majority of respondents said that they felt that they spent more time on planning, especially at the beginning of their involvement with the ELP SN, when both they and their learners were trying to develop their own routines for using the ELP. Three teachers felt the amount of time they spent on planning was so considerable that it proved to be a hindrance to them. Two of those teachers also mentioned that they probably did not use the ELP 'properly' or 'to its potential' this year owing to the fact that they lacked relevant experience, but they did add that they felt more skilled to plan things better for next year, on the basis of the knowledge they had gained this year. Those of the teachers who had already used the ELP before the project began felt that the extra time needed for planning became substantially less for them this year. They did admit that they still needed to spend some time every week in planning. However, as David colourfully put it: 'planning, however, does not mean a lot of extra work before the class, rather it means a lot less effort on the teacher's part during it'. He also mentioned that the ability needed to mediate the ELP effectively to the learners is something which 'becomes easier with practice, as with everything in life'. To this he added that the ELP, especially when used with older learners, acts as 'a compass and helps the class generate exercises and activities'. His

feelings were echoed by his colleagues (cf. especially Michael's multi-paragraph reply which was structured around three themes, claiming that the effect of the ELP on his planning was that it 'a) Facilitated b) Liberated it and c) Made it more interesting' in a principled and objective fashion, reviving his enthusiasm for teaching along the way).

In relation to classroom management (organising activities, groups, etc.), the main impact of the ELP mentioned by all participants was that it encouraged and facilitated group- and pair-work in a way which made learners more confident and at ease with using the TL in class. Three participants acknowledged that they realised that they could/should have fostered more group-work in their classes and two more said that structuring autonomously-oriented group-work at first proved detrimental to classroom discipline. Markedly, some teachers mentioned that the nature of the LAP ELP helped them realise better use of classroom management, resulting in precious (extra) time to cover items, while others mentioned that through their experience using the ELP and their interaction with other project members, they realised that 'methods other than whole-class teaching can be successful in teaching a topic' (Martha). This claimed effect had been particularly evident in what I had seen happening in many of my observations, where at least one learner per group was actively using the TL through small-group-work and pair-work as a means for real communication at any given time in the classroom, while the teacher was able to act as a 'floating facilitator' and offer optimised task-specific and learner-specific help focussed on problems a specific group was facing in real time, by attending to the needs of different groups as appropriate.

In relation to use of the textbook and other teaching-learning materials, all the teacher participants who responded to this section (note that three participants did not do so) mentioned that their experience with the ELP 'made them less reliant on the textbook and encouraged them to use other materials' (Seán). Some participants said that the ELP legitimised through its checklists their not spending the greatest amount of lesson time focusing primarily on textbook coverage in the classroom, as it gave them an independent, more objective form of assessment of the progress in learners' TL proficiency, based on language use rather than on things 'being covered' in class which may have been learned to a non-satisfactory degree by some learners. The two teachers teaching in PLC classes mentioned how they were able to maintain a structured,

principled approach even in the absence of a textbook. Perhaps the one fact about which all participants were in agreement was that they now viewed the textbook as one of many teaching resources. They mentioned that they made flexible use of many other resources to supplement it and hence felt they catered for the needs of their learners in a better way. Such resources mentioned were, for instance, old textbooks, learner-created material/tests which were brought over to the class for communal use, various learner-initiated activities (cf. also section 4.4.2), magazines, the Internet, Authentik magazines, restaurant menus, receipts, cinema tickets, poems and short stories, proverbs and sayings, the work of learners from other project classes which learners saw on the ELP SN site, etc. Most of the participants mentioned at one point or other how their using the ELP in their classes further legitimised the use of such material in class, since it permitted its full integration in the class goals and its 'celebration as a valid learning tool' which could be recorded/acknowledged in the ELP in a principled and systematic way.

In relation to the impact on their personal view of the learning process, all the teachers mentioned that they came to realise more things about what type of teaching and learning practices best facilitate learning. The things they mentioned overlapped considerably with things mentioned in the sections presented above. Relatively more emphasis was placed by some teachers on the existence of different learning styles and the fact that they were better accommodated by an 'ELP-enhanced' class than they would have been by a more traditional 'textbook-bound' class. With the exception of one teacher (Brendan), who felt that the learning process in which weak 1st-year learners engaged, such as some learners in his 'Foundation-level' Irish class, was not significantly affected by their use of the ELP owing to the fact that the essence of the ELP and the benefits its use entailed were probably 'beyond them', teachers found that the ELP made learning more transparent to the learners, helped them take control of their learning and led them towards more structured and responsible (and hence autonomous) ways of learning. Some teachers also mentioned how the structure offered by the ELP helped them shift their focus in the classroom from 'what was taught to what was learnt'. As Lorna put it: 'I have got an increasing understanding of the learning process, as opposed to the focus I previously had on the teaching process [...] Learning styles were not an issue for me'.

In relation to how their learners were getting on in developing their L2 proficiency, three teachers gave no response, while those who responded generally felt that their students were developing satisfactorily/were ahead of their peers in both 'fluency and comprehension', made a bigger effort to learn and seemed to be happier than other classes. Although the responses of different teachers show that they were influenced by their previous teaching experience and the prior notions they had about how learning may be best fostered in a classroom, they were generally happy with how their learners progressed in the TL. The majority of respondents mentioned that their students generally tended to *exceed the expectations they had* at the beginning of the year *and surprise them positively at the things they were able to do.* Each respondent backed up their arguments by adding aspects of learning in which learners seemed to be particularly affected. Michael, for instance, said that the learning involved was 'deepened' and the learners were more 'motivated to engage when awareness of the embedded skills like self assessment, goal setting, reflection on learning and autonomous work is raised'. Although some teachers expressed their lingering fears owing to the fact that they still felt they had to help the learners 'cover a lot' in class, they also mentioned that even if their classes 'covered less' during the project year they at least became better 'set' to learn more. Michael also reinforced his argument that teachers need to go beyond the notion of simple 'coverage', not only in terms of textbook chapters, but also in terms of ELP levels:

> 'I think we need to be careful not to make it another textbook; keep the freedom, keep the student central. We are going to have to – I feel I have to – sort of cut loose from the competition; [...] students are all different in my class from the class next door. There is a whole different set next door. And if I have the equivalent of ten chocolates worth learned through the ELP and they have twenty chocolates in their way I am going to take the chance that mine may have learned as much as theirs, and maybe more, and they are probably more able to learn. At least some of them are doing independent work and some of them are beginning to treat the thing as such [...]'

Emer and Maria, however, qualified their statements further by saying that some learners in their classes had such an uninterested and negative attitude towards learning

their project-class TLs that they resisted suggestions that they could make an effort in learning their TL in general and use the ELP in a productive way. Maria also remarked that 'the learners who had accepted that learning does require some dedication did fare well and benefited greatly from the use of the ELP', whereas those who had not accepted that were also the ones who benefited less from the use of the ELP and appeared to regret the fact that the ELP made them work more in their TL.

In relation to the differences that working with the ELP made to their learners in relation to interest, motivation and attitudes to learning, teachers' responses were highly varied. In general, there were two categories of responses; those of teachers who claimed they saw tangible and substantial positive changes in learner attitudes following one year of ELP use, and those of teachers who claimed that learner motivation did not increase dramatically as it was hindered by the combination of the physical bulk of the ELP folder (which meant that learners would have to spend time working on the ELP/their language class), negative attitudes towards a TL (Irish), and/or the occasionally severe limitations in mother tongue (L1) competence. It has to be noted that the responses of teachers to this question roughly corresponded to the learner attitudes as measured by the attitudinal-motivational questionnaires (cf. section 4.4.2). It also appeared to be the case, however, that approximately half of the teachers perceived their learners as being slightly less motivated than the attitudinal-motivational questionnaires had shown them to be. This may be attributed to a number of factors not directly related to the ELP or this project, such as overall teacher disposition and relative optimism, etc. It may also have been caused by a conservative tendency some teachers have (including the author of this thesis) to protect themselves from unwarranted over-enthusiasms by occasionally erring on the side of caution when evaluating what their students have accomplished and/or what they are already capable of achieving. Notably, the responses of all the 'conservative' teachers were more positive in the related part of the group discussion.

Two of the most interesting responses were given by Emer and David. Emer said that her Italian class 'would not, I think, have persevered with Italian as an exam subject but for the variety introduced to class through the ELP' (cf. further discussion in Chapter 5). David mentioned in relation to his (substantially) mixed-ability 1st-year class that '[...] to my pupils it is now completely natural and they enjoy it as well as making real

progress. By March even the weakest and the behaviourally problematic pupils were taking it in their stride, and were motivated to work.' When asked in the meeting to say whether his class appeared to be so effective in their use of the ELP because they were a relatively 'strong' group, he replied that they were a 'generally weak class [...]. There are some very weak ones. But once one student sets the example, there's a good chance others will follow [...]'

In general, it seems that the substantial experience David had gained in working with the ELP (he had joined ELP SN in 2001 and participated in EE1) gave him considerable confidence in the way he mediated the ELP to his learners. The enthusiasm he had developed for the ELP and its potential was further amplified by the success he had seen it have with his classes in the previous years. This encouraged the existence of an atmosphere of 'emotional contagion of enthusiasm and motivation to learn well' in both his project classes (Patrick, Hinsley, and Kempler 2000). So successful did he feel the ELP was, that he claimed it added critically important structure to the courses he taught and considered it indispensable, especially for PLC courses.

In relation to development of skills in self-management (planning, monitoring, evaluating learning), all teachers who responded to this section appeared to recognise that both their own and their students' understanding of the importance of self-management skills for successful learning developed substantially during the year. Although once again one teacher expressed reservations on how much his weaker students' understanding grew, the rest had clearly positive perceptions of their learners' self-management skills and of how the ELP influenced learners and helped them to develop as individuals in an extremely positive manner by the end of the project. Frances, for instance, said that her learners 'have recognised themselves to be the central core of the process. They have grown more responsible and developed socially, through group interaction'. An excerpt from Maria's response summarises quite succinctly the fact that teachers recognised the emphasis placed on the development of learner autonomy and self-management skills in the LAP ELP, as well as the crucial contribution such skills make to successful (language) learning. It also shows the importance the majority of respondents placed on helping learners to develop self-management skills:

'I understand that the ELP is built around the notion of developing skills which are central to the learning process, namely planning, monitoring, evaluating and discovering one's own learning style. My reflection on this is that *this is probably the most ambitious of the goals I constantly aim at'* (emphasis added).

The development of L2 proficiency (overall proficiency levels, focus on particular skills) was an issue all teacher participants mentioned quite often in other sections of this essay and in all their responses to other research instruments. This is understandable, given the fact that it arguably constitutes the major goal of language education. In general, teachers said that their learners exhibited better retention levels, were a lot more confident, and used their TLs more naturally in real and/or realistic situations. Two teachers, however, observed that some of their students still 'needed' to be actively prompted to speak their TLs as they were unwilling to do so unless the teacher was there to make sure they did. Some teachers mentioned that even their weakest and most uncooperative learners at times surprised themselves (and their teachers) with how much language 'they could pick up without great effort'.

In response to what they thought they gained from their participation in the project and what had been particularly helpful or less helpful (for them), teachers gave responses which showed that they had reflected considerably on their practices. Different teachers generally focused their responses on different benefits they and their students experienced. Such examples were: an increased willingness to listen to the learners' voices, a chance to exchange views with other language teachers who were 'in the same boat' with them and to work together in order to make their teaching practices better, an increase in their ability to discern the stronger and weaker points in their students' TL proficiency, an ability to set up an (ELP-enhanced) autonomous classroom, see its merits, and incorporate its practices in the rest of the classes they were teaching even though those classes did not participate in this research project, a 'wider view' of the curriculum not confined to 'sterile coverage', a perseverance to make an effort with a class in the face of hostile attitudes exhibited by some learners, a renewal of their enthusiasm for teaching and a feeling of achievement owing to the effectiveness and the positive atmosphere they perceived their project classes to have, etc.

The next section of the essay examined the feelings of teacher participants and their classes in relation to some of the research instruments. This section did not examine such feelings in relation to interviews. This was necessary for purposes of homogeneity as some of the participants had not had their interviews at the time the essay had to be submitted. As an alternative, a relevant question was added to the provisional agenda employed in the interviews. In general teachers expressed positive or neutral feelings towards the research instruments, stated their willingness to see what the analysis of findings collected through these instruments would yield, and said they understood the necessity of such research instruments in any research project that aspires to any degree of objectivity. Additionally, questionnaire surveys were mostly characterised as original in their comprehensiveness, and objective. More mixed feelings were expressed towards classroom observations, with some teachers maintaining they were fervently in favour of observation practices as they viewed them as a rare chance to get feedback from a colleague, while three teachers expressed their feelings of unease towards observations owing to a number of reasons related to the particulars of their status in their school as newly-qualified teachers, or the nature of their classes (cf. discussion of monthly teacher reports in section 4.4.6). Interestingly, most teachers said that the process of reflecting on their practices, on the use of the ELP in their classes, etcetera, through the monthly teacher reports was invaluable in helping them to reflect in a principled manner. However, a number of teachers said that despite seeing the merits of filing such reports, they found the practice to be too repetitive, especially in the light of the fact that they had to find time to fulfil their many other school-related obligations (e.g. marking, coaching debating teams, editing a school newspaper, coaching a baseball team, preparing for and conducting parent-teacher meetings, etc.).

In relation to the support actions they thought are needed for the successful adoption of the ELP, teachers mentioned many different actions. Some of them were already in place, such as the monthly ELP SN meetings, on-line help from Trinity College (through personal e-mails in response to queries, and through the monthly updates on the project and the summaries of ELP SN meetings I sent to the network participants for the benefit of those who had not been able to attend them), informational material on the ELP and learner-produced material appearing on the project site, etc.

Some participants said they would like to see a lot more samples of this type online (in response to this, the site was substantially expanded; cf. presentation of Appendix F in the Introduction to the Appendices). Others pointed out that the use of the ELP will be a lot easier for teachers and learners alike when all language teachers in Ireland use it, since, in a way, ELP users will not have to struggle against the notion that what they are doing may be 'just another charming curiosity or a fad'. To this effect, they called for more publicity to be given to the ELP as a concept, since they said that the majority of the language teacher population in Ireland was only vaguely – if at all – aware of the existence of the ELP. They also mentioned that more seminars should be conducted presenting what the ELP is and what it aims to achieve. Proposed audiences for these seminars were members of the various associations of school principals and vice-principals of Ireland, all students in Higher Education courses who would soon qualify as language teachers and thus would affect the future of language education in Ireland, members of language teachers' and of parents' associations, as well as members of the Department of Education and Science Inspectorate. Other actions mentioned by only one or two teachers were: observations and hands-on teaching experience of HDipEd students to be arranged in classes which used the ELP, setting up a wider supportive framework offering help to teachers who had not used the ELP before in order to help them to have an easier start and develop 'coping strategies', and uploading a number of videos or lesson plans which would be compatible with the ELP on the project site. However, as Lorna pointed out, using the ELP is rewarding in time, but it 'is not a quick fix', as every teacher has to first use it in order to find/develop a way of using it which is best suited to their own teaching style and to the various learning styles of their students.

In answer to the questions 'What particular difficulties did you experience this year?' and 'What challenges did you have to successfully meet?', most teachers mentioned the fact that the novelty of teaching with the ELP, trying to familiarise themselves with its workings and at the same time do their best to help their students develop as language learners and as critical thinkers put some mental strain on them, especially in the first half of the project year. Additionally, three teachers mentioned that they were under even more pressure as they had to balance being newly-qualified teachers and being newcomers in a project school who had to establish themselves among

their fellow-teachers. Three teachers mentioned problems related to the erratic attendance of learners in one of the two project classes they taught. Three more teachers mentioned problems arising from the fact that they were out of school on sick leave for extended periods of time in crucial points during the school year, which had a demoralising effect for teachers and learners alike, halting the momentum achieved and the self-propulsion brought about by the general sense of achievement present in project classes. Two teachers mentioned procedural mistakes they made as a result of their eagerness to make their learners efficient in using the ELP as quickly as possible. This had the effect that they did not take sufficient time to explain each section thoroughly/gradually to the learners and at times created minor confusion among the weakest learners. Some of the teachers of Irish mentioned the unfortunate coincidence of the announcement that Irish would not be a language used for official purposes in the European Union some months before the end of the school year, which made some learners state that studying Irish was not worth any great effort and lose interest.

The next section of the essay invited teachers to reflect on whether or not they thought on the basis of their experience using the ELP thus far that the ELP model for learners in Irish post-primary education evaluated in this project could be improved in any way. Some teachers mentioned that they found the model quite satisfactory in its present form, while others voiced once more concerns they had expressed in previous sections, which have already been summarised in some detail above.

Additional suggestions made at this point included:

- Changing the ring-binder of the folder to avoid breakages and sheets falling out of the folder (a constant problem, especially with all the younger years in the Junior Cycle);
- Use of more graphic elements, more colour, and employment of more straightforward numbering of language biography pages to facilitate quick navigation inside the ELP and make each section look more distinctive and aesthetically appealing;
- Addition of dividers between different ELP sections and/or the language biography 'can-do' checklists for different languages to facilitate navigation;

- Simplification of the layout of the model and/or making it more compact for the benefit of younger and weaker learners, or developing a new simpler model for the Junior Cycle and retaining the current model for the Senior Cycle;
- Examination of the possibility of using simpler, non-academic language in the language biography;
- Examination of the possibility of dividing some of the descriptors in the 'can-do' checklists of the language biography which covered a very broad spectrum of activities in their wording into two or three new descriptors, or adding bullet points with different themes a descriptor could be applicable to;
- Examination of the possibility of adding some indicative learner samples for each section, which would help teachers and learners get ideas for activities, etc.;
- Making the language biography more compact by including checklists for fewer languages.

Although many arguments could be raised for and against the adoption of each of these suggestions, it seems to me that those arguments are all but obvious, so I will not tire the reader with them at this point. However, I feel that the last of the suggestions is in a way the most controversial one, as it might lead to an ELP model which would be language-specific and would not promote an integrated language curriculum which would build on the different languages a learner is learning, and other languages he might have some proficiency in. In any case, it appears to me that it would not promote CoE's objective to broaden the linguistic horizon of learners by fostering plurilingualism and pluricuturalism. Further evidence of the validity of this point is found in that the CoE's committee for the validation and accreditation of ELP models follows a policy of not validating language-specific ELP models.

However, with more languages being introduced in educational systems throughout Europe (including the Irish educational system examined in this thesis) one could argue that there should be a way to enable each learner to own an ELP which will correspond to their own language needs and profiles, offer them the great benefits evidenced in this project by promoting what appears to be *the optimum combination of language biography checklists, i.e. checklists appearing both in the TL and in the learners' L1*, but also to make sure that the ELP does not become too big to be comfortably usable. The balance

needed could be achieved, for instance, if an ELP model such as the LAP ELP examined here was expanded through the development of checklists in many more languages, but if individual learners (or schools which offered a specific combination of languages) were able to order customised ELPs which would contain the checklists of only the 3-5 languages corresponding to their linguistic profiles and needs. Although such a proposal presupposes the allocation of research time and financial resources which might be prohibitive for isolated ELP developers, such an undertaking could be made a lot more realistic, if further multilingual checklist templates were developed centrally by the CoE, which then could be translated and/or customised by individual developers according to their needs. Currently, a descriptor bank is available on the CoE ELP portal (Council of Europe) with a variety of descriptor examples both in French and English (Lenz and Schneider 2004).

In answer to the question 'Would you do something in a different way in relation to what you did this year, were you to use the ELP in a class like the one(s) which participated in this project?' most teachers answered that they would indeed do things differently owing to the fact that they would be a lot more confident, and they would have a clearer long-term strategy which they would strive to implement. Typical examples of this ideology were the responses given by Jean ('I would have long-term goals listed at the outset. I would be more familiar with the project and I would definitely be more confident. I would definitely try to include all skills in classes on a monthly basis') and by Lorna ('Having completed the year, and learnt so much about the workings of the ELP, and becoming more confident with it, I would introduce it differently. First of all, I would introduce it as an old friend: as a compact, simplified version, with a more step-by-step approach to the learners. I complicated it a little this year, and by simplifying it I believe I would make it more attractive to the weaker students. I also believe that the learners know when the teacher is "winging" it, and is not fully confident of what she is doing. I believe that now I could "do" the ELP more justice.'). Additional things some teachers mentioned they would do differently in mediating the ELP to the learners included:

- modifying the pace of the first 'introduction to the ELP', taking more time to 'ease learners into' using it, using it with a younger group in order to be under

less time pressure to cover exam material while having to teach learners how to operate in groups, or how to take more initiatives in and responsibility for their learning;

- making more/better use of the ELP SN website;
- making a different class selection;
- making better use of 'Can-do' lists; e.g. 'I now realise that I did not spend enough time on mediating and exploiting this aspect of the ELP' (Michael), etc.

In the next section teachers offered their advice to language teachers who have not yet used the ELP. In general the majority of respondents remarked on how effective they found the ELP to be with their classes and mentioned one or other of its merits which they had mentioned in previous sections of the essay. Other pieces of advice included adopting a step-by-step approach, being prepared to adapt both the ELP and their own views on learning, using it and seeing how it works for them as they have nothing to lose and may stand to gain a lot, starting to use it with a 1st-year class and using it up to and including the Leaving Certificate in order to minimise learner confusion, adopting (and helping the learners develop) a weekly routine of ELP use, etc.

In the last section of the essay, teachers were asked to make any further comments they wanted to. Here respondents mentioned various things. For instance, Emer mentioned that 'the most beneficial aspect is the "star" system for recording achievement, as it encouraged weaker students' and helped everybody to feel they were progressing towards their goals. Jean said that the ELP helps 'put the onus on the students to manage their own learning [...]. It makes the students question certain things and they are not passive in their learning'. Lorna remarked that although the ELP can be of great help, 'there is no simple way to implement learner autonomy – and it has its ups and downs. It is important in my opinion to remember that it is a process, and not a destination [...] It is easier to implement [...] with non-exam classes' (as there is less time pressure). Finally David reiterated his view that in the next year more efforts should be made to publicise the ELP as much as possible; crucially, he also added that, on the basis of his experience using the ELP with PLC classes, 'to run a course at this level without the ELP would seem ridiculous now'.

Some further points not entirely related to a specific section of the reflective essay presented above were raised in the end-of-year group meeting. They are presented below in bullet points for the sake of brevity:

- Using the ELP as an 'add-on' and not as a fully integrated part of a class tends to result in excessive pressure for the teacher. One teacher participant who tried to do so made the following remark: 'I tried to work on the ELP as an aside to see how that worked. In fact I felt I had two things on me, and I felt really really under a great deal of pressure' (Martha).
- Finding a classroom which was suitable for language learning and negotiating the use of resources was hard in some schools.
- It is very helpful to take some time at the beginning of the year to reshuffle, divide, and mark the pages you will be using in the folder, in order to make its navigation more efficient and save time in the long run (some learners in two project classes also added tables of contents they updated during the year to include items they put into their dossiers).
- Teachers seemed to need to have a lot of support from a research team and other teachers who had already used the ELP in their classes, if they were to implement the ELP successfully in their classes. This statement seems to be particularly true for teachers when they start using the ELP in their classes, as they are quite vulnerable to feelings of insecurity when embarking on something new.
- Senior teachers felt less vulnerable to criticism from parents, principals and colleagues when they started using the ELP. New teachers, on the other hand, 'had a steeper slope to climb' and thus were in need of even more support. In fact, two of the younger project members also mentioned they would probably have given up if it had not been for the ELP SN meetings and/or the support they received from Trinity College.
- Even though in ELP-informed classes the coverage in terms of textbook chapters was less substantial than in classes which did not use the ELP, there was a lot more *real* communication going on, which gradually created a feeling of enhanced confidence on the learners' part in their ability to perform real tasks in

the TL, the applications of which they could realise immediately. Michael also attributed this felicitous state of affairs as follows:

> 'The ELP is more comprehensive as a set of tools than anything which has been around before [...]. I think the ELP kind of renews that fact that we have to actually speak the language. It sets it up in a way that the student can say, ok it's hard, but it's part of the thing. Again, they have a better understanding of the different things that are involved. I'll tell you something. This year they resent me speaking as often as I did, and I spoke less than I did other years.'

- If we want learners to become more autonomous and responsible for their learning, we should offer them some control over certain aspects of their learning and respect the fact that they are going to be in charge of those aspects. This proviso should include the learners' ownership of the ELP, if we want it to be meaningful and to promote positive motivational trends. As Emer put it, 'ownership is *ownership*' and we should not water it down too much as it will lose its motivational potential.
- The attitudes of the learner population over recent years have changed as a result of a more general shift in its socio-political status as learners experience 'substantially more autonomy in society outside school' and this in effect necessitates changes to the teaching styles which need to be employed. Michael remarked in relation to this that: 'Now, they don't care. You have to sort of go with them. You have to win them, before you try to work on the language. You have to be much more versatile and [...] much more yourself [...]'
- A major issue which should be brought forward in order to make more effective use of the ELP would be examining how it can be integrated productively in all the stages of language education including assessment, since assessment has a profound wash-back effect on learning and teaching practices. The majority of teachers acknowledged in their reports (and in their interviews, which will be discussed briefly in the following section) the 'subversive potential' built into the ELP, which, among other things, could inform assessment practice in a 'dramatically significant' way. In the course of the discussion held at the meeting,

some teachers raised the question of how the ELP can affect the general assessment framework and culture of language education in Ireland, which, for instance, places considerably less emphasis on TL use, and on oral communication and assessment than it should. All but one of the teacher participants lamented the little emphasis placed on oral communication in formal assessment, especially in the Junior Cycle. Brendan put this in a quite emphatic manner: 'there is absolutely no emphasis on spoken Irish for the first five and three quarters of years.' An excerpt from Michael's views related to these issues is indicative of possible first steps towards finding a way out of this vicious circle through a more expanded use of the ELP:

> [...] Instead of waiting for every teacher to suddenly start sending their students for an oral exam, I think there is a way of maybe building in assessment; the ELP offers a way of integrating assessment on a day-to-day basis; a non-dramatic assessment. The students assess themselves; the teacher maybe validates the assessment in some little bits occasionally or something like that [...] maybe gradually changing the culture [...] Assessment is not such a terrible thing; after all, we are doing it. Maybe using the ELP itself as a tool [...] the dossier surely should be worth something in terms of assessing where a student is.

- Observer B of the meeting (cf. Appendix E, p.2) approached the discussion over the assessment culture in Ireland from a broader perspective, by citing a composite report published by the inspectorate of the DES 'on the teaching of modern languages' based on forty-five individual inspection reports that were done mostly in 2002 (Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2004b, cf. Chapter 2). He said that 'one of the key recurring recommendations in that is that teachers should not be so tied to the textbook or to the exam papers; they should actually teach the syllabus in the way it was meant to be taught; in an integrated way with a proper balance of skills.' To these findings he added his view that:

> 'in actual fact, teachers who are participating in the portfolio [project] are using a tool which is based on the syllabus. You have a very good answer to any parent. You can say: We are doing it in the way it's meant to be

done. We are using the target language. We are working on the [Council of Europe] scales. We are working on a document that's based closely on the syllabus. Whereas the people who are using the textbooks and are working from exam tapes right through the year… In actual fact, we are doing something that is better. In the long term, it is undoubtedly far more beneficial.'

- Some teachers felt that they need to strike a balance between 'what is beneficial for the learners in the long run, and (continuously) satisfying every stakeholder that the learners are progressing in a satisfactory fashion in the short run'.

4.4.9. Samples from learners' ELP entries

Arguably, the most diverse findings of this project came in the form of the various samples taken from learners' ELP entries which were submitted for inclusion in the ELP SN site (cf. section 3.9.8 for an overview of how samples were submitted). Although the samples submitted in many cases exhibited their owner's progress in reflection, TL ability, and morpho-syntactic and metalinguistic awareness, they also showed that such a course of real progress may be attained by taking a number of different routes (on how important this progress is cf. e.g. Wenden 1998). Each learner's approach seemed to have been affected in various degrees by their teachers' input and many other aspects of their classes and incidents taking place in them. In addition to this, each learner's approach invariably contained a personal element which stemmed from their personalities, needs and feelings.

Furthermore, as early as the beginning of October, I became aware that some learners used samples from other learners' work already posted on the ELP SN site as an inspiration to produce their own samples on the same themes, even when – on a number of occasions – their own classes were working on something entirely different at the time. This showed me that the site could be employed as a tool not only for teachers to be informed on how the ELP can be used, but also for autonomously-oriented learners who

exercise some control over their learning, and renewed my own enthusiasm for adding more samples to the site.

Although I made a conscious effort to depict the microcosms of the learners as they appeared in the ELPs as objectively as possible, while adhering to a policy of not 'vetting' the samples submitted for inclusion in the site and thus attempting to outline the many ways the ELP was used in the project classes in all its vigour and splendid diversity, I also influenced the findings in two (minor but arguably important) ways. First, I acknowledged the submission of samples through the development of dedicated pages for every school and sections for every class to host the samples. Second, in a few cases where I was offered some ELPs by their owners to choose whatever I wanted to include in the site, I opted to include the contents of whole ELPs after asking for the learners' permission to do so. I did this as I felt that offering the contents of a whole ELP folder, rather than just few selected show-case samples, may offer a snapshot of what took place in a classroom during the year in a way which can claim to command more validity and objectivity than findings collected through any self-report measure such as interviews and questionnaires. I personally feel that the interaction between this holistic type of sampling and self-report measures cross-validates the different research instruments in a very crucial sense and adds further credibility to each type of findings.

Further to the points raised above, I realised very early in the project year that learners who submitted their work for inclusion in the site naturally did so in order to show *their personal take* on how something may be learnt, tested, organised, made more eye-catching and interesting, etc. Given also the fact that in some classes learners were allowed to set personal goals in a highly independent and autonomous manner with the help of their teacher, I found it beneficial for the practice of 'whole-folder inclusion' in the ELP SN site to be further substantiated through the inclusion of the contents of two (and at times three) ELP folders from some classes in order to capture which parts of the folders were the fruits of 'class-wide work' and which parts were attempted only by certain learners. Two examples of 'whole-folder samples' will be presented at the end of this section, after the presentation of more general findings.

Of course, the combination of the decision to include all the samples mentioned above and the '*no vetting*' rule, led to the project site growing in size to become the

largest of its type. To the best of my knowledge the collection of ELP-related learner-produced samples included in the site still remained the largest at the time this thesis was completed (August 2005), containing 1,961 samples from the project year, and seventeen files containing samples of the work of prize-winning learners from the 1st ELP competition of 2001-02.

In general, the samples discussed here (i.e. the 1,961 samples related to this research project) show the enthusiasm of learners for LL and the ELP. Some of the main things which 'jump out' of those samples most prominently are the following:

- many dossier samples were quite colourful, original and showed considerable creativity in the way they were made;
- some learners made their own ELP navigation aids, such as (colourful) dividers between different sections, etc.
- some samples contained very long texts on certain descriptor themes and they arguably were the fruits of motivated learners who seemed to enjoy what they were doing in their TL class;
- the vast majority of samples were linked to one or another of the language biography descriptors and at times covered different elements of a skill related to a certain descriptor; at the least, such samples were thematically structured/oriented;
- often, samples were related to the learners' immediate environment, their interests, pastimes, and aspirations, and contained personal touches such as photos of themselves and their families, their favourite bands, etc.;
- the nature of the samples and the linguistic complexity found in them tended to vary with age, with the exception of the size of 'thematic picture glossaries', which seemed to vary mainly as a result of how interesting learners found a certain theme;
- learners followed different strategies in organising their dossiers; some learners prefaced them with thematic tables of contents and added many samples, others kept a 'hardback copy-book' as a 'process dossier' and created a few highly elaborate and decorated 'showcase dossier' samples which they kept in their ELP folders, while others kept all their TL work in their folders;

- most learners found it a lot more comfortable to use the ELP after reshuffling its language biography pages to suit their own preferences; a highly successful type of arrangement was to put the checklist translations of the ELP appendix (cf. Appendix O) facing the equivalent TL checklists;
- most learners seemed to take pride in how they used the language biography to organise their learning and submitted samples showing how they used especially the 'setting goals and thinking about learning' pages in conjunction with the checklists to develop their TL skills more efficiently; in some classes, these pages were used so intensively/frequently, that extra pages had to be photocopied and used;
- many teachers mediated the ELP to their learners by first asking them to set long-term goals related to what they were hoping to achieve during the year; a few of the learners revised their goals (usually after Christmas), either making them more realistic following reflection, or setting higher goals on the basis of their learning achievements to date; some learners also appeared more skilled in differentiating more objectively between their receptive and productive skills in the TL;
- many learners included in their dossiers samples containing diverse material such as: tips for using the ELP more effectively, reminders of what worked best for them in studying difficult points and other study tips, 'templates' of successful writing samples (e.g. business letters, postcards, etc.), translations of handy formulaic expressions and conversational phrases, cultural comparisons of Irish and TL culture (e.g. school organisation, politeness requirements, etc.), their own study resolutions and/or 'class contracts', etc.
- impressively, learners seemed to recognise the need to use the TL in their class as much as possible if they were to stand any 'serious chance of learning it'; this is evident both through what they wrote in the language biography pages containing their reflections, but also – and perhaps even more substantially – in the fact that they started using the TL rather than their L1 as the means for filling in their language biography. Some learners started writing solely in the TL from as early as late September, while others were slower to make the switch to the TL, and/or wrote sentences in the TL which still contained items of vocabulary they were not

familiar with in their L1. Only in four project classes, did learners keep on writing in their language biography in English. Some learners whose L1 was not English, initially wrote their reflections in their L1s (e.g. Spanish, French or Farsi) and English, and generally were quite keen to switch to writing in the TL when they became aware of the possibility of doing so;

- samples of passport self-assessment pages and language biography pages show clearly that more than half of learner participants started filling in sections related to one or more of the languages they knew or were learning in school. For instance there were learners who used the ELP in a French project class, but filled in their self-assessment not only for French, but also for Irish, German and English. Many also used the language biography checklists for these languages in the same way they did for their project TLs, and some wrote their reflections on these languages in a number of reflection pages they set apart for each of them. Note that the proportion of learners using the ELP in this way is greater than what was implied in the interviews and reflective essays of teachers;
- finally, a popular type of sample was that of tests that different learners developed on the themes their classes were working at the time, for their fellow students to sit; many of these tests were very well-designed and functional, and some included very good ludic elements, which stimulated interest and excitement when they were used in class; some of these tests had been developed by groups of two to four learners.

Two of the classes where the 'whole-folder samples' strategy was employed were the 2nd-year French class in Sancta Maria College, Ballyroan, and the transition-year Irish class in the Irish medium school of Coláiste Pobail Osraí, Kilkenny (note that class and learner names rather than class and learner index numbers are used in the remaining part of this section for the reasons mentioned in section 3.9.8).

The 2nd-year French class was the class whose learners submitted the greatest number of samples to be posted to the project site; in fact almost a quarter of the samples on the site were developed by learners in this class. Two learners in this class whose whole folders were made available through the site were Niamh Guven and Aoibhín Gaynor. The former won a class prize for the 'most original learning idea', while the

latter won a class prize for the 'greatest general achievement' (i.e. improvement during the year).

Niamh Guven also won a project-wide prize. Niamh's L1 was Spanish, and she came to Ireland to spend a year with her Irish father and become better in English. As a result, she filled in the ELP self-assessment for three languages: English, Spanish and French. In the section related to French, she used different colours each time she re-evaluated herself, to indicate how her ability in different skills had developed over time. She filled in her language biography in Spanish, English and French. She expressed clear preferences for certain types of learning which she said she liked best and learned best from. She mentioned practising such methods on her own, such as listening to songs in the TL, exchanging e-mails with TL-speaking e-pals, etc., always trying to structure her learning around themes of interest to her, such as ordering food in a TL restaurant, learning about TL-related cooking and clothes, etc. In her class, a hardback copy-book was used as 'process dossier', but she said she would not like that to appear on the site. What was really impressive in her ELP though was how she used colour to facilitate her learning and make certain themes, morpho-syntactic elements, and vocabulary items easier to remember. In her interview she had mentioned how the use of colour helped her to learn, and in her ELP she had used colour and vivid drawings as mnemonic aids very effectively, in a way that showed the enthusiasm with which she worked on her ELP this year. To this effect, she also decorated her ELP in a very impressive way.

Aoibhín Gaynor, on the other hand, was a learner who was among the most balanced among the junior cycle learners in this project. Her ELP samples show that she was very industrious during the year and used modular self-assessment and goal-setting cycles to achieve rapid improvement in most of the skills she was weakest in at the beginning of the year. Although she was very cautious as a learner and thus tended not to write in the TL in the language biography, she worked on her LL a lot and exhibited a great ability for reflective thinking which helped her to find, examine and then eliminate the causes of many of the mistakes she made. She also filled in the passport for all the languages she spoke (Irish, English, French and Spanish), and revised her self-assessment during the course of the year. She used mnemonic techniques such as 'Venn diagrams', drawing, etc. as an additional aid to learning. Aoibhín also used dividers between

different sections which she decorated in a witty manner. In her interview she also mentioned how she found she was able to organise herself much better thanks to the ELP, learn more and study without wasting time (impressively, her folder comprised of 120+ samples, excluding the products of group-work projects and any correspondence with TL pen-pals which did not appear in her ELP).

In the TY class, on the other hand, the 'whole-folder' samples painted a different story of how the class used the ELP. Two learners in this class whose whole ELP folders were made available on the site were Caít Nig Raighne and Cuileann Ní Chremín. The former won a class prize for the 'best ELP', while the latter won a class prize for the 'greatest general achievement' (i.e. improvement during the year).

Both these learners had produced an impressive amount of dossier material, including a few quite long stories retelling legends from the Irish mythology. Their language biographies were filled in exclusively in Irish, and their comments showed their belief in setting targets and achieving them in LL. Both of them had filled in the passport for all the other languages they were learning (including German, which they had just started in TY), and they filled in the language biography checklists for all those languages, as well as some reflections in the language biography related to each language (once again filled in solely in the TL). Their ELPs (as had their interviews and their responses to other research instruments) showed their great pride in their TL (Irish), their positive outlook towards trying new methods in LL, and their appreciation for the help they got from the ELP and the fun they were generally having in class.

5. Class-specific case studies

5.1. Preamble

This chapter presents and critically examines the project's class- and teacher-specific findings, again according to data-elicitation instrument. This chapter extends the presentation of findings in Chapter 4. Like Chapter 4, it draws from and should be read in tandem with the extensive appendices of the thesis with a particular emphasis on Appendix K.

5.2. Chapter rationale and discussion structure employed

The reason behind the devotion of an entire chapter to class- and teacher-specific project findings is twofold.

First, the teacher participants in the project and their classes were actively encouraged to develop their own way of using the ELP in their classes. Thus project participants tailored the use of the ELP to suit their classes at their discretion, and I felt it would be important to examine and depict through the discussion of findings how effective different teaching and learning implementations of the ELP would appear to be in each of these settings.

Second, the general substrate (peer-group norms inside a classroom, school regulations, degree of administrative support from school managers and head-teachers, teacher peer-group support, etc.) and overall environment of each project class was in itself quite variable. Hence it was bound to affect how the ELP was mediated from a teacher to his or her students and influence the findings in ways which could not be presented in a meaningful manner only through the aggregate format employed in the general discussion part of Chapter 4. As a result, the second part of the discussion, i.e. Chapter 5, was deemed necessary. That part discusses findings broken down according to class (and hence also according to teacher and school).

The discussion contained in this chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part is contained in section 5.3 below and presents a class-specific presentation of *quantitative* findings already presented in Chapter 4. The second part of the discussion consists of seventeen sections (i.e. sections 5.4.1 to 5.4.17) containing one section for

each project class for which there are valid findings collected through all research instruments (cf. also presentations of 'partial' findings in the appendices and in Chapters 3 and 4). In those sections an integration of the most prominent findings related to that class is attempted in brief. Unfortunately, in the space available, an exhaustive presentation of each project class is not possible. However, my hope is that these sections may help the reader to understand the substrate of this project a little better (cf. also Appendices B-N).

The order of presentation of project classes is symptomatic and does not represent a ranking of any kind, since it follows the class index numbers of the SPSS database. These index numbers were allocated during the coding of round a) responses at the beginning of the year, and as a result depict only the order of questionnaire administrations in different schools. Finally, findings related to two classes (#15 and #18) will not be discussed in a section of their own, since there were not enough valid findings related to them to inform a coherent and comprehensive class-specific discussion (cf. however related discussion and presentations of 'partial' findings in Chapters 3 and 4) .

5.3. Quantitative findings

As mentioned earlier in the discussion of quantitative findings in Chapter 4, some of the research instruments employed in this research project when used with the current learner sample did not yield enough statistical power for them to license salient conclusions on a class-specific basis. As a result, such instruments will not be discussed in this section. They include the SRQ-P- and the PosPerI-related findings, for which the Levene test of normality indicated a general absence of enough class variability of responses. Furthermore, not all LAP-based research instruments will be discussed here, since a principled class-specific examination would not only be precarious owing to the nature of the instruments employed, but would also require substantially more space than is afforded by a Ph.D. thesis. Below, a presentation of findings related to the remaining quantitative research instruments is offered, in the form of summary tables followed by a brief commentary. Furthermore, as subscale inter-correlation matrices and reliability analyses related to these research instruments have been offered in Chapter 4, no further comments will be made here.

Owing to the fact that all the quantitative findings in this section are class-specific, I opted simply to describe them here, and discuss them more fully in the sections corresponding to the classes with which they are related. In my opinion, this offers a better integration of quantitative and qualitative findings related to each class, and might help the reader reach a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of each project class, and how they were affected by the use of the ELP.

As in Chapter 4 1-way between-groups ANOVAs were conducted. Each row of the ANOVA tables presented below contains summary data gathered from one or more 1-way ANOVAs examining *between-classes* differences. In successive columns, it contains the name of the scale it is related to, the observed mean, the scale's standard deviation (SD), the degrees of freedom applicable (DF), the degree of observed difference in the means of the different groups examined (F) followed by the grouping variable which determines the groups in question. Two additional columns offer the observed significance of the ANOVA (p) which gives us the level of confidence with which we can claim whether or not the observed sample is contained in the population examined and can be used to make statistical inferences about that population, and finally 'eta squared' (H^2), a measure of the effect size for the result (i.e. between-groups difference) examined.

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (class)	P	H^2
aSRQLext	1,8687	,58226	18, 316	3,168	,0005	0,153
aSRQLinr	1,3460	,60960	18, 316	2,312	,002	0,116
aSRQLide	2,1692	,54278	18, 316	2,683	,0005	0,133
aSRQLint	1,0179	,65019	18, 316	2,984	,0005	0,145
aSRQAext	1,8348	,52659	18, 316	3,591	,0005	0,170
aSRQAinr	1,6812	,52641	18, 316	2,113	,006	0,107
aSRQAide	2,2555	,50544	18, 316	2,563	,001	0,127
aSRQAint	1,1907	,61524	18, 316	3,197	,0005	0,154

Table 5.1: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: Class Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round a

Table 5.1 contains a summary of the results from eight one-way between-groups ANOVAs. It depicts the observed impact of project class on the findings in round a) as

measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A. As can be seen from the DF column (DF=18, 316), 317 respondents in nineteen classes informed the findings. As one can see in the P column above, all Fs related to all four motivational orientations appeared to be highly (statistically) significant (p range: 0,006 - <=0,0005), with H^2 exhibiting the effects of ANOVA-measured differences to be rather large (0,116-0,170). Hence we can safely conclude that there were statistically significant class differences in the responses in round a) as regards extrinsic, introjected, identified and intrinsic motivational orientations. Following Bonferroni post-hoc multiple between-groups comparisons for all ANOVAs, the following significant differences were identified between groups:

As regards the extrinsic motivational orientation in LL, differences were traced to the fact that learners in class #8 had higher extrinsic motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences between the following project classes presented according to their index number: #8-#6 p=0,014; #8-#19 p=0,026).

As regards the introjected motivational orientation in LL, differences were traced to the fact that learners in class #2 had higher introjected motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #3-#2 p=0,035).

As regards the identified motivational orientation in LL, differences were traced to the fact that learners in class #3 had lower identified motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #3-#2 p=0,022; -#16 p=0,023; -#19 p=0,044).

As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation in LL, differences were traced to the fact that learners in classes #10 and #19 had higher intrinsic motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #10-#3 p=0,015; #10-#7 p=0,010; #10-#9 p=0,016; #10-#15 p=0,008; #19-#15 p=0,047).

The between-groups Bonferroni comparisons in relation to motivation in school in general exhibited similar – if not more pronounced – differences between classes as regards motivation in school in general. More specifically:

As regards the extrinsic motivational orientation in school in general, differences were traced to the fact that learners in class #8 had higher extrinsic motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #8-#2 p=0,023; #8-#3

p=0,001; #8-#5 p=0,013; #8-#6 p=0,008; #8-#11 p=0,017; #8-#12 p=0,005; #8-#13 p=0,024; #8-#18 p=0,005; #8-#19 p=0,001).

As regards the introjected motivational orientation in school in general, differences were traced to the fact that learners in class #2 had higher introjected motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #3-#2 p=0,033; #6-#2 p=0,018).

As regards the identified motivational orientation in school in general, differences were traced to the fact that learners in class #3 had lower identified motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #3-#2 p=0,039; -#10 p=0,047; -#16 p=0,029; -#19 p=0,038).

As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation in school in general, differences were traced to the fact that learners in classes #10 and #19 had higher intrinsic motivation levels than learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #10-#3 p=0,015; #10-#7 p=0,010; #10-#9 p=0,016; #10-#15 p=0,008; #19-#15 p=0,047).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (class)	P	H^2
bSRQLext	1,7175	,55030	16, 260	3,727	,0005	0,187
bSRQLinr	1,2503	,58206	16, 260	1,230	,245	-
bSRQLide	2,0373	,54817	16, 260	2,795	,0005	0,147
bSRQLint	,9943	,63816	16, 260	3,885	,0005	0,193
bSRQAext	1,7077	,52476	16, 260	3,348	,0005	0,171
bSRQAinr	1,5507	,55124	16, 260	1,607	,067	-
bSRQAide	2,1164	,51628	16, 260	2,718	,001	0,143
bSRQAint	1,1332	,61206	16, 260	3,991	,0005	0,197

Table 5.2: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: Class Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round b

Table 5.2 contains a summary of the results from eight one-way between-groups ANOVAs. It depicts the observed impact of project class on the findings in round b) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A. For the sake of brevity, it will not be discussed in detail, as it appears that although at first glance it seems to depict the existence of significant between-groups differences, the only marked difference which remained following the eight Bonferroni comparisons involved, was that learners in class #11 had

substantially lower extrinsic motivational orientation levels (significantly so towards all other classes apart from classes #1 and #13).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (class)	P	H^2
cSRQLext	-,1906	,57284	16, 234	1,519	,094	-
cSRQLinr	-,1491	,57989	16, 234	1,771	,036	0,108
cSRQLide	-,1617	,52873	16, 234	1,723	,043	0,105
cSRQLint	-,0322	,58208	16, 234	3,454	,0005	0,191
cSRQAext	-,1740	,51335	16, 234	1,280	,211	-
cSRQAinr	-,1882	,48351	16, 234	1,792	,033	0,109
cSRQAide	-,1600	,51202	16, 234	1,928	,019	0,116
cSRQAint	-,0647	,55049	16, 234	3,259	,0005	0,182

Table 5.3: SRQ-A Motivational Orientations: Class Impact (ANOVA) Overview for Round c

Table 5.3 depicts through a summary of the results from eight one-way between-groups ANOVAs the observed impact of project class on the change in motivational orientations between rounds a) and b) as measured by SRQ-L and SRQ-A. As can be seen from the DF column (DF=16, 234), only 235 respondents in seventeen classes informed the findings. As one can see in the p column above, all Fs (apart from those related to extrinsic motivational orientations) appeared to be statistically significant (p range: 0,043 - <=0,0005), with H^2 exhibiting the effects of ANOVA-measured differences to be medium to large (0,105-0,191). Hence we can safely conclude that there were statistically significant class differences in the responses in round c) as regards introjected, identified and intrinsic motivational orientations, but also that the extrinsic motivation levels in all classes dropped in approximately the same way across classes (with cSRQLext mean = -0,1906, and cSRQAext mean = -0,1740). Following Bonferroni post-hoc multiple between-groups comparisons for all ANOVAs, most differences did not reach significance at the 0,05 level. The only differences which remained significant were related to the intrinsic motivational orientation. The following significant differences were identified between groups:

As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation in LL, differences were traced to the fact that the intrinsic motivation levels of learners in class #7 rose significantly more

than those of learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #7-#1 p=0,033; #7-#2 p=0,004; #7-#3 p=0,006; #7-#8 p=0,0005; #7-#9 p=0,0005), whereas those of learners in class #8 fell significantly more than those of learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #8-#4 p=0,011; #8-#7 p=0,0005; #8-#16 p=0,009; #8-#17 p=0,004).

As regards the intrinsic motivational orientation in school in general, significant differences quite similar to those observed in relation to motivation towards LL were observed, traced to the fact that the intrinsic motivation levels of learners in class #7 rose significantly more than those of learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #7-#2 p=0,023; #7-#3 p=0,034; #7-#8 p=0,0005; #7-#9 p=0,001), whereas those of learners in class #8 fell significantly more than those of learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #8-#4 p=0,031; #8-#7 p=0,0005; #8-#16 p=0,006; #8-#17 p=0,003).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (class)	P	H^2
aPCSL	2,2189	,57793	The Levene test of normality indicated not enough variability.			
bPCSL	2,0152	,66230				
cPCSL	-,2027	,61336	16, 233	2,242	,005	0,133

Table 5.4: Perceived Competence in LL: Class Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 5.4 depicts the observed impact of project class on how competent learners perceived themselves to be in their language classes as measured by PCSL. As we can notice above, The Levene test of normality indicated not enough variability in the very high perceived competence of learners in round a), which was slightly lower in round b) (mean=2,0152). Furthermore, after post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons and a plotting of means for different groups were carried out for round c), it seems that most learners' perceived competence changed between rounds in approximately the same manner, apart from learners in class #17, whose perceptions of their own competence grew a little (but not statistically significantly) more than those of learners in the rest of the classes.

Table 5.5 depicts the observed impact of project class on how competent learners perceived themselves to be in using their ELP as measured by PCSELP. In general, no

significant between-groups differences were found, after post-hoc Bonferroni multiple comparisons and a plotting of means for different groups were carried out. On the basis of this, and bearing in mind the very small number of learners who informed these findings in rounds a) and c), we can make no conclusive generalisations on the basis of this sample, further to the ones made in Chapter 4. Significantly more salient relevant conclusions may be drawn from the EE1-based questionnaire qualitative findings (cf. section 4.4.3 and related class-specific discussion below).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (sex)	P	H^2
aPCSELP	1,9615	,88476	3, 33	2,283	,097	-
bPCSELP	1,6642	,85829	16, 257	2,577	,001	0,138
cPCSELP	-,4516	,96051	3, 27	1,778	,175	-

Table 5.5: Perceived Competence in Using the ELP: Class Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (class)	P	H^2
aLCQ	1,7628	,64551	16, 278	6,941	,0005	0,285
bLCQ	1,7542	,75012	16, 258	4,598	,0005	0,222
cLCQ	-,0444	,71911	16, 232	3,182	,0005	0,180

Table 5.6: Learning Climate Questionnaire: Class Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 5.6 depicts through a summary of the results from eight one-way between-groups ANOVAs the observed impact of project class of the respondents on how much support learners perceived they were getting from their language teachers as measured by LCQ. As one can see in the p column above, all three Fs related to the three rounds appeared to be highly statistically significant ($p <= 0,0005$), with H^2s depicting the effects of ANOVA-measured differences to be very large (0,180-0,285). Hence we can safely conclude that there were statistically significant class differences in the responses in rounds a) and b) and in the change of perceptions of teacher support between rounds. Following Bonferroni post-hoc multiple between-groups comparisons for all ANOVAs, many statistically significant between-groups differences were observed. However, the pattern of between-groups significance for rounds a) and b) was too random to license any salient interpretations, and as such will not be discussed further at this point.

The situation was radically different in relation to round c), where Bonferroni comparisons traced differences to the fact that the perceptions of learners in class #7 of how much support they received by their teacher rose significantly more than those of learners in most other classes (statistically significant differences: #7-#8 p=0,0005; #7-#14 p=0,027; #7-#16 p=0,046; #7-#17 p=0,044; #7-#19 p=0,0005).

Scale name	Mean	SD	DF	F (class)	P	H^2
aAutAsI	2,3839	1,75981	18, 317	3,590	,0005	0,169
cAutAsI	,1080	1,63064	16, 233	1,406	,140	-
aAutAsL	1,9911	1,53270	18, 317	2,055	,007	0,104
cAutAsL	,2120	1,59790	16, 233	,796	,690	-
aAutAsA	2,1935	1,39340	18, 317	2,982	,0005	0,145
cAutAsA	,1320	1,48438	16, 233	1,009	,448	-

Table 5.7: 'Autonomous' Aspirations: Class Impact (ANOVA) Overview

Table 5.7 contains a summary of the results from 1-way between-groups ANOVAs, depicting the observed impact of project class of the respondents on the perceived importance, perceived likelihood and perceived current attainment of their 'autonomous aspirations' (i.e. the sums of the three intrinsic aspirations minus the sums of the three extrinsic aspirations; cf. discussion in section 4.4.2 above). On the whole, the summaries of the three ANOVAs in the table related to round a) show us that there were initial between-groups differences in the aspects of the autonomous aspirations examined through the Aspirations Index. Following Bonferroni post-hoc multiple between-groups comparisons for all ANOVAs, most differences did not reach significance at the 0,05 level. The only differences which remained significant were related to the perceived importance of autonomous aspirations and were traced to the fact that learners in class #10 perceived autonomous aspirations to be significantly more important for them than did learners in other classes (statistically significant differences: #10-#8 p=0,0005; #10-#9 p=0,008; #10-#1 p=0,004; #10-#3 p=0,027; #10-#6 p=0,001; #10-#13 p=0,0005; #10-#17 p=0,001).

Furthermore, significant class differences were not found in the manner learners' responses changed during the course of the year (i.e. round c). This is a highly desirable

effect, as it shows that despite the differences in how the ELP was mediated in different classes, the positive effect on the life-goals of the students which was observed and discussed in Chapter 4 was more or less stable across classes (and hence across different teacher participants, school environments, etc.).

Do you like working with the ELP in your class?	Class index number																	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16	17	19	N=274
No	9	11	4	14	2	0	2	4	5	1	0	1	8	4	1	1	3	70
I am not sure	5	0	3	1	0	1	5	1	7	0	0	0	4	7	1	2	2	39
Yes	7	17	12	6	9	6	19	6	13	11	2	6	6	8	16	13	8	165
Total	21	28	19	21	11	7	26	11	25	12	2	7	18	19	18	16	13	274

Table 5.8: Do you like working with the ELP in your class?: Class index number Crosstabulation

Table 5.8 offers a breakdown of learner responses to the question of whether they liked working with the ELP or not according to project class. As one can see above, although the overall picture shows that the majority of learners liked working with the ELP in their classes, that was not the case in classes #1, 4 and 13, while in classes #2, 8, 9 and 14 there was a strong minority of learners who did not like working with the ELP.

Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL?	Class index number																	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16	17	19	N=265
No	6	8	4	8	1	0	1	3	7	0	0	1	7	1	0	2	2	51
I am not sure	4	4	1	1	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	2	3	2	1	0	24
Yes	10	15	13	12	10	4	23	5	17	11	2	6	9	15	16	11	11	190
Total	20	27	18	21	11	5	26	10	25	11	2	7	18	19	18	14	13	265

Table 5.9: Do you think the ELP might actually help you to learn the TL?: Class number Crosstabulation

Table 5.9 offers a breakdown of learner responses to the question of whether or not the ELP might help them learn their TL according to project class. As one can see above, although the overall picture shows that the majority of learners felt that the ELP might help them learn their TL (with this majority being even stronger than the one observed

for the previous research item), there were still strong minorities of learners who did not think so in classes #1, 2, 4, 8, 9 and 13.

Most favourite ELP sections:	Class index number																	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16	17	19	N=226
Language Passport	3	0	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	11
Language Biography	3	5	0	4	1	0	2	0	6	2	0	1	4	8	3	5	2	46
Dossier	9	14	13	12	6	1	17	2	7	6	1	4	10	1	4	6	4	117
I like no particular section best	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	4	2	0	1	2	19
I like all sections equally	1	3	0	0	1	2	1	0	4	2	0	0	0	6	0	2	0	22
L. Passport + L. Biography	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
L. Passport + Dossier	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	9
Total	18	24	17	19	9	3	25	3	19	11	2	7	18	18	7	17	9	226

Table 5.10: Most favourite ELP sections: * Class index number Crosstabulation

Table 5.10 offers an overview of which sections of the ELP learners identified as their most favourite ones, broken down by project class. Although a number of small differences seemed to emerge between classes, I was not able to pinpoint large differences in responses between groups that would depict a consistent group tendency not related to chance, apart from the fact that the norm in responses was the answer 'dossier' in all classes except #6, where the norm was 'I like all sections equally', and #14, where the norm was 'language biography (n=8 out of 18) closely followed by 'I like all sections equally' (n=6 out of 18).

Table 5.11 offers an overview of which sections of the ELP learners identified as their least favourite ones, broken down by project class. As for the previous item, I was not able to pinpoint large differences in responses between groups which would depict a consistent group tendency not related to chance, apart from class #14, where the norm of responses was 'I dislike no particular section' (n=10 out of 15).

Least favourite ELP sections:	Class index number																	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16	17	19	N=168
Language Passport	3	0	3	2	1	0	7	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	20
Language Biography	2	7	7	7	3	0	9	0	5	2	1	1	6	2	4	7	3	66
Dossier	3	0	2	1	1	0	3	0	4	1	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	21
I dislike no particular section	6	3	1	1	0	1	1	0	5	3	1	0	0	10	1	3	3	39
I dislike all sections equally	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	8
L. Passport + L. Biography	0	1	1	4	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	13
L. Passport + Dossier	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	15	13	15	16	5	1	21	2	14	7	2	6	9	15	6	14	7	168

Table 5.11: Least favourite ELP sections: * Class index number **Crosstabulation**

	Class index number																	Total
Language Skill focus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16	17	19	N=234
Listening	15	26	4	17	8	7	20	9	7	12	2	6	17	15	13	9	2	189
Reading	8	11	9	17	8	6	17	7	22	12	0	5	11	11	13	6	4	167
Spoken interaction	8	16	5	14	9	2	23	3	10	9	2	4	2	9	6	11	13	146
Spoken production	4	10	3	6	7	2	19	3	4	9	0	6	4	11	4	5	12	109
Writing	20	25	18	21	8	7	16	9	24	11	2	7	16	18	15	15	2	234

Table 5.12: Language Skill Focus * Class index number **Crosstabulation**

Table 5.12 offers an overview of which language skills learners ticked in order to indicate that they focussed more on them in their classes, broken down by project class. One aspect which appeared to somewhat differentiate classes into two groups was how much focus learners perceived was placed in them on language skills related to speaking, namely spoken interaction and spoken production, in comparison to the focus placed on reading, writing and listening. In summary, the numbers in Table 5.12 indicate that learners in the majority of classes said less focus was placed on speaking-related skills than on the other three. In the minority 'group' (classes #5, 7, 12, 14 and 17), learners'

responses indicated a more balanced focus on all skills. Finally, class 19 had a very unusual pattern of responses indicating that a lot more focus was placed on speaking-related skills than on the other skills.

Goal Setting	Class index number																	Total
N of learners who said 'yes'	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**16**	**17**	**19**	
Perceived frequency in other subjects	2	4	0	5	4	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	22
It is important-No specific reason	6	7	1	2	2	3	4	3	4	3	0	1	1	3	2	13	0	55
It gives you (more) freedom/independence	1	3	6	1	5	1	16	0	2	1	2	1	1	4	4	0	2	50
It is (more) fun	0	0	5	0	2	0	11	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	23
It is useful in language learning	9	6	7	13	5	1	15	4	11	7	2	4	6	9	12	1	7	119
It helps you organise yourself more	5	12	4	7	6	1	20	4	12	5	2	4	5	11	7	1	6	112
It is too time consuming	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	9
It is too difficult for students/ teachers know better	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	9

Table 5.13: Goal setting * Class index number Crosstabulation

Table 5.13 offers an overview of learner responses related to goal setting, broken down by project class. On the basis of the numbers contained in this table we can see that the most negative attitudes towards setting their own goals through the help of the ELP were found in class #4, where six learners said they thought it was too time-consuming, and two more said it was too difficult for students. Otherwise, in all classes substantially more learners were positively disposed towards setting their own goals through the help of the ELP than those who were negatively disposed. In eleven out of seventeen classes, no learners expressed negative attitudes. Owing to the small numbers of learners involved, it was not possible to draw further class-specific conclusions from this table.

5.4. Findings related specific project classes

5.4.1 Class #1

Class #1 was a first-year German class taught by Martha. She was a teacher of German and Irish with many years of teaching experience. Contrary to other teachers, she decided to 'teach the ELP as an aside and see how it worked'. The reasons behind this decision seem to have been the following: she had not taught mixed-ability classes before and wanted to 'keep things simple'; she was under great pressure as the first year in this school was a taster year (each learner took seventeen subjects) with the result that foreign languages were taught for only two hours a week (at times dropping to one hour per week, as some classes were lost owing to a variety of school-wide sport, cultural or recreational activities) and learners did not carry all their books in school every day; finally, she taught a very large class (with an initial membership of 30) which hampered her ability to mediate the ELP to the learners as effectively as she would have liked and meant that the ELPs had to 'live in the lockers' most of the time.

The above challenges may account for the fact that although the learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, this was one of the three classes where learners' responses indicated that they enjoyed using the ELP the least. Thus, the majority of learners who responded (n=21) said they 'did not like' (n=9) or 'had mixed feelings about' (n=5) using the ELP, and only 7 learners 'liked using the ELP in their class'. Furthermore, although the majority of learners felt that the ELP might help them to learn their TL, this was one of the six classes where a significant minority (6 out of 20) of respondents did not think so. Most of those learners felt the ELP was 'a bit helpful' but also too time consuming or too confusing/difficult to use.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see the wide variety in the levels of different learners in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect. A common theme in the samples was a class-wide project on the German 'Karnival'; however, many learners wrote in English rather than in the TL. Some tried to use the TL more than others and at times produced samples with mixed sentences (TL-English or TL-French/Spanish).

Two learners from this class were interviewed. Both of them liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, and felt the ELP became easier to use after a while. Learner #1 used it also for other TLs she was learning and learner #2 said she intended to. Learner #2 appeared to be highly motivated, effective in her learning and prolific in the material she made for her dossier. She also appeared to be the most autonomous learner in her class and applied the ELP simply but effectively: 'I ask myself questions [...] and understand more. It's brilliant'. Both learners mentioned having fun and learner #2 added that the ELP should be used by all to help them to become more organized.

In her reports, Martha observed that the ELP was 'not really in operation yet' even in December (cf. the issues mentioned above) and mentioned encountering many technical problems stemming from the bulkiness and the flimsiness of the ELP folders. Things seemed to become better by March, when she mentioned noticing some learners learning more autonomously in how they used their dictionary and participated in project work.

In her end-of-year reflective essay she remarked: 'I didn't use it properly but have worked out how I would use it as a very valuable tool for organising different activities and levels of work for a mixed-ability class.' She added that in her project classes (cf. section 5.4.2 below), she did not witness the 'real independence found in some other project classes such as class #4' (cf. presentation of findings related to class #4 in section 5.4.4 below), and in retrospect realised she had employed 'frontal teaching up to Christmas', using the ELP as an add-on 'approximately once a month'. She felt that more 'pre-planning' prior to using the ELP in class is needed in order to avoid frustration.

In her interview, she largely repeated the themes mentioned through the other research instruments, and added that she knew what she would do differently next year. She also felt that she had to continually respond successfully to some persistent additional challenges: a lack of preparatory planning together with her colleague who was teaching this class Spanish (who was not using the ELP) made her avoid the themes learners were covering in their Spanish class so that learners would not mix up the two languages (both TLs were learned 'ab initio'). Furthermore, she observed thee phenomenon of having some learners in class 'switched off from German', as they had chosen to take Spanish rather than German in second year, following the results of

school-wide general tests on both TLs at Christmas. She added that the ELP probably started to be used systematically slightly too late to offer a boost to learner motivation. The main advantage she felt the ELP holds for teachers is that 'it helps you explore your teaching'.

My observations of this class showed that this class was largely effective under the circumstances, with the teacher creating a very positive atmosphere despite the challenges mentioned above, through the use of humorous devices, miming, etc. (cf. further discussion in the following section).

5.4.2 Class #2

Class #2 was a first-year Irish class taught by Martha, who also taught class #1 presented in the previous section. Although this was also a first-year class and I was hoping that we would be able to see if there were differences in the way the ELP affected classes of different TLs where most other aspects were the same (i.e. teacher, school, class year and ability level), we were not able to do so, primarily owing to the difference in teaching hours per week (this class had Irish four hours per week), and to the highly varied levels of proficiency in Irish of the learners in this class as a result of their learning experience in different primary schools.

That said, Martha used the same strategy in mediating the ELP to her students, deciding to 'teach the ELP as an aside and see how it worked'. This class consisted of learners of extremely 'mixed abilities', and consisted of 30 learners. Many of the things mentioned in relation to class #1 also apply to this class, as a result of the policies followed in this school.

Once again, I think that the challenges facing first-year learners as a result of the school policies may account for the fact that the learners of this class were significantly different to other classes in the general sample in that their introjected motivational orientation (which could arguably be associated with coercion) was extremely high as regards activities related both to LL and to school in general. Furthermore, this was one of the four classes where learners' responses indicated that although most of them enjoyed using the ELP, a significant minority did not appear to do so. Thus, the majority of learners who responded (17 out of 28) said they 'liked using the ELP', and eleven

learners 'did not like using the ELP in their class'. Furthermore, although the majority of learners felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL, this was again one of the six classes where a significant minority of respondents (8 out of 27) did not think so. As in class #1, most of those learners felt the ELP was 'a bit helpful' but also too time consuming or too confusing/difficult to use.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see (especially in earlier samples) the markedly wide variety in the levels of different learners in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect. The thinking and reflection evident in some of the language biography pages I checked was significant for such a young age-group, but not substantial. It seems that some sections of the language biography could have provided more help to some learners had they been used more. That said, some learners seemed to have enjoyed this relative freedom and worked a lot on their ELPs. However, those were the minority. Once more, there was a common theme in the samples: a class-wide project on St Patrick's Day and its festivities. The language biography was filled in mostly in English.

Two learners from this class were interviewed. Both of them liked their TL but found it 'a bit hard', enjoyed using the ELP, and felt the ELP became easier to use after a while. Both learners seemed to be among the most motivated in their class, and seemed to have used the ELP in a way which suited their learning style and organised their learning. Learner 1 appeared to be highly motivated, seemed to have used the checklists more than her class on her own to self-assess and set goals, and mentioned that a good ELP has to be used 'once a week or more [in order to] help you to organise your learning and set goals [...] and show your best work'. Both learners added that the ELP should be used by all as it helps a lot in 'organising yourself and setting goals'.

In her reports, Martha made the same observations related to the challenges first-year classes pose for teachers in this school, and to how the implementation of a project such as the current one was affected by such a state of affairs. The timeline of ELP use in this class follows the one mentioned for class #1. Additional class-specific observations were the following: more time was devoted to explanation of different ELP parts; the Irish checklists were placed next to their English translations (included in the ELP appendix) and thus assisted the acquisition of some related vocabulary; learners had extremely varied attitudes to Irish stemming from previous learning experiences in

primary school; the teacher was under pressure to prepare learners for a summer exam which was used by the school to form ability streams; in the April report, it was mentioned that the class 'cracked the ELP', and this was the longest 'delayed' teacher statement of this type among project participants; the class used the ELP on one occasion in order to integrate Irish and art and they won a prize for their efforts, however the teacher feared that they were falling behind in vocabulary acquisition.

Martha's end-of-year reflective essay was common for both classes, so it will not be discussed further at this point (cf. section 5.4.1).

My observations of this class showed that it was quite effective. The teacher once more created a very positive atmosphere, provided good scaffolding for learners to try their best, used a lot of pair-work, story-telling and offered help related to real learner needs, focussed on problematic aspects of Irish morphology. On the whole, the last observation of this class also showed that many positive aspects of the class were strengthened further. However, in my opinion, what this and the previous section seem to me to indicate is that the ELP does not optimise learner effort and motivation up to its potential when it is not used as an integral part of what takes place in the classroom. And this is also confirmed by Martha's feelings as they were expressed in her end-of-year reflective essay (cf. also Chapter 6).

5.4.3 Class #3

Class #3 was a second-year mixed-ability French class taught by Michael. He was a teacher of French with many years of teaching experience, some of them in France. He had used the ELP before very briefly, when he joined the ELP SN during EE1. This time he started using the ELP from the beginning of the project, knew a bit more about what to avoid when introducing the ELP to his students, and on the whole seemed to have created a positive and intellectually challenging atmosphere in the class which helped to produce some very good outcomes.

On the whole, the learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, apart from the fact that their identified motivational orientation was lower

as regards activities related both to LL and to school in general. Furthermore, learners' responses indicated that the majority of learners generally enjoyed using the ELP and felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see the wide variety in the levels of different learners in both TL proficiency and ability for reflection. Most learners by the end of the year seemed able to fill in the language biography in the TL, and to varying degrees used the ELP in all the other languages they knew/were learning. Most learners in this class submitted at least one or two samples to the site. Three learners submitted as many as 120 (!) samples, while two learners said they intended to keep on working on their French and producing dossier work on their own in their summer holidays. The reason why dossier work was so popular in this class may be related to the fact that learners were actively prompted to produce samples linked to 'personally-set and thus optimally relevant' goals which they would 'make even more their own' by integrating their art, their interests, etc. into them. As a result, many learners produced very artistic and/or well-thought-out samples, some produced self-tests, some devised study routines, etc. Most ELPs were decorated and included a class-contract in their pages, while some contained a 'beginning-of-year resolution' page.

Two learners from this class were interviewed. Both of them liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, and felt the ELP became very easy to use after a while. Both learners used it also for other TLs they were learning and saw that the principles behind it could be applied to many other subjects, and could help 'focus on your weaker points, set good goals, learn them, test them and start again to learn more'. Both learners also appeared to be highly motivated, and effective in their learning. Learner #1 was especially prolific in the material she made for her dossier. Both these learners – along with many others in their class – appeared to be quite autonomous in how they organised their learning.

In his reports, Michael mentioned that he introduced the ELP gradually and felt this helped learners a lot in developing confidence in the ELP and in using the TL in class. Although he mentioned some things he would do differently the following year, such as taking more time to introduce some sections, and starting with a first-year class in order to be under less time pressure to 'cover' material for the JC exam, reshuffle ELP pages a

lot earlier in the year, etc., he mentioned that the ELP generally helped to 'revolutionise' his teaching, and helped his learners to reflect, and 'understand the geography of learning a TL' (even as early as October). By November, he mentioned that the class had become a lot more group-work oriented, real communication often took place in the TL, and learners started noticing morphological features of French a lot more. Some learners exhibited real progress, which they themselves were also noticing.

In his end-of-year reflective essay he made extremely positive remarks based on the positive effects the ELP had on his class, boosting learner motivation, fostering real teacher-learner interaction, empowering learners and 'giving them a fishing rod and one fish, rather than just some fish, through only the pre-packaged material in the textbook', etc. He also related many anecdotes showing how the majority of his learners benefited in TL proficiency, thinking, organising and analytical skills (which he called 'embedded skills', since they exist in most activities in life), etc. Although he also stated that he did not recall being given the questionnaires in advance (contrary to other participants who did; cf. discussion transcript in Appendix E), he said he found that his participation in this research project and the effect of the ELP on his class was so positive that *it renewed his enthusiasm for teaching*.

In his interview, he largely repeated the themes mentioned through the other research instruments, and expressed consistently positive views on the ELP. Among other things, he added that he found the effect on those learners not belonging to the strongest group to be even more dramatic and important. He felt that for them, the ELP 'dedramatised LL by helping them to understand' that it can be modular/gradual and thus achievable by all. Furthermore, he said that the effect on his class was very pronounced, and that they had become the most motivated, systematic/organised and effective 2nd-year class he had ever taught.

My observations of this class showed that it was very effective, and confirmed that during the year, more TL was used in the class for a multitude of functions, and more group-work was carried out in a very positive climate. All learners seemed to follow both a general class-wide agenda guided by the ELP and the textbook, but also their own personal goals which they set through their ELPs. The level of oral French employed by the learners was very high, and the teacher consistently created a very positive

atmosphere through the use of humorous devices, miming, etc., where learners felt safe in using the TL, and trying to guess correct ways of expressing something. Many learners also benefited from material produced by their peers who were in pursuit of their own goals and had, for instance, created glossaries, conjugation tables, Venn diagrams, etc. which could be 'recycled' in group-projects and presentations, self-tests, etc.

5.4.4 Class #4

Class #4 was a second-year Honours Irish class taught by Seán, a native speaker of Irish from Donegal. He was a teacher of Irish with eleven years' teaching experience. Although he became aware of the ELP only a month before the project started, he felt very comfortable with the theory behind it and with using it from the very beginning, and on the whole seemed to have created a very systematic, positive and intellectually challenging atmosphere in the class, which, coupled with his aptitude for making jokes in simple Irish, and his unexpected prolonged absence from teaching during the year on medical grounds, produced some unique results (cf. relevant discussion in Chapter 4).

Thus, learners in this class succeeded in keeping up with their learning up to a point, undeterred by the physical absence of a teacher while Seán was in hospital and convalescing. They appear to have been able to do so by structuring their learning around their language biography (especially the checklists and the 'setting goals and thinking about learning' pages), which they used three times a week or more.

Of course, not all learners found this practice easy, and although most acknowledged its benefits, it seemed to affect their attitude towards the ELP, as some felt it made them 'work a lot', and would have liked 'more teacher help/guidance'. Thus, although on the whole the learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, this was one of the three classes where learners' responses indicated they enjoyed using the ELP the least. Thus, the majority of learners who responded (n=21) said they 'did not like' (n=14) or 'had mixed feelings about' (n=1) using the ELP, and only 6 learners 'liked using the ELP in their class'. Furthermore, although the majority of learners felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL, this was one of the six classes

where a significant minority of respondents (8 out of 21) did not think so. Most of those learners felt the ELP was 'very helpful' and/or 'helps you stay focussed' but also found that 'setting goals on your own through the ELP is time-consuming' (n=6) or 'difficult' (n=2) and would like to also have a teacher in class (understandably so, although it was not possible under the circumstances).

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see the high level of work produced by the majority of learners. The length and grammatical complexity of some texts were what one would expect from a higher year, and when viewed diachronically progress during the year was evident. Most learners filled in the language biography only in the TL on a weekly basis, and approximately half of them used the ELP in at least one of the other languages they knew/were learning in varying degrees. From the beginning of year learners were encouraged to vote for class-wide themes which would inform the next class goals, which they would 'make even more their own' by integrating their art, their interests, etc. into them. Many learners produced very artistic and/or well-thought-out samples, devised study routines, etc.

Two notable facts related to this class. First, its membership was disrupted in the first two months by new learners entering the class, when a third of its original members were withdrawn from Irish by their parents 'owing to psychological strain'; however, round a) questionnaires (which these learners had responded to) showed that all but one of them were very positively disposed towards Irish, their teacher, etc. and had many ideas on activities they liked doing, etc. Thus, it seems to me that the causes leading to these withdrawals were linked primarily to some parents' negative preconceptions and general attitudes towards Irish, a fact Seán also mentioned in passing in his interview. Second, a learner of non-Irish origin with limited proficiency in English at the beginning of the year was very effective at learning Irish, and most of his dossier samples were written in Irish of a very high level, and were consistently artistically embellished.

Three learners from this class were interviewed. They all liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, and felt that self-assessment and goal-setting through the ELP became very easy after a while. Learner 2 used it also for other TLs she was learning and saw that the principles behind it could be applied to many other subjects and even activities outside school, learner 1 intended to use it in this way next year, and learner 3 felt it

'would help with concentration in other subjects'. They all mentioned that it could help 'focus on your weaker points, set good goals, learn them, test them and start again to learn more. I would claim that these learners – along with many others in their class – became quite autonomous in how they organised their learning, especially in the absence of regular teacher input.

In his reports, Seán mentioned that the ELP increased his learners' awareness of what class goals were (September) and made them less reliant on the teacher (December). It also 'made classes more fun', while it fostered an increase in learner confidence. By January learners had become adept at using the ELP and using the TL as the (almost exclusive) language of communication in class.

In his end-of-year reflective essay he made extremely positive remarks based on the positive effects the ELP had on his class, making it less textbook reliant, giving it a clearer structure and fostering real debates/discussion in the TL, while facilitating a wider interpretation of the prescribed curriculum. He also pointed out quite emphatically how his participation in the project 'broke his professional isolation', since this was his first chance in eleven years of teaching to be visited in class and offered feedback on his teaching practice by a colleague.

In his interview, he largely repeated the themes mentioned through the other research instruments, and added that the ELP helped him to become more 'cross-curricular' through an integration of themes and tools from other classes into Irish, while it helped learners to 'take charge of their learning', 'become more inquisitive' and develop their reflective skills, use the TL more, etc. He said that although implementing the ELP for the first time meant some extra work for the teacher in the first two months, it was well worth it, and made teaching a very big class (of initially 30 learners) a lot more flexible, especially through the added help he got by exchanging ideas in ELP SN meetings.

My observations of this class showed that it was very effective, and confirmed that during the year learners became more confident in using their TL almost always (following the example set by their teacher, who employed the TL as the (almost exclusive) language of communication in class in a very efficient manner. By the end of the year, learners seemed able to –among other things – make jokes in the TL.

5.4.5 Class #5

Class #5 was a transition-year Irish class in an Irish-medium school taught by Emer. She was a teacher of Irish and Italian with thirty-five years of teaching experience. The class in question was very interesting for this project as it had started using the ELP two years earlier and it was in the only Irish-medium school which participated in the project. Unfortunately, the fact that this was a TY class meant that learners were frequently involved in projects which kept them away from their classes and limited the use of the ELP in the class. This was a fact which made Emer think that the ELP should be introduced earlier than TY, and optimally in first year. This class was entirely different to the other project class she taught (cf. section 5.4.6 below). Learners enjoyed learning the TL and using it in the class as the sole language of interaction. There was a collective attitude of pride and love for Irish which exceeded what I witnessed in other classes in the past. This was combined with a positive and intellectually challenging atmosphere of cooperation in the class which helped produce some very good outcomes.

On the whole, the learners of this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires. Additionally, this was a class where learners' responses indicated that they enjoyed using the ELP and felt it might help them to learn their TL. Furthermore, their responses indicated a very balanced focus on all five language skills contained in the ELP.

The very high level of all learners in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect were evident in the samples submitted to the site. Almost all learners filled in their language biographies in the TL, and used the ELP for all the other languages they knew/were learning. In this, they again used those languages to convey their reflections in varying degrees. Many learners submitted a large number of samples to the site which exhibited great effort, artistic qualities, and showed that they had developed their individual routines for using the ELP to organise their learning, work on their weaknesses and capitalise on their mistakes, and set personal goals. There was also evidence of considerable morphological awareness in all learners' work.

Three learners from this class were interviewed. They all loved their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, and felt the ELP was for them extremely easy to use after three years. They mentioned the many benefits they felt they got from using it, such as learning not only more in a more flexible way by making use of many different resources from their everyday life and other school subjects (taught in Irish), but also *better*, and added that these benefits made them use it even for other TLs they were learning including German, which they started studying this year, as a TY elective subject, and could 'see that the principles behind it could be applied to many other 'things in life', and could 'help you to work on your weaker points', 'set the goals that you need to', learn them, test them and start again to learn more. These learners appeared to know 'where they wanted to get in their TL', recognised they got substantial help from the ELP in their effort, and were quite autonomous in how they organised their learning.

In her reports, Emer observed that this class was very motivated, and that they had elected at the beginning of the year to do some work towards the prescribed literary texts examined in the LC Honours. They would use that and the ELP checklists as a means of structuring their learning. Recurrent problems mentioned were the large number of lost classes owing to TY projects and the low ability of learners in idiomatic language (according to Emer, a common problem in many Irish-medium schools). This class excelled in real TL use, and was awarded a number of prizes. A prize from the Irish-medium television station, TG4, for the best class-produced script in Irish, a debating prize, etc. They also developed activities for the classroom which were quite creative (the class-winner of the prize for the most original idea for LL, also got the all-Ireland prize in this category, for a quiz activity he called 'stump the teacher' (cf. ELP SN site).

In her end-of-year reflective essay Emer made extremely positive remarks based on the positive effects the ELP had on her class, boosting learner motivation, fostering real teacher-learner interaction, empowering learners and helping her develop an approach which was at once flexible and structured. Like Michael, she said she found her participation in this research project and the effect of the ELP on her classes was so positive that it renewed her enthusiasm for teaching.

In her interview, she largely repeated the themes mentioned through the other research instruments, and added that she felt that the more a teacher used the ELP, the

less planning time they needed for it, and remarked that she found it useful to keep her own ELP, as a place where she could store ideas, notes on certain classes and resource material. She said that there was 'no one best way of using the ELP' and mentioned using the ELP at very variable frequencies ranging from once a lesson to once a month, depending on the type of work carried out in class.

My observations of this class showed that it was very effective, and confirmed that the TL was used as the sole means of communication in the class for a multitude of functions by both the teacher and the learners in a very positive climate. Learners appeared to feel at ease using the TL, and trying to guess correct ways of expressing something. Many learners also benefited from material produced by their peers who were in pursuit of their own goals and had for instance created glossaries, quizzes, etc.

5.4.6 Class #6

Class #6 was a fifth-year Italian class taught by Emer. The class in question was very interesting. Emer chose to use the ELP with them as everything else she had tried had met with little success. This class was included in the project in order to test how the ELP worked in 'adverse conditions'. Their school attracted negative attention owing to a series of unfortunate events which started two years before the beginning of this research project. A number of school classrooms (including lockers with language resources and ELPs) were vandalised, absenteeism and drop-out rates were very high, a police investigation on the causes of arson which damaged parts of the school premises around the beginning of this project, provision of meals was organised to fight absenteeism and mischief, some teachers' cars were vandalised and teachers were threatened, and a high-court injunction was in place prohibiting the further discussion of other aspects affecting school functioning (for this reason, I will also refrain from discussing those aspects any further). Unfortunately this led to a situation in which the school appeared in the press and on national television a number of times, parents became worried, and the learner population became more unruly. In a number of subjects, the presence of two teachers in a classroom was deemed necessary in order to maintain order (fortunately not in the project subject of Italian).

I think it should be obvious from the above that this school environment was not conducive to learning. Furthermore, the project class presented an additional challenge as it had been branded as one of the most difficult to teach by the staff in the school. The majority of learners were already English and Shelta bilingual, as they were members of 'settled traveller communities' (Shelta is the language of the Irish travelling community, and it was initially a language used as a secret code among members of that community while trading with non-Shelta-speaking people, also known as Traveller Cant and Gammon). This resulted in some of them occasionally using Shelta in class as a secret code in order to communicate without teachers knowing what they said, and some students were occasionally suspended for being abusive in class. All the above created a negative peer pressure, which at times proved very difficult for teachers and learners alike to overcome. Taking everything into account, and knowing that this class had started using the ELP to a degree in the previous year, I decided to include it in this project. I felt that if the ELP could be of benefit for such a challenged class, it would arguably be of benefit in all other environments in (Irish) post-primary language education.

The above challenges may account for the fact that although the learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, most of their attitudes seemed to become consistently more positive during the year. Additionally, this was a class where learners' responses indicated that they enjoyed using the ELP and felt it might help them to learn their TL. Furthermore, their responses indicated a very balanced focus on all five language skills contained in the ELP.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see that the work carried out during the year was limited, but substantial under the circumstances. Two learners recorded some of their reflections in Italian (most others wrote in English rather than in the TL), and approximately half of the learners seemed to become more confident in their use of the TL during the year.

Three learners from this class were interviewed. They all liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP and found that it made learning their TL easier, and felt the ELP itself became easier to use after a while. One of them had joined the class only a few weeks

prior to the interview, but was hard-working enough to win a prize for 'general achievement'. Learners mentioned having fun and added that the ELP should be used by all to help them to become more organised and learn more.

In her reports, Emer mentioned many issues which stemmed from class- and school-specific circumstances. Apart from the things mentioned earlier, she added that learners tended not to accept homework and study at home, at times played truant to avoid taking a test, and seldom volunteered to answer a question even if they knew the answer in order to avoid being 'branded a teacher's pet'. Furthermore, Emer remarked that learners were genuinely surprised when they sat a mock JC or LC exam and saw that they could get a pass mark. Progressively, the ELP seemed to offer a little structure to the classes (note that most learners' TL textbooks from earlier years had been shredded and burnt in an act of defiance) and 'the possibility of a lesson', with some learners starting to make some effort.

In her end-of-year reflective essay, Emer reflected that these learners did not succeed in becoming more autonomous, but they developed as individuals, became somewhat more interested in languages, did not drop out as she thought they might have done, had it not been for the ELP, and managed to remain interested in their TL and in general quite civil to the teacher. She also added that learners who were as 'challenged' as these were, had little interest in LL and were prone to feeling bored and might have benefited more from a simpler ELP model.

In her interview, she largely repeated the themes mentioned in her responses to the other research instruments, and among other things added that in this class the ELP offered her more ways of getting across to the learners and realising that any method that helps learners to learn is valid, even if the teacher herself might consider some of the practices learners like to follow 'daft or boring'.

Owing to the special circumstances of this class, four observations had to be cancelled at the very last minute, and I succeeded in observing them for only one full lesson, with a second observation lasting only ten minutes. My observations of this class showed that it was as effective as possible under the circumstances, with the teacher trying to strike a balance between creating an interest in learners and not provoking a negative reaction. Some common ground was established following my second visit to

this class for the administration of the LAP-based questionnaire in round a). There, many learners expressed a wish to do more activities related to sports. After this, sports, and especially football, became an ongoing theme of this class. Finally (and to the surprise of some of their teachers), the learners in this class kept up studying Italian even after the end of the project, when they were not the focus of attention from an 'external observer' such as me, and ultimately did sit their Leaving Certificate examination and passed it (most had not 'shown up' to sit their Junior Certificate exam three years earlier).

5.4.7 Class #7

Class #7 was a second-year mixed-ability German class consisting of thirty learners taught by Kate. She was a teacher of German and Spanish with four years of teaching experience. She was made aware of the ELP and asked to join the project, following the recommendation of one of her former Higher Diploma in Education lecturers. By asking Kate to join the project, I was hoping to see what effect the ELP would have on the practices of a teacher who was already successful in fostering the development of learner autonomy. This class was further assisted by the fact that it was the only one where there was a class assistant (who incidentally happened to be a native speaker of the TL). This class had its lessons in an old language laboratory with a peculiar desk pattern of four desks fixed to the floor in four rows. Although it seemed dysfunctional at first glance, especially since the classroom barely accommodated thirty learners, the teacher managed to use it to the class's advantage, by organising quick and effective group-work (cf. relevant part of Appendix C).

On the whole, the learners of this class were different to the general sample in several distinct ways. First, as regards their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, their intrinsic motivational orientation was significantly higher as regards activities related both to LL and to school in general, indicating that they were learning their TL for reasons which were important to them, as opposed to externally dictated ones. Second, their perceptions of how supportive their teacher was of their autonomy as measured by the LCQ were significantly higher than all other classes; between-groups p's for those differences as measured through 1-way ANOVAs were

quite small in five cases. This indicates that not only was the teacher perceived by her former teachers and the researcher as autonomy-supportive (cf. introductory paragraph to this section), but her learners also strongly believed so.

These two findings combined reinforce the findings of earlier research projects discussed in Chapter 4, suggesting the positive effects autonomy support can have on learners' intrinsic motivation levels. Furthermore, learners' responses indicated that the majority of them generally enjoyed using the ELP and felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL. Finally, learner responses indicated a very balanced focus on all five language skills contained in the ELP. This was the only class where that balance was slightly in favour of oral skills, indicating the constant use of the TL in class (cf. discussion of class observations below).

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see the wide variety in the levels of different learners in both TL proficiency and ability for reflection. All learners by the end of the year seemed able to fill in the language biography in the TL, and nearly a third of them used the ELP to varying degrees for all the other languages they knew/were learning. Most learners in this class submitted at least one or two samples to the site. Learners in this class were the first ones to come up with the idea of 'self-tests', namely tests and quizzes which they wrote to use in class, in order to test their peers in group-work time, and help each other realise how much (of a checklist descriptor/goal) they had learnt, and what they needed to work on some more. This idea was later taken up by learners in most other project classes, and was highly popular. The samples from some learners' ELPs when viewed chronologically indicate substantial progress, especially after late October, when they 'found their way' around their ELP more. Learners were actively prompted to produce samples linked to 'personally-set and thus optimally relevant' goals which they would 'make even more their own' by integrating their art, their interests, etc. into them. As a result, many learners produced very artistic and/or well-thought out samples, some produced self-tests (at times in groups of two/three), etc.

Four learners from this class were interviewed. They all liked their TL and chose to study it rather than French for a variety of reasons, enjoyed using the ELP, and felt the ELP became very easy to use after a while. Three out of the four learners used it also for other TLs they were learning and saw that the principles behind it could be applied to

many other subjects, and could help 'focus on your weaker points, set good goals, learn them, test them and start again to learn more'. Interestingly, all four learners had a different personal style as regards how often and in what manner they used the ELP. This may account in part for the fact that although all learners appeared to be highly motivated, and effective in their learning, they all named different benefits of ELP use as being the most important. One thing which was common among them was that they found the language passport somewhat hard to use, and preferred the layout of the more straightforward 'JC Syllabus/ELP thematic list' (cf. discussion of Kate's reports below). These learners – along with many others in their class – appeared to be rather autonomous in the manner they organised their learning.

In her reports, Kate mentioned that she was delayed in introducing the ELP by almost a month because many learners were absent on a number of occasions. She presented the passport first very briefly, and then reshuffled the checklists to help learners use the TL more, by placing the English translations of the ELP Appendix opposite the German checklists. She found that the first month was difficult both for her and the learners, as they were all familiarising themselves with the ELP. Things got easier once the class started using the more straightforward 'JC Syllabus/ELP thematic list', and then going back to the ELP checklists less often than before, when some significant progress was made. In general, Kate found that the ELP started to yield more benefits as the year went on, but was also aware of the time pressure she was under owing to comparisons her learners made with how other 2nd-year classes were progressing as far as textbook chapters were concerned. She also remarked that it was a lot easier to use the ELP in the class when less than thirty learners were present, and it was easier to organise group-work, etc.

In her end-of-year reflective essay she made extremely positive remarks based on the positive effects the ELP had on her class, boosting learner motivation, helping learners to have more fun in class, fostering a maximisation of TL use in class for real communication purposes and empowering learners. She further added that she applied ELP principles to other classes, which also became more effective. However, she lamented the fact that the ELP was not used by all language teachers in Ireland from 1st-year up to LC classes. This would make it more acceptable to parents and learners, and

would eliminate anxieties arising from comparisons with what classes not using the ELP cover in an equal period of time.

In her interview, Kate largely repeated the themes mentioned in her responses to the other research instruments, and expressed positive views on the ELP. She advised other teachers interested in using the ELP to first read the teacher guides and the other informational material on the ELP; she said it would have saved her from a lot of her initial frustration, had she been able to do that earlier. She expressed the opinion that the ELP helped all her learners, with weaker learners benefiting the most. She added that all learners were happier, and although more group-work took place in class, there were no free-loaders in the groups; everybody worked a lot and became a lot more organised and effective in the process. However, she added that a simpler, less bulky (and thus less intimidating) ELP, possibly written in simpler language, might be of benefit for weaker learners.

My observations of this class showed that it was exceptionally effective, and became even better during the year, with learners using (and responding to) the TL quite confidently and fluently in class for a multitude of functions, and with more group-work being carried out in a very positive climate. The level of oral German employed by the learners was very high, and the teacher consistently created a very positive atmosphere, where learners were encouraged to use the TL and to try to guess correct ways of expressing something. Many learners also benefited from material produced by their colleagues who were in pursuit of their own goals and had for instance created tests, quizzes, glossaries, etc. In fact, following my observations, I came to realise that Kate somewhat undersold the progress of her class and her own (exceptional) abilities to foster autonomous practices and teach in a very time-efficient and stimulating manner.

5.4.8 Class #8

Class #8 was a first-year Foundation-level Irish class taught by Brendan. He was a newly-qualified teacher of Irish. According to Brendan, this was the weakest first-year Irish class in the school, which made it difficult to use the ELP with them. He felt that the language used in some parts of the ELP such as the checklist descriptors was beyond the

level of comprehension of some of these learners, even in English, a fact which had demoralising effects. He also mentioned being under great pressure most of the time as this class had to sit the same Christmas and end-of-year school-wide tests and he naturally did not want his students to do badly in them. He felt it was difficult to find adequate time to 'do justice to the ELP' and prepare his learners for these exams.

The above challenges may account for the fact that the learners in this class were different to the general sample in that their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires indicated that their extrinsic motivational orientation was significantly higher than that of the rest of the learner sample at the beginning of the year. Although the above difference dropped to being non-significant in rounds b) and c), ANOVAs related to round c) indicated that this was the only class in which learners' intrinsic motivational orientation was significantly lower than that of learners in other classes as regards both activities related to LL and to school in general, arguably indicating that the positive influence of the ELP on their intrinsic motivational orientation was not as large as it was for the rest of the learner sample.

Furthermore, this was one of the four classes where learners' responses indicated that although most learners enjoyed using the ELP, a significant minority did not appear to do so. Thus, although the majority of learners who responded said they 'liked using the ELP' (6 out of 11), four learners 'did not like using the ELP in their class'. Furthermore, although the majority of learners felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL, this was again one of the six classes where a significant minority of respondents (3 out of 10) did not think so. Some of these learners felt that Irish was 'a waste of time' and resented learning it, as well as doing anything related to studying it, including using the ELP for Irish.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see that very few learners made a consistent attempt to fill in their language biography in their TL and that learners varied in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect. Common themes in the samples were class-wide projects on postcards, fairytales and prayers. Two learners produced more colourful samples than the rest, but the general level of Irish was not very high. There was no evidence that students used the ELP with other TLs. This may have been the outcome of a combination of the challenges mentioned above.

Two learners from this class were interviewed. Learner 1 liked her TL, enjoyed using the ELP, found it helped her, and felt the ELP became easier to use after a while. Learner 2 found 'Irish very boring', but said that the things they did with their ELPs made it more interesting and made her do more things and learn more. They both said the ELP should be used by all learners as 'it helps'.

In his reports, Brendan observed that the ELP was 'not really in operation' until late October (cf. the issues mentioned above) and mentioned encountering many technical problems stemming from the bulkiness and the flimsiness of the ELP folders. He said storing the folders was difficult. Sadly, some folders were vandalised by learners in other classes who were not participating in the project and 'felt marginalised', and had to be replaced with very demoralising effects for the learners and the teacher. He mentioned that most learners started to 'finally grasp' the ELP by March. The most prominent benefit of the ELP for this class was that it enabled learners to draw on non-textbook resources and legitimised their production of TL-based artwork for their project class.

In his end-of-year reflective essay he repeated that the ELP in its current form (and possibly self-assessment in general) may be beyond the grasp of the weakest first-year learners, but also that it encouraged group- and pair-work, and in general the class benefited a lot from using it. He felt, however, that it was up to the teacher to motivate learners, and that although the questions in the reflection pages of the language biography stimulated thinking, learners still felt it was 'the teacher's job to do the planning'. He finally added that although he gained a lot from the exchange of ideas in the ELP SN meetings, he would like many more teaching resources to be made available, and more assistance given to teachers in class selection, etc.

In his interview, he once more repeated the themes he had mentioned in response to the other research instruments. He further added that all learners were a little helped by the ELP in organising their learning. However, he observed that he was not entirely happy with the support he got from Trinity College, and felt he should have got more help, such as sample lesson plans and advice on what classes to use the ELP with and what types of samples should be included in a good dossier. He felt that a tool such as the ELP was difficult to handle for learners such the ones in this class, most of whom were

doing something which resembled 'keeping a diary' for the first time (note that the 'catchment area' of this school included some 'socially sensitive' areas).

My observations of this class showed that it was rather effective under the circumstances, with the teacher having created a very positive atmosphere despite the challenges mentioned above, through the use of humorous devices, a lot of miming, drawing, etc. Notably, the use of TL by the teacher and the learners seemed to increase during the year, although a mishap related to the last observation of this class precluded more comprehensive conclusions.

5.4.9 Class #9

Class #9 was a second-year mixed-ability Irish class also taught by Brendan. Some of the issues related to class #8 discussed above were also applicable to this class in varying degrees. This was a very mixed-ability class, in which learners were generally more motivated, but one or two of the weakest learners found the ELP too confusing at first. Once more, time pressure before end-of-year school-wide tests was an issue.

The above challenges may account for the fact that although the learners of this class were not different to the general sample in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, this was one of the four classes where learners' responses indicated that although most learners enjoyed using the ELP, a significant minority did not appear to do so. Thus, although the majority of learners who responded said they 'liked using the ELP' (13 out of 25), five learners 'did not like using the ELP in their class'. Furthermore, although the majority of learners felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL, this was again one of the six classes where a significant minority of respondents (7 out of 25) did not think so. Interestingly, as in class #8 above, some of these learners felt that Irish was 'a waste of time' and resented learning it, and using the ELP to study more.

The same tendencies as in class #8 were evident in the samples submitted to the site (cf. previous section), with the only exception being that slightly more learners made a consistent attempt to fill in their language biography in their TL or a mixture of TL and English. A big gap in the levels of different learners in TL proficiency was evident.

Three learners from this class were interviewed. All three liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, found it helped them see 'how they are getting on', 'sets you certain things to learn' and 'helps you learn more'. They said they also generally found the ELP easy to use and learners 1 and 2 said they would 'recommend it for other subjects, such as French and German'.

In his reports, Brendan observed that the ELP was 'not really in operation' until late October as with class #8. Many of the issues he mentioned for that class were also mentioned in connection to this class. In fact he also remarked that learners in this class tended to take greater pride in their work than learners in class #8 and were more shaken when their folders were vandalised. He mentioned that there was a great division among the learners in this class between those who wanted to learn and those who did not care (note how this is confirmed by the findings in Chapter 4 and those mentioned in section 5.3 above, but also how the unmotivated learners constituted the minority in this class).

In his end-of-year reflective essay he said that his reflections related to class #8 were also applicable for this class.

In his interview, many of Brendan's reflections mentioned in the previous section are also applicable here. He also added in relation to this class that some learners found it 'uncool to speak Irish', while others were discouraged during the year by the fact that Irish was not awarded the status of an official EU language. Finally, he remarked that the ELP made teacher evaluation of spoken interaction and spoken production easier.

My observations of this class showed that it was a lot more effective than class #8, with more able learners helping their peers at times, and the teacher making excellent use of the blackboard, and sustaining a very positive atmosphere despite the challenges mentioned above, through the use of humorous devices, a lot of miming, drawing, examples, quick morphological training drills, etc. Notably, the use of TL by the teacher and the learners seemed to increase and to become more consistent during the year; the themes of conversation became more immediate, and thus more engaging. Notably, the teacher started all lessons with a prayer in Irish (note that this was a Roman Catholic school), and made good use of whole-group activities.

5.4.10 Class #10

Class #10 was a first-year mixed-ability French class taught by David. He was a teacher of French with many years of teaching experience. He had used the ELP since he joined the ELP SN during EE1. He immediately witnessed an extremely positive impact on the learners and on his teaching from his use of the ELP (recorded in EE1, Ushioda and Ridley 2002), and saw it being quite effective in a number of classes ever since then. He had already successfully employed the ELP with consistent success in the widest range of learner ages in Irish post-primary education, namely from 1st-year to 2nd-year PLC classes (learner ages in those classes ranged from eleven to twenty, while some learners were older 'mature students'). This might explain the fact that even some of his students from classes which did not participate in this project emailed me and on occasion submitted some samples of their work to be included in the ELP SN site. Owing to my very limited time resources, and since the site was focussed primarily on the samples produced by the project classes, only a couple of indicative samples from those learners were posted to the site.

In this project, David participated with the two age extremes in Irish post-primary education, this first-year French class and a second-year PLC class (cf. presentation of class #11 in the following section, and Chapter 4). He understandably was the most confident among the teacher participants, and was confident he could have equally good results with a weaker and with a stronger class. Thus, this particular first-year class was considered a relatively weak mixed-ability class, with two learners exhibiting severe concentration problems, some belonging to socially sensitive groups, and/or some others being newly arrived immigrants with little proficiency in English.

David's confidence in the way he introduced the ELP to his students minimised challenges this class had to face, and produced a positive atmosphere which made learners feel that their goals in LL were easily achievable. On the whole, he appeared to have created a positive and intellectually challenging atmosphere in the class, which helped to produce some very good outcomes.

On the whole, the learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, apart from the fact that their intrinsic motivational orientation was

significantly higher as regards activities related both to LL and to school in general, indicating that they were learning their TL for reasons which were important to them, as opposed to externally dictated ones. Second, their perception of how important 'autonomous aspirations' were for them as measured by the AutAsI were significantly higher than all other classes with between-groups p's being quite small in seven cases, indicating that their aspiration priorities were of a highly desirable type, promoting well-being (cf. review of earlier research findings in sections 3.9.2 and 4.4.2).

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see the wide variety in the levels of different learners in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect (influenced by learner-specific factors mentioned above). Most learners by the end of the year seemed able to fill in the language biography in the TL, and used the ELP in at least one of the other languages they knew/were learning in varying degrees. Most learners in this class submitted at least one or two samples to the site. Some learners said they intended to take their ELP with them on their summer holidays. Dossier work was quite popular in this class, maybe as even weaker learners were able to get some help from their more capable peers during group work and worked at different levels of complexity, while they also made their samples 'even more their own' by integrating their art, their interests, etc. into them. As a result, many learners produced artistic and/or well-thought-out samples, some produced self-tests, some wrote lexical phrase substitution tables, study routines, etc. So successful were some learners during the year, that we can see at least four cases where they made significant upward revisions to their yearly goals after receiving the results of their Christmas test.

Two learners from this class were interviewed. Learner 1 was experiencing severe concentration problems during the first month of the project, but managed to overcome them and reach a satisfactory level of proficiency in all skills in French, developed a liking for French and the ELP and said she started using it on her own at home from time to time, because she could see that it helped her and it made learning French easier and more fun. Learner 2 was a high-achieving learner, who used the ELP to learn substantially more French than she was exposed to in class. Thus, once she realised the ELP helped her learn very quickly and efficiently, she claimed she started using it every day at home, to assess herself, set goals on the basis of the descriptors and achieve them.

To this effect, she mentioned finding easy texts, grammar and other TL-related material on the Internet, while she also bought (and used daily) a dictionary and a 'teach-yourself' CD-ROM. She remarked that she was convinced of the value of the ELP for LL, as it made LL 'easier than if only a textbook was used to help you', and helped to make French easier than Irish for her (she saw evidence of this in the fact that *she knew more French than Irish, although she had been studying Irish for six years and French for only seven months).* Learner #1 was especially prolific in the material she made for her dossier. Some of it was related to her own 'home-study' themes and not to class-based work.

In his reports, David described how he introduced the ELP, gradually starting from the language passport, and felt this helped learners a lot in developing confidence in working with the ELP and in using the TL in class. From his previous experience with the ELP, he found it worthwhile to arrange for a double period at the start of the week, which would give him more time to distribute ELPs, organise group-and pair-work, and let learners express themselves more freely and reflect on their practices under less time pressure. Although he mentioned some things he would do differently the following year, such as improving some navigational aspects of the folder earlier in the year, he mentioned that the ELP helped to make him reach a new kind of principled professionalism, and helped his learners to reflect on their learning, become more skilled at LL and more autonomous, and develop significantly during the year. His success with the ELP made him assume a positive frame of mind when faced with any problems, saying 'there are no problems, just challenges to be met!'

In his end-of-year reflective essay he made extremely positive remarks based on the positive effects the ELP had on his classes, boosting learner motivation, fostering real teacher-learner interaction, fostering a more flexible use of (one or more) textbooks as resources which learners could be urged to explore to their benefit, and empowering learners and teachers alike. He also mentioned benefiting a lot from his participation in this research project, and was keen to let others know of the positive effects of the ELP, and participate in any publicising efforts and seminars to that end.

In his interview, he largely repeated the themes mentioned through the other research instruments, and expressed consistently positive views on the ELP. Among other things, he added that he would now 'hate to teach without the ELP' as he found it created

a strong momentum in his classes, especially when used in a double period at the beginning of each week, fostered a more integrated coverage of all five skills, and offered strong evidence of learner progress through the dossier contents and oral skills of each learner. He advocated that teachers should also keep their own ELP to store ideas, etc. He made many suggestions on how the LAP ELP could be made more functional (already presented in the relevant discussion in Chapter 4), and outlined how important he considered the theory behind the ELP and the CEF to be in steering LL into the future.

My observations of this class showed that it was very effective, and confirmed that as the year progressed, substantially more TL was used in the class for a multitude of functions, and more group-work was carried out in a very positive climate. Individual attention was paid to certain ('challenged') learners during group-work in a generally positive manner. The level of oral French employed by many learners developed significantly during the year, and the teacher consistently created a very positive atmosphere through the use of humorous devices, miming, etc., where learners felt safe in using the TL, and trying to guess correct ways of expressing something. By the third and last observation visit to this class, peer correction routines were in place, all learners were using the TL a lot in class and helping one another in flexibly arranged groups which changed in order to better accommodate the type of work carried out, and negotiated goal-setting was the norm. Notably, the class came up with a customised A1 descriptor from the checklists for their next goal, which was based on a simplified version of an A2 descriptor.

5.4.11 Class #11

Class #11 was a second-year PLC German class also taught by David. Some of the issues related to class #10 discussed above were also applicable in varying degrees to this class. This was a very small class, with its core consisting of two learners, and two more learners participating in it in certain lessons. A third learner joined the class for six months but had to suspend her participation owing to health problems, and a fourth learner (student in another PLC course) joined the class for four months, during which she was able to attend the class once a week or less. Despite technical problems stemming from timetabling issues which resulted in absenteeism and some classes not

being held, all four learners were generally quite motivated. However, the findings related to learners 3 and 4 are not sufficient to inform a principled discussion of the class; thus, the remainder of this section is based on learners 1 and 2 (but see also information related to learners 3 and 4 in David's reports found in Appendix B and in other Appendices).

In general, the learners of this class exhibited consistently positive tendencies in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, although this was not obvious from the various significance tables, owing to the fact that the valid sample for this class was so small. They also 'liked using the ELP' and felt it 'might help them' to learn their TL.

The same tendencies as in class #10 were evident in the samples submitted to the site (cf. previous section), the only exception being that the full folders of both learners were offered online in February 2004, in order to provide a snapshot of 'work in progress' to other PLC classes interested in using the ELP, at the same time their first interview was made available on the ELP SN site (cf. following paragraph). The folders included a lot of cultural material, letters the learners wrote to their teacher in the TL once a week during their four month trans-national placement in Austria and the two bilingual 'project-folders' they prepared for FETAC (Further education and training awards council) following their placement.

The two learners were interviewed twice; the first time they were interviewed together immediately after their trans-national placement, and the second time they were interviewed individually as all other learner participants at the end of the project. Their responses indicated they were enthusiastic about the ELP, and remained consistently so during the year (cf. relevant discussion in section 3.9.5). Furthermore, in their second interviews, both learners compared the very effective and interesting routines of learning they had established thanks to the ELP, to their primarily 'exam-focused' earlier learning experience in post-primary school.

In his reports, David observed that the ELP proved indispensable for this PLC class, providing it with a principled structure and linking it with other examinations outside the PLC framework, such as ÖSD, the Austrian language diploma which the

learners decided to take in parallel with their class. Many of the positive effects of the ELP he mentioned for class #10 were also mentioned in connection with this class.

In his end-of-year reflective essay, David recapitulated some of the things mentioned in his reports. Some of his reflections related to class #10 also applied to this class. He further added that thanks to the ELP this class became infinitely more focussed on learners' real 'proficiency gaps' and flexible, and drew on many different resources (note that this class usually took place in a computer laboratory with Internet access and Internet television facilities).

In his interview, many of his reflections mentioned in the previous section are also applicable here. He also added in relation to this class that portfolio learning is the only way forward, especially for PLC classes, and that he 'would now hate to teach without the ELP'.

My observations of this class showed that it was quite effective, taking as its starting point certain learner weaknesses in the TL. Notably, the use of TL by the teacher and the learners became more consistent during the year, the themes of conversation remained real, and many mini-projects were carried out. However, towards the end of the year the (exam) pressure on one of the learners started to become more evident. However, in general the collective enthusiasm and the feeling of achievement I witnessed in this class remained high and compared favourably to attitudes found in other PLC classes I have visited in the past.

5.4.12 Class #12

Class #12 was a second-year mixed-ability French class taught by Lorna. She was a teacher of French with many years' teaching experience, who had used the ELP before when she joined the ELP SN during EE1. This time she tried to use the ELP more intensively, in the light of the knowledge she had gained the previous year from reading some of the research literature on the benefits of learner autonomy while pursuing a Diploma in Counselling and simultaneously fulfilling the taught modules required in the first year of a Master's in Education (she was writing up her thesis in the second year of the Master's degree, in parallel with her participation in the project). Although she claimed to have come back from studying with extremely high expectations which did

not fully materialise, she was happy with the things achieved, and on the whole she seemed to have created a positive and intellectually challenging atmosphere in the class which helped to produce some very good outcomes.

On the whole, the learners of this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires. Furthermore, learners' responses indicated that the majority of learners generally enjoyed using the ELP and felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL. Finally, learner responses indicated a balanced focus on all five language skills contained in the ELP.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see a limited variety in the levels of different learners in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect. Most learners by the end of the year seemed able to fill in the language biography in the TL, and in varying degrees used the ELP for all the other languages they knew/were learning. Notably, all learners produced at least five self-tests (which would later be recycled in contributing a few items for a teacher-assembled test and reused by other more senior classes as revision aid). Some learners produced very artistic and/or well-thought out samples, some designed Venn diagrams, etc. All learners also wrote a *'journal intime'*, which was a type of a daily lesson diary, helping them to become more adept at using lexical phrases in their texts and reprocessing previously learnt knowledge. One learner also used his computer to produce a great number of computer-enhanced picture glossaries and word-processed samples, as well as searching on the internet for information on the themes his class was studying.

Four learners from this class were interviewed. They all liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, and felt the ELP became very easy to use after a while. Two of the four learners used it also for other TLs they were learning and all four saw that the principles behind it could be applied to many other subjects, and could help 'focus on your weaker points, set good goals, learn them, test them and start again to learn more. All learners appeared to be highly motivated, and effective in their learning. They all had their personal routines for using the ELP, and the frequency of that use varied from once a week to once a lesson, with added work done at home a few times a week. They felt that

they had benefited a lot from the ELP and suggested that every (language) learner in Ireland should use it.

In her reports, Lorna was prolific, and – perhaps influenced by her training in the applications of 'counselling psychology in education' the previous year – was able to respond to the report headings in considerable detail and offer detailed insights into a great number of challenges facing a teacher and how they may affect the feelings of the teacher and the learners as 'an organic whole'. In brief selection of other key points, she mentioned that the ELP helped learners a lot in developing confidence and in using the TL more in class. They became more aware of different ways of learning and able to self-assess. Their thinking skills and their autonomy grew, despite certain disruptions to the lessons, which broke momentum and undermined the general sense of achievement from time to time. Although she mentioned that she learned a lot this year and would do some things differently the following year, such as taking more time to introduce some sections in a simpler and more confident way, and starting with a first-year class in order to be under less time pressure to 'cover' material for the JC exam, reshuffle ELP pages a lot earlier in the year, etc., she could see the positive effects of the ELP on her learners and on herself as it helped her re-evaluate her practices. She mentioned that using the ELP definitely involved a learning curve for teachers and learners alike, to which 'there are no shortcuts'.

In her end-of-year reflective essay she repeated themes she had mentioned in her report and added that she grew as a person and a teacher through her participation in this research project, and her learners benefited not only in TL proficiency but also as individuals. As far as TL proficiency was concerned, she could discern the biggest benefit in relation to her learners' oral skills.

In her very extensive interview, she once more repeated the themes she had mentioned in her responses to the other research instruments. Among other things, she added that she found she was under considerable pressure during the year, as she had to strike a balance between covering a portion of textbook-based material, 'explaining the ELP well' to the learners, and leaving them sufficient time for reflection, group-work and other activities. On the whole, she reflected that she was extremely happy she used the ELP as it gave her a lot, especially with this class, which many of her colleagues and she

felt was 'unteachable' following more traditional methods, as the learners seemed to be 'in need of more autonomy in their learning' than most other classes.

My observations showed that Lorna's fears about the effectiveness of this class and the amount of work covered were not justified as the class became substantially more effective during the year, with more TL used in the class for a multitude of functions, and more group-work carried out in a very positive climate. In my opinion, these fears were also propelled by the fact that she was a very caring individual and a perfectionist who wanted to make sure she created the best possible conditions for learning. All learners seemed to have developed their personal study routines and were a lot better than they were at the beginning of the year at carrying out cooperative work focussed around class goals which they negotiated through their ELPs. The level of oral French employed by the learners was good, and the teacher consistently created a very positive atmosphere. Many learners also benefited from material produced by their colleagues.

5.4.13 Class #13

Class #13 was a third-year mixed-ability French class also taught by Lorna. Some of the issues related to class #12 discussed above also applied in varying degrees to this class. This was a mixed-ability class, in which learners were generally not very motivated, and were also a little difficult to warm up to the ELP. Indeed, the attitudes of this class to the ELP were the most negative among all project classes. Although this may sound strange, it may be accounted for by the fact that the class had used the ELP with some success when they were first-year students, but later did not have a chance to use it in the second year, since Lorna had taken a year's study leave and no other language teacher in this school used the ELP. Thus, when Lorna came back to school and asked them to use their ELPs again while no other language teacher used it, they were a lot more likely to consider it a kind of 'fad', practised only by her, and possibly forgotten in the following year, if they joined a class taught by a different teacher. Furthermore, time pressure before the JC exam was an issue which in the case of this 3rd-year class was understandably a lot more urgent for both the teacher and the learners.

Thus, although the learners of this class were not different to the general sample in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires and the influence of the ELP had equally positive effects on their motivational tendencies, this was one of the four classes where learners' responses indicated that although most learners enjoyed using the ELP, a significant minority did not appear to do so. Furthermore, although the majority of learners felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL, this was again one of the six classes where a very significant minority of respondents (7 out of 18) did not think so. The majority of respondents who expressed negative views did not give a specific reason for their opinions.

The same types of work as in class #12 were evident in the samples submitted to the site (cf. previous section), the only exception being that most learners made a consistent attempt to fill in their language biography in their TL or a mixture of TL and English. Once again, learners wrote a *'journal intime'*, many wrote self-tests, etc., and most learners used the ELP in varying degrees to organise their learning of the rest of their TLs.

Four learners from this class were interviewed. Three liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, found that it helped them to set goals, be more organised and learn more, while learner 1 did not like French, and just said he did not mind using the ELP as it might make his learning easier, and help him to get the points to enter university. Learners 2-4 said they also generally found the ELP quite easy to use and used it for other languages. Learner 4 was the one mentioned earlier as being extremely enthusiastic about the ELP and having created an ELP of his own for English (cf. section 4.4.5).

In her reports, Lorna observed that the effects of the ELP on this class were equivalent to those observed in class #12, but also that there was a lot more pressure owing to the upcoming JC, which somewhat 'muffled' the variety of activities attempted, and 'necessitated' some more planning on the part of the teacher. However, these (slightly older) learners made even better use of opportunistic resources, such as a French bazaar market coming to town for a week.

In her end-of-year reflective essay she said that her reflections related to class #12 also applied to this class, and added that she was 'guilty of expecting too much' from this class who had used the ELP before; in a way, she did not take into serious account the

year of her absence, which had a big effect on learners, and meant that they had to 'relearn' some things, and break habits of passive learning they had established the previous year.

In her interview, many of her reflections mentioned in section 5.4.12 also applied to this class. She also added in relation to this class that the ELP 'forced' the teacher and the learners to reflect more and use the TL in substantial quantities, especially for spoken interaction and production.

My observations of this class showed that it was a lot more effective than I would have hoped under the circumstances, and a very positive atmosphere was sustained despite the challenges mentioned above, through the use of humorous devices, a lot of miming, drawing, examples, quick morphological training drills, etc. Notably, the use of TL by the teacher and the learners seemed to increase and to become more consistent during the year, and many learners appeared to have progressed significantly in motivation, thinking skills and TL proficiency during the year (their JC results also proved this to be the case as all passed).

5.4.14 Class #14

Class #14 was a first-year mixed-ability Irish class taught by Jean, a native speaker of Irish from Mayo. She was a teacher of Irish with a few years' teaching experience. On the whole, she seemed to have created a very systematic, positive and intellectually challenging atmosphere in the class, which was further boosted by the almost exclusive use of the TL for interaction in class. Indeed Jean's whole approach was largely thematic even prior to her use of the ELP, and she saw the main advantage of the ELP as providing a good means to integrate evaluation of how well themes were learnt with goal setting.

In general, learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, but this was one of the four classes where learners' responses indicated that although most learners enjoyed using the ELP, a significant minority did not appear to do so. However, a very strong majority of learners felt the ELP might help them to learn their TL, with one learner saying that he did not think so and three learners expressing mixed

feelings. Furthermore, their responses indicated a very balanced focus on all five language skills contained in the ELP. Finally, responses differed to the general learner sample in that the majority said they 'liked all ELP sections equally' and 'did not dislike any particular section'.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see the high level of work produced by all learners. The length and grammatical complexity of some texts was indicative of a higher year, and when viewed diachronically progress during the year was evident (some learners by the end of the year seemed able to get a distinction in the JC exam, including its – sadly optional – oral component). Most learners filled in the language biography only in the TL on a weekly basis, and a small number of them used the ELP for at least one of the other languages they knew/were learning. Learners mentioned in their reflections how much they enjoyed integrating their art, their interests, etc. with Irish and generally produced very artistic and/or well-thought out samples, etc. Increasingly, they produced many self-tests, quizzes and class posters on the themes they studied, which were also used in other classes.

Three learners from this class were interviewed. They all liked their TL, but also found that it could be hard at times both to study and to use/understand (two added that they occasionally found the teacher's dialect difficult), enjoyed using the ELP, and felt using the ELP for self-assessment and goal-setting became easy after a while. One learner only used it also for other TLs she was learning, while the rest felt it could be applied to other languages. They all mentioned that it could help them to focus on their weaker points, set good goals, achieve them, etc., with learner 4 being very emphatic on this point.

In her reports, Jean mentioned that the ELP made her learners reflect more, fostered fluency coupled with morphological training through the checklists, facilitated thematic structuring of the course, and a balanced focus on all five skills. She observed that a combination of the checklists and tests offered an excellent diagnostic assessment tool. By December, learners became more accustomed to the folder and less reliant on the teacher. She noticed a generally positive atmosphere and a climate of motivation to learn. However, recurrent challenges were the substantial mix of abilities in the class – some learners were very weak and had no outside exposure to the TL (through TL radio, TV,

etc.), and the lack of time for extra practice of the TL. This challenge was partly met by appointing group leaders who were responsible for helping their weaker peers and at the same time revised and expanded their knowledge on themes they already knew, by conducting small-scale group-projects.

In her end-of-year reflective essay Jean made extremely positive remarks based on the positive effects the ELP had on her class, making it more fun, giving it a clearer thematic structure and fostering real communication in the TL, while enabling a wider interpretation of the prescribed curriculum and adding an element sorely missed in the teaching of Irish: a way of integrating and bringing to the foreground the rich cultural heritage associated with the Irish language (Mac Mathúna 1996).

In her interview, she largely repeated the themes she mentioned in response to the other research instruments, and added that the ELP helped her learners gain in confidence, set weekly goals, and experience tangible achievements in the TL, adding that this positive effect was more dramatically pronounced in weaker learners. The ELP also helped her with her teaching of other classes, and enabled her to observe the learners' unfamiliarity with the Irish culture. She reflected that the project site and the ELP competition, especially with its prize for 'the most original LL idea', gave a boost to learner reflection. She added that her outlook became more 'cross-curricular' by recognising learners' talents in art, computers, etc. in the TL class. She added that the ELP was motivating for both the teacher and the learners.

My three observations of this class showed that it was very effective, and confirmed that during the year, learners became more confident in using their TL almost always for classroom communication (following the example set by their teacher, who employed the TL always in a very efficient manner). The thematic examination of some themes through the participation of all the learners in the class was impressive, and became even more time-efficient towards the end of the year. By then, learners seemed able to use the TL a lot more efficiently than any other first-year Irish class I have observed in the past.

5.4.15 Class #16

Class #16 was a second-year mixed-ability French class taught by Hugh. He was a newly-qualified teacher of French, and was the last teacher to join this research project. He joined up in mid-September (after the data collection had started), when he became aware of the ELP and the project following a discussion with Frances (cf. section 5.4.16 below). Hugh and Frances were both newly-qualified teachers who were thus new to their school, and I was keen to welcome Hugh as a late entrant to the project and seize the opportunity to examine the potential effect two newly-qualified teachers at the same school could have on each other's practices, offering support, exchanging ideas, etc., especially in comparison to the other newly-qualified teacher, Brendan, who was the only teacher in his school using the ELP.

An overview of the findings related to the three newly-qualified teachers shows that the two teachers who used the ELP in the same school were a real support to each other, and consequently felt less pressure than Brendan, although this effect was not as great as it might have been, owing to the fact that both teachers had to take on a lot of extracurricular activities such as coaching baseball teams, organising school trips, assisting in the development of a school website, etc. On the basis of this, I would be inclined to observe that it is not enough to have more than one teacher in a school using the ELP to make it easier on teachers; there should also be some time provision made to allow them to capitalise on each other's insights.

As regards class #16, according to Hugh, this was a very weak mixed-ability class, in which at least one learner was severely dyslexic and some others were having great learning difficulties, affecting their performance and occasionally their morale. This class was made up of the bottom performers of their year, who had a reputation for being 'tough to deal with in all subjects'. Hugh lamented the demoralising effect which streaming practices have for 'bottom-stream' learners such as these; he chose to use the ELP with this class as it was his most 'difficult one'. This was naturally applauded and encouraged by me as I wanted to see how the ELP works under 'adverse conditions' (cf. also section 5.4.6 above).

Additionally, owing to the allocation of space in the school, Hugh had to keep the ELPs in a storage room and transport them to the new section of the school where his

lessons were held approximately once every two to four weeks, which made it difficult to use the ELP. He felt that these challenges and the difficult language used in some parts of the ELP such as the checklist descriptors, which may have been beyond the level of comprehension of some of these learners, even in English, had demoralising effects. He also mentioned being under great pressure most of the time as this class had to sit the same end-of-year school-wide tests. Interestingly, in common with Brendan, he felt it was difficult to find adequate time to 'do justice to the ELP' and prepare his learners for their test.

Despite the above challenges and Hugh's fears that his learners may have developed negative feelings towards the ELP, the learners of this class were *not* different to the general sample in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, and generally enjoyed using the ELP and felt that the ELP might help them to learn their TL.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see that very few learners made a consistent attempt to fill in their language biography in their TL, and that learners varied in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect. Less than half the learners had used their ELPs in an autonomous fashion at home, and that showed in the relatively small amount of text contained in their learner biographies, and in the fact that the individual themes were not many. However, all learners produced self-tests and mentioned that they enjoyed deciding up to a point how they studied the TL through the ELP checklist descriptors. Common themes in the samples were class-wide projects on postcards, such as the ones which are required for the writing component of the JC. Only one learner used the ELP with other TLs, possibly as a result of the limited access learners had to their ELPs.

Two learners from this class were interviewed. Both learners liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, found that it helped them to 'think', and felt that the ELP became easier after Christmas. They both acknowledged that they used their TL a lot more this year as a result of their using the ELP in class, and said that the ELP should be used by all learners as 'it helps a lot'. Both learners would have liked to have used the ELP more frequently.

In his reports, Hugh observed that the ELP was 'not really used' until early November (cf. the issues mentioned above) and mentioned encountering many technical problems stemming from the bulkiness and the flimsiness of the ELP folders, and folder storage. He said that some learners were more confused than others at first and saw the ELP as extra paperwork, but also that it ultimately 'helped learners with serious organisation problems'. He mentioned that a marked benefit of the ELP for this class was that it enabled learners and the teacher to 'see progress more clearly'.

In his end-of-year reflective essay he repeated themes he mentioned in his reports and added that the ELP folder should probably be simplified and made more compact in order to bypass some of the problems he faced this year. Furthermore, he said that his being a new teacher did mean that it was more difficult for him to implement the ELP as it presented extra challenges. He said that at times he had been under considerable pressure, but was glad he 'stuck with it' as it offered him and his class a lot. His advice to other teachers was related to the statement above: 'use it as it pays off, despite any initial problems'.

In his interview, he once more repeated the themes he had mentioned in his responses to other research instruments. He also added among other things that using the ELP with this particular class was probably more difficult than it would have been with another class owing to their having been 'branded' a bottom stream group, but it still boosted learner motivation greatly.

My observations of this class showed that it was rather effective under the circumstances. The teacher seemed mostly successful in employing a 'multi-sensory approach' which aimed at bypassing the learning difficulties of learners. He also employed a lot of miming and drawing, and brought an impressive array of realia to class. Notably, the use of TL by the teacher and the learners seemed to increase substantially during the year, although minor discipline problems remained.

5.4.16 Class #17

Class #17 was a first-year mixed-ability French class taught by Frances. As mentioned in the previous section, she too was a newly-qualified teacher of French, and taught in the same school with Hugh.

In general, the learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires. Furthermore, learners' responses indicated that the majority of learners generally enjoyed using the ELP and felt that the ELP might help them to learn their TL. Finally, learner responses indicated a balanced focus on all five language skills contained in the ELP.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see that learners varied in both TL proficiency and ability to reflect and use the ELP autonomously, while some learners who worked on their own at home produced some material not only in their TL, but also one or two samples related to the TL culture in English. However, all learners produced self-tests and culturally-laden samples, and mentioned they enjoyed 'deciding how they would study their TL' through the ELP checklist descriptors. A few learners used the ELP for other TLs, but the majority did not.

Three learners from this class were interviewed. They liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP, found it helped them to 'think', and felt that the ELP became easier after Christmas. They also said that the ELP should be used by all learners as 'it helps', and 'asks you good questions'. One learner, however, felt that it should be up to the learners to decide if it works for them or not.

In her reports, Frances observed that the ELP was 'not used' until late October owing to a number of procedural problems, and mentioned encountering some of the technical problems stemming from the bulkiness and the flimsiness of the ELP folders, also mentioned by Hugh. She remarked that the ELP helped learners a lot by making them think about their learning, develop their thinking and work in pre-planned stages through the checklists, and 'see progress and understand that perseverance pays off'. She mentioned that learners also benefited by the increased use of the TL in class, which in a way 'immersed them in the TL and its culture'.

In her end-of-year reflective essay Frances added that the ELP folder was too big in its current form and its use proved somewhat too time-consuming. However, it

encouraged team-work and the use of additional resources. It also helped learners to become more motivated and able to monitor and evaluate their learning, while they came to understand that learning was gradual and achievable. She felt that there was possibly no need for classroom visits and 'no need for critical analysis' of a teacher's practices by an outsider. Finally, she mentioned that she felt that the ELP helps teachers to develop a deeper understanding of LL.

In her interview, she repeated the themes she had mentioned in response to the other research instruments. She added among other things that the ELP appeared somewhat daunting at first but became easy to use in time. She found it generally beneficial, but also time-consuming and suggested the development of two separate ELP models for JC and LC. Furthermore, she felt that ELP-enabled peer-assessment had a 'group-building' effect which resulted in a more positive atmosphere in class. She added that she enjoyed the fact that at least two teachers in the same school were using the ELP and could exchange ideas, etc. She said that her experience with the ELP made her realise that there are many different techniques which can be used to teach/learn languages. Finally, she remarked that following her experience of using the ELP with a class this year, she would like to have had more exposure to the ELP in her HDipEd the previous year, and felt that every teacher should try using the ELP.

My observations of this class showed that it was rather effective under the circumstances. The teacher made use of many resources, such as menus from restaurants in the TL, and discussions of similarities and differences between TL and Irish culture. Notably, the use of TL by the teacher and the learners seemed to increase in a pronounced way during the year, the teacher's style of teaching became more effective, and learners became more knowledgeable in their TL, at ease with group-work and keener to participate in class and volunteer information based on their previous encounters with their TL and its culture.

5.4.17 Class #19

Class #19 was a PLC Italian class taught by Maria, a native speaker of Italian. The class in question was very interesting. Maria chose to use the ELP following her encounter

with the theoretical background of the LAP ELP during the first and second years of her Ph.D. study in Trinity College. She became very interested in learner autonomy and was quite keen to explore how a pedagogical tool aimed at fostering learner autonomy and more effective learning worked in practice. She chose to use the ELP with this class in an effort to see if it could help her learners to become more interested in their Italian course (absenteeism was rife and some learners had come to class less often than once every two/three months in the previous year, when the class was taught by another teacher). Encountering the same problems in the first month of this school year, and having tried various strategies with them, which had met with little success, she decided to join the project. As the other Italian class of the project (class #6), this class was included in the project in order to test how the ELP worked in 'adverse conditions'.

Owing to the above, and as a result of the – at best intermittent – attendance pattern of some learners in the class, some of the learners did not show up even once to receive their ELPs in the first three months of the course, and a small number of learners came to a lesson less often than once every two months. Consequently, absenteeism was a main aspect influencing what took place in this class, and was mentioned in the responses gathered through *all teacher and learner 'self-report'* qualitative research instruments. The discussion which follows is based only on learners who participated in data gathering in a sufficient and hence valid manner (cf. related discussion in Chapters 3 and 4).

On the whole, the learners in this class were not different to the general sample in any significant way in their motivation as measured through the SDT-based questionnaires, apart from the fact that their intrinsic motivational orientation was significantly higher as regards activities related both to LL and to school in general, indicating that the learners who did attend classes were learning their TL for reasons which were important to them, as opposed to externally dictated ones. Additionally, this was a class where learners' responses indicated that they enjoyed using the ELP and felt that it might help them to learn their TL. Furthermore, their responses indicated a rather balanced focus on the five language skills contained in the ELP, which was even positively skewed towards speaking-related skills.

From the samples submitted to the site, one can see that the work carried out during the year was limited, but substantial under the circumstances. Some learners recorded some of their reflections in Italian and most of them seemed to become more confident in their use of the TL during the year.

Two learners from this class were interviewed. They liked their TL, enjoyed using the ELP and found that it made learning their TL 'a good deal easier', and felt the ELP itself was easy to use. They also acknowledged the fact that it gave them a lot more confidence in the TL, especially when combined with the fact that Maria used the TL as the sole means of interaction in class. They felt the ELP should be used by all learners, but *only if* they want to learn, as it would help them become more organised and learn more. Both learners felt that self-assessment is a difficult thing to do, but also that it becomes easier through the ELP, as it 'helps you see your progress, understand your weaknesses' and work on them.

In her reports, Maria mentioned many issues which stemmed from the things mentioned earlier related to absenteeism, and said she would base her reports on those learners who came to the classes, and not those who had just registered for the course and were difficult to engage on those occasions when they took the time to come to class; the latter type of learners (three of whom happened to be present during the administration of questionnaire rounds a) and b) and thus were able to express their opinions) also viewed the ELP as an extra chore. Furthermore, Maria noted that there was a school-wide problem whereby many students lacked interest in their course and respect for teachers and their fellow-students. By early December, Maria said that learners had got over the initial difficulty of understanding the process and logic of negotiated goal-setting. They became more accurate in their self-assessment and the majority of them became more committed to their LL. She also added that the ELP initiated a dynamic learning mechanism, especially through the bilingual checklists and the dossier. By February Maria observed that the ELP operated as a 'conveyor belt', relaying learners' weaknesses and attitudes to their teacher, and offering a basis for a genuine teacher-learner dialogue. She observed that the majority of learners opted to use their ELPs as a basis for a 'real testing discussion' in their final oral exams, which were conducted by an external examiner; that examiner was very enthusiastic about the effect the ELP had on this class.

In her end-of-year reflective essay, Maria reflected that learners who came to the classes became a lot more involved thanks to the influence of the ELP, even though some of them felt they were 'coerced to work more'. She felt the main advantage the ELP brought to this class was a 'real teacher-learner dialogue'. Maria's thoughts on the ELP as a tool show her in-depth reflection on the principles underlying it and on its practical application. She also mentioned that she enjoyed her participation in this research project, the chance it gave her to reflect on her practice through the monthly reports, my feedback, the teacher meetings and learners' responses to questionnaires. She observed that 'eradicating old (i.e. passive) learning attitudes takes time' and a will on the part of the teacher to 'take on' disinterested students, and show them how they can develop 'learning-how-to-learn skills' and become more autonomous.

In her interview, she largely repeated the themes mentioned in response to the other research instruments, and among other things added that in this class the ELP offered a 'negotiation of a more transparent course', which resulted in increased choice and interest, and ultimately in increased receptive TL proficiency for learners. Learners who used it learned how to learn in more personalised and effective ways, reflected on their learning and developed their language skills in a more integrated manner. As a teacher, she felt she gained substantially from reflecting more on her teaching and the nature of learning in general, and from the exchange of ideas and group-support in the ELP SN monthly meetings. She urged all teachers to use the ELP and to 'find out what lies beneath its surface'.

My observations of this class showed that it was as effective as possible under the circumstances, with the teacher trying to strike a balance between creating an interest in learners and building on work carried out in previous lessons, without provoking a negative reaction from those learners who came to the class at irregular intervals. This took some laborious group-building on the part of the teacher and some of the 'regularly present' learners. The teacher used the TL as the sole means of communication in class throughout the year, while the learners used their language biography checklists and their dossier as memory aids in order to use their TL more confidently towards the end of the year. Learner participation and interest improved and at least six learners (out of a core of thirteen 'generally frequent participants') seemed to have developed quite substantial

personal learning strategies. Four of them mentioned that they planned to visit Italy after the end of their course in order to further improve their TL proficiency, and they felt that their ELP would help them while they were there.

5.5. Final notes on the class-specific discussion of findings

It may have become apparent from the class-specific sections above that the ELP seemed to work out acceptably well in many different class and school settings, with many different teachers and learners. It generally helped boost motivation, and foster learner autonomy and ultimate achievement in all the TLs examined. It also fostered teacher reflection on teaching practice and learning, which was further augmented by the networking of language teachers of different languages and backgrounds through the ELP SN.

However, I think it also became evident that some aspects related to each class affected the extent of the success of ELP implementation. Taking into account that most of the earlier research projects focussing on ELP implementation around Europe have so far had a more general outlook and offered predominantly positive findings, I tried to offer a discussion of the findings of this project which was more 'applied', in the sense that it tried to analyse aspects of the class environments which presented greater challenges to successful ELP implementation. In this way, I would hope that the reader is enabled to identify such aspects from my discussion. For this reason, my discussion was generally more detailed for those classes/aspects where findings were not entirely positive. The reader may for instance notice the practice of offering in-text references to learner numbers from Chapter 5 tables only for the classes where more negative attitudes than the general trend were expressed.

In Chapter 6 which follows I examine what conclusions may be reached on the basis of the findings and make some first suggestions for potential future actions.

6. Principal conclusions

6.1. Concluding preamble

Chapter 6 considers the possible implications of the project findings for Irish post-primary language education and examines how these conclusions may inform language provision in Irish post-primary education as well as in other language learning settings. The findings paint a colourful picture of the perceptions, routines and attitudes of project participants towards not only the ELP and its effects on their practices, but also towards the TLs involved and various aspects related to LL and post-primary education in general. The conclusions reached on the basis of these findings are presented indexed under a number of themes below, focussing on what findings may indicate about the current state and potential future development of:

- the LAP ELP model;
- the curricula currently in place;
- related public examinations;
- learners in Irish post-primary education;
- teachers in Irish post-primary education;
- Irish post-primary schools;
- Irish bodies involved in language policy;
- CoE and other trans-national bodies involved in language policy.

6.2. LAP ELP

This project was designed with a view to evaluating in a comprehensive longitudinal way the effect of the ELP on foreign/second language teaching and learning in Irish post-primary schools. The two preceding chapters presented a number of different aspects of that effect and briefly examined and evaluated the nature and implications of the experience of a number of teachers and learners who use the ELP in their classes.

The responses of learner participants to the various research instruments as regards the ELP indicate that a very strong majority of learners felt that its effect was markedly positive. They stated that they liked working with the ELP and found that it helped them with their learning. Even those few who felt that the LAP ELP in the format they employed (cf. discussion below) might have not been the optimum pedagogical tool to help them learn substantially more and in a better way, were – with very few exceptions – ready to acknowledge that they 'got something from using it during the year'. They further qualified their statements, saying that they felt that the potential of the LAP ELP to be of help was hindered mostly by its physical characteristics (large size, flimsy ring binder which needed frequent repairs, lack of colour, etc.), or by the fact that they had not used it enough in class this year owing to class-specific procedural challenges (timetabling problems, class-specific routines of ELP use, etc.).

The predominantly positive effect of the ELP became evident through the positive change it seems to have facilitated as measured by a number of quantitative and qualitative research instruments. More specifically, the ELP appears to forestall or reverse negative maturational trends and/or have a positive impact on:

- the motivational orientations of learners as regards LL motivation and motivation towards school in general, as measured by the academic self-regulation questionnaire and the related relative autonomy indices;
- perceived competence in learning as measured by the perceived competence in learning scale (cf. however, findings of more incisive qualitative measures presented in sections 4.4.3-4.4.8);
- perceived competence in using the ELP as measured by the perceived competence in using the ELP item (cf. once again findings of more incisive qualitative measures presented in sections 4.4.3-4.4.8);
- perceived autonomy support offered by teachers as measured by the learning climate questionnaire;
- perceived importance, likelihood and attainment of the life-goals of learners as measured by the aspirations index questionnaire (AI);
- the perceived variety and frequency of and satisfaction with activities related to LL carried out in or for a project class (i.e. during the year learners experienced

proportionately more activities, and more of an activity they were initially positively disposed to; furthermore, their experience seemed to have been on the whole positive enough to affect their overall attitudes to that activity in a positive manner);

- beliefs about the difficulty of L2 learning, about LL processes and skills, and about the role and nature of intelligence in LL;
- the effort learners expend in LL;
- ability to focus one's efforts on the specific points/language skills they need to and thus save time/effort;
- ability to self-assess and set personally relevant goals, contrary to perceived established practices of passivity in (almost all) other school subjects;
- acknowledgement of learner ownership of responsibility for their learning;
- integration of personal realities, hobbies, interests and knowledge gained through other subjects with their LL;
- integration of learners of non-Irish origin with limited proficiency in English into their classes;
- ratio of use of the TL to use of English as the language of communication inside the classroom.

As already mentioned in Chapter 4, the ELP appeared to be used effectively in the large majority of project classes, and to be optimally effective for those classes and learners that used it more often, and in a more systematic manner. In a way this was to be expected, since what I witnessed in my observations suggested to me that the major facilitative effect of the ELP in LL is that it offers learners the ability to perceive and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, reflect on them and thus understand their nature better, and set modular goals of optimal difficulty. In my opinion, this procedure can be effective only if it is practised systematically in a modular way, especially since its acquisition is bound to involve some time during which different learners will develop different systems and routines to better suit their own learning styles and preferences. What I witnessed in the project classes convinced me that the learning curve involved in this process can vary widely for different individuals and can be further influenced by

other situational factors, such as the approach a teacher adopts in mediating the ELP to his/her learners, etc.

During the year, under the influence of the ELP, project classes generally changed to include more

- short reflection sessions, where learners exchanged study ideas and learning-how-to-learn tips, ELP-routine tips, etc.;
- project work parts/activities initiated by the learners;
- flexible use of the ELP in tandem with one or more textbooks and other learning resources such as video, audio and Internet material;
- time for the learners to come up with ideas on how to test previously learned material, and how to prepare tests for their class;
- creative use of the blackboard/whiteboard in order to raise morphological and phonological awareness.

In addition to the points mentioned above, one of the things which stood out quite clearly was that both teachers and learners gradually became more efficient in their management of time and effort expended; in a very real sense, they devised their own customised ways of using the ELP and conducting a lesson which was informed by it and which fostered maximal TL use and autonomous work.

All the above findings seem to suggest that the LAP ELP in the format employed in the project did exert a positive influence on the practices and attitudes of learners and teachers. On the basis of participant responses it seems that features of the LAP ELP which seemed to be particularly conducive to the establishment of good practice in this project were:

- the bilingual open-ended language biography checklists which facilitated and scaffolded maximal TL use, boosted vocabulary building, and facilitated an integration of modularised goal-setting, self-assessment and reflection in the TL;
- the quintilingual format of the ELP, which includes all the languages taught in Irish post-primary education and thus allowed learners to use it not only for the language they were learning in their project classes but also for all the other languages they were learning or had some proficiency in, thus promoting in

practice the establishment of a real integrated language curriculum and plurilingualism;

- the 'learning-how-to-learn' and routine-building reflection pages of the language biography, which foster learner autonomy;
- the allocation of space to intercultural experiences in both the language passport and a dedicated language biography part.

Of course, not everything in the LAP ELP was optimal, especially in the format we evaluated in this project. Thus, a main complaint had to do with its physical form: learners and teachers lamented the fact that the folder was too big to fit in learners' bags, or that it was flimsy. In immediate reaction to these criticisms, the second printing of the ELP, published during this project, does not include a ring-binder and thus bypasses the problems with which the ring-binder was associated.

However, some other criticisms of the LAP ELP which will merit further exploration in future editions are the following:

- use of more graphic elements, more colour, and employment of more straightforward numbering of language biography pages to facilitate quick navigation inside the ELP and make each section look more distinctive and aesthetically appealing;
- addition of dividers between different ELP sections and/or the language biography 'can-do' checklists for different languages to facilitate navigation;
- simplification of the layout of the model and/or making it more compact for the benefit of younger and weaker learners, or developing a new simpler model for the Junior Cycle and retaining the current model for the Senior Cycle;
- examination of the possibility of using simpler, non-academic language in the language biography;
- examination of the possibility of dividing some of the descriptors in the 'can-do' checklists of the language biography which covered a very broad spectrum of activities in their wording into two or three new descriptors, or adding bullet points with different themes a descriptor could be applied to;
- examination of the possibility of adding some indicative learner samples for each section, which would help teachers and learners get ideas for activities, etc.;

Despite these criticisms, the vast majority of project participants believed that all learners learning languages should use the ELP, as it is beneficial on many levels. The only concern raised was that, since the project classes were the only classes in their schools using the ELP, comparisons between ELP and non-ELP classes were inevitable. This created psychological pressure for learners and teachers using the ELP and affected their attitudes towards it, since ELP classes appeared to take longer to cover equal parts of the textbook than other more traditionally-oriented classes which were not using the ELP and were organised around textbook coverage (cf. further discussion in remaining sections).

6.3. Current Irish post-primary language curricula

The fact that the ELP seemed to have a positive effect on Irish post-primary education in so many different settings and to such an extent was not something I had entirely anticipated when I was designing this project. Having read the FL/SL curricula for Irish post-primary education, and seen that they were to some extent informed by socio-cultural theories of learning and by theories on learner autonomy, I felt that it was quite possible for project classes to have been organised around principles and practices quite close to those advocated by the LAP ELP even prior to their involvement in this research project. If that were the case, then one might expect the impact of the ELP to be quite limited.

However, the clear benefits of ELP use attested through the findings of this research project paint a different picture. In my opinion, the fact that the ELP seems to have had such a profound constructive impact on the learners and teachers who participated in the project seems to indicate not only the positive potential of the ELP but also that the language curricula in their current form are not generally promoting successful practice, fostering learner autonomy, maximal TL use and learner and teacher reflection in language classes (cf. similar concerns raised in Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2004b; Little 2003c, and related extended quotations cited in sections 2.3 and 2.4.5 above; NCCA 2005b).

A possible explanation for this finding might lie in the fact that although the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabi for French, German, Italian and Spanish appear to

share a common – and hence unifying – core, they are also firmly based on the understandings of a communicative approach and of a functional-notional syllabus which are contained in publications such as *Threshold Level* (van Ek and Trim 1991a), without the added insights offered in the more recently published CEF and the constellation of publications related to it. This makes the curricula appear somewhat 'dated' (note, e.g., the lack of functional and notional domains focussing explicitly on ICT, and the absence of 'can do' task descriptors), and lacking in the modularity and transparency of communicative tasks that a learner should be able to perform in order to claim mastery of a certain curricular goal. Such transparency would, for instance, enable teachers to communicate curricular goals to learners and parents in a more straightforward manner, and foster the establishment of virtuous circles of motivation founded on self-assessment, goal setting and reflection (cf. earlier related discussion in Chapter 2). Such transparency would also facilitate attempts to determine how well curricular goals are being achieved at any given time. These criticisms appear to apply on an even more acute level in relation to the curricula for Irish, which might partly explain the proportionately more negative attitudes towards Irish expressed by project learners (cf. also relevant discussion in Chapter 4).

A telling example of how the outlook of language curricula in Irish post-primary education needs to change can be found on the first page of the four Junior Certificate FL syllabi, where it is said that 'the adolescent learner in the Irish context seldom needs to use the target language in an authentic exchange with a native speaker'. Although this view may have been true in earlier times, it certainly is not true in the multilingual and multicultural Europe of today, where, for instance, cross-country mobility has become a frequent phenomenon and not a rarity.

Many publications have discussed how the current curricular structure appears to be in urgent need of reform, on the basis of a coherent and comprehensive overarching national language policy. Such a holistic policy – when developed – will help to rationalise language provision in Irish education and draw up criteria for the flexible and principled diversification of language provision informed by the current identity and needs of Irish society, as well as make language provision transitions from pre-primary to primary, post-primary and tertiary levels more objective, principled and transparent. It

would also help to develop and implement an integrated language curriculum, acknowledging and building upon the knowledge learners might have in other second or foreign languages, their heritage languages and English, as well as upon their world knowledge and knowledge gained through other subjects (cf. similar concerns raised in Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2004b; Little 2003c; NCCA 2005b).

On the basis of the findings of this project, it seems that a pedagogical tool such as the ELP can inform the process of curricular reform needed to promote the comprehensive principled treatment of language education mentioned above. It appears that the ELP has the potential to become the vehicle of a paradigm shift for Irish language education if implemented on a large scale. First, the LAP ELP appears ideally suited for the promotion of an integrated curriculum thanks to its multilingual format, which allows learners to use it in all the languages they have, or are working towards developing a degree of proficiency in. Second, with the recent development of an ELP model for primary education approaching completion in the framework of the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative, ELP models will be available for all levels and types of language provision in Ireland, including provision of English for people with refugee status through Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT), and for non-English speaking pupils in primary and post-primary schools (Little and Lazenby Simpson 2004). The success of ELP application in settings where a whole curriculum used in an educational institution is based on language provision structured by the ELP, such as is the case in IILT (Lazenby Simpson 2003), coupled with the findings of this project, indicate that for the ELP to be maximally effective, all the language teachers in a school should indeed use it as an instrument informing their teaching. Such a state of affairs would relieve teachers of a major challenge they currently seem to be facing, namely viewing the curriculum as something vague which needs to be covered during the year in terms of textbook pages or sections, and would help them view curricula as the open-ended competence-based benchmarking and guideline tool they were envisaged to be by their developers (some issues related to curriculum reform and development applicable also to this setting are mentioned in A. V. Kelly 2004; Kennedy 1999; Roeber 1999; Stoks 1998; Toogood and Pemberton 2002).

As far as curricula are concerned, the easiest way to bring about such a paradigm shift could be to review the curricula currently in place, examine their effectiveness as far as the practice they promote and the ultimate language achievement attained through them are concerned, and restate them in CEF/ELP terms. Such a development has already taken place to some degree for the post-primary curricula in their current format through the development of the LAP ELP. A more longitudinal exploratory evaluation and development project capitalising on the insights gained so far would appear to be a short and urgently needed step from this point. However, the experience gained in this project points towards the fact that the stated ultimate attainment goals of these curricula (i.e. CEF level A2 for JC and CEF level B2 for LC) might not be entirely attainable goals. This is even reflected by the level of the LC examination which arguably corresponds to B1 level and not B2 (cf. discussion below).

Admittedly, the ELP models currently available will need to be further optimised in order to better accommodate the demands of an integrated curriculum when that becomes a reality (cf. e.g. discussion in section 6.2. above), and to be supplemented with supportive measures such as dedicated teacher's handbooks, Internet sites, and teacher support networks holding group meetings and disseminating good practice, possibly on a school and on a regional level, such as the ones which were employed for this research project. Notably, all teacher participants in this project felt that the existence of group meetings was the most important supportive action for the successful implementation of the ELP. Only through such well-thought-out curricular reforms, conducted on the basis of longitudinal empirical research can substantial progress be made towards quality control in language education and a much more effective promotion of learner autonomy and the practices associated with it, such as reflection, learning-how-to-learn skills, optimal TL use, group-work, etc.

The proposed nature of such curricular reforms, when attempted in a critical manner, stands not only to pay dividends in ameliorating the current state of Irish language education, but also to respond quite effectively to the needs to promote portfolio education, reform (especially the senior cycle of) post-primary education in order to make it more flexible and geared to the needs of learners, and foster the development of a life-long learning perspective. In this framework, rephrasing the curricula in all subjects

(and not just languages) taught in Irish post-primary education on the basis of target curricular competences in the manner of the CEF/ELP descriptors might be the only way forward towards benchmarking and quality control in education (cf. NCCA 2002a, and relevant discussion in section 6.7 below; NCCA 2002b; NCCA 2003d).

6.4 Irish post-primary public examinations

An institution which is inseparably connected with what takes place inside Irish post-primary classrooms is the system of public examinations, which mark the end of the junior, senior and PLC cycles. Earlier publications have consistently highlighted the fact that these examinations tend to have a negative influence on teaching and learning practices (this is effect is often described in the literature as 'negative washback'), generating feelings of pressure on teachers and learners. This pressure often leads teachers to 'teach to the exam' and focus on test-taking strategies, rather than consistently striving towards the improvement of learner competences in the TL (Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2004b).

In this project, the feeling of constant time pressure in order to 'cover more' – especially closer to public exams – was the single most persistent anxiety cited by teachers and learners in their responses to a variety of research instruments. In a good few cases, this anxiety persisted even in the face of evidence of considerable improvement in learner proficiency in the TL, thinking and reflection, learning how to learn, and self-assessment skills. This anxiety – especially as regards coverage of an exam-geared textbook – seems to have also been the single most important statistic factor which generated the reservations expressed towards the ELP, especially in the face of comparisons generated by the fact that the project classes were the only classes in their schools using the ELP. One teacher (Martha) summarised this state of affairs succinctly when she mentioned that one would have to seek a compromise between long-term benefits and short-term coverage concerns necessitated by the prevalent 'assessment culture'. Project participants also lamented the fact that public examinations (especially in the junior cycle) are structured in a very traditional way, arguably not conducive to the development of positive learning practices. In particular, they put less emphasis on

productive than on receptive skills. The extreme case in this is the JC. First, since it has an optional oral component currently offered by only a tiny minority of schools, and second, since written exam questions and instructions are provided in English, and learners are asked to provide their answers again in English except in part III: written expression (e.g. State examinations commission of Ireland 2005a; b).

The deleterious negative washback caused by public examination features of this kind has been well documented (e.g. McDonough 1995, pp.108-9; Messick 1996; Singleton and Little 1985, pp.16-7), with some theorists calling for a thorough exploration and ultimate democratisation of the washback stemming from public forms of assessment (Shohamy 2001; Shohamy, Donitsa-Schmidt, and Ferman 1996). In fact, this has made many theorists seek ways to make formal assessment more task-based, integrate self-assessment with formal assessment, and generally foster a more transparent and objective form of summative assessment (Bachman 2002; Bachman and Palmer 1989; Byrnes 2002; Calfee and Masuda 1997; Candlin 2001; Chalhoub-Deville 2001; Cizec 1997; McNamara 2001; Mislevy et al. 2002; Norris et al. 2002). Such assessment would have to be in tune with (and possibly even explicitly assess) practices informed by learner autonomy (Clapham 2001; Gardner 2002), and would have a *positive washback* effect, as it would foster good practice even in the case where more traditional classes would spend more time working on test-taking techniques related to examinations of this type (Bailey 1996; Buckby 1987; Hamp-Lyons 1997).

On the basis of the above, it seems that the LAP ELP, with its internationally transparent standards offered in the form of the CEF levels, its modularly oriented 'can do' descriptors of communicative proficiency (which can be used equally well for learning, teaching, self-assessment, and summative formal assessment), and its explicit added focus on the development of intercultural competence, thinking and reflection skills, and maximal TL use, arguably constitutes an appropriate basis for a principled reform of public examinations (Little 2005b). In particular, the modular character of the ELP checklists of language competences offer a solution to the problem posed by the policy-making bodies and theorists examining the modularisation of senior cycle post-primary education, providing a principled basis for an internationally transparent in-vivo

assessment and accreditation of partial competences (NCCA 2003a), at least as far as languages are concerned.

In addition to the above, on an international level a CoE effort to facilitate principled language examining and test development on the basis of the CEF levels is in progress (e.g. Milanovic 2002) and might fruitfully inform related Irish efforts. In the USA, efforts are being made by a number of policy-making bodies on various levels to make assessment by teachers more respected, standard-based and integrated with formal and self-assessment (Phye 1997; Plake and Impara 1997).

6.5. Learners in Irish post-primary education

It was only natural to design this research project with a view to evaluating first and foremost how ELP use affects learners. Thus, all data elicitation instruments included an examination of ELP effects on learners. This was a conscious decision made in recognition of the fact that the ELP is a learner-centred pedagogical tool (cf. section 1.5 above) that

a) aims to make itself maximally accessible to learners themselves even in the absence of a teacher;
b) is and remains the property of the learner even after the end of and/or outside formal education; and
c) celebrates the learner and his or her linguistic, reflective and intercultural competences and personal characteristics as the most important person in LL, who must be helped to develop in autonomy and optimise his or her learning practices.

Apart from the predominantly positive findings depicting the effects of ELP use mentioned in section 6.2 above, the research instruments also facilitated the elicitation of more general findings which license conclusions on learner practices, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to: activities related to LL carried out in or for a project class, reasons for learning a TL, beliefs about LL, etc. It is my conviction that many of the findings of this project related to learners in Irish post-primary education may be of interest to a more general readership than language education specialists.

Limiting myself to a discussion of learner-related conclusions which can be reached in relation to the ELP, I would have to once again draw the reader's attention to the fact that the ELP proved to have a statistically significant and proportionately substantial positive effect on learners on both a personal and a group level (according to TL studied, learner gender, class year, project class and project school).

On the basis of the findings it appears safe to claim that an overwhelming majority of learners generally progressed in their ability to express and develop their creativity in their project classes as evidenced by the frequently impressive samples they submitted for inclusion in the ELP SN site. They also appeared and claimed to have a better time in class, and developed substantially in how autonomous they were in their LL, how in control they felt they were, and how aware they were of the type of sustained effort needed in order to be successful in LL. Furthermore, they became more objective in their self-assessment, better able to focus their learning on the points they needed to work more on, and progressed more than the norm as regards TL proficiency and reflective skills (as evidenced by their responses to the various research instruments, their teachers' views, their linguistic production, and my own observations of their classes; cf. discussion in Chapters 4 and 5). These positive changes were true for almost all learner participants, although the ultimate achievements of each specific participant were linked to personally relevant 'substrate factors'.

The value of positive changes in practice such as those which took place in the ELP-informed project classes during the year and their effects on learners is also clear. Such changes included:

- more frequent use of collaborative learning practices and autonomously oriented group-work, informed by task-based and discovery learning theories (e.g. Brown and Campione 1994; Duch 2001; Ellis 2000; Lentz 2000; Seeman and Tavares 2000; White 2001; Willis 1996);
- peer revision and scaffolding (e.g. de la Fuente 2002; Donato 1994; Mercer 1995; van Lier 2001; Villamil and De Guerrero 1996; 1998; Wertsch 1985);
- maximal appropriate use of the TL in class (e.g. Betáková 2000);

- explicit focus on form and morphosyntactic training practice (e.g. Doughty and Varela 1998; Doughty and Williams 1998; Swain 1998; 2000; Swain and Lapkin 2001; VanPatten 1993).

6.6. Teachers in Irish post-primary education

This research project yielded a wealth of findings related to how ELP use appeared to affect teachers in Irish post-primary education. On the basis of those findings it appears safe to claim that teachers generally recognised the ELP to be an invaluable pedagogical tool which exerted a positive influence on their teaching practices and their students in a variety of ways. This belief was evidenced by their responses to the various research instruments, the views they expressed in the discussions and the presentations of their classes which took place over a number of ELP SN meetings, their learners' views, my own observations of their classes, and a number of related conversations and e-mail/letter exchanges I had with each one of them (cf. also discussion in Chapters 4 and 5).

Although all teacher participants experienced positive overall effects, the extent of those effects for each specific participant was heavily influenced by other personally relevant 'substrate factors'. Such factors included the degree of prior exposure to the ELP, the speed at which they established their own teacher and learner routines of ELP use in their classes, how systematic these routines were and how quickly and efficiently they were mediated to the learners, the individual teacher's ability to cope with change, the nature of collegial culture in their schools and the degree of support/criticism other teachers were prepared to offer, and last but not least, some specific characteristics of the project classes.

Findings also appear to show that newly-qualified teachers had to overcome proportionately more challenges in order to use the ELP in the same empowering way as the rest of the teacher participants. This finding indicates that, although supportive actions like support networks, methodological support, examples of good teaching practice and ELP work, are prerequisites to successful ELP implementation for all teachers, newly-qualified teachers may be in need of more intensive support than their more experienced colleagues.

The value of positive changes in practice such as those which took place in the ELP-informed project classes during the year and their effects on teachers is also clear. Further to those mentioned in preceding sections, such changes included:

- a broader, more "ecological" view of language teaching (Acker 1994; Fontana 1995; Wallace 1991);
- a recognition that the ELP made them feel more in charge of their teaching and boosted their own autonomy;
- increased teacher autonomy as evidenced in teachers' critical reflection on their practices (e.g. Brookfield 1996; Gebhard 1999a; b; Gebhard and Opprandy 1999; Schön 1987; 1996a; b), and an understanding of a number of aspects of their autonomy, such as its context (Aoki 2001; 2002), the pressures it might entail (Gagné, Koestner, and Zuckerman 2000; Gagné, Senécal, and Koestner 1997; Pelletier, Séguin-Levesque, and Legault 2002), and how it can be scaffolded through appropriate pre- and in-service teacher training practice (A. Camilleri 1999b; Reeve 1998; 2002; Torres Diaz 2000) and peer support groups which foster critical friendships (Randall and Thornton 2001, p.8);
- a recognition of the value of incorporating intercultural communicative competence training in teacher education (Huber-Kriegler et al. 2004; Lázár 2003; Lázár et al. 2001);
- a recognition of the positive knock-on effect teacher autonomy has on learner autonomy (Little 1995a; Reeve, Bolt, and Cai 1999), which was also acknowledged by learners' positive perceptions of their teachers (Mäkinen 2004);
- the feeling that thanks to the ELP teachers developed a new type of professionalism, based on a more principled and transparent framework of reference integrating learning, teaching and assessment, and fostering greater recognition of their educating efforts from parents, greater parent and learner involvement, and quality control in LL in a profession which tends to fall short in these respects (Rádai 2003).

6.7. Irish post-primary schools

This research project yielded a small but important number of findings related to Irish post-primary schools. The first and foremost conclusion which can be safely reached on the basis of those findings is that the ELP exerted a positive influence on the practices followed in a wide variety of post-primary settings, across all the different types of Irish post-primary schools. Thus, it affected in a very positive manner what took place in

- all-boys, all-girls and co-educational schools
- schools which did and schools which did not practise ability streaming
- schools which did and schools which did not offer choice in TLs studied
- vocational schools, community colleges, and (denominational) voluntary schools
- Irish-medium and (conventional) English-medium schools

The rest of the school-related findings are not strictly related to the ELP, but they offer an indication of some aspects of the environment in which LL takes place in Irish post-primary education.

Practices related to the teaching of SL/FLs followed by different schools tend to differ widely in some respects, such as, for instance, whether or not learners are streamed according to gender and ability. Moreover, time allocated to language provision varies so widely that the weekly time allocation in some schools is less than half that in other schools of the same type (cf. class-specific discussion in Chapter 5).

A case which merits particular attention is that of having a first 'taster' year during which two TLs are taught and subsequently asking learners to choose one language for the remainder of the Junior Cycle. On the basis of the findings, it seems that this practice can have a negative effect on learner motivation and place teachers under considerable pressure.

Taking into account that schools form attitudes, it bodes ill for the future of the Irish language that in some schools there is a high frequency of exemptions from Irish on the ground of psychological angst, especially when considered in tandem with the view expressed by a number of teacher participants in this project that a large proportion of the material employed in the teaching of Irish seems to indicate a narrow interpretation of the prescribed curriculum and a failure to foreground and integrate the rich cultural heritage associated with the Irish language (cf. also Mac Mathúna 1996). Tellingly, some of the

more mature PLC learners were also of this opinion, when they compared their project classes to their Irish classes in earlier years (cf. section 4.4.5 below and Appendix G).

Although the practice of having subject teacher meetings is widely employed, such meetings are usually few and far between, and are organised only on a language-specific basis. This means that they do not inform practice across languages or contribute to the evolution of an integrated language curriculum, and their effectiveness is usually reduced by the ever-present lack of time for reflection.

Further school differences exist in the presence or absence of dedicated language classrooms. Some schools appear to have no such provision, while a few have dedicated language classrooms, enjoy frequent/constant access to video and multimedia facilities, and benefit from the presence of a language assistant.

A negative feature of the schools participating in this project – which I think may be symptomatic of the prevailing situation in Irish post-primary language education – was the almost complete lack of ICT use for LL in all schools but one. Although ICT has started informing LL practice around the world in many exciting ways with well-established benefits, such as multimedia-based multi-sensory learning (e.g. Najjar 1996), tandem LL (e.g. Appel 1999; Appel and Mullen 2000; Brammerts 1996; Little and Brammerts 1996), network-based LL (e.g. Pimentel 1999; Warschauer and Kern 2000), online learning (e.g. Harrison and Bergen 2000), LL through object-oriented multi-user domains (e.g. O'Rourke and Schwienhorst 2000; Schwienhorst 1997; 1998; 1999; 2000; 2002), language resource centres (e.g. Poteaux 2000), and computer-mediated communication (e.g. O'Rourke and Schwienhorst 2003; Warschauer 1998), the vast majority of learners who participated in this project mentioned that they never used computers in their language classes, although a large majority said they would like to do so, if given the chance.

In addition to the above, learner responses indicate that their schools offered them little chance to exercise and sharpen their judgement by setting their own goals and reflecting on their progress in any subject.

Also, classes tend to include growing numbers of learners whose first language is not English, which arguably necessitates a re-examination of the appropriacy of the curricula currently in place. Absenteeism tends to be a serious issue in some schools

especially at PLC level. The seating arrangements in some schools are not conducive to LL, as they hinder rather than facilitate group- and pair-work.

Finally, replicating findings of earlier research projects, no CLIL was practised in any of the schools participating in this project, apart from the case of the Irish-medium school, where all subjects were taught through Irish except English and FLs. CLIL is a very important (e.g. Kolodziejska and Simpson 2000; Wolff 2003) and in my opinion much needed addition to current practice of Irish post-primary education. It is ideally suited for task-based learning in a very real sense and could help to solve the constant problem of not having enough time allocated to LL. By definition it entails the presentation of new knowledge in an appropriate context, and it is a means of establishing closer co-operation among (at least some) teachers of different subjects, thus fostering cross-fertilisation of practice among subjects. It would contribute significantly towards the development of a fully integrated curriculum.

Designing an ELP for CLIL which would use multilingual checklists consisting of descriptors focussed on the skills learners should acquire by the end of a given time in each subject might be a way of introducing CLIL in Irish post-primary education. Such ELPs (or more appropriately subject portfolios) may usefully inform the review of the Senior Cycle and become a crucial catalyst for quality-enhancing benchmarking and modularisation.

6.8. Irish bodies involved in language policy

Although this research project focussed primarily on the effect of the ELP on Irish post-primary language education, some of its findings have implications for various Irish bodies involved in language education policy. These are summarized in this section.

Owing to some particularities of Irish education, a great number of public, semi-private, and voluntary bodies are involved in the development of educational policies, including individual schools, which operate in line with their own mission statements. All these bodies inevitably affect language policy as well, and may be the primary reason for the absence of an overarching language policy in Ireland up to now. On the basis of the project findings, it seems that teachers' views coincide with the view found in PISA and

Eurydice studies (cf. section 2.2 above), which call for further rationalisation of the way educational policy is developed in Ireland (Eurydice 2000, p.58). In view of the current situation, it would appear to me that a more flexible policy-making framework is called for, under the auspices of the DES and the NCCA.

In this framework, education experts (rather than a combination of education experts and stake-holding and advisory bodies) would be called upon to conduct focussed research and make suggestions on the development of and potential improvements to education policy at a national level, as informed by insights gained from practice and research in other countries. Then, the various bodies currently involved in educational policy development could participate in a consultation process through a national education council, which would aim to build upon the previous experience of each body, take into account the needs of different types of educational settings and the sensitivities of all stake-holders, and optimise and ratify such policy, thus minimising delays between the conception, development, piloting and evaluation, and implementation of educational policy and related pedagogical instruments (note that the nature of this suggestion complies with the relevant mandates of the Irish constitution mentioned in section 2.2 above).

As mentioned above, the DES and the NCCA should lead reform efforts. DES has the power – not least because of its mandate, which includes the allocation of funding in Irish (post-primary) education – to promote good teaching practice in schools by continuing the practice of whole-school inspections, which promote quality control across subjects, commissioning research projects which will examine ways of improving the current situation in schools, and fostering more extensive and versatile use of ICT. At the same time it should promote a re-examination of the effectiveness of current curricula and related public examination schemes, and examine ways through which the mediation of curricula to learners may be optimised.

A key aim which should inform this process is the evolution of a more integrated curriculum where all subjects would inform one another. Additionally, an optimal compromise has to be attained between promoting further modularisation of the curriculum and minimising the excessive curricular fragmentation which prevails today at post-primary level, with most subjects taught independently of one another. In the field of

languages, an integrated language curriculum should be engineered, and the use of CLIL should be promoted much more convincingly and extensively than at present.

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, DES has already renewed its efforts to promote the formulation of an integrated language policy by inviting the CoE to appoint a team of international experts to develop a country profile for language provision in Ireland, and to make suggestions towards possible improvements which could promote the formulation of an integrated language policy. This profile is due in 2006 (cf. section 2.3 above and Little 2005c, p.4).

A potential way of achieving – at least some of – the goals mentioned in the preceding paragraphs of this section would be to organise a funded empirical evaluation and development project examining the longitudinal effects of the ELP when used for all languages in a school, as has been proposed in a number of recent publications related to the review of language provision in Irish post-primary education (cf. Little 2003c, and sections 2.3 and 2.4.5 above; NCCA 2005b).

On the basis of the findings of this project, where the LAP ELP was found to exert a predominantly – and at times impressively – positive influence despite the fact that its use was hindered by the absence of a) an integrated curriculum and b) close co-operation between teachers of different languages, we would expect the effects of ELP use to be even more positive in a whole-school setting like the one of the proposed project. Such a project could also possibly combine ELP use with ICT and CLIL. The findings of this project indicate that valuable lessons could be learnt from the consistently successful experience of Irish-medium schools at all levels (e.g. Hickey 1997), in spite of generally negative prevailing family attitudes toward Irish (O'Laoire 1996, pp.69-70).

The NCCA has already played an instrumental role in bringing the issues mentioned above to the foreground. One project of NCCA related to the topics of this thesis is the attempt to make curricula of different educational levels feed into one another in a principled way (cf. e.g. Métais 2003; NCCA 2004a; d; f). NCCA also seeks to optimise language provision in Ireland through its *Report on the feasibility of languages in primary school* (NCCA 2005a), and through its extensive review of languages in the post-primary curriculum. The first phase of this review culminated in a call for action in the form of a whole-school development empirical evaluation project

using the ELP (cf. NCCA 2005b). It seems to me that on the basis of the findings of this project showing the positive effects of the ELP, and further to the negative findings related to the practices prevalent in the teaching of languages in post-primary education contained in a number of publications (cf. e.g. Department of Education and Science of Ireland 2004b), the urgency of such a project is self-evident.

Irish universities have an important role to play in informing the general effort to improve Irish post-primary (language) education in two ways, first, by offering the expertise of their academic staff, and second, by working together towards better quality control and introducing a module on ELP use in pre- and in-service language teacher training (cf. e.g. Jones 1998; Komorowska 2004).

Currently, the content of pre-service teacher training (HDipEd) courses varies according to the university which offers it, as universities do not follow a set curriculum. To the best of my knowledge, only the University of Dublin and the National University of Ireland (Galway) use the ELP in the HDipEds they offer. However, the findings of this project indicate that even teachers newly-qualified from these two courses reported that their exposure to the ELP was not sufficient to prepare them adequately for its use in class. Further to this point, intensive short in-service teacher training courses on ELP use in class could be offered by universities to practising teachers, optimally on a regional or school level, if sufficient funding were available.

Subject teacher unions for different languages should organise workshops on and presentations of the ELP and the benefits it can have to their members. Having a pedagogical tool which seems empowering enough to revolutionise language teaching means nothing if its dissemination remains minimal. Unions should also promote the cross-fertilisation of practices across languages, and foster the development of learner autonomy, optimal use of the TL in class, and development of learner reflection skills. Unions could also operate as pressure groups with considerable impact on educational policy, although in the current arrangement, the time and funding resources (and resulting power) available to these associations in Ireland are quite limited in comparison to what associations in other countries like the USA enjoy (Troy 1999).

Other bodies which could inform a review of Irish post-primary language education are IILT, which has accumulated knowledge on using the ELP with learners of

English as a SL, Leargas, which has organised trans-national co-operation projects on the teaching of languages, and the Post-primary Modern Languages Initiative, which has engineered a degree of diversification of language provision in Irish post-primary education (Cunningham 2003).

6.9. CoE and other trans-national bodies involved in language policy

The findings of this project seem to have a number of messages which could inform CoE policies. First, they offer a preliminary indication as to what type of characteristics might be more or less effective in an ELP model developed for post-primary education and what supportive actions may appear necessary for its successful implementation:

- an ELP model like the one which was the object of this project seems to have a predominantly positive effect (as evidenced through a variety of different quantitative and qualitative findings) on the learners and teachers using it, when its implementation is assisted by supportive actions like those which were employed during this project;
- the ELP appears to be an invaluable tool in fostering teacher as well as learner autonomy, as it facilitates a *principled* integration of diverse material into a language course, and further legitimises the avoidance of slavish adherence to a textbook;
- although they are not an obligatory ELP component, multilingual checklists in the language biography (in both the learners' TLs and L1s) facilitate and help to scaffold maximal TL use, boosting vocabulary building, and integrating modularised goal-setting, self-assessment and reflection in all the TLs learner is learning;
- it seems that language biography checklists should best be open-ended, thus facilitating their personalisation and helping learners to reflect more on the nature of LL (cf. Figure 2.1 and Appendix O);
- since some of the concepts contained in the ELP, such as self-assessment and reflection on their practice, and modular goal-setting, may be novel to a large proportion of ELP owners (especially those using the ELP in a class, who may be

used to passivity in learning like the students involved in this project), the practice of developing examples of prefaces to ELP sections related to self-assessment and goal-setting appears necessary;

- ELPs addressed to the full age range of post-primary education should best include some aesthetically appealing graphic elements and colour-schemes, especially for the benefit of younger learners;
- since intensive ELP use, whereby the ELP becomes an integral part of a course and personalised routines of use are established early, seems to be the most effective form of ELP use, it appears important to make sure that the ELP is constructed with a view to maximising functionality, durability (especially for the benefit of younger learners), and optimising navigation;
- it seems advisable to promote the development of ELP models which contain 'learning-how-to-learn' and reflection pages, such as those of the LAP ELP language biography, since they appear to foster learner autonomy and reflective skills;
- the allocation of space to intercultural experiences in both the language passport and a dedicated language biography part as in the LAP ELP seems to increase the amount of learner time spent on developing intercultural competences;
- the provision of some indicative examples of learner work for each section, which would help teachers and learners get ideas for activities and orient themselves around their ELPs, appears extremely advisable;
- the most important element conducing to successful implementation of an ELP appears to be the provision of ample methodological support to teachers in the form of support meetings best organised at a regional level, especially when they first embark on using the ELP, and particularly if they are newly-qualified teachers who are new to their teaching environment and thus more vulnerable to criticism from their older peers and parents;
- on the basis of the contributions that learner and teacher participants in this project made to the ELP SN site, it appears that the effort commenced in Schärer's report on ELP implementation, whereby an 'overview of validated and non-validated ELP models according to educational sectors' was offered (2004,

p.59, cf. also section 1.5.4 above), may be usefully supplemented through the creation of an interactive site, redirecting interested teachers and learners to internet sites containing information on ELP projects and examples of learner work at the educational levels and in the languages which are of interest to them, thus making dissemination of good practice faster and more effective;

- further to the preceding point, CoE itself may provide a considerable boost to its ELP project by increasing its visibility through a dedicated site for learners and teachers using the ELP (with sections such as teachers' and learners' corners, examples of ELP work, articles on the ELP, success stories, forums, regional seminars, special interest groups, videos of good practice, the ELP-related teacher-training kit when it is finalised, information on trans-national projects of interest to teachers and schools using the ELP, etc.), which would serve as a motivating device, since it would reinforce the international character of the ELP for teachers and learners who already use or are thinking of using the ELP;
- it seems to be the case that all FL/SL curricula can benefit from being recast in ELP terms, as they may become less vague, with the result that learners' ultimate achievement in TL proficiency tends to be greater, as they understand what their ultimate achievement in a language should be, and what steps they need to take in order to get there.

Further to what has been mentioned in relation to the CoE so far in this thesis, it must be said that since its major contribution to language education through the development of the communicative approach a few decades ago, it has consistently remained in the forefront of sponsoring research and commissioning dissemination workshops and publications on LL through the work of its LPD and the ECML. Further to the things mentioned in relation to the CoE so far, it promotes research and dissemination efforts on intercultural competence (Byram and Tost Planet 1999; Camilleri 2002; Huber-Kriegler, Lázár, and Strange 2003; Newby 2003) and its contribution to peace (Candelier 2000a), learner autonomy (A. Camilleri 1999a; G. Camilleri 1999), language awareness (Candelier 2000b), teacher education viewed as a single cross-language discipline (Dupuis et al. 2003; Easton 2001), LL in primary schools (Felberbauer 1998), textbook design integrating principles of authenticity, learner autonomy and cultural awareness

(Fenner 2001; Fenner and Newby 2000), a unified theory of first, second and third language learning (Hufeisen and Neuner 2001), the ELP's intercultural component and learning how to learn (Little and Lazenby-Simpson 2003, including a presentation of parts from the LAP ELP), and school-wide quality assurance (Muresan 2002). Crucially, CoE has also developed and is currently implementing a strategic plan in relation to the ELP for the period of 2005-2007 (cf. Joseph Sheils' address to the Madrid pan-European ELP seminar in Little 2004c, p.20).

The EU has an instrumental role to play in supporting the continuation of research on the ELP and further dissemination efforts, and continuing to promote good practice in language education. For all countries which are EU members, the endorsement of an effort of any kind by the EU has particular importance, since the EU is also a law-making body which affects their lives on a day-to-day basis. Besides that, the views on LL expressed by the EU are not substantially different in philosophy to those of the CoE, and EU institutions seem to view LL as essential for a productive, unified, democratic and peaceful place, in a Europe where the understanding of its young citizens (Eurobarometer 2001; European Commission 1995; 1997; 2001b; 2003), and social inclusion are prized and actively sought after (European Parliament 1998). Recently the EU offered added support to the ELP project by recognising the importance of the ELP as a pedagogical tool and an instrument of quality development in LL, by basing the language section of its Europass curriculum vitae on CEF levels. This can only signify positive EU intentions for further co-operation with the CoE. Besides, taking into account the degree of overlap in the membership of these two institutions, closer co-operation seems the only reasonable future strategy. This co-operation may also help minimise some potential funding concerns related to ELP development and dissemination, as the EU has much bigger funding capacities than the CoE.

Another important body influencing language policy in Europe is the Association of Language Testers of Europe (ALTE), which has lent its support through its contribution to CEF development in the form of the CEF 'can do' statements, on the basis of which the ELP descriptors of language competence of the checklists have been developed. The ALTE members have contributed to the pan-European recognisability of

CEF levels through the description of exam difficulty of the various examinations they hold around Europe in terms of CEF levels.

Last but not least of the major bodies involved in and affecting language policies across Europe is the OECD, through its PISA programme presented in section 2.2 above, with its special emphasis on LL, problem solving skills, student involvement (Willms 2003), and life-long learning (Artelt, Baumert, Julius-McElvany, and Peschar 2003).

6.10. Instead of a conclusion

Ending this thesis, it is my hope that I have managed to convey to the reader an objective and comprehensive overview of the effect of the ELP on Irish post-primary education as it was evidenced in this project. Although the predominantly positive effect on the perceived motivation and enthusiasm of learner and teacher participants is something which is difficult to convey exhaustively in the limited space afforded by a doctoral thesis, I hope I have been able to communicate some of the complex realities of the settings in which this project took place, and the ways in which those realities were affected by the use the ELP. The reader may wish to supplement his or her understanding of these realities by browsing through the extensive appendices, and the additional material (videos, photographs, presentations, etc.) found on the ELP SN site (CLCS 2003a).

Prior to the beginning of the project, I was able to see the positive effects of the LAP ELP in some of the classes which participated in the first empirical evaluation of the LAP ELP. This made me decide to employ research instruments which would be slightly biased against finding positive results (cf. relevant discussion in Chapters 3 and 4). Despite this, the findings yielded by all research instruments were overwhelmingly positive. Furthermore, what I witnessed during this project reinforced my firm belief in the subversive potential bundled into an ELP model like the one examined herein (Lenz 2004; Little 2005a), which is explicitly informed by principles of learner autonomy.

Such an ELP model appears to me to offer the ideal vehicle for the standards-based reform and benchmarking which many educationalists agree is needed for Irish post-primary education. Indeed, I think that a number of the things mentioned in this

thesis might apply to most if not all other educational settings I could think of and/or have taught in, both in Ireland and in Greece.

Widespread use of the ELP in Irish post-primary education would promote good practice and rectify some problems associated with the current curricula and the practices through which they are mediated to learners. If supported and implemented appropriately, it would also promote a reversal of the currently prevailing curriculum fragmentation.

Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the findings seem to indicate that it is a good idea to promote a review and recasting of current post-primary curricula in CEF/ELP terms. Such a process would inform and be informed by the proposed development of an overarching language policy, and make Irish post-primary language education internationally transparent, comparable and compatible with other LL environments by means of the CEF levels it incorporates, with Europass and by extension the EU and its common market, and in the long run would have important positive repercussions for Irish language education and the competitiveness and welfare of Irish citizens.

On the basis of the findings of this thesis, it seems that the time is more than ripe to commence further actions structured and informed by the LAP ELP. In my opinion, Irish bodies shaping language policy are presented with a rare chance to proactively initiate a principled paradigm shift (Lumpe 1999) in Irish language education, exploring the potential of a pedagogical tool which has been found, statistically as well qualitatively, to have an effect which could be characterised as transformative (cf. Cranton 1994), rather than resign themselves to permanently reactive crisis-driven policy making (Cizec and Ramaswamy 1999), potentially vulnerable to educational faddisms (Slavin 1999). The choice is in our hands.

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Introduction to the appendices

Data-elicitation appendix and ELP Appendix

The appendices to this thesis are divided into three categories. The first category is the shortest one and contains only Appendices A and O. Appendix A contains the data-elicitation instruments employed in the research project in the form they were administered in the main part of the project. Appendix O contains the Appendix of the LAP ELP and it is offered in order to familiarise the reader with the format of the ELP model examined (cf. discussion in section 2.4.4). Appendices A and O consist of thirty-two and nineteen pages only, and since they constitute integral parts of the thesis they are presented in printed as well as electronic format, whereas the rest of the appendices are presented only in electronic format on the DVD-ROM which accompanies this thesis.

Appendix A: Data elicitation instruments

Appendix A presents the data-elicitation instruments of the research project documented in this thesis in the form they were administered. Pages three to sixteen contain questionnaires and the related researcher's narrative. More specifically, the SDT-based composite questionnaire (Appendix A, pp.3-7) corresponds to questionnaires 'a1' and 'b1' (the same indexing rules have been applied to the rest of the appendices; cf. presentation of Appendix H below). The reason why it had to be indexed twice is that it was administered twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the project (administration rounds a) and b) respectively). By the same token, the LAP-based questionnaire has been indexed as a2 (Appendix A, pp.8-11) and b2 (Appendix A, pp.12-4) respectively. The end-of-year open-ended questionnaire which was embedded in the LAP-based questionnaire during its second administration was indexed as questionnaire b2.5 (Appendix A, pp.15-6).

The remainder of Appendix A contains more qualitatively-oriented data-elicitation instruments: the semi-scripted scenario employed in the interview with sub-samples of the learner population of every class (Appendix A, p.17, cf. section 3.9.5), the semi-scripted scenario employed in the interview with teacher participants (Appendix A,

p.18, cf. section 3.9.5), as well as the semi-scripted scenario employed in one interview with two learners following a trans-national placement during which the ELP was used (Appendix A, pp.19-20, cf. section 3.9.5). Appendix A also contains the monthly teacher report forms (Appendix A, pp.21-7, cf. section 3.9.6), and the 'end-of-year reflections on the ELP' form which all teacher participants filled in at the end of the project (Appendix A, pp.28-30, cf. section 3.9.7). Lastly, the 'learning progress & ELP use checklist' which had been developed by the ELP SN in spring 2003 is included here. Although it was not used in the data collection proper, some of the teacher participants used it with their project classes as a way of tracking ELP effectiveness in a class at a glance. More specifically, some teacher participants mentioned how they used this tool in their classes, while some other participants explained how they photocopied it and used it together with their pupils as a quick reference tool. Thus, this checklist has been included here in order to facilitate a more complete understanding of what happened in the project classes which used it.

The reader may wish to read Appendix A in tandem with Appendices H and I which among other data contain the different items found in these elicitation instruments indexed through the names/index numbers and codes they were given when coded for statistical analysis (cf. relevant sections on Appendices H and I below). In this way, each piece of information contained in the other appendices and in the main body of this thesis can be easily linked to the instrument through which it was elicited.

Qualitative data appendices

The second family of appendices to this thesis is qualitatively oriented. It contains the majority of qualitative findings of the project. The first four appendices are related to the teacher participants and two more are related to the learner participants.

Appendix B: Monthly teacher reports

Appendix B amounts to 311 pages. It contains the transcripts of the monthly progress reports submitted by teacher participants. These reports (as in EE1) served different purposes: first, to make the researcher aware of the perspective of the teachers on what

was happening in the project classes on a monthly basis; second, to help teachers to reflect more on their teaching practice and on the challenges their classes had to meet in order to become more effective; and third, to identify common concerns among teacher participants which could then be used as issues for discussion in some ELP SN meetings and/or teacher-training seminars on how to use the ELP effectively. Indeed, four meetings of the network dealt with some of the challenges teachers mentioned they were facing, and four were primarily devoted to presentations by the teachers themselves of various highly successful activities which took place in their project classes. All the above was made possible through the use of various section headings in the reports which facilitated reflection (cf. Appendix A, pp.21-7).

The reports have been alphabetically indexed according to teacher pseudonym and further sorted by chronological order. For instance, Brendan is the first teacher, when teachers' pseudonyms are sorted in alphabetical order. Hence, his reports were indexed first. He taught two project classes, so he had to write two reports each month. At times, the reports on both were written together in one text. The first report is indexed as 'classes 8 & 9, school 6, #1'. This means that it is a report on both classes 8 and 9 of school 6, and it is the first report on file for these two classes. The same system is applied throughout the thesis and its appendices to facilitate cross-referencing.

At the end of the project, teachers were asked to write a semi-structured essay containing their summative reflections on their experience using the ELP for one full school year. This essay was entitled 'end-of-year reflections'. Since this essay was structured through the use of headings the teachers had to respond to which had a lot in common with the monthly reports, it is included in Appendix B after the last monthly report for each class. Thus, 'classes 8 & 9, school 6, #E' signifies the end-of-year reflective essay which is related to the classes mentioned above.

Appendix C: ELP feedback to teachers

Appendix C contains the feedback notes I sent to teacher participants following a class observation (cf. section 3.9.4). It comprises 114 pages and contains my field-notes and observations related to each visit. The texts contained in this appendix are faithful to the originals, with the exception that any names which would reveal the identity of project

participants, schools, learners, etc. have been weeded out or changed to the relevant pseudonyms and/or index numbers employed in the thesis for confidentiality reasons.

Appendix D: Transcripts of teacher interviews

Appendix D contains the broad transcripts of interviews with teacher participants and it consists of 141 pages (cf. section 3.9.4). Owing to the fact that most of the qualitative data gathered up to the time the interviews took place showed rather strongly positive reactions to the ELP, the discourse I opted to employ throughout the interviews on the one hand loosely followed the interview agenda, but on the other hand tried to elicit any aspects of ELP use or parts of the LAP ELP model the interviewees found problematic. I made this choice as I was conscious of the fact that this was a rare opportunity to use the project findings in order to examine not only how well the ELP worked out for the project participants in its current form, but also how it might be further modified to become an even more flexible and effective tool for language learning in Irish post-primary education.

Naturally the strategy elaborated above had repercussions for the coding technique used in the analysis of findings collected in the interviews. The coding employed was a mixture of 'grounded theory/in-vivo coding, whereby coding develops and theory gets formed on the grounds of the developing data' and 'classical content analysis, whereby texts are coded to known themes', i.e. the preset question headings of the interview agenda (Ryan and Bernard 2003, pp. 278-9 & 282-3).

Appendix E: European Language Portfolio 'End-of-year reflections' meeting

Appendix E consists of 25 pages which contain the transcript of the 'end-of-year' meeting held on Tuesday, 4th May 2004. This was the concluding meeting of the monthly support meetings for the school year 2003-04, and it also marked the end of the ELP SN meetings which were connected to this research project. The rationale behind it was to enable teacher participants to take part in an open discussion on how the ELP worked out for them throughout the year. The agenda of the meeting followed the structure of the 'end-of-year reflections' essay which each teacher had to submit on that day. It was hoped that through the meeting, teachers and researchers would be able to summarise their reflections on the

year to each other, and further reflect on how the knowledge they gained during the year could inform their teaching practice in the future. Again, the discourse employed aimed to bring to the foreground challenges faced and solutions employed. This resulted in a big part of the meeting being devoted to the things which seemed to present particular difficulties for the teacher and learner participants (cf. section 3.9.7), rather than to the things which worked out well. I hoped that the participants would be encouraged to further express such perceived challenges and difficulties in the supportive environment of the meeting, without any inhibition they may have had when reflecting on their experience on their own in written form. On the whole, this plan worked out well, as can be seen from the transcript of the meeting proceedings.

Appendix F: Learner-produced material

Appendix F is the largest of the appendices to this thesis and comprises a big selection of non-vetted learner-produced samples from various ELPs. The 1,961 samples of the appendix also appear on the ELP SN site (cf. section 3.9.8). Most of these are picture images in Jpeg format, and they represent parts of learners' ELP dossiers. Additionally, a few samples taken from language biographies and language passports from every project class were included. These were mostly submitted for inclusion in the site by the winners of the second ELP competition (cf. following section).

The material in the appendix is indexed according to participating class and learner. The indexing technique employed in this appendix differs from the one employed for the rest of the appendices. The actual names of the learners who produced the material are supplied. This state of affairs was necessitated by the fact that the vast majority of learners who submitted material for the project site asked for their names to appear on the site. As a result, the names of learners are already in the public domain, and if we had replaced the names here with learner numbers from the project database, then any reader could immediately identify any learners who have been individually cited in the thesis by juxtaposing the thesis and the project site.

Appendix G: Learner interviews

Appendix G contains the broad transcripts of interviews with some of the learner participants and it consists of 233 pages (cf. section 3.9.4). As already mentioned in Chapter 3, it was decided at the piloting phase of the project that three learners would be interviewed per class: the learner who used the ELP best/most effectively, the learner who had the most original idea related to language learning, and the learner who exhibited the greatest achievement/improvement in language learning through the course of the year. However, in the January 2005 meeting of the ELP SN, some of the teacher participants expressed their apprehension about the procedure through which these three learners would be chosen in every class. They were particularly apprehensive about two aspects of this procedure: the amount of time it would take to vote for or select those three learners, and how the criteria for the vote or selection procedure could be made fair, easy to use and transparent to the whole class.

The solution to this predicament presented itself shortly afterwards when Authentik Language Learning Resources Ltd. announced their sponsorship of the second ELP competition. The competition involved prizes for each class corresponding to the three categories mentioned above, as well as an overall prize for the two first categories. There was no overall prize set for the third category as it was felt that it would not be possible to compare the degree of improvement in language learning across classes, given the variety of project class types and settings. The competition was subsequently announced to the project classes and they were asked to pick the three class prize-winners themselves under the guidance of their teachers. Samples from all prize-winners' work was sent to Trinity College, where the overall winners for the first two categories were selected. As it happened, some of the classes did not select winners for all three categories, while some classes declared a draw between two learners on one category. This led to a state of affairs whereby each class selected from two to four prize-winners.

Shortly after this I began to interview the learners who had been voted/selected as prize-winners. Out of 52 prize-winners, I was able to interview 48. Four were absent from their schools on the day I conducted the interviews and owing to time constraints I was not able to schedule an extra visit to their school. Since all classes were represented in the interviews by at least two learners, this situation was deemed satisfactory.

Quantitative data appendices

The third family of appendices to this thesis consists of the quantitative appendices. They are related to the learner participants in the project, and they depict different aspects of their responses to the various questionnaires already mentioned. In a way, these appendices are designed to reconstruct the SPSS 12.0 database which resulted from the codification of the findings. In order to make the appendices more compact and accessible to readers without a substantial statistical background, no additional variables which resulted from recalculation through 'z-scoring' (standard scoring) are included here. The same is true for 'weights' applied to certain calculations. Thus, the variables included in the discussion which follows are only the ones that are of 'general' or 'basic' nature, and not the ones that were artefacts created to facilitate more salient statistical inferences and comparisons. Naturally, whenever z-scoring (and/or 'weighting') was applied to a variable/calculation in a specific point in the thesis, this is explicitly stated in the text and summaries of relevant recalculated values are supplied (cf. procedures for 'safe weighting' described in de Vaus 2002, pp.160-5; Miller, Acton, Fullerton, and Maltby 2002, pp.94-5).

An additional measure employed in order to curb the length of the quantitative appendices was that no charts were included for the four 'cross-tabulation' appendices (cf. presentation of Appendices K-N below), as that would inflate each appendix by at least 715 pages, without any equivalent information benefit. As an exception to this rule, charts were included only in Appendix J (cf. relevant discussion below).

Appendix H: SPSS data dictionary of project variables

Appendix H contains the 'data dictionary' of the project variables which resulted from the codification of:

- demographic information related to the participants;
- the responses of the project participants to various items in the data-elicitation instruments which could be quantitatively codified and analysed;
- statistical computation rules employed.

More specifically, Appendix H amounts to 237 pages which contain information on how each variable was indexed in the database in accordance with the 'native' SPSS format. Information supplied includes the names/index numbers and codes each variable was given when coded for statistical analysis. An example presented in Table 4.1, which is replicated and discussed below.

```
a1.1.3 (33) Why do I do my course work? Because it's fun a.
    Measurement Level: Ordinal
    Column Width: 8  Alignment: Right
    Print Format: F8
    Write Format: F8
    Missing Values: 4 thru 9

          Value    Label

              0    Not at all true
              1    Not very true
              2    Sort of true
              3    Very true
              4 M  Not applicable
              7 M  No response
              8 M  I am not sure
              9 M  Absent
```

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..**1: Data dictionary variable summary for variable 'a1.1.3'.**

Thus Table 4.1 offers the summary of a variable named 'a1.1.3'. The 'a1' part in its title signifies that it resulted from the codification of round a) administration of questionnaire '1' (i.e. the SDT composite questionnaire). Furthermore, the '1.3' part in the title shows that this variable represents the codification of the third item in the first section of that questionnaire. The number 33 that is given in parentheses tells us that this is the 33rd variable (out of 914 'basic' ones) in the database. Following that, we see a 'variable label' which in this case contains the question contained in this item of the questionnaire and the letter corresponding to the round of administration in question. This variable's measurement level is ordinal; i.e. the possible answers to this item can be ranked from

smaller to bigger (Norušis 1998, p..60-1). 'Column width' and 'alignment' both relate to how SPSS presents the labels which depict actual responses in their data cells; these attributes are of no further interest. The 'print' and 'write' formats again relate to data presentation. However, they also show what level of detail was deemed necessary for a given variable. For instance the level of detail here is F8, which signifies that the possible values this variable can take are integers with no decimal places. F8.2 would denote that possible values are numbers with two decimal places, etc. Below that one finds what possible values have been declared as 'missing'. Missing values are defined as all values which will not be included in any statistical calculation, unless a specific computation algorithm instructs the program to do so. In this project I felt it might be of interest to differentiate between different missing values. For this reason, categories of missing values were set up. The numbers related to these categories were kept uniform throughout the project, though some variables were related to questionnaire items which could generate more missing values than others. In the case of variable 'a1.1.3', all values from 4 'thru' (sic) 9 are considered missing. Below that one can see the actual values this variable can take, and the labels which correspond to those values. Thus, valid answers range from zero to three, denoting the order of suggested answers found in the questionnaire, which range from 'not at all true' to 'very true'. Below that we can see possible missing values for this variable. Four denotes that the question contained in this questionnaire item might not have been applicable to a specific person or class. Seven denotes that there was no response to this item. Eight denotes that a respondent may have written something next to this item signifying his/her uncertainty as to which possible value best depicted his/her feelings, or may have circled/underlined more than one option. Nine denotes that the respondent was absent from class when this item was administered.

Further to the above, it has to be observed that not all variables had such elaborate structures, since not all variables actually had missing values or indeed had so many possible values in general. For instance, gender streaming, which is indexed as 'sexstrea', had no missing values as we knew in advance whether a respondent came from an 'all-boys', an 'all-girls', or a co-educational school. Thus this variable could take only three

different values: 0 for co-educational, 1 for all-boys, and 2 for all-girls (cf. Appendix H, p.4).

In the case of values in the 'data dictionary' which had to remain confidential, such as school location names, I manually weeded them out and replaced them with XXX or something similar.

Furthermore, this data dictionary contains some variables which are preceded by the letter 'c'. This means that they represent the balance between the beginning and end-of-year administration rounds for a particular item. Thus, c1.1.3 has been computed by subtracting a1.1.3 from b1.1.3, when both a1.1.3 and b1.1.3 have been valid. This means that c1.1.3 has been calculated only for learners who were present in both administrations of questionnaire 1 and gave a valid answer on both occasions. This latter computing rule protects us from comparing a1.1.3 and b1.1.3 on unequal terms.

An example of how this rule operates is the following: In a class consisting of thirty learners, twenty-nine learners may have participated in both administrations. However, that does not mean that the same learner who was absent from the first administration was also absent from the second. As a result, through the application of the rule presented above, we make sure that we examine comparable constructs, i.e. the answers of the same learner population at the beginning and at the end of the year. In this example we would be able to draw a salient conclusion on whether we can make a comparison based on twenty-nine learners (which would be the correct procedure if the same student was absent on both occasions), or based on twenty-eight learners (which would be the correct procedure if a different learner was absent from each administration).

If the above situation held for variable 'c1.1.3' described above, it would allow us to draw statistical inferences on whether respondents perceive their reasons behind doing their course-work as more, less or approximately equally fun at the end of the year in relation to what they did at the beginning of the year. 'More fun' would have been indicated by a positive c1.1.3 value, 'less fun' by a negative c1.1.3 value, and 'approximately equally fun' by a zero c1.1.3 value (cf. further variable-specific discussion of findings from the questionnaires in section 4.4.2).

In the case of variables which depict scales of questionnaire items such as the 'Relative Autonomy Index' of SRQ-A and its component scales discussed in section

3.9.2, any SPSS syntax rule which has contributed to the computation of an aggregate variable is presented in the 'Label' section of that variable. In this way readers who are familiar with the SPSS statistical package will be able to see clearly – and thus be enabled to pass judgment on the validity of – the rule through which each variable was calculated.

Appendix I: Variable 'descriptives'

Appendix I contains a short version of the numerical parts of the 'descriptives', i.e. the descriptive statistics, related to the basic project variables. It consists of 45 pages. Although box-plots, scatter-plots, scatter-plot matrices, and histograms were also calculated for those variables for which it was statistically appropriate, the relevant charts are not contained here for reasons of brevity. However, at the time these graphic tests were generated, their results were used to:

- weed out miscoded data;
- make first overview comparisons of responses to different questionnaire items;
- make first decisions on the relative appropriacy and reliability of further analysis avenues followed for each case;
- identify 'outlier cases' and try to identify the cause behind seemingly aberrant responses within as well as across variables, etc.

For each variable presented, not all of the descriptive statistics contained in the Appendix can be analysed meaningfully. Thus each variable is presented in one line which contains its 'label' (cf. section 4.3), its 'N', i.e. the number of respondents for whom this variable has a valid non-missing value, the minimum and maximum values which have been given for this variable by respondents, the mean of those values, i.e. their arithmetic average, and lastly the standard deviation of the valid values for this variable, i.e. a measure of how dispersed these values are in relation to the mean. This measure has to be treated with caution and not interpreted at face value in its current form, since these standard deviations are not *standardised* and thus comparisons between different variables can only be valid for variables which are measured on the basis of the

same scale. Of course, such a condition applies for all the variables which belong to the same section of a questionnaire (cf. discussion of findings in section 4.4).

Appendix J: General basic numeric variable 'frequencies'

Appendix J is the biggest quantitative appendix. It contains the frequencies of responses given that correspond to all the basic numeric variables of the quantitative database. The variables are presented in the order in which they appear in the database and/or thematically clustered to facilitate quick comparisons. Only variables which were amenable to numeric coding are presented, as a presentation of 'string' (i.e. text-based) variable frequencies would be meaningless. A quick comparison between Appendix J and the data dictionary of the thesis (Appendix H) shows which variables have not been included here.

In 1,180 pages, Appendix J is divided into two parts. The first part contains the frequency tables broken down according to frequency, percentage and valid percentage of every response option, whereas the second part contains the frequency bar charts broken down according to frequency only. This arrangement was deemed preferable, as it enables the reader to browse through a more visual or more numerical medium at will. Following the advice of Norušis, I used bar charts and avoided all use of pie-charts in the thesis and appendices, to facilitate quicker and more accurate comparisons (2003, p.82).

Some of these frequency tables have already been presented in section 3.5 in relation to the sample employed in the project, whereas a selection of some more tables is discussed in the general discussion of findings arranged according to data elicitation instrument (cf. section 4.4).

Appendix K: Basic cross-tabulations: all basic numeric variables BY class index number

Appendix K is the first of four appendices which contain data that resulted from the cross-tabulation of the values of two variables. Cross-tabulations depict how different observed values in one variable tend to vary in connection to different observed values of another variable. Cross-tabulation as a procedure can enable us to make inferences on how statistically related two different variables are, when used in conjunction with the

chi-square test of independence, etc. (Miller et al. 2002) (cf. general discussion of findings in Chapters 4 and 5).

Appendix K consists of 407 pages of cross-tabulations of the values of all basic numeric variables BY (sic) the values of class index number. The appendix aims to offer an overview of how the values of different variables may have varied between different classes. It was hypothesised that within-class trends in variation would be strong, and that between-class trends would be affected in similar ways between the two administration rounds. In very broad terms, if, for instance, such between-class trends were found to have strong commonalities, then we could infer that the ELP tends to have an effect which spans different class types in Irish post-primary language education. If between-class trend changes exhibited large differences, we could try and tease out the characteristics of classes where the ELP use/effect has been optimal and where it seems to have been problematic.

As with all other appendices which contain cross-tabulation data in this thesis, only the cross-tabulation tables are supplied, and not additional statistics, related variable 'descriptives', charts, etc. These are supplied in the main text of the thesis when appropriate.

Appendix L: Basic cross-tabulations: all basic numeric variables BY sex

Appendix L replicates the system of Appendix M in every respect apart from the fact that it cross-tabulates all basic numeric variables by the gender of the respondents. In the vast majority of research conducted in the behavioural sciences, as well as in all the projects that this project seems to build on, it is standard practice to examine whether the behaviours or answers of respondents vary between genders. Reviews of behavioural research focussing on gender seem to indicate that genders tend to somewhat 'filter knowledge' (Fontana and Frey 2003, p.82). For instance female respondents have tended to value communality of effort and success more than male respondents (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, and Kaplan 2003, p.107), and to attribute success more to luck than to their ability (Williams and Burden 1997, pp.106-7), although they generally tend to be more self-determined (Vallerand, Fortier, and Guay 1997, p.1171). However, recent research shows that gender differences in attitudes have started to become less marked and/or less

consistent than they used to be (e.g. Wigfield and Tonks 2002). This change may signify that large gender differences in observed attitudes and responses may in fact be the result of a tendency of both sexes to live up to their stereotypical roles. Appendix L amounts to 370 pages which attempt to depict the commonalities and differences in the responses of the two sexes to the questionnaire items related to the basic numeric variables.

Appendix M: Basic cross-tabulations: all basic numeric variables BY target language

Appendix M offers cross-tabulation data of numeric variables by target language studied in 381 pages. This represents a comparison which was built into the research design of this project in order to tease out whether learners of different languages tend to exhibit different attitudes to the languages themselves, the ELP, their teachers, etc. Building on my own previous teaching experience, I consider this issue to be of particular importance, taking into account how learner attitudes toward a language can shape their learning experiences and have snowballing effects on classroom climate, etc.

Appendix N: Basic cross-tabulations: all basic numeric variables BY class year

Appendix N offers cross-tabulation data of numeric variables by class year in 417 pages. It seeks to depict in summary any effects class year may have on learners' attitudes/motivations.

Quantitative data appendices: addendum

As mentioned in Chapter 3, some further comparisons which should in theory be possible as a result of the research design employed were subsequently abandoned owing to a variety of reasons, mainly having to do with inadequate statistical power (cf. section 3.5). In the two cases described below, however, the reasons were more complex than that.

First it was impossible to draw conclusions on how the existence of choice between TLs affected the learners. It seems that 'choice' was offered in a variety of ways that extended from offering no choice, offering choice for a year, drawing lots to allocate learners to different languages, etc., while sometimes the presence of choice was actively moderated by the families of the learners, who seemed to favour choosing for a learner the same TL older siblings may have studied in the past, so that help from a more

knowledgeable peer would be at hand if needed. This state of affairs was described quite eloquently in the majority of the learner and teacher interviews.

The situation was also vague as regards most comparisons based on ability streaming. Again, different schools followed widely different practices. Examples ranged from not streaming classes, to having first-year classes unstreamed and then streaming classes on the basis of end-of-year results, etc. (cf. Chapter 5 for class-specific discussions of effects of such practices).

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APPENDIX A

DATA ELICITATION INSTRUMENTS

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Trinity College Project on Using the ELP in Irish Post-Primary Schools

Name: _____ Class: _____

( ) Boy or Girl ( ) Date: _____

Thank you for helping us with our research project. We are interested in finding out about how different students use the ELP to make their learning better. There is no such thing as a right or wrong answer, so you can put down what you think or feel honestly. The information you give will not be passed on to your teacher. When you have finished filling in the questionnaire, please give it to the researcher.

For each of the following items, please underline the phrase that you feel closer corresponds to your thoughts.

e.g. 0. I like ice-cream a lot.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

A. Why do I do my course-work (class-work and homework)?

1. Because I want the teacher to think I'm a good student.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

2. Because I'll get in trouble if I don't.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

3. Because it's fun.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

4. Because I will feel bad about myself if I don't do it.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

5. Because I want to learn new things.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

6. Because that's what I'm supposed to do.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

7. Because I enjoy doing my course-work.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

8. Because it's important to me to do my course-work.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

B. Why do I try to answer hard questions in class?

9. Because I want the other students to think I'm smart.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

10. Because I feel ashamed of myself when I don't try.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

11. Because I enjoy answering hard questions.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

12. Because that's what I'm supposed to do.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

13. To find out if I'm right or wrong.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

14. Because it's fun to answer hard questions.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

15. Because it's important to me to try to answer hard questions in class.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

16. Because I want the teacher to say nice things about me.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

C. Why do I try to do well in school?

17. Because that's what I'm supposed to do.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

18. So that my teachers will think I'm a good student
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

19. Because I enjoy doing my school work well.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

20. Because I will get in trouble if I don't do well.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

21. Because I'll feel really bad about myself if I don't do well.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

22. Because it's important to me to try to do well in school.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

23. Because I will feel really proud of myself if I do well.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

24. Because I might get a reward if I do well.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

D. Why do you not make fun of another child for making a mistake?

25. Because if I do, I'll get in trouble.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

26. Because I think it's important to be nice to others.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

27. Because other kids won't like me if I do that.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

E. Why do you try to be nice to other kids?

28. Because if I don't, other kids won't like me.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

29. Because I'll get in trouble if I don't.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

30. Because I think it's important to be a nice person.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

F. Why would you help someone who is in distress?

31. Because I think it's important to give help when it's needed.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

32. Because I could get in trouble if I didn't.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

33. Because I want people to like me.
very true sort of true not very true not at all true

G. General feelings

34. I feel confident in my ability to learn the material in this course.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

35. I feel able to use the ELP effectively.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

36. I am able to achieve my goals in this course.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

37. I feel able to do well in this course.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

38. I feel that my teacher offers me choices and options.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

39. I feel understood by my teacher.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

40. My teacher conveyed confidence in my ability to do well in the course.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

41. My teacher encouraged me to ask questions.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

42. My teacher listens to how I would like to do things.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

43. My teacher tries to understand how I see things before suggesting a new way to do things.
Very true Sort of true Not very true Not at all true

H. Aspirations

In this section, you will find a number of life goals, presented one at a time, and we ask you three questions about each goal. (a) How important is this goal to you? (b) How likely is it that you will attain this goal in your future? and (c) How much have you already achieved this goal thus far? Please use the following scale in answering each of the three questions about each life goal.

not at all = 0 **moderately = 1** **very = 2**

e.g. Life-goal: To work for the betterment of society.
0. How important is this to you? _____
0. How likely is it that this will happen in your future? _____
0. How much have you already attained this goal? _____

Life-goal: To be a very wealthy person.
1. How important is this to you?_____
2. How likely is it that this will happen in your future? _____
3. How much have you already attained this goal? _____

Life-goal: To learn new things.
4. How important is this to you? _____
5. How likely is it that this will happen in your future? _____
6. How much have you already attained this goal? _____

Life-goal: To have good friends that I can count on.
7. How important is this to you? _____
8. How likely is it that this will happen in your future? _____
9. How much have you already attained this goal? _____

Life-goal: To have people comment often about how attractive I look.

10. How important is this to you? _____
11. How likely is it that this will happen in your future? _____
12. How much have you already attained this goal? _____

Life-goal: To be famous.

13. How important is this to you? _____
14. How likely is it that this will happen in your future? _____
15. How much have you already attained this goal? _____

Life-goal: To help others improve their lives.

16. How important is this to you? _____
17. How likely is it that this will happen in your future? _____
18. How much have you already attained this goal? _____

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date:_____

Thank you for helping us with our research project. We are interested in finding out about how different students use the ELP to make their learning better. There is no such thing as a right or wrong answer, so you can put down what you think or feel honestly. The information you give will not be passed on to your teacher. When you have finished filling in the questionnaire, please give it to the researcher.

SECTION 1

What do you enjoy or not enjoy in your language course?

For each item below, tick ✓ the box that best corresponds to how often you do each activity, choosing between ***At least once a lesson, Once a week, Never, Other (please specify):_____.***
Tell us whether you ***like*** *or* ***don't like*** *this activity by ticking the* ***Yes*** *or* ***No*** *box alongside.*

Activity	How often do you do this activity in class?				Do you like doing it?/ Would you like to do it?	
	At least once a lesson	Once a week	Never	OTHER: Please specify	Yes	No
Working with the textbook	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Listening to tapes	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Watching a video	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working at the computer	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working in the language lab	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Listening to the teacher talk in Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Writing in Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Speaking in Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Reading Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Learning things off by heart (when the teacher tells me)	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Learning things off by heart (even when the teacher doesn't tell me)	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Looking things up in a dictionary	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Doing Italian homework	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Looking at videos or photos of Italy	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working with a partner in class	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Doing homework with a friend	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Giving answers in class when the teacher asks questions	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working in a small group	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Having to be quiet in class	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Speaking or reading out loud in front of the class	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Other Activities- Please Specify: _____	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Other Activities- Please Specify: _____	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐

SECTION 2

What do you think about learning foreign languages?

For each statement below, tick ✓ the answer that says what you think.

	Statements about learning languages	What do you think?
1.	Learning a foreign language is very difficult	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
2.	It is helpful when the teacher speaks in Italian in class as much as possible	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
3.	It is better not to say anything at all in Italian, rather than make mistakes	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
4.	The most important part of learning Italian is concentrating hard on grammar	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
5.	It is easier to read and write Italian than to speak and understand it	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
6.	It is easier to learn Italian than Irish	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
7.	Learning Italian is more difficult than learning other subjects at school	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
8.	You have to be really clever to learn Italian	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
9.	Intelligence is something you are born with and you cannot change it	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
10.	You need to do some learning outside class if you are going to be good at Italian	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree

SECTION 3

Do you think you put a lot of work into learning Italian?

Tick ✓ the boxes to tell us whether you usually, sometimes or never do the things described below.

	What some people do when they try to learn a language	Do you do this?
1.	I make an effort to think about what I've learned in Italian class	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
2.	If the teacher asks the class a question, I try to think of the right answer	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
3.	If I don't understand something we are learning in Italian class, I ask for help	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
4.	If I don't know the Italian word for something, I try to find out what it is	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
5.	I write down new Italian words in a notebook so that I can remember them	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
6.	I put as much effort as possible into doing my Italian homework	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
7.	When I get my Italian homework back, I look carefully at my mistakes and the teacher's comments	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
8.	When the teacher asks us, I make an effort to talk in Italian in class	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
9.	I try to learn things off by heart that I know will be useful	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
10.	I look for chances of speaking, reading or listening to Italian outside school (for example, meeting Italian students or tourists, watching satellite/cable TV, watching Italian films, surfing the Internet, etc.)	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never

SECTION 4

Do you have any reasons for wanting to learn Italian?

Put a tick ✓ in the box for all the reasons below which are true for you

	Reasons for learning Italian	**Tick if this is true for you**
1.	I think it's great to be able to speak another language	☐
2.	I want to learn Italian so that I can understand people when I go on holiday abroad	☐
3.	I like learning Italian	☐
4.	I'd love to have a good Italian accent	☐
5.	I want to be able to speak Italian so that I can show off in front of other people	☐
6.	I think it's fun to speak in Italian	☐
7.	I want to learn Italian so that I can use it as a secret code with friends	☐
8.	I wish I didn't have to learn Italian	☐
9.	My parents encourage me to learn Italian	☐
10.	I think that learning Italian is useful because I want to make friends with people from other countries	☐

If you have other reasons for wanting to learn Italian, please tell us:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date:_____

Thank you for helping us with our research project. We are interested in finding out about how different students use the ELP to make their learning better. There is no such thing as a right or wrong answer, so you can put down what you think or feel honestly. The information you give will not be passed on to your teacher. When you have finished filling in the questionnaire, please give it to the researcher.

SECTION 1

What do you enjoy or not enjoy in your language course?

For each item below, tick ✓ the box that best corresponds to how often you do each activity, choosing between ***At least once a lesson, Once a week, Never, Other (please specify):_____.***
Tell us whether you ***like*** *or* ***don't like*** *this activity by ticking the* ***Yes*** *or* ***No*** *box alongside.*

Activity	How often do you do this activity in class?				Do you like doing it?/ Would you like to do it?	
	At least once a lesson	Once a week	Never	OTHER: Please specify	Yes	No
Working with the textbook	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Listening to tapes	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Watching a video	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working at the computer	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working in the language lab	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Listening to the teacher talk in Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Writing in Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Speaking in Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Reading Italian	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Learning things off by heart (when the teacher tells me)	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Learning things off by heart (even when the teacher doesn't tell me)	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Looking things up in a dictionary	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Doing Italian homework	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Looking at videos or photos of Italy	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working with a partner in class	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Doing homework with a friend	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Giving answers in class when the teacher asks questions	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Working in a small group	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Having to be quiet in class	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Speaking or reading out loud in front of the class	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Other Activities- Please Specify: _____	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐
Other Activities- Please Specify: _____	☐	☐	☐		☐	☐

SECTION 2

What do you think about learning foreign languages?

For each statement below, tick ✓ the answer that says what you think.

	Statements about learning languages	What do you think?
1.	Learning a foreign language is very difficult	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
2.	It is helpful when the teacher speaks in Italian in class as much as possible	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
3.	It is better not to say anything at all in Italian, rather than make mistakes	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
4.	The most important part of learning Italian is concentrating hard on grammar	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
5.	It is easier to read and write Italian than to speak and understand it	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
6.	It is easier to learn Italian than Irish	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
7.	Learning Italian is more difficult than learning other subjects at school	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
8.	You have to be really clever to learn Italian	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
9.	Intelligence is something you are born with and you cannot change it	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree
10.	You need to do some learning outside class if you are going to be good at Italian	☐ I strongly agree ☐ I agree ☐ I'm not sure ☐ I don't agree ☐ I strongly disagree

SECTION 3

Do you think you put a lot of work into learning Italian?

Tick ✓ the boxes to tell us whether you usually, sometimes or never do the things described below.

	What some people do when they try to learn a language	Do you do this?
1.	I make an effort to think about what I've learned in Italian class	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
2.	If the teacher asks the class a question, I try to think of the right answer	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
3.	If I don't understand something we are learning in Italian class, I ask for help	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
4.	If I don't know the Italian word for something, I try to find out what it is	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
5.	I write down new Italian words in a notebook so that I can remember them	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
6.	I put as much effort as possible into doing my Italian homework	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
7.	When I get my Italian homework back, I look carefully at my mistakes and the teacher's comments	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
8.	When the teacher asks us, I make an effort to talk in Italian in class	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
9.	I try to learn things off by heart that I know will be useful	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never
10.	I look for chances of speaking, reading or listening to Italian outside school (for example, meeting Italian students or tourists, watching satellite/cable TV, watching Italian films, surfing the Internet, etc.)	☐ usually ☐ sometimes ☐ never

SECTION 4

Question 1: like/dislike

Question 2: usefulness of the ELP

Question 3: favourite and least favourite bits

Question 4: which skills? please tick ☑

- ☐ listening
- ☐ reading
- ☐ spoken interaction
- ☐ spoken production
- ☐ writing

Question 5: setting your own learning targets

Manolis's Narrative on Open-ended questions: Questionnaire 6 (found in section 4 of questionnaire 2B above)

---

1. Do you like working with the ELP in your *ITALIAN* class? If yes, tell us why. If no, tell us why not.
2. Do you think using the ELP might actually help you to learn *ITALIAN*? How? For example, using a diary helps you to plan and remember important events. Using a computer helps you to produce nice-looking documents or get information from the Internet. Using a mobile phone helps you to stay in touch with people. In what ways do you think using the ELP helps you to learn *ITALIAN*?
3. As you know, the ELP has three different sections: the Language Passport, the Language Biography, and the Dossier (where you store your own personal work). And there are different kinds of pages in these sections - pages where you set goals, pages where you write down things you have noticed about the *ITALIAN* language or *ITALIAN* culture, and so on. Tell us which particular bit of the ELP you like best, and why. And which bit do you like least of all, and why?
4. The ELP talks about five communicative skills: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. Which of these skills in particular have you been working on in your *ITALIAN* class? You can tick more than one skill.
5. In this class you have started setting your own learning targets through the ELP. Do you do this kind of thing - setting your own targets - in your other school subjects? Do you think it's a good idea to try to set your own learning targets like this? Why?

Agenda for ELP Learner Interview April-May 2004

1. Interview introduction: Provisional agenda given to the learner
2. Two minutes free for the learner to read through the agenda and ask questions.
3. The learner greets TCD and introduces him/herself.

Main Interview:

4. Do you like learning Irish/Italian/French/German/Spanish?
5. Do you like using the ELP in your course? Do you find it helpful? (Yes/No and why)
6. How do you usually use it?
7. How often?
8. How easy do you think it is to judge what you're good at in Irish/ Italian/ French/ German/ Spanish, and what you can do and can't do?
9. Do you think the ELP has helped you learn more Irish/Italian/French/German/Spanish than if you were not using it in your course? How can you tell?

A) Did it help you organise your learning better?
B) Did it help you understand your stronger and weaker points in language learning? What are they?
C) Do you think you know how to learn languages better now than what you did before? Can you prove it? (Please indicate: ELP pages that contain related information; your own intuitions; how you feel your accuracy and fluency in Irish/Italian/French/German/Spanish has changed, etc.)
D) From the five language skills contained in the ELP, which one(s) are you best at? What do you find hardest?
E) Do you think you can apply the organising and reflection skills used in the ELP in other things in your life? Where?

10. What will you try to achieve in your course this year? Do you think the ELP can help you achieve that? Yes/ No and How?
11. Do you think the ELP should change in any way to become more effective?
12. Do you think the ELP should be used by all the learners learning foreign languages in Ireland? Yes/No and Why?
13. If you were to give a message to other learners of foreign languages in relation to the ELP, what would that be?
14. What do you think makes a really good ELP?
15. What's your favourite subject in school and why?
16. Did you find this interview: very difficult/ somewhat difficult/ not very difficult/ not at all difficult.
17. Would you like to ask something?
18. Is it ok with you if parts of this interview are shown to other teachers/ learners who are thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time?

Thank you!

Manolis Sisamakis,
National Co-ordinator of the ELP Support Network
Centre for Language and Communication Studies
Trinity College Dublin

Agenda for ELP Teacher Interview April-May 2004

1. Interview introduction: Provisional agenda given to the teacher
2. Two minutes free for the teacher to read through the agenda and ask questions.
3. The teacher greets TCD and introduces him/herself.

Main Interview:

4. Do you like using the ELP in your course? Do you find it helpful? (Yes/No and why)
5. How do you usually use it and how often?
6. Do you think the ELP has helped your learners learn more Irish/Italian/French/ German/Spanish than if you were not using it in your course? How can you tell?
7. How easy do you think it is to judge if your learners are good at in Irish/ Italian/ French/ German/ Spanish, and what they can do and can't do? Does the ELP help in that? How?

A) Did it help them organise their learning better?
B) Did it help them understand their stronger and weaker points in language learning? How?
C) Do you think they know how to learn languages better now than what they did before? Can you prove it?
D) Do you think the ELP helped the learners become more reflective and autonomous? Y/N and why?
E) Do you think they can apply the organising and reflection skills used in the ELP in other things in their life? Where?
F) Do you think their motivational levels have been affected by the use of the ELP? How can you tell?
H) Are there any particular features of this class that may have affected your use of the ELP with them in a significant way?

8. Do you think the ELP should change in any way to become more effective?
9. Do you think the ELP should be used by all the language teachers in Ireland? Yes/No and Why?
10. What supportive actions do you think are needed for the teachers who are using the ELP?
11. Do you think your outlook towards teaching (and learning) languages has changed since you started using the ELP? Y/N and how?
12. If you were to give a message to other language teachers in relation to the ELP, what would that be?
13. What do you think makes a really good ELP?
14. Did you find this interview: very difficult/ somewhat difficult/ not very difficult/ not at all difficult.
15. Would you like to ask something?
16. Is it ok with you if parts of this interview are shown to other teachers who are thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time?

Thank you!

Manolis Sisamakis,
National Co-ordinator of the ELP Support Network
Centre for Language and Communication Studies
Trinity College Dublin

Agenda of the first ELP Interview with learners A & B from class 11, school 11 that was used in the interview following their trans-national placement on 26/9/2003

1. Interview introduction: Provisional agenda given to B and A
2. Two minutes free for them to read through the agenda and ask questions, if any (in German or English).
3. *David* introduces himself, his class (duration of the course so far: month the course started, approximate date of ELP introduction to this class).
4. A and B greet TCD and introduce themselves.

Main Interview:

5. Do you like using the ELP in your course? Do you find it helpful? (Yes/No and why)
6. How do you usually use it?
7. How often?
8. Do you think the ELP has helped you learn more German than if you were not using it in your course?

   A) Did it help you organise your learning better?
   B) Did it help you understand your stronger and weaker points in language learning?
   C) Do you think you know how to learn languages better now than what you did before?
   D) Do you think you can apply the organising and reflection skills used in the ELP in other things in your life? Where?

9. Did you like going abroad? Why? What did you like best? What did you like the least?
10. What did you find particularly interesting?
11. What do you think could be made better in such visits abroad?
12. Do you think more learners should be given the chance to go abroad on such trips? Why?
13. Would you like to go on another trip if you were given the chance? Why?
14. Do you think it is a good idea for learners that are learning a foreign language to visit a country where that language is the main language of communication? Why?
15. Do you think your knowledge of German is better now than before going to Austria? Can you prove it? (Please indicate: ELP pages that contain related information; your own intuitions; accuracy and fluency in German, etc.)
16. Did you use the ELP while you stayed in Austria?
17. How did you use it?
18. How often?
19. Do you think the ELP has helped you learn more German than if you would not have it with you?

    A) Did it help you organise your learning better?
    B) Did it help you understand your stronger and weaker points in language learning?
    C) Do you think you know how to learn languages better now than what you did before?

20. Did you use the supplementary *Learning Progress & ELP Use Checklist*? Did you find it helpful? Why?
21. What will you try to achieve in your course this year? Do you think the ELP can help you achieve that? Yes/ No How?

22. Do you think the ELP should change in any way to become more effective?
23. Do you think the ELP should be used by all the learners learning foreign languages in Ireland? Yes/No and Why?
24. Would you like to participate in a presentation of the ELP to other Irish learners and language teachers, mentioning your experience with it so far?
25. Is it ok with you if parts of this interview are shown to other teachers/ learners who are thinking of using the ELP in their classes for the first time?
26. Possible additional question(s) by *David*.
27. Did you find this interview: very difficult/ somewhat difficult/ not very difficult/ not at all difficult
28. Would you like to ask something? (B*x / A*y)

Thank you!

Manolis Sisamakis,
National Co-ordinator of ELP Support Network
Centre for Language and Communication Studies
Trinity College Dublin

Working with the European Language Portfolio 2003–04

[Empty] Teacher Evaluation Report [printed format]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the empirical evaluation of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) for Irish post-primary learners. One important strand of this evaluation is regular ongoing feedback from you on your experience of working with the ELP in a particular "ELP project class". The purpose of this report form is to provide a uniform framework for documenting teacher feedback on a regular basis. This will make it easier for us to analyse and compare the experiences of teachers in different classrooms.

We are grateful to you for taking the time to reflect and report on your experiences of working with the ELP. This will make it easier for us to develop and implement supportive actions for all the teachers that are currently using or will use the ELP in their classes.

We should like to assure you that your feedback will be treated in confidence, and that individual or institutional identities will not be revealed in any publications that arise from this empirical evaluation.

Please complete this report form **before the end of each month** and bring it along to the meeting (or e-mail/send it to Manolis Sisamakis if you are unable to attend).

(It is necessary to complete Section A below only on the first occasion.)

SECTION A	**Your name**	**Date**

Overview of your ELP project class –

year (e.g. 1st LCert.): number of lessons per week:

language of study: duration of each lesson:

ability level (mixed, upper, lower):

SECTION B	Your name	Date

Please give a detailed account of what you did with your class this term in relation to the ELP

Please describe how you think this helped your learners to

plan and organize their learning

set learning goals

Monitor and evaluate their learning

think about the target language

How well did things work for you this term? Please give examples

What problems, if any, did you experience?

What problems, if any, did your learners experience?

Additional comments or reflections/ notable occurrences

[Empty] Teacher Report Form [ELECTRONIC SIMPLIFIED FORMAT]

Section A

Name:

Date:

ELP Project Class

year:

language:

ability level:

no. of lessons per week:

lesson duration: Minutes

no. of learners:

Timetable:

Section B

Please give a detailed account of what you did with your class this month in relation to the ELP:

Please describe how you think this helped your learners to

plan and organize their learning:

set learning goals:

monitor and evaluate their learning:

think about the target language:

think about problems in learning:

How well did things work for you this month? Please give examples

What problems, if any, did you experience?

What problems, if any, did your learners experience?

Additional comments or reflections:

ELP Network Project 2003–04: Final Teacher Report Form
END-OF-YEAR REFLECTIONS

To be returned in person on the 4th of May

Section A

Name:

Date:

ELP Project Class

Year:

Language:

ability level:

no. of lessons per week:

lesson duration:

no. of learners:

End-of-year reflections

IMPORTANT NOTES:
A. If you are filling in this form manually rather than electronically, please feel free to use a separate sheet to record your reflections. To that effect, we have included below section numbers (in grey font) which you can use to avoid any misunderstanding. The electronic form expands automatically to fit its contents, once you start writing after the grey arrow.
B. All teachers that participate with two project classes are kindly requested to use the same form for both classes and clearly indicate in their text when one comment they make is applicable only to a specific class/ student/ group of students.

What differences has working with the ELP made to you as a <u>teacher</u> in relation to

planning (courses, lessons), time management S1▶

classroom management (organizing activities, groups, etc.) S2▶

use of the textbook and other teaching-learning materials S3▶

your personal view of the learning process S4▶

your view of how your learners are getting on in developing their L2 proficiency S5▶

What differences has working with the ELP made to your learners in relation to

interest, motivation, attitudes to learning	S6▶
development of skills in self-management (planning, monitoring, evaluating learning)	S7▶
development of L2 proficiency (overall proficiency levels, focus on particular skills)	S8▶

What do you think you gained from your participation in the project? What has been particularly helpful or less helpful?

S9►

What were your own and your classes feelings in relation to:

the questionnaire surveys S10►

classroom observations and related feedback S11►

teacher reports S12►

What type of support actions do you think are needed for the successful adoption of the ELP?

S13►

What particular difficulties did you experience this year?/ What challenges did you have to successfully meet?

S14►

On the basis of your experience using the ELP so far, do you think the model for learners in Irish post-primary education can be improved in any way?

S15►

Would you do something in a different way in relation to what you did this year, were you to use the ELP in a class like the one(s) that participated in this project?

S16►

What advice would you give to language teachers that have not yet used the ELP?

S17►

Further Comments:

S18►

Thank you for your time, effort and valued reflections,

Manolis Sisamakis
ELP Support Network Co-ordinator

Learning Progress & ELP Use Checklist

(Proposed frequency of use: approximately weekly) ..... TERM:	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE .....
Have we updated our language passports for this term?								
Have we set up and recorded our general aims for this term and our reflections on our learning?								
Have we used the skill checklists to record what we can do in French/ German/ Irish/ Italian/Spanish?								
Can we understand the vocabulary related to the items we have already ticked?								
Have we looked at and updated the Junior/ Leaving Certificate syllabus Card?								
Have we produced one or more items for our dossiers this week? (write number and type of items; e.g. texts, taped pronunciation exercises,								
Have we set and recorded a definite goal for this week?								
Have we written down the things we noticed about language and culture this week?								
Have we recorded any communication problems we had this week and how we solved them?								
Have we written down one method (system, technique, trick) we use to learn languages?								
Have we recorded the intercultural experiences we had this week (if any)?								
Have we filled in the section related to our heritage languages?								
Did we negotiate the topic/ activities/ method we used this week?								
Did we focus on at least one specific grammar point this week? If yes, which one?								

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..... TERM	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE .....
How much have we practised speaking (interaction/production), writing, reading, listening in Spanish/French/Irish/Italian/German this week?								
Spoken Interaction: How many minutes each one of us spoke on average per class?								
Spoken Production: How many times did we have to speak and for how long per class?								
Reading: Did we read an authentic text this week? If yes, write down the number of texts.								
Listening: Did we listen to any authentic material in Italian/French/Irish/Spanish/German this week?								
Writing: Did we write something in Italian/French/Irish/Spanish/German this week?								
How much did we use Irish/French/German/ Spanish/Italian in class this week? (e.g. always/ almost always/ half the time/ often/ very little)								
Have we learned something about ourselves this week? If yes, did we record it in the ELP?								

Learning Progress & ELP Use Checklist (continued)

Additional symbols you can use to fill in the checklist: — , ☺ , ☺ ☺ , ☺ ☺ ☺ / — , √ , √√ , √√√

—	= No
☺ or √	= Yes, with a lot of help
☺ ☺ or √√	= Yes, with a little help
☺ ☺ ☺ or √√√	= Yes, on my own

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APPENDIX O

ELP MODEL 10.2001
(for learners in Irish post-primary education)

ELP APPENDIX

Appendix
Aguisín

The following pages provide you with:

1. an English translation of My Checklist of Target Skills;
2. a photocopiable version of each page in the LANGUAGE BIOGRAPHY.

Gheobhaidh tú sna leathanaigh seo a leanas:

1. aistriúchán Béarla de Mo Sheicliosta de na Scileanna atá Uaim;
2. leagan inchóipeála de gach leathanach sa TAIFEAD TEANGA.

My general aims and reflections
Spriocanna agus machnaimh ghinearálta
Mes objectifs et réflexions généraux
Meine Lernziele und allgemeine Überlegungen
Reflexión sobre mis objetivos
I miei obiettivi e le mie riflessioni generali

Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache / Idioma / Lingua _____ ...../...../20.....

I am learning this language because / Tá mé ag foghlaim na teanga seo toisc / J'apprends cette langue parce que / Ich lerne diese Sprache aus folgenden Gründen / Estoy aprendiendo este idioma por las siguientes razones / Sto imparando questa lingua perché

In this language I want to be able to / Is iad na rudaí is mian liom a bheith in ann a dhéanamh sa teanga seo / Je veux pouvoir faire les choses suivantes dans cette langue / Ich habe folgende Lernziele in dieser Sprache / En este idioma quiero ser capaz de / In questa lingua voglio essere in grado di

Things I like doing in language class / Is iad na rudaí is maith liom a dhéanamh sa rang teanga / Ce que j'aime faire dans la classe de langue / Das macht mir Spass im Unterricht / Cosas que me gusta hacer en la clase de lengua extranjera / Cose che mi piace fare in una lezione di lingua

Things I am good at / Rudaí a dhéanaim go maith / Ce que je peux faire bien et facilement / Das kann ich gut / Cosas que me salen bien / Cose in cui sono brava/bravo

Things I find difficult / Rudaí a fhaighim deacair / Ce que je trouve difficile / Das finde ich schwierig / Cosas que encuentro difíciles / Cose che trovo difficili

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Listening

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Tá na spriocanna foghlama thíos bunaithe ar na scálaí léiriúcháin i gCreatlach Coiteann na hEorpa (© Comhairle na hEorpa) ach gur cuireadh in oiriúint iad do spriocanna curaclaim an Teastais Shóisearaigh agus na hArdteistiméireachta.

When you hear the language being spoken, what kinds of things can you understand? What do you want or need to be able to understand? Below is a checklist of listening skills, based on targets set out in the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabuses. You can use this checklist **(a)** to tick your next learning goal(s), and **(b)** to record how well you can perform each particular skill:

☆ if you can do this with *a lot of help* (e.g., from your teacher) date the first box;

☆☆ if you can do it with *a little help* date the second box;

☆☆☆ if you can do it *on your own* date the last box.

Level A1 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can understand basic words and phrases about myself and my family when people speak slowly and clearly				
I can understand simple classroom instructions, directions and teacher comments				
I can understand the names of everyday objects in the classroom				
I can understand basic greetings and routine phrases (e.g., please, thank you)				
I can understand simple questions about myself when people speak slowly and clearly				
I can understand numbers and prices				
I can understand days of the week and months of the year				
I can understand times and dates				

Level A2 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can understand what people say to me in simple everyday conversation when they speak slowly and clearly				
I can understand everyday words and phrases relating to areas of immediate personal relevance (e.g., family, school, local environment)				
I can understand everyday words and phrases relating to areas of personal interest (e.g., hobbies, pets, holidays, music, TV, films, travel)				
I can grasp the essential elements of clear simple messages and recorded announcements (e.g., on the telephone, at the railway station)				
I can understand simple phrases, questions and information relating to basic personal needs (e.g., shopping, eating out, going to the doctor)				
I can follow simple directions (e.g., how to get from X to Y) by foot or public transport				
I can usually identify the topic of conversation around me when people speak slowly and clearly				
I can catch the main elements of simple news stories on TV if there is visual support				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Listening

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

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Level B1 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can follow the gist of everyday conversation when people speak clearly to me in standard dialect				
I can understand the main points of discussions on familiar topics in everyday situations when people speak clearly in standard dialect				
I can follow short narratives and extended talks on familiar subject matter (e.g., contemporary culture) delivered in clear standard speech				
I can catch the main elements of radio news bulletins and recorded audio material on familiar topics delivered in clear standard speech				
I can follow many TV programmes on topics of personal or cultural interest broadcast in standard dialect				
I can follow detailed directions, messages and information (e.g., travel arrangements, recorded weather forecasts, answering-machines)				

Level B2 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can understand standard spoken language on both familiar and unfamiliar topics in everyday situations even in a noisy environment				
I can understand announcements and messages on concrete and abstract topics spoken in standard dialect at normal speed				
I can follow extended talks delivered in standard dialect on cultural, intercultural and social issues (e.g., customs, media, lifestyle, EU)				
I can follow complex lines of argument, provided these are clearly signposted				
I can follow most TV news programmes, documentaries, interviews, talk shows and the majority of films in standard dialect				
I can follow most radio programmes and audio material delivered in standard dialect and identify the speaker's mood, tone, etc.				
I am sensitive to expressions of feeling and attitudes (e.g., critical, ironic, supportive, flippant, disapproving)				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Reading

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

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What kinds of things are you able to read in the language? What do you want or need to be able to read? Below is a checklist of reading skills, based on targets set out in the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabuses. You can use this checklist **(a)** to tick your next learning goal(s), and **(b)** to record how well you can perform each particular skill:

☆ if you can do this with *a lot of help* (e.g., from your teacher) date the first box;

☆☆ if you can do it with *a little help* date the second box;

☆☆☆ if you can do it *on your own* date the last box.

Level A1 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can pick out familiar names, words and phrases in very short simple texts				
I can understand words and phrases on simple everyday signs and notices (e.g., exit, no smoking, danger, days of the week, times)				
I can understand simple forms well enough to give basic personal details (e.g., name, address, date of birth)				
I can understand simple written messages and comments in the classroom situation (e.g., "well done", "today's homework")				
I can understand short simple messages on greeting cards and postcards (e.g., holiday greetings, birthday greetings)				
I can get an idea of the content of simple informational material if there is pictorial support (e.g., posters, catalogues, advertisements)				
I can follow short simple written directions (e.g., to go from X to Y)				

Level A2 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can understand short simple messages and texts containing basic everyday vocabulary relating to areas of personal relevance or interest				
I can understand everyday signs and public notices (e.g., on the street, in shops, hotels, railway stations)				
I can find specific predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, timetables, menus, directories, brochures				
I can understand instructions and regulations when expressed in simple language (e.g., how to use a public telephone)				
I can understand short simple personal letters giving or requesting information about everyday life or offering an invitation				
I can identify key information in short newspaper/magazine reports recounting stories or events				
I can understand basic information in routine letters and messages (e.g., hotel reservations, personal telephone messages)				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Reading

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Tá na spriocanna foghlama thíos bunaithe ar na scálaí léiriúcháin i gCreatlach Coiteann na hEorpa (© Comhairle na hEorpa) ach gur cuireadh in oiriúint iad do spriocanna curaclaim an Teastais Shóisearaigh agus na hArdteistiméireachta.

Level B1 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can read straightforward factual texts on topics of personal or cultural interest with a reasonable level of understanding				
I can understand the main points in short newspaper articles and well signposted argumentative texts on cultural and social issues				
I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters well enough to correspond with a pen friend				
I can find and understand relevant information in everyday material, such as standard letters, brochures and short official documents				
I can understand clearly written straightforward instructions (e.g., for using a piece of equipment)				
I can scan longer texts in order to locate specific factual information				
I can follow the plot of clearly structured narratives and modern literary texts				

Level B2 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can quickly scan through long and complex texts on a variety of topics to locate specific information or decide if closer study is worthwhile				
I can understand in detail correspondence, reports and discursive texts relating to cultural, intercultural, social and language-related issues				
I can understand articles on specialized topics using a dictionary and relevant reference resources				
I can read and understand articles and reports in which writers express opinions or viewpoints (e.g., arts reviews, political commentary)				
I can understand detailed complex instructions and official documents				
I can readily appreciate most narratives and modern literary texts (e.g., novels, short stories, poems, plays)				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Spoken interaction

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Tá na spriocanna foghlama thíos bunaithe ar na scálaí léiriúcháin i gCreatlach Coiteann na hEorpa (© Comhairle na hEorpa) ach gur cuireadh in oiriúint iad do spriocanna curaclaim an Teastais Shóisearaigh agus na hArdteistiméireachta.

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How well can you communicate orally and interact with people in the language? What kinds of situations do you need to be able to interact in? Below is a checklist of spoken interaction skills, based on targets set out in the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabuses. You can use this checklist **(a)** to tick your next learning goal(s), and **(b)** to record how well you can perform each particular skill:

☆ if you can do this with *a lot of help* (e.g., from your teacher) date the first box;

☆☆ if you can do it with *a little help* date the second box;

☆☆☆ if you can do it *on your own* date the last box.

Level A1 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can say basic greetings and phrases (e.g., please, thank you), ask how someone is and say how I am				
I can say who I am, ask someone's name and introduce someone				
I can say I don't understand, ask people to repeat what they say or speak more slowly, attract attention and ask for help				
I can ask how to say something in the language or what a word means				
I can ask and answer simple direct questions on very familiar topics (e.g., family, school) with help from the person I am talking to				
I can ask people for things and give people things				
I can handle numbers, quantities, cost and time				
I can make simple purchases, using pointing and gestures to support what I say				

Level A2 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can handle short social exchanges and make myself understood if people help me				
I can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, apologies and requests for permission				
I can talk about likes/dislikes, agree or disagree with people, and make comparisons				
I can discuss what to do, where to go, make arrangements to meet (e.g., in the evening, at the weekend)				
I can ask and answer simple questions about familiar topics (e.g., weather, hobbies, pets, music, sport)				
I can ask and answer simple questions about things that have happened (e.g., yesterday, last week, last year)				
I can handle simple telephone calls (e.g., say who is calling, ask to speak to someone, give my number, take a simple message)				
I can make simple transactions (e.g., in shops, post offices, railway stations) and order something to eat or drink				
I can get simple practical information (e.g., asking for directions, booking accommodation, going to the doctor)				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Spoken interaction

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Tá na spriocanna foghlama thíos bunaithe ar na scálaí léiriúcháin i gCreatlach Coiteann na hEorpa (© Comhairle na hEorpa) ach gur cuireadh in oiriúint iad do spriocanna curaclaim an Teastais Shóisearaigh agus na hArdteistiméireachta.

Level B1 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can readily handle conversations on most topics that are familiar or of personal interest, with generally appropriate use of register				
I can sustain an extended conversation or discussion but may sometimes need a little help in communicating my thoughts				
I can express and respond to feelings and attitudes (e.g., surprise, happiness, sadness, interest, uncertainty, indifference)				
I can agree and disagree politely, exchange personal opinions, negotiate decisions and ideas				
I can obtain detailed information, messages, instructions and explanations				
I can handle most practical tasks in everyday situations (e.g., making telephone enquiries, asking for a refund, negotiating purchase)				

Level B2 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can participate fully in conversations on general topics with a degree of fluency and naturalness, and appropriate use of register				
I can participate effectively in extended discussions and debates on subjects of personal, cultural, intercultural or social interest				
I can express, negotiate and respond sensitively to feelings, attitudes, opinions, tone, viewpoints				
I can exchange detailed factual information within my fields of interest (e.g., intercultural differences)				
I can handle personal interviews with ease				
I can cope linguistically with potentially complex problems in routine situations (e.g., complaining about goods and services)				
I can cope adequately with emergencies (e.g., summon medical assistance, telephone the police or breakdown service)				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Spoken production

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Tá na spriocanna foghlama thíos bunaithe ar na scálaí léiriúcháin i gCreatlach Coiteann na hEorpa (© Comhairle na hEorpa) ach gur cuireadh in oiriúint iad do spriocanna curaclaim an Teastais Shóisearaigh agus na hArdteistiméireachta.

What kinds of things are you able to say in the language? What do you want or need to be able to say? Below is a checklist of speaking skills, based on targets set out in the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabuses. You can use this checklist **(a)** to tick your next learning goal(s), and **(b)** to record how well you can perform each particular skill:

☆ if you can do this with *a lot of help* (e.g., from your teacher) date the first box;

☆☆ if you can do it with *a little help* date the second box;

☆☆☆ if you can do it *on your own* date the last box.

Level A1 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can give basic personal information about myself (e.g., age, address, family, hobbies)				
I can use simple words and phrases to describe where I live				
I can use simple words and phrases to describe people I know				

Level A2 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can describe myself, my family and other people I know				
I can describe my home and where I live				
I can say what I usually do at home, in school, in my free time				
I can describe plans, arrangements and alternatives				
I can give short simple descriptions of events or tell a simple story				
I can describe past activities and personal experiences (e.g., what I did at the weekend)				
I can explain what I like and don't like about something				
I can give simple descriptions of things and make comparisons				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Spoken production

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

Tá na spriocanna foghlama thíos bunaithe ar na scálaí léiriúcháin i gCeatlach Coiteann na hEorpa (© Comhairle na hEorpa) ach gur cuireadh in oiriúint iad do spriocanna curaclaim an Teastais Shóisearaigh agus na hArdteistiméireachta.

Level B1 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a film or book				
I can give straightforward descriptions in familiar subject areas				
I can describe personal experiences, reactions, dreams, hopes, ambitions, real, imagined or unexpected events				
I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions				
I can develop an argument well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time				
I can give a simple summary of short written texts				
I can give detailed accounts of problems and incidents (e.g., reporting a theft, traffic accident)				
I can give a short and straightforward prepared presentation on a personal project or chosen literary work in a reasonably clear manner				

Level B2 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can give clear detailed descriptions on a wide range of personal, cultural, intercultural and social issues				
I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options				
I can develop a clear coherent argument, linking ideas logically and expanding and supporting my points with appropriate examples				
I can speculate about causes, consequences and hypothetical situations				
I can summarize short discursive or narrative material (e.g., written, radio, television)				
I can give a clear, systematically developed presentation, with highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail				
I can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up points raised by an audience				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: Writing

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

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What kinds of things are you able to write in the language? What do you want or need to be able to write? Below is a checklist of writing skills, based on targets set out in the Junior and Leaving Certificate syllabuses. You can use this checklist **(a)** to tick your next learning goal(s), and **(b)** to record how well you can perform each particular skill:

☆ if you can do this with *a lot of help* (e.g., from your teacher) date the first box;

☆☆ if you can do it with *a little help* date the second box;

☆☆☆ if you can do it *on your own* date the last box.

Level A1 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can fill in a simple form or questionnaire with my personal details (e.g., date of birth, address, nationality)				
I can write a greeting card or simple postcard				
I can write simple phrases and sentences about myself (e.g., where I live, how many brothers and sisters I have)				
I can write a short simple note or message (e.g., to tell somebody where I am or where to meet)				

Level A2 (Junior Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can write short simple notes and messages (e.g., saying that someone telephoned, arranging to meet someone, explaining absence)				
I can open and close a simple personal letter using appropriate phrases and greetings				
I can write a very simple personal letter (e.g., accepting or offering an invitation, thanking someone for something, apologizing)				
I can write about aspects of my everyday life in simple phrases and sentences (e.g., family, school, hobbies, holidays, likes and dislikes)				
I can fill in a questionnaire or write a simple curriculum vitae giving personal information				
I can open and close a simple formal letter using appropriate phrases and greetings				
I can write very basic formal letters requesting information (e.g., about summer jobs, hotel accommodation)				

My checklist of target skills

Skill: **Writing**

The learning targets below have been adapted from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework (© Council of Europe) in the light of the curriculum goals prescribed for Junior and Leaving Certificate.

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE
European Language Portfolio
Portfolio européen des langues

Level B1 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can write simple connected texts and essays on topics of personal interest, making appropriate use of dictionaries and reference resources				
I can write personal letters giving news, describing experiences and impressions, and expressing feelings				
I can write messages and reports communicating enquiries and factual information, explaining problems				
I can describe the plot of a film or book, narrate a simple story or report on an event				
I can write a simple summary of factual information on familiar topics				
I can write standard letters giving or requesting detailed information (e.g., replying to an advertisement, applying for a job)				

Level B2 (Leaving Certificate)	my next goal	how well I can do this (enter dates) ☆	☆☆	☆☆☆
I can write clear detailed text on a wide range of subjects (personal, cultural, intercultural and social issues)				
I can express news, views and feelings effectively in writing, and relate to those of others				
I can write summaries of articles on topics of general interest, and summarize information from different sources and media				
I can write an essay which develops an argument, giving reasons to support or negate a point of view, weighing pros and cons				
I can write a short review of a film or book				
I can write about events and real or fictional experiences in a detailed and easily readable way				

Setting goals and thinking about learning
Spriocanna a shocrú agus machnamh a dhéanamh i dtaobh na foghlama
Se fixer des objectifs et réfléchir à l'apprentissage
Zielsetzung und Gedanken zum Lernen
Marcando metas y reflexiones sobre el aprendizaje
Porsi degli obiettivi e riflettere su come s'impara

Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache / Idioma / Lingua	
...../...../ 20.....	My next target / An chéad sprioc eile agam / Mon prochain objectif / Mein nächstes Lernziel / Mi siguiente meta / Il mio prossimo obiettivo ....
...../...../ 20.....	How well did I achieve it?/ Cé chomh mhaith is d'éirigh liom é a bhaint amach?/ Dans quelle mesure y suis-je parvenu(e)? / In wie weit habe ich es erreicht?/ ¿Qué nivel de dominio he conseguido?/ A che livello l'ho raggiunto? ....
...../...../ 20.....	What have I learnt about myself or about learning? / Cad a fuair mé amach fúm féin nó faoin bhfoghlaim? / Qu'ai-je appris sur moi-même ou sur l'apprentissage? / Was habe ich über mich oder das Lernen gelernt? / ¿Qué he aprendido sobre mí mismo o sobre el proceso de aprendizaje? / Che cosa ho imparato di me stesso o di come si apprende? ....
...../...../ 20.....	My next target / An chéad sprioc eile agam / Mon prochain objectif / Mein nächstes Lernziel / Mi siguiente meta / Il mio prossimo obiettivo ....
...../...../ 20.....	How well did I achieve it?/ Cé chomh mhaith is d'éirigh liom é a bhaint amach?/ Dans quelle mesure y suis-je parvenu(e)? / In wie weit habe ich es erreicht?/ ¿Qué nivel de dominio he conseguido?/ A che livello l'ho raggiunto? ....
...../...../ 20.....	What have I learnt about myself or about learning? / Cad a fuair mé amach fúm féin nó faoin bhfoghlaim? / Qu'ai-je appris sur moi-même ou sur l'apprentissage? / Was habe ich über mich oder das Lernen gelernt? / ¿Qué he aprendido sobre mí mismo o sobre el proceso de aprendizaje? / Che cosa ho imparato di me stesso o di come si apprende? ....

Things I notice about language and culture
Rudaí a thugaim faoi deara mar gheall ar theanga agus chultúr
Ce que je remarque sur la langue et la culture
Sprach- und Kulturunterschiede, die mir aufgefallen sind
Cosas que me llaman la atención sobre la lengua y la cultura
Cose che noto della lingua e della cultura

Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache / Idioma / Lingua

Material/media/resource / Ábhar/meán/acmhainn / Document/média/source
Material/Medien/Quelle / Material/medios/recursos / Materiali/media/risorse ...../...../20.....

Aspects of language/culture I've noticed / Gnéithe de theanga/chultúr atá tugtha faoi deara agam / Les aspects de la langue/culture que j'ai remarqués / Sprachliche/kulturelle Aspekte, die mir aufgefallen sind / Aspectos que me han llamado la atención en relación a la lengua/cultura / Aspetti della lingua/cultura che ho notato

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Material/media/resource / Ábhar/meán/acmhainn / Document/média/source
Material/Medien/Quelle / Material/medios/recursos / Materiali/media/risorse ...../...../20.....

Aspects of language/culture I've noticed / Gnéithe de theanga/chultúr atá tugtha faoi deara agam / Les aspects de la langue/culture que j'ai remarqués / Sprachliche/kulturelle Aspekte, die mir aufgefallen sind / Aspectos que me han llamado la atención en relación a la lengua/cultura / Aspetti della lingua/cultura che ho notato

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Material/media/resource / Ábhar/meán/acmhainn / Document/média/source
Material/Medien/Quelle / Material/medios/recursos / Materiali/media/risorse ...../...../20.....

Aspects of language/culture I've noticed / Gnéithe de theanga/chultúr atá tugtha faoi deara agam / Les aspects de la langue/culture que j'ai remarqués / Sprachliche/kulturelle Aspekte, die mir aufgefallen sind / Aspectos que me han llamado la atención en relación a la lengua/cultura / Aspetti della lingua/cultura che ho notato

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How I solve communication problems
Na bealaí ina réitím mo chuid fadhbanna cumarsáide
Comment je résous les problèmes de communication
Wie ich bei Kommunikationsproblemen vorgehe
Cómo resuelvo los problemas de comunicación
Come risolvo i problemi di comunicazione

Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache / Idioma / Lingua

Problem / Fadhb / Problème / Problem / Problema / Problema ...../...../20.....

Solution / Réiteach / Solution / Vorgehensweise / Solución / Soluzione

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Problem / Fadhb / Problème / Problem / Problema / Problema ...../...../20.....

Solution / Réiteach / Solution / Vorgehensweise / Solución / Soluzione

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Problem / Fadhb / Problème / Problem / Problema / Problema ...../...../20.....

Solution / Réiteach / Solution / Vorgehensweise / Solución / Soluzione

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Problem / Fadhb / Problème / Problem / Problema / Problema ...../...../20.....

Solution / Réiteach / Solution / Vorgehensweise / Solución / Soluzione

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Methods I use to learn languages
Seifteanna a úsáidim chun teangacha a fhoghlaim
Les méthodes que j'utilise pour apprendre les langues
Methodisches Vorgehen beim Fremdsprachenlernen
Métodos que uso para aprender idiomas
I metodi che uso per imparare le lingue

Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache / Idioma / Lingua	
What I do and why it helps me / An tseift a úsáidim agus an chaoi a gcabhraíonn sí liom / Ce que je fais et pourquoi cela m'aide / Wie ich vorgehe und warum es mir hilft / Lo que hago y por qué me ayuda / Che cosa faccio e perché mi aiuta	...../...../20.....
What I do and why it helps me / An tseift a úsáidim agus an chaoi a gcabhraíonn sí liom / Ce que je fais et pourquoi cela m'aide / Wie ich vorgehe und warum es mir hilft / Lo que hago y por qué me ayuda / Che cosa faccio e perché mi aiuta	...../...../20.....
What I do and why it helps me / An tseift a úsáidim agus an chaoi a gcabhraíonn sí liom / Ce que je fais et pourquoi cela m'aide / Wie ich vorgehe und warum es mir hilft / Lo que hago y por qué me ayuda / Che cosa faccio e perché mi aiuta	...../...../20.....
What I do and why it helps me / An tseift a úsáidim agus an chaoi a gcabhraíonn sí liom / Ce que je fais et pourquoi cela m'aide / Wie ich vorgehe und warum es mir hilft / Lo que hago y por qué me ayuda / Che cosa faccio e perché mi aiuta	...../...../20.....
What I do and why it helps me / An tseift a úsáidim agus an chaoi a gcabhraíonn sí liom / Ce que je fais et pourquoi cela m'aide / Wie ich vorgehe und warum es mir hilft / Lo que hago y por qué me ayuda / Che cosa faccio e perché mi aiuta	...../...../20.....

Intercultural experiences
Eispéiris idirchultúrtha
Expériences interculturelles
Interkulturelle Erfahrungen
Experiencias interculturales
Esperienze interculturali

Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache / Idioma / Lingua

I have experienced the culture of this language in the following ways (enter dates)
Is iad seo na slite ar bhlais mé de chultúr na teanga seo (breac síos na dátaí)
Comment j'ai pu goûté à la culture de cette langue (indiquer les dates)
Ich kenne die kulturellen Unterschiede aus eigener Erfahrung (hier die Daten eintragen)
He tenido contacto con la cultura de este idioma de las siguientes maneras (anotar las fechas)
Sono venuto a diretto contatto con la cultura di questa lingua nei seguenti modi (inserire le date)

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I have been able to use this language in the following situations (enter dates)
Bhí deis agam an teanga a úsáid sna comhthéacsanna seo a leanas (breac síos na dátaí)
J'ai pu employer cette langue dans les situations suivantes (indiquer les dates)
Ich habe diese Sprache in den folgenden Situationen benutzt (hier die Daten eintragen)
He sido capaz de utilizar el idioma en las siguientes situaciones (anotar las fechas)
Sono stato in grado di usare questa lingua nelle seguenti situazioni (inserire le date)

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I have learnt about the culture of this language in the following ways (enter dates)
D'fhoghlaim mé mar gheall ar chultúr na teanga seo sna slite seo a leanas (breac síos na dátaí)
Comment j'ai appris des choses sur la culture de cette langue (indiquer les dates)
In folgenden Situationen habe ich etwas über die Kultur dieses Sprachraums erfahren (hier die Daten eintragen)
He aprendido acerca de la cultura de esta lengua de las siguientes maneras (anotar las fechas)
Ho appreso la cultura di questa lingua nei seguenti modi (inserire le date)

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Heritage languages
Teangacha oidhreachta
Langues patrimoniales
Erbsprachen
Lenguas patrimoniales
Patrimoni linguistici

Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache/ Idioma / Lingua

This language is important to me because / Tá an teanga seo tábhachtach domsa toisc / Cette langue est importante pour moi parce que / Diese Sprache ist für mich wichtig, weil / Este idioma es importante para mí porque / Questa lingua è importante per me perché

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Here are the ways I have learned and used this language / Is iad seo na slite ar fhoghlaim mé agus ar úsáid mé an teanga seo / Voici comment j'ai appris et employé cette langue / So habe ich diese Sprache gelernt und und so benutze ich sie / Estas son las maneras en las que he aprendido y utilizado este idioma / Questi sono i modi in cui ho imparato ed utilizzato questa lingua

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Language / Teanga / Langue / Sprache/ Idioma / Lingua

This language is important to me because / Tá an teanga seo tábhachtach domsa toisc / Cette langue est importante pour moi parce que / Diese Sprache ist für mich wichtig, weil / Este idioma es importante para mí porque / Questa lingua è importante per me perché

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Here are the ways I have learned and used this language / Is iad seo na slite ar fhoghlaim mé agus ar úsáid mé an teanga seo / Voici comment j'ai appris et employé cette langue / So habe ich diese Sprache gelernt und und so benutze ich sie / Estas son las maneras en las que he aprendido y utilizado este idioma / Questi sono i modi in cui ho imparato ed utilizzato questa lingua

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Thesis
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appendices
2 CD Roms