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BOOK REVIEW

Rollin M, *Enseignement des langues en France: Textes, discours, enjeux*. Montpellier: Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2025, 111 pp., ISBN: 978 2 36781 527 5.
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Enseignement des langues en France : Textes, discours, enjeux investigates the contemporary teaching of *langues vivantes étrangères et regionales* (foreign and regional living languages–LVER) in 21st century France. The author, Marc Rollin, draws on his twenty years of experience as a secondary school teacher to explore the representation of languages and language teaching in official texts of the French Ministry of National Education, from 2005 to the present day. The book is based on his doctoral thesis and aims to provide readers with an understanding of current features of language teaching in France. For his analysis, Rollin uses a corpus of around 200 documents, incorporating legal texts (such as *lois*, *décrets* and *circulaires*), administrative directives, reports, curricula, press releases and public discourse of Ministers of National Education. The range of documents allows a comprehensive picture of LVER teaching in France to be painted, providing a trove of valuable information on contexts, methods, pedagogies and objectives of language teaching. It also, significantly, explores the representations of the different languages—how they are discussed in official texts, and what utility and meaning is ascribed to them. The book consists of three chapters, addressing structures of language teaching, language education policy, and pedagogy.

The first chapter investigates the current state of LVER teaching in France. A brief history of language teaching in French schools is provided, identifying shifting priorities, followed by a discussion of current methods of teaching. In this section, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) emerges as a key point of reference for the book, and some criticisms of it are highlighted. The twenty languages[1] whose teaching is examined in the work are then introduced. Rollin highlights each language's distinct context and representations in the corpus—for example, some languages are presented as linked to the labour market and globalization, while others are more associated with the study of foreign or local cultures. Chapter 2 looks more specifically at current language education policy, examining several themes arising from the corpus. Definitions and the roles of various institutions are explored, alongside the objectives of language teaching as stated in the corpus. The focus on language teaching as a tool for the job market is

[1]The work examines documents pertaining to ten foreign languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish) and ten regional languages (Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, "créole", Gallo, "langues mélanésiennes", "langue régionale d'Alsace et des pays mosellans", "occitan – langue d'Oc" and Tahitian (pp. 99-100). Rollin notes the contested nature of the term "régionale", using it as a general term for convenience. Some languages are grouped together by the Ministry of National Education—for example, "langues mélanésiennes" refers to Ajië, Drehu, Nengone and Paicî.

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discussed (particularly as linked to European and international mobility), followed by the notion of European citizenship, linked in turn to intercultural competency. The third chapter focuses on pedagogical questions regarding language teaching and assessment, addressing five key themes: authenticity; oral vs written skills; tasks and actions in language classes; interdisciplinarity; and the role of assessment. Rollin charts the changing perspectives on these pedagogical themes over time, finding that official texts are often vague in their suggestions, providing ambiguous instructions to educators.

In justifying the timeframe of the selected corpus, Rollin invokes the work of the Council of Europe on languages, and in particular, the publication of the CEFR in 2001. Recognizing its place as the key framework for French language education policy, the book often refers to concepts found in the CEFR—such as the action-oriented approach (a form of task-based learning focused on realistic communication and student agency), plurilingualism, and the notion of the learner as a social actor. For readers familiar with the framework, the book will be an extremely valuable resource, providing a thorough analysis of its implementation in the French school context. Throughout the book, there are references to the action-oriented approach, whose significance and implementation in the classroom is explored in Chapter 3, with Rollin raising the question of whether tasks described as action-oriented are perceived as authentic and meaningful by students. The broader rationale of language learning is often highlighted in the corpus, with a significant focus on the benefits of languages for employability and mobility. Advocating for languages not to be perceived solely as an economic tool, Rollin argues that the predominance of English marginalizes other languages, potentially leading to uniformity rather than genuine cultural diversity.

The distinct contexts of various languages offered in French schools are well highlighted by Rollin. English is, unsurprisingly, the most widely offered foreign language, presented in the corpus as a crucial language for the labour market in an increasingly globalized world. Rollin identifies the seeming contradiction between policies which seek to further grow the teaching of English—the only language present at every level of LVER teaching—with a push for linguistic diversity coming from French industry. Of note is the approach to the so-called 'rare' languages (such as Chinese and Arabic), a term which Rollin critiques. In the corpus, there is a significant focus on cultural elements associated with these languages, as well as links to migrant communities in France. Addressing the regional languages, Rollin traces the evolution of syllabi over the examined period, identifying a shift in the way they are presented: now afforded more legitimacy and linked less exclusively to local contexts. Rollin's examination of how language policy manifests (sometimes differently) in the teaching of each of these languages is a key strength of the work.

While concentrating on the past two decades of LVER teaching, the book is very future focused. Highly contemporary contexts—such as the links between language education and ecology, and the use of technology for language learning—are prominent in the work. Throughout the text, Rollin provides many detailed recommendations for future administration of language teaching, such as a more pluralistic offering of languages and a clarification of certain concepts in the policy corpus. Drawing on his long experience as a secondary school teacher, these recommendations are another key strength of the work, bridging the gap between

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policies and the real-world experiences of teachers. Rollin states that the text aims to be a resource for teachers, researchers and students to understand education policy and, in particular, the impacts of the European focus on language teaching. It very much succeeds in doing so, providing a thorough analysis of the corpus documents, and identifying shortcomings, tensions, and inconsistencies. Looking to the future, Rollin calls for a collective approach to the development of future education policy, drawing together teachers, disciplinary associations, trade unions and sociolinguists to rise to some of the challenges identified in the text. The necessity of rising to these challenges is clear. As Rollin reminds us, the teaching of a range of languages and cultures is a sign of the 'vitalité culturelle' of a society (p. 87). The benefits of language learning for young people are untold, and through works such as this book, language teaching can be strengthened, fostering the development of engaged learners with a sense of curiosity about other cultures and the world around them.

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