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Visualising Future Foreign Language Education: From Revision and Supervision to Vision

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Abstract

At the moment, foreign language teachers face, more than ever, the challenge of visualising future language teaching and learning. In this article, it is argued that foreign language education (FLE) cannot be properly developed unless we understand the recent past of FLE and, at the same time, have a fair command of certain futuristic instruments, such as vision, strategy, scenario and mission. This article thus aims to lead language teachers’ thinking towards a better understanding of futuristic perspectives, while reflecting on their past.

Three research questions will be asked: 1) What kind of instruments might language teachers and teacher educators profit from when developing foreign language education (FLE), especially in order to better understand the future? 2) What sort of developmental trends can be seen when analysing the recent past of FLE? 3) How can the future of FLE be discussed if the recent past and the present are taken as starting points?

A brief analysis of FLE history will be presented and some conclusions drawn based on the analysis. A preliminary grid of the possible scenario in 2020 will be presented, as visualised by some 20 Finnish language and media specialists.¹

Keywords: foreign language education (FLE); future; vision; strategy; scenario; mission; conception of learning; theory of language; curriculum; method; evaluation; educational technology; information and communication technologies ICTs; errors; communicative language teaching (CLT); Common European Framework (CEF).

¹ A graphic presentation of this article is available at http://www.helsinki.fi/~tella/vision.html
1 Past vs. Future

As she passed me in the corridor of the University of Helsinki Department of Teacher Education in the early 1990s, a young female student teacher caught my attention by asking: “Seppo, why is everybody in teacher education always talking about the past? Why don’t they speak more about the future? What is your vision of the future of foreign language teaching, studying and learning?” A good question, indeed, I thought. My initial interest in thinking ahead, instead of just reviewing the past was strengthened. This episode, I believe, was the real starting point for this article.

2 Vision Instead of Revision, Division and Supervision

In educational parlance, revision, division and supervision may have been used more often than vision. Yet, in teacher education at least, we often face the challenge and demand of having all teachers act as visionaries, able to actively visualise future language teaching and learning, while, at the same time, encouraging future teachers to follow suit.

When looking back, we can easily see how foreign and second language teaching has developed over the past few decades. They have, in fact, followed the progress seen in linguistics—first theoretical, then more and more applied—while, on the other hand, they have also followed developments in learning and cognitive psychology. Foreign language education (FLE) began to develop as an autonomous science in the 1960s, and was reinforced in the 1970s, along with the emergence of the second language acquisition (SLA) tradition. In the Finnish context, an important milestone was laid in 1974 when teacher education was relocated from Teachers Colleges to the university faculties of education and to the departments of teacher education. The year of 1974 was also the date when teaching became an academic profession in Finland, and all teachers were required to take an academic degree at a university.

Now, 30 years later, in the early 21st century, I argue that we should turn more heavily to futures research. This is very much the heart of the matter in this article. To my way of thinking, we cannot develop foreign language education, meaning foreign and second language teaching, studying and learning, unless we understand, better than we have done so far, certain developmental trends and certain instruments that are used when we look into

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2. Foreign language and second language teaching, studying and learning will be incorporated in this article into one single concept: foreign language education (FLE). This is often referred to, in other contexts, as language didactics, language pedagogy or language teaching methodology. No further distinction will be made in this article between FLE and SLA (second language acquisition), though admittedly, the distinction is worth making in some other contexts (cf. e.g., Kramsch 2002). No distinction will be made between foreign language (FL) and second language (SL), either, though it would be easy to see a lot of differences between them (cf. Kramsch 2002, 59–60, for instance). Still, as Byram (2003, 62) has argued, from the learner’s point of view the distinction is not that important, though in an educational and political context, the status of a language in a given society is important. It is also crucial to bear in mind that education here refers to the teaching–studying–learning process, covering these three major components, not only learning or teaching.

3. Many believe, as Ellis (1990, 30—31) argues, that past approaches to language teaching owe more to linguistics than to psychology, at least in Europe.
and work for the future. The main purpose of this article is to explore this relatively uncharted territory and to lead language teachers’ thinking towards a better understanding of the futuristic perspectives. For this purpose, we need to understand the concept of perceptual difference and what the future may mean to us as language teachers and teacher educators. But yet, we also need visions and a better comprehension of some of the other instruments that can be used when analysing the past and the present and, more important, when foreseeing and envisioning the future.

I will continue by citing a very basic truth expressed by Hooper (1981):

“One of the simplest and yet most difficult ideas to internalise is the concept of perceptual difference—the idea that everyone perceives the world differently and that members of one culture group share basic sets of perceptions which differ from the sets of perceptions shared by members of other culture groups. It is not that the idea is difficult to understand, it is that it is hard to impose upon ourselves, to internalise so that it affects our behaviour.” (Hooper 1981, 13)

In the light of futuristic FLE, Hooper’s concept of perceptual difference implies various interpretations, various understandings of the notion itself and all the connotations the future will bring with itself. However, these differences are bound to make the picture richer and more rewarding for all of us working in the field of FLE.

3 Research Questions

In the light of what was said above concerning the need for FLE to face the future, while not forgetting the recent past, and bearing in mind certain trends that have taken place in learning and cognitive psychology as well as in didactics and educational sciences, the following research questions must be asked:

1. What kind of instruments might language teachers and teacher educators profit from when developing foreign language education (FLE), especially in order to better understand the future?

Research Question 1 can be answered by describing and analysing a number of key concepts in the field, such as vision, strategy, scenario and mission.

2. What sort of developmental trends can be seen when analysing the recent past of FLE?

Research Question 2 will be answered with an analysis of some trends that have been drawn from the FL teaching tradition in general and from foreign/second language didactics and SLA in particular.

3. How can the future of FLE be discussed if the recent past and the present are taken as starting points?

Research Question 3 will first be answered by elaborating on the analytical structure (the “grid”) created when answering Question 2, followed by a more general overview of certain trends as seen and visualised by a group of language and media specialists in two visionary seminars organised by the Research Centre for Foreign Language Education.

(ReFLEct) at the University of Helsinki Department of Teacher Education in 2003. Finally, a few brief conclusions will be drawn, regarding post-modern education.

At this point, a comment needs to be added. This article is written as an initial review and analysis of certain ideas, points of view or ‘indicators’ and conceptual perspectives that will be analysed later in greater detail. Therefore, a number of issues will be discussed and some questions asked, without satisfactory answers necessarily for all of them.

One of the first questions bound to puzzle any language teacher facing the problem of the future is to wonder to what extent previous research has covered this area. Unfortunately, not much specific research has focused on the issues presented in this article. A quick survey points to research done by Littlejohn (1998) and Tella (1993a; 1993b; 1996a; 1996b), among the relatively few researchers who specialise in FLE. The area seems rather uncharted and, consequently, exceptionally inviting to look into more deeply. This is the main rationale for this article, in fact.

1. What Do We Mean by Futures?

Without going into detail or discussing the future from the deepest sense as seen by many futurologists, suffice it to say that the future is not to be foreseen, and yet, on the other hand, it is feasible to see and anticipate different kinds of futures. Even if we cannot predict the future precisely, it is generally accepted among futures researchers that we can affect the future and future developments through our own decisions, our actions, our ways of behaving. What really counts is the ability to grasp what is desirable and what is probable. As the French novelist Antoine de Saint-Exupéry has put it, “As it comes to the future, our task is not to foresee it, but to enable it.”

The future is very often depicted as at once probable, possible, conditional, desirable or frightening. This list of descriptors is easily continued. When thinking of the future, it is good to ponder it from these various perspectives. In a probable future, the sun sets tomorrow as well. In a possible future, we might have to face some rain, sleet, snow or slippery weather. A conditional future is something that depends on certain conditions that will subsequently have an effect on our behaviour: “if it rains tomorrow morning, we will delay our excursion to the country” or, in a more technologically-oriented world, “if the server is down, then we will not continue to upload the new web gallery photos tomorrow”. Yet this kind of future might be highly unpredictable, and in FLE-based contexts might frequently be related to intercultural differences. The future can also be desirable (“I wish…”) or frightening (“Will I pass the final exam? And if not, what then…?”).

How can we react to the various futures that lie ahead? One classification (e.g., Helakorpi 2001, 17; Figure 1) is based on three different attitudes. First, there are people who are driven to the future (tulevaisuuteen ajautujat), as they believe, by “greater forces”, such as legislators and political decision-makers who are thought to be in the critical posi-

6. Read, for instance, the amusing story about Finnish, Italian and Japanese students who discussed whether they should try to climb Mount Snowdon in Lewis’s “When Cultures Collide”, 1996, 1—2). One might argue that the Finns built an obstinate future, the Japanese an adaptable future and the Italians a highly weather-specific flexible future, irrespective of the consequences to the others.
tion to design the future. Second, there are people who adapt to the future (tulevaisuuteen sopeutujat), who take the future as something inevitable but understand that future needs have the potential to be looked into in advance, and these people can be flexible enough when facing these needs. Third, there are people who make the future (tulevaisuuden tekijät). These individuals are convinced that their own future is—at least partly and to some extent—up to them themselves to create, to shape, to design. This kind of attitude calls for predictive behaviour, which is often also called strategic thinking.

Figure 1. Different Views Towards the Future (based on Helakorpi 2001, 17; translated by Tel-la).

Another classification is to speak of reactive (sopeuttava) and proactive (ennakoiva, luova) attitudes towards the future. Reactive behaviour is based on questions such as: How can we adapt to the future? How can we achieve our aims in the predicted world? A proactive attitude encourages us to ask: How do we influence the characteristics of all possible worlds? How will we achieve our aims in these possible worlds? This latter attitude does not see the future as monolithic; rather, the future becomes a spectrum of different options and opportunities that are open to all of us.

5 Some Instruments to Use for Looking into the Future

Vision, strategy, scenario and mission are some of the key instruments used when looking into the future. In the following, these instruments will be described, with the goal of providing language educators with some conceptual tools to work with.
5.2 Vision

At its best, a vision is short, easy to remember, acceptable to many, like Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité (as argued in Tella 1993a). Unfortunately, such handy yet apposite visions are difficult to formulate in regard to education. And few visions are easily accepted by all.\(^7\)

Visions are closely related to futuristic thinking, to the idea of doing something in order to affect the future. In this sense, creating visions, or visualising the future, is needed at all levels, including those of the institution, its principal and the teachers themselves. This does not exclude student teachers, by any means.

Yet, what does a vision mean? According to one English-language dictionary, a vision implies the “power of seeing or imagining, looking ahead, grasping the truth that underlies facts”. This meaning is very close to how I see the vision: looking forward, foreseeing and anticipating. If we compare these terms with those in a French-language dictionary, we notice that the following French definition starts from the concrete action of seeing, then advances towards a more personal sight or conception of something: «perception du monde extérieur par les organes de la vue; action de voir; façon de voir; conception».

Some theorists have suggested an even broader interpretation. Liebermann (1990), for instance, when referring to general school developmental work, points out such aspects as leadership, professionalism, reform, teaching incentives, social realities, teachers as colleagues. On the other hand, visions can also be interpreted through various and sometimes even contradictory concepts of teaching: engineering and apprenticeship as well as a developmental, nurturing or social reform (e.g., Parr 1993). The visions would then greatly depend on the approach adopted.

The meaning of visions has not generally been underscored in education or training. One example might be the well-known handbook by Wittrock (1986), which did not mention vision in its index. A decade ago, one could, in line with Leppilampi (1991, 149), retort sarcastically that in the realm of education, revision, division and supervision were words used much more frequently and with emphasis. The situation can be argued to have changed in the early-to-mid 1990s, especially thanks to the nationwide exercise of drawing up municipality-based school curricula, in the spirit of Finland’s national framework curricula (POPS 1994; LOPS 1994).

All in all, a vision is defined as a view geared towards the future, an abstraction of some sort, which can then be made more concrete with goals, aims and objectives. A vision is something projected relatively far into the future, while goals and aims are more concrete, often measurable and chronological, so that they can be achieved by the end of a specified period of time. A vision always contains the idea of a better and more desired or desirable future. The vision accepted by an organisation should form the basis for everyday action, because the conceptions related to the future promote a state of self-directedness.

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7. As an example, the vision formulated for the ReFLEcT is as follows: “Language Makes Sense—To Master Your Life, Have Some Sense in Languages” (in Finnish: “Kielessä on mieltä – elämänhallintaan mielekästä kieltä”).
5.2 Strategy

Strategy is not unknown to language teachers or to language teacher educators, as all educational institutions have prepared their Educational Use of Information and Communication Technology Strategies (tieto- ja viestintäteknikan opetuskäytön strategia) over the past couple of years, as required by the Finnish Ministry of Education. For this reason, the notion of strategy will not be explained in this article at length; rather, a number of different facets are only discussed, with a view to adding something to a rather established discussion that has been going on in Finnish education recently.

Strategies consist of those paths that are geared towards creating and enabling visions. The vision defines the limits within which the strategies are being implemented. In a learning organisation, the strategy is changed if something unexpected is faced. If an organisation has a vision but no strategy, then, as Malaska (1993) eloquently states, the sky collapses when something completely unexpected occurs.

Strategies are often divided into competition strategies (kilpailustrategiat) and visionary strategies (visionaariset strategiat). The first category of strategies aim to increase our commercial competitiveness, and are usually expected to come true within five years, often even much sooner. A visionary strategy, on the other hand, aims at coming true in the future as it will appear 10 or 15 years from today. Naturally, visionary strategies are more difficult to create, even if they are exactly what we would need now and are what we think of in this article when speaking of strategies and strategic thinking and planning.

How are strategies and organisations linked together? Strategies usually consist of decision-making rules and practices, which help people to run the organisation and to guide its behaviour in the future. The rules and practices regarding the management of different organisations can be divided into four categories (Ansoff 1984): 1) Rules that are used to assess the present and future capacity to perform. Goals, aims and objectives are some of the instruments used to “measure” these kinds of rules. 2) Rules that determine the relationship between the organisation and its external environment. 3) Rules that determine the internal relationships of the organisation and the different quality support mechanisms of the working order. 4) Rules that govern the daily working policy of the organisation.

Sometimes the different strategies needed to develop and assess an organisation are gathered into a “strategic cross” (e.g., Meristö 1991; Määttä 1996; Helakorpi 2001), which contains four different kinds of knowledge linked to organisation: (i) knowledge related to aims: shared reflections concerning the future and the aims which an organisation, such as a school, needs when developing into a networked or team school; (ii) situational knowledge: analysis of the status quo and the action environment; (iii) methodical knowledge: an organisational analysis and a survey of what the staff know, with a view to deciding about the methods that are needed in developmental work; and (iv) strategic knowledge: a concrete plan of development or an implementation plan to be carried out jointly between different individuals and units of the organisation.

8. To see some examples of ICT strategies, take a look at http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/tietostrategia/ for the University of Helsinki Faculty of Behavioural Sciences strategies, or at http://www.helsinki.fi/~tella/stp23tietstrat.html for the Media Education Centre ICT strategic thinking.
In strategic thinking and planning, the typical mistake is not taking all four of these types of knowledge into consideration, but contenting oneself with one or two out of the four. In that way, not enough adequate information is gathered to work on.

5.3 Scenario

One more instrument that helps educators to cope with the future is a scenario. Generally speaking, scenarios are optional or alternate images of the world or worlds of the future; possible worlds. They are powerful instruments that can be used to shape and visualise change, as well as all the ingredients and chains embedded in it. Scenarios are often used to assess all of the weak signals that the future sends to this day. One could summarise the meaning of scenarios by saying that they are the future’s manuscripts based on the knowledge we have at present. One of the best-known scenarios is what is known as the PESTE scenario. PESTE stands for political, economic, social, technological and ecological aspects. (E.g., Helakorpi 2001.)

5.4 Mission

The last instrument to be mentioned when considering futuristic planning on an organisational level is mission. Mission is usually preceded by a vision. Mission, briefly, means all the tasks that are required when advancing towards a vision.

The links between mission and vision are described by Malaska (1993) as follows (Figure 2): Mission links a vision situated somewhere in the future with the present state of affairs, which is also the level of know-how as we experience it. In order to see mission implemented in the future become concretised as vision, we need an adequate level of know-how and a certain number of resources, as well as a certain level of purposiveness for all of this to come true. Briefly, for mission to manifest itself as vision, quite a few criteria or prerequisites must become tangible. Yet, both mission and vision are essential to be explicated, because otherwise we will not know the paths we are heading towards or the targets we should be aiming at. Vision, *grosso modo*, is the futuristic state of the art, while mission is the way to proceed onwards from the present state of affairs, in other words, from the present *status quo*. 
In the preceding, some of the instruments have been discussed that may be used, when foreseeing the different futures that may lie ahead. It is our belief that every FLE teacher and teacher educator should be familiar with these instruments, in order to better understand the past, and in order to be able to look into the future. Now, it is time to have a look at the recent past, so that we can be ready for the future.

6 A Brief Analysis of the Recent Past, the Present, with Some Pointers to the Future

In the following, as a possible answer to Research Question 2, an analysis will be made of the present methodological situation in FLE. This analysis will then be followed by a number of pointers, or “indicators”, towards future developments. The starting point might be called an analysis of present trends, followed by some indications of how these trends could be projected forward, and what might follow from such projections. As I mentioned earlier in this article, this article is an overview with an emphasis on covering a certain number of critical or key issues, to be specified, exemplified and elaborated on in subsequent articles. Therefore, some loose ends may occur, towards which the reader is asked to be tolerant.

One of the major problems in analysing the recent past-to-present situation is how to choose the trends that might best describe the status quo of FLE. In this article, the raison d’être of this selection is grounded on abductive reasoning or my preunderstanding of the situation, as experienced and comprehended through my work as a professor of FLE (foreign language didactics). Naturally, some choices are based on the research literature.
involved, which is also used to underpin my reasoning. Understandably, the analysis *per se* is somewhat subjective and open to criticism, but then again, it might serve its purpose if it inspires the reader to think of how we could move from the *status quo* towards the *state of the art* in FLE.

Some major trends have taken place in the recent past of FLE (Table 1). These trends are, to some extent, subsequent in time, albeit somewhat overlapping (divided horizontally into four sections in Table 1). This simplification is needed in order to provide a general idea of certain emphases. The first column represents the tendencies in the 1950s and 1960s, generally speaking. The second column approximately illustrates the 1970s and 1980s; the third, the 1980s through the 1990s, and the fourth, the 1990s up to the early 21st century. Timing should naturally be regarded as approximate only, but it still might give the reader a better idea of the aim of this article. The conceptions of learning, for instance, are related to the developments in theories of language, and to the ideas of curricula, evaluation, assessment and testing. Therefore, Table 1 can also be studied vertically. The methodological approach, together with teaching practices, is expected to be equally in tune with these other trends.

*Table 1. Major Recent Past-to-Present Trends in FLE.*

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<tr>
<td>So-called naïve (“pre-theoretical”) conception of learning</td>
<td>Behaviourism</td>
<td>Cognitive and psycho-dynamic conception of learning</td>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>Structuralism; “medium” (linguistically-coded messages)</td>
<td>Pragmatism; “mediation” (functionally-coded messages)</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional language teaching</td>
<td>Lehrplan (Herbart); subject-specific</td>
<td>Situational; functional; notional; functional-notional</td>
<td>Curriculum (Dewey); communication-strategic; communicative; holistic; individualistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammatical; code-focused; a textbook</td>
<td>Audiolingualism; audiolingual (audiovisual) teaching method</td>
<td>Communicative language teaching</td>
<td>Communicative language teaching; co-operative learning; elaboration</td>
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<td>Translation (from MT to TL; from TL to MT)</td>
<td>Analytical tests</td>
<td>Integrative tests</td>
<td>Process evaluation; self-evaluation; continuous assessment; portfolio</td>
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<td>Pen and paper; blackboard</td>
<td>Open-reel tape recorders; cassette recorders; language laboratory</td>
<td>Educational radio and TV; VCRs; computers</td>
<td>Internet; WWW; e-mail; ICTs</td>
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<td>“~9 points”</td>
<td>Errors are deviations of norms set by native speakers; negative attitude to errors and mistakes; to be avoided at all cost</td>
<td>Belong to the learning process; inevitable and even desirable; interlanguage; positive attitude; you learn from them</td>
<td>Errors are a natural part of the teaching–studying–learning process</td>
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When speaking of conceptions of learning, the first phase might be called naïve or “pre-theoretical”, which characterised earlier FLE practices, and was not founded on any particular theory of language (for a more elaborate analysis, cf. Laihiala-Kankainen 1993). The second phase, behaviourism, in its different forms, is based mostly on stimulus–response–reinforcement chains, and dominated from the early 1900s until the latter half of the 20th century.

Behaviourism—sometimes called objectivism—started to fade out from FLE in the late 1960s, and more strongly in the 1970s, when cognitive psychology and cognitivism began to gain more ground. By 1980 at the latest, most language educators had grown to understand that the nature of learning was more cognitive and psycho-dynamic than simply reacting to external stimuli. In the Finnish school system, 1989 proved to be an important year, as the former National Board of General Education promoted certain publications (e.g., Lehtinen et al. 1989) that launched the “new” conception of learning, that is, constructivism. This idea, of course, was an old one, and a lot had been written about it before 1989 (e.g., Lehtinen 1983); yet, the year of 1989 can still be assessed as crucial.

Alas, despite all publicity and promoting, the notion of constructivism did not become very well known or popular among Finnish FL teachers or teacher educators in the early 1990s (cf. e.g., Tella 1993b). Yet, as the 1990s advanced, it became fashionable and almost compulsory to speak of constructivism and constructivist learning as opposed to behaviourism. Without going too deeply into constructivism, one might argue that individual-focused constructivism was the major conception of learning, the “new” conception of the 1990s.

In the field of language theories, the earliest stage of traditional language teaching up to the 1950s, roughly speaking, was followed by a strong movement in linguistics, in other words, structuralism, which is exemplified here by the notion of medium. This concept included linguistically-coded messages. In teaching, those kinds of messages were dealt with that included deliberate linguistic code, such as the past tense, relative pronouns or the conditional. In teaching materials, this called for chapters that had overrepresentations of linguistic expressions and examples of particular grammatical patterns.

As more emphasis was placed on pragmatism, with a view to solidify practical and useful aspects of language use, the concept of medium was changed into mediation, beginning in the late 1960s. In mediation, the messages were understood to be more functional in nature. The message had to have a communicative function to meet. The question, then, was not what linguistic expressions communicate, but the ways in which people should communicate by using linguistic expressions. All this emphasised the role of language use pragmatics, pragmatic features and problem-solving situations, an eclectic but critical methodological approach and in-depth understanding of other people and cultures, in addition to one’s own. All of this development led to a more naturally flowing use of language, which also served pragmatic purposes. This stage was a natural step towards modern FL teaching, studying and learning. — The next step is expected to be an integrative or integrated theory of language. At the moment, there is not really an integrated theory yet, though some theorists (e.g., Ellis 1990) have heralded their theories as such.

As to curricula, the first stage could be described as a grammatical or code-focused approach, during which the textbook very often was the “living” curriculum to be imple-
mented. Among teachers, the printed curricula were not necessarily known at all. Up to 1970, prior to the emergence of the Finnish comprehensive school system, Finnish schools mostly used a subject-specific “Herbartian” Lehrplan, which gradually changed into a situational, functional and notional (or functional-notional) curriculum in the 1970s. Even if Wilkins’ Notional Syllabuses (1976) rose into unprecedented fame and led to a legion of new textbooks, it was soon realised that even if the functions and notions were there to stay, it was proving extremely hard (or even impossible) to plan a longer, multi-year curriculum based on functions and notions only.

In the 1980s, one might contend, a shift took place from a Herbartian Lehrplan towards a Deweyan curriculum. Originally, Dewey used the notion of curriculum to refer to a growing child’s learning experiences, especially when they were organised into a systematic chain of events. When this was adopted in Finland (POPS 1985; LOPS 1994; POPS 1994), the exact content-matter to be specified in curricula was no longer very important; rather, more emphasis was placed on communication and learning strategies. Therefore, the focus of all curricula implemented in Finnish schools since the mid-1980s could be described as communication-strategic, communicative, holistic and individualistic, though it was also expected to promote co-operation and collaborative learning.

The methodological approach and teaching practices, as well as evaluation, assessment and testing, have usually lined up with and paralleled the conception of learning and the theory of language. The “traditional”, grammar- or code-focused approach used translation from one’s mother tongue (MT) to target language (TL), and the other way round. This is sometimes called “the academic style” (e.g., Cook 2001, 201). Very often, the texts to be translated from MT to TL had first been rendered from TL to MT, especially in higher education courses, thus adding an element of artificiality to the translation process. On the positive side, Byram (2003, 61), a specialist in cultural issues, has recently pointed out, quite aptly, that the grammar-translation method also involved “seeing another language and the values and beliefs it embodies through the framework of one’s own language, and one’s own beliefs and values”.

With audiolingualism, largely based on structuralist linguistics, tests became analytical; very small items were tested, such as verb endings or prepositions. In line with audiolingualism and the audiolingual teaching method, which used to keep the four facets (or “skills”) of language separate, that is listening, speaking, reading and writing, analytical tests did not approve of so-called hybrid forms, such as dictation, as clearly more than one component was being tested at the same time. The audiovisual teaching method, favoured in countries such as France, laid some emphasis on using a lot of visualisations, such as slides and OH transparencies, when presenting the linguistic input.

As integrative tests began to gain more ground in the 1970s, one started to pay more attention to the whole meaning of sentence or utterance. Integration also meant combin-

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9. In the light of all these developments, it is noteworthy to find how narrow an interpretation the Common European Framework (CEF 2001) has of the notion of mediation, when mainly referring to translation and interpretation only. The Finnish translation of this important document (Viitekehys 2004, 126) speaks of ”merkityksen välittämistoiminnot ja -strategiat”. For broader analyses of the notion of mediation, see e.g., Tella et al. 2001, 176 or Tella & Mononen-Aaltonen 1998, 112—116.
ing if possible the four different “skills”, whose division into four, temporarily used in the conferences of Ostia and Ankara in the 1960s, has remained surprisingly strong even up recent days.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) developed strongly in the 1980s, and has occupied centre stage ever since. One of the fundamental merits of CLT, as argued by Byram (2003, 63) is that it helped complete a long change “from aims of acquiring a foreign language for purposes of understanding the high culture of great civilisations to those of being able to use a language for daily communication and interaction with people from another country”. VanPatten (2002) has summarised five major tenets, or the most salient aspects, of CLT as follows: (i) meaning should always be the focus, (ii) learners should be at the centre of the curriculum, (iii) communication is not only oral but written and gestural as well, (iv) samples of authentic language used among native speakers should be available from the beginning of instruction, and (v) communicative events in class should be purposeful (VanPatten 2002, 106—107). VanPatten continues on to mention that there are other aspects that are worth mentioning, such as the development of skills, cultural knowledge and its interface with communicative competence and the development of strategic competence (VanPatten 2002, 107).

From the Finnish perspective, one of the first kick-off events to promote communicative language teaching was an international conference at Aulanko in 1984, sponsored by the Council of Europe (e.g., Tella 1984; 1985), which helped promote communicative language teaching among Finnish language educators. This tendency towards communicative language teaching also led to a stronger emphasis on using integrative tests, with a view to communicative tasks. Admittedly, caution against CLT was also presented in the literature (e.g., Swan 1985a; 1985b), especially towards the position of grammar in language syllabi.

Two other emphases should be mentioned: co-operative learning and elaboration. Both have had an important and beneficial impact on FLE, especially in the 1990s. Co-operative learning was first introduced into Finland in its Johnsonian format (e.g., Johnson & Johnson 1975) by Professor Viljo Kohonen (e.g., 1988) in the late 1980s, and was to become one of the leading innovations within Finnish FLE. Elaboration was developed by Dr. Irene Kristiansen (e.g., 1993) as one of the major approaches to build up learners’ vocabulary by using techniques and practices solidly based on psychological research.

In evaluation, using translation as a test technique started dwindling in the late 1960s, though they still play a minor role, especially when used in connection with functional interpretation in microdialogues, for instance. Audiolingualism favoured analytical tests, which were progressively subverted by more integrative and communicative testing in the 1990s. The following steps include process evaluation, while only products were assessed earlier. Process evaluation emphasises the importance of the process itself, for instance in process writing. Other forms of evaluation include self-evaluation, which has been developed systematically in Finland, and continuous assessment, anticipating lifelong or lifebroad learning. Portfolios—whether printed or digital—represent some of the latest instruments in this multi-faceted chain of evaluation.

Educational technology (ET) has always been part of the FL teacher’s life. Pen and paper, along with blackboard (very often green at the moment), are still valid and robust teach-
ing tools. Starting around the 1960s, ET involved different kinds of recorders and the notorious “language lab”, which was closely related to the philosophy of learning as seen through audiolingualism and behaviourism. Radio and TV, as well as video recorders (VCRs), have enriched the language teacher’s technical arsenal. Since the early 1980s, microcomputers started to make their way into the classrooms. In the mid-to-late 1990s, the Internet and the World Wide Web, especially in the form of e-mail, started to be used to a progressively greater degree. Even so, many believe that the real breakthrough of ICTs (information and communication technologies) is still to come.

The final category in Table 1 deals with language errors and how language teachers have reacted to them over the past 40 years. Many of the teachers who are over 50 remember the notorious “minus 9 points”, namely, the gravest error one could ever make in a language test. This stage was closely related to the grammar-translation method and the audiolingual approach, when errors were regarded as deviations from the correct linguistic norms, and therefore had to be treated with a negative attitude. Briefly, errors, mistakes and even slips of the tongue were to be avoided at all cost. Intellectually, it is interesting to note how completely this conception has changed, once language educators started realising that errors belong to the learning process, represent certain developmental stages of one’s interlanguage, and that errors are inevitable and even desirable, because all learners, including teachers, can learn and profit from them. This is more or less where FLE is in 2004. Errors are a natural part of the teaching–studying–learning process.

Most language teachers are highly aware of the very profound changes that have taken place over the past few decades in FLE. Thus, we should now turn our eyes towards the future and start imagining what might happen next. In this visualising and envisioning process, the instruments of the futures research presented earlier can come in handy. The main argument of this article, in the final analysis, is that each and every language specialist and teacher educator should be (made) conscious of the various futures we might have ahead. This article aims at visualising some weak signals as examples of what can be done when promoting future FLE practices.

7 Based on Our Past, What Next?

In the previous chapter, I tried to summarise some of the trends that have taken place in FLE since the 1950s. Now, it is time for us to think ahead, while remaining grounded in what FL teachers and educators do at present. I will pinpoint some trends that can be seen, and which are transmittable in our work as FL educators. Some of these trends relate to the nature of communication itself (authentic, genuine, real-time, dialogic and technology-facilitated, for instance), while others take up the learner’s increased task of autonomy, collaboration, initiative-taking, responsibility-assuming, distributed or shared expertise and shared cognition. Hay (1993) advertises a post-modern educational environment in which students are released from the discursive hegemony of the school as objects, and empower themselves as subjects. This also means that students have gained increased control over their learning environment, and indicates a reciprocal decrease in modern educational authority (Hay 1993, 618).
But let us now consider the same dimensions as above, starting with the conceptions of learning and advancing towards the treatment of errors, with a view geared towards the future.

1. Conceptions of Learning

| Socio-constructivism; socio- and interculturalism |

While it was the major conception of learning in the 1990s, constructivism has been gradually replaced by socio-constructivism, which underscores the dynamic nature of the group and argues that we always best learn with others. One of the latest developments seems to be a shift toward socio- and interculturalism (e.g., Lantolf 2000; Säljö 2000), the two having part of their spiritual source in Bruner’s ideas of culturalism. To Bruner’s (1990; 1996) way of thinking, culturalism implies the societal method of transferring, storing and developing a symbolism common to all members of a cultural society. Individual people’s minds are modelled by culture in a legion of ways that take place in people’s minds, but also arise from the culture where they have been originally created. This way, meanings founded on knowledge and communication create the basis for intercultural communication.

At the same time, we must understand that the primary question is not one of the absolute supremacy of socio-constructivism or socio-culturalism; rather, in our teaching, studying and learning practices, there are still a lot of behaviouristic “relics”, some of which remain quite necessary.10

2. Theory of Language

| Ecological “theories”; affordance; language as intellectual partner, context-creator, an empowering mediator |

From among the various groups of FL learning and SL acquisition theories (cf. e.g., Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991, 220—295), an ecological perspective has recently been promoted. As van Lier (2000, 245) puts it, “[a]n ecological approach to language learning questions some basic assumptions that lie behind most of the rationalist and empiricist theories and practices that dominate in our field, and offers fresh ways of looking at some old questions that have been around for a long time.” van Lier further argues that ecology is “a fruitful way to understand and build on the legacy that Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and also their American contemporaries Peirce, Mead, and Dewey, left for us” (van Lier 2000, 245).

One of the most interesting features of an ecological perspective is embedded in the notion of affordance, which has been defined by Gibson (1979) as a “reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment” (cited in van Lier 2000, 252). In FLE in general and in SLA in particular, the corresponding term has long

10.Cf. Tella’s (1993b) argument of teaching standard letter-writing patterns quickly and almost behaviouristically before going constructivist, when entering uncharted domains of knowledge, such as letter-writing in electronic communication.
been ‘input’, which, during the period of audiolingualism for instance, led to very restricted lexis being offered to primary school language learners, as it was determined that they would not be able to learn more than, say, 10 new lexical items per lesson. This was the principle that was followed in many teaching materials as late as the 1980s, though, little by little, it was transformed into the construct of ‘intake’, very much thanks to the principles of the notion of mediation, relying more and more on the learner’s inner capacity to adopt substantially larger amounts of lexis, for instance. VanPatten (2002, 109) defines ‘intake’ as “the result of input processing [as] a filtered set of the input”. In current pedagogical thinking, it is paramount to allow FL learners and users to control the intake themselves. It should not be regulated by the textbook, the curriculum or, worse still, by the teacher. In suggestopaedia and in many intensive teaching methods, an extensive intake has always been allowed. In a suggestopaedic language course, one might easily count several hundred, even 2,000 new lexical items in a 3-hour-long learning session.

Now, affordance is a new way to look into this same issue. According to ecological theory, any language learning environment is full of affordances, “demands and requirements, opportunities and limitations, rejections and invitations, enablements and constraints” (van Lier 2000, 253) to which the language learner has access. As in the metaphor that is often used by van Lier (2000, 253), one might justifiably argue that “knowledge of language for a human is like knowledge of the jungle for an animal”.

Another feature that might have an impact on future language learning and on the way we envision language teaching consists of seeing the language from a wider perspective than before. Foreign languages were once known—at least in Finland—as “instrumental subjects” (välineaineita). Tella (1999) has argued that foreign languages are much more than simple tools or means of instruction, because they also serve as intellectual partners and help us to construct and maintain new educational contexts. In this interpretation, cultural aspects are important at all levels, regardless of the age of the students (cf. e.g., Mustaparta & Tella, A. 1999, 37). The third level beyond the instructional use of language is the role of an empowering mediator, where language mediates between the teacher, content matter and culture, represented by these three entities on the one hand, and the community of learners and the learning tasks on the other. (For a more detailed analysis, see Tella 1999; Tella & Vähäpassi 2000.)

The new framework curriculum for Finnish upper secondary schools (LOPS 2003) was ratified in mid-August 2003 and will be implemented as of August 1, 2005. It is interesting to read the way in which foreign languages are described in this document: “A foreign language as a school subject is a skill subject, a knowledge subject and a cultural subject” (translated by Tella; in Finnish: Vieras kieli oppiaineena on taito-, tieto- ja kulttuuritaito). This kind of interpretation of language is very much up-to-date and gives an ample enough conception of what foreign languages really are.
3. Curriculum

As mentioned above, the latest nationwide framework curriculum for Finnish upper secondary schools (LOPS 2003) will be implemented in 2005. Some initial interpretations refer to the fact that this recent curriculum is a step towards a Herbartian Lehrplan, as subject matter is again being defined. At the same time, however, this new framework curriculum seems to pay enough attention to a dual approach, which is at once both individualistic and collaborative. On a more general level, present emphases in curriculum development could be called communal (yhteisöllinen), as they are also expected to favour the improvement of organisational structures. This communal emphasis might well be one of the indicators of the future as far as curriculum development is concerned.

On the whole, one might argue that curriculum developers and curriculum designers have not been very active for the past 10 years, excluding the official framework curriculum development. On the other hand, all schools and educational institutions have lately developed a strategy of using ICTs, as mandated by the Finnish Ministry of Education. At its best, this kind of work has contributed to the emergence of knowledge-strategic thinking and planning, which is expected to merge with classical curriculum development, even at the school-wide level. This is one of the background factors in this article, because knowledge-strategic thinking is one way to envision the future by using some of the instruments described earlier in this article.

4. Methodological Approach and Teaching Practices

When analysing the methodological approach as it is implemented in Finnish schools, I feel tempted to describe it as eclectic, albeit critical. No one single method is currently being used in our FL classrooms. On the contrary, a lot of various elements adapted, borrowed and modified from different methodological approaches can be found and identified. These elements come from numerous sources, which makes it difficult to analyse the present picture. At the same time, however, it is apposite to state that this picture is multi-faceted, varied and shows high professionalism in many respects.

Some of the latest developments include the change from co-operative learning to collaborative learning, and then to communal learning and communalism, dialogic and cross-cultural communication, pedagogic drama and FLE enhanced with the latest educational applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Not all teachers, naturally, are using all of these different approaches; yet, it may be fair to acknowledge that Finnish FL classrooms owe a lot to the variety of paths already trodden, uncharted or not. Undoubtedly, some earlier approaches are valid as well, including the elaboration and suggestopaedic approaches, mentioned earlier in this article\(^\text{11}\).
All of this demands a lot from FL teachers and teacher educators. It would be a tempting idea to start analysing the different roles of FL teachers when facing these different approaches, but that discussion lies outside the scope of this article.

A few words, though, concerning the approaches indicated above. Co-operative learning has changed in the direction of increased collaboration, communalism and collegial culture. Co-operative learning was indeed a major innovation, but in many teachers’ minds it manifested only through certain classroom techniques, without a deeper image or understanding of the principles behind it. One might say that further developments, such as a structural approach, group investigation and complex instruction, better mirror the present state of the art. (For more analysis, see e.g., Vähäpassi 1998; Vahtivuori, Wager & Passi 1999; Sahlberg & Sharan 2001; Tella et al. 2001, 203—211; Kumpulainen 2002; Kohonen 2003.)

The Common European Framework (CEF 2001; Viitekehys 2004) has also become a central document at the moment, and has already played an important role in planning European language teaching. It actually embodies the pedagogical philosophy of the Council of Europe as it has evolved over the past 30 years (Byram 2003, 69). The CEF does not define any particular methodology that should be used in FLE, but it certainly provides a framework within which to reflect on teaching. The CEF has had a clear impact on the newly revised Finnish curricula, in both basic and upper secondary education (e.g., LOPS 2003; POPS 2004; also Kauppinen et al. 2003). The recent work on setting language levels and the European Language Portfolio (e.g., Hildén 2002; Kohonen 2002) are good examples of the developmental work that has been done to promote language teaching, studying, learning and assessment.

In the Finnish context, some other recent developments include an emphasis on cultural aspects (e.g., Kaikkonen & Kohonen 2000), dialogic communication, teaching–studying–learning environments (e.g., Tella & Mononen-Aaltonen 1998) and pedagogic drama (e.g., Mäkinen 2002). Likewise, FLE has been enhanced with media education and new educational applications of information and communication technologies (see Point 6 below).

One interesting issue remains: whether to continue resorting to divide language proficiency into four separate skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), as has traditionally been the case since the 1960s. Interestingly enough, one of the recent policy documents published in the United States (Standards 1999) moves away from a framework of four skills, “where the focus is on language as a system to be acquired, and substituted goal areas (communication, cultures, connections, comparisons and communities12 ), when the focus is on what can be accomplished through a foreign language” (Byram 2003, 63). In the CEF (2001), the division into various skills is mostly maintained, though

11.To see an up-to-date version of these tendencies, take a look at [http://www.helsinki.fi/~tella/postkommkielenopetus.pdf]

12.The five “standards” for FL learning (“what students of foreign languages should know and be able to do at the end of high school”) are: (i) communicate in languages other than English, (ii) gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures, (iii) connect with other disciplines and acquire information, (iv) develop insights into the nature of language and culture, and (v) participate in multilingual communities at home and around the world. (Standards 1999; cited in Kramsch 2002, 65).
it is somewhat modified, as it adopts an approach based on communication in general and on functions and notions in particular. It does not recommend any particular theory or conception of learning, but rather states that “there is at present no sufficiently strong, research-based consensus on how learners learn” (CEF 2001, 139).

5. Evaluation and Testing

The emergence of the Common European Framework (CEF 2001) has also had a substantial impact on evaluation and testing. Basically, the CEF (2001)

“… provides a common basis for the elaboration 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. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners’ progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis.” (CEF 2001, 1)

The CEF scales of language proficiency are, in fact, included in the latest Finnish framework curricula (e.g., LOPS 2003; POPS 2004), though the original skill level scales have been substantially elaborated upon and empirically validated in the Finnish context. More intermediate levels have been added in order to provide the teachers, students and various other decision-makers with more accurate instruments.

It is important to note that the CEF scales of language proficiency have different functions in the upper secondary curriculum from the functions in the basic education curriculum (POPS 2004). In the upper secondary curriculum (LOPS 2003), the skill level indicates the target to aim for. It does not indicate any specific school grade or matriculation examination mark. In basic education, however, the skill levels are used as criteria for good skills (hyvä osaaminen; mark 8). Mark 8 is estimated to be achieved by half of the age population. Using the skill levels this way is expected to unify assessment, especially at the conclusion of basic education.

The CEF (2001) lends itself to three main ways to be used for evaluation. First, it can be used to specify the content of tests and examinations. Second, it may help to state the criteria for the attainment of a learning objective, both in relation to the assessment of a particular spoken or written performance, and in relation to continuous teacher-, peer- or self-assessment. And third, it is the basis for describing the levels of proficiency in existing tests and examinations, thus enabling comparisons to be made across different systems of qualifications. (CEF 2001, 19.)

The developmental work on the European Language Portfolio is directly linked to the common framework scales of language proficiency. As the CEF puts it,
“[t]he Portfolio would make it possible for learners to document their progress towards plurilingual competence by recording learning experiences of all kinds over a wide range of languages, much of which would otherwise be unattested and unrecognised. It is intended that the Portfolio will encourage learners to include a regularly updated statement of their self-assessed proficiency in each language. It will be of great importance for the credibility of the document for entries to be made responsibly and transparently.” (CEF 2001, 20)

At the national level, in addition to adopting the CEF skills level scales, a recent movement has been towards sample-based examinations in Grades 6 and 9 of basic education. The schools that have been selected to hold these examinations will also be informed of their own results—but not of the results of other schools. These examinations are intended to give school authorities, parents, teachers and students alike more information about the national level of skills at a particular stage of schooling. This is an important step in national school policy, as Finland has thus far been one of the countries where there has been no nationwide test system in place at the end of basic education.

6. Educational Technology

Educational technology, including educational applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and media education, is an area where rapid changes are the norm. In FLE, much educational technology has traditionally been used, so language teachers should be more than ready to tackle even the latest ICTs and rapidly growing mobile technologies. Some “low-tech” applications, such as document cameras, are on their way to replacing classical overhead projectors. Video and CD-ROM recorders are gradually being replaced by DVD players and recorders. Web radios and DivX movie players are on their way into people’s homes, and also into the FL classroom. The list of new technologies and applications seems endless and only shows us the astronomical speed at which technology is advancing. But how we use all these technologies in education is a different matter, if they are to be used at all.

As to the matter of ICTs, only a few major steps need be mentioned here. First, stand-alone computers have mostly been replaced by networked computers. Most computers are now logged on to the Internet, giving their users full access to the World Wide Web and all its services, such as e-mail, real-time chat and search machines. Second, a new technological infrastructure has emerged in the form of groupware programs (or IDLEs = integrated distributed learning environments), such as WebCT, BSCW, Blackboard, FLE and R5 Generation. These are technological platforms that some educators call learning environments. The common thing about them is that all registered persons logged on to an IDLE share a number of functions, such as a discussion forum, documents and a calendar. IDLEs are new kinds of repositories for saving, storing and retrieving information, but they also serve as forums for joint discussions and dialogues. Third, programs (“software”) are becoming more integrated, so more can be done with less. Instead of several separate programs, most “office packages” nowadays include every-
thing from brainstorming mind-mappers to finishing a printed product. Fourth, video conferencing in its different formats, as well as m-learning or mobile learning (Tella 2002; 2003), are now available to language educators as well.

In the near future, a number of things may happen. The Internet, as we know it, is probably approaching its end. It may collapse altogether or, most probably, it will be replaced by a more secure and high-performance net. Another option is a mobile Internet, enabled through the latest developments in mobile technologies. A grid net (hilaverkko) is another possibility, technologically. As far as language teachers are concerned, taking advantage of technology is related to how one is using it in pedagogically-appropriate ways. This is clearly a challenge for all of us.

I have pointed out (e.g., Tella 1997a; 1997b) a number of converging trends between FLE, multiculturalism and media education. One of them includes a shift in FLE from a closed system of language towards an open system of knowledge and communication. At the same time, in media education, there has been a tendency to move away from computer-based education (CBE) towards user-focused approaches and network-based education (NBE). Likewise, in FLE, the relatively narrow (albeit initially fruitful) notion of communicative competence has been expanded to communicative proficiency and intercultural proficiency. The Common European Framework (CEF 2001) speaks of ‘communicative language competences’, which are those that empower a person to act using specifically linguistic means. In media education, similarly, a shift can be witnessed from computer literacy to multimedia literacy and media proficiency (mediataito; Tella et al. 2001).

The potential of ICTs is important for FLE, as many of these technologies are clearly geared towards facilitating transnational or cross-cultural communication. Many of them also support language teachers’ work in different ways. Let us refer briefly to style and grammar checkers, mind-mapping programs, outliners, dictionaries and thesauruses on the web and off-line, automatic summarisers, automatic translation helpers on the web (admittedly in their infancy, but very robust already), e-books, language lessons, practical tips for FL teachers—the list is endless. Whether language educators are able and willing to profit from all of these ICTs to a substantial extent remains to be seen.

7. Treatment of Errors

| Language changes; native speaker vs. international speaker |

As mentioned earlier, the present train of thought considers language errors to be a natural part of the teaching–studying–learning process. In addition, more and more language educators have become cognisant of the fact that language changes all the time, and it takes quite a lot of energy to keep up with the changes. I argue that languages will change even more rapidly in the future, partly because of the manifold contacts people have with other cultures, both virtually and in face-to-face communication. Treating errors will then become a subtle issue; in a school context, in formal education, that is, certain deviations from established patterns of language use will certainly remain to be accounted for. One of the important aspects may arise from the status of the language spoken by native speakers as opposed to international speakers. More leniency should also be developed
towards authentic but non-standard use of language as witnessed through contemporary novels, films and press.

In conclusion, this chapter has dealt with some emphases and foci related to what we call the latest developments in FLE. Naturally, this has been a subjective choice of options. The idea was not to cover everything but to highlight some of the things that have apparently changed and that are still “on the move”.

Now it is time to look into the future from a different perspective, by integrating some of the ideas presented so far.

8 Language Teaching in 2020

Visions should be placed far away in the future, at 10 or more years from now. Otherwise they are too close to our present-day problems, needs and urgencies. All in all, setting visions does not equal enumerating our contemporary needs. In this light, thinking ahead as far as the year 2020 might give us a proper distance. As this is just a preliminary paper on the topic, no real summary of all tendencies will be given; rather, I present a tool, a grid, that I expect to help language educators to visualise the future by using a certain number of initial categories.\textsuperscript{13}

The grid is called a Future Grid (Table 2) and it can be modified to cover various areas of interest. This was the grid presented to some 20 language and media specialists, as they started envisioning what language teaching might be like in 2020.

Table 2. A Future Grid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
<th>Option 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value Basis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Integration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using One’s Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Picture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five categories were first modified to better reflect the work of a language teacher. A few new categories were added. So the new categories before the brainstorming sessions were: the student’s portrait; the language teacher’s portrait; challenges to our expertise; learning environment and technology; resources, financing and competition, and the world picture, the status quo in the world, attitudinal atmosphere and “driving forces”. The participants were given free hands—or free “minds”, rather—to foresee any possible world they could, without any initial constraints or limits.

\textsuperscript{13}I owe this particular grid to Dr. Anita Rubin, who gave a lecture on futures research in our visionary seminar as part of the Kielet Project co-run by the Research Centre for Foreign Language Education and the Media Education Centre of the University of Helsinki Department of Teacher Education in the spring of 2003. I felt tempted to call this chapter “Rubin’s Cube”, but then renamed it more traditionally.
Table 3. Language Teaching in 2020—Four Options Chosen by Some Language and Media Specialists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Fully Techno</th>
<th>GDR (“DDR”)</th>
<th>Ultimate Individualism</th>
<th>World Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Student’s portrait</td>
<td>Part of the technological world</td>
<td>Obedient rat</td>
<td>Looking for one’s own best</td>
<td>Technical expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Language teacher’s portrait</td>
<td>Virtual tutor</td>
<td>Directed from outside</td>
<td>Waifer, with a tray in his hand</td>
<td>Cultivated mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Challenges to our expertise</td>
<td>No challenges</td>
<td>Adaptability; uncritical attitude</td>
<td>Obligation to cope</td>
<td>Complete mastery of technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Learning environment and technology</td>
<td>Virtual world</td>
<td>Determined by central adminstration</td>
<td>Many alternative options available</td>
<td>Mediated through mobile technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Resources, financing and competition</td>
<td>Hard competition: prices down – society must pay</td>
<td>No competition: society subsidises</td>
<td>Enormous competition; sponsors</td>
<td>Basic needs secured: according to one’s ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) World picture, the status quo in the world, attitudinal atmosphere; “driving forces”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Everything for me, right now”</td>
<td>“It takes a village to raise a child”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Naturally, the language and media specialists’ views regarding four possible (or probable) futures are merely indicatory. Yet they might reveal a deeper understanding of some trends we can see some weak signals of at the moment. In my opinion, one of the most powerful methods of looking ahead is the “experiencing method” (eläytymismenetelmä) as presented by Eskola (1997, 138). The grid in Table 3 is a good example of reflections gathered this way. It is my intention to continue to reflect on the future of FLE along the lines illustrated in this grid.

9 Conclusions

Foreign language education has had a colourful past, but it is bound to face a more colourful future, once language educators start envisioning and visualising different possible worlds in which to teach, study and learn languages. All this activity does not happen in a vacuum, of course. As Byram (2003) has shown, FLE is closely linked to broader societal structures, such as national education systems, the creation of the human capital required for a country’s economy, national identity, and the promotion of equality.

Envisioning the future of FLE is undoubtedly an example of post-modern education in the spirit of Parker (1997). It is post-modern in the sense that it does not enumerate facts, nor does it define some facts as correct and others as wrong or set strict aims for learning situations. It is post-modern, in the positive sense of the word, in providing language learners with different narratives or genres to support their growth, while giving them access to a rich collection of linguistic affordances.

FLE has witnessed a constant process of developments in a number of areas, some of which have been used as the ‘indicators’ above, in order to allow us to reassess past and
present teaching, studying and learning practices. Looking into the future also involves looking backwards, with critical eyes.

10 References


Downloadable at [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents_intro/common_framework.html]


[http://www.helsinki.fi/~tella/118teknohumaani.html]


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