ALADIN

Case Studies about Heritage Language Teaching in France and Germany

TEACHING ARABIC IN FRANCE

Why does Arabic have such an image problem in France? According to practitioners, researchers and teachers who participated in the documentary Mauvaise langue (Bad language) created by Nabil Wakim et Jaouhar Nadi(50), Arabic is a language that is not necessarily highly valued by the general public in France. Rather than seeing it as a way of opening to the world it is rather considered to be a fallback. According to the National Ministry of Education, Arabic is considered to be a 'rare language', only taught in three percent of the country's schools, positioning itself behind Chinese and Russian. This is despite the fact that there are over 4 million Arabic speakers in France, making it the 2nd most spoken language after French. There are various reasons for this so-called 'image problem', which will be addressed in this text, including the historical context, societal narratives as well as legislations and reforms that have been exacerbating the problem. The consequences of this 'image problem' are far reaching and need to be addressed.

The historical roots of the current situation date back to the 1960s, the end of the French colonial empire and the post world war II period, marked by rapid industrial and economic growth. The French government recruited workers from Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal), North Africa (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia), and later sub-Saharan Africa and Turkey. Migration from Algeria was particularly significant because of its status as a French colony until 1962. Algerians were considered French citizens and migrated in large numbers to fill industrial jobs. Due to the economic slowdown in the 1970s and rising unemployment the government introduced policies to restrict

Collection resources for local worskshops in the first ALADIN Co-desinging Lab (Berlin, 2024)

(53) https://www.imarabe.org/fr/agenda/cinema/mauvaise-langue

immigration, though many workers had already settled permanently in France and brought their families. The problem they encountered was that the 2nd generation did not speak the language of their parents which has led to a flourishment of Arabic courses in France.

Due to the high levels of exclusion and demand for assimilation, many parents did not teach their children their mother tongue. Instead they put more emphasis on teaching them 'proper' French, in order for them to 'integrate well'. The government set up a system of optional learning of foreign languages in schools in order to aid the integration of immigrants' children in their parents' countries of origin, and therefore facilitate the departure of these families. At a later stage particularly two events have had substantial impact on the stereotypes that became attached to Arabic - namely 9.11. and the 2015 Paris attacks. According to Nabil Wakim, Arabic came to be seen as the language of Islam, of terrorism and therefore a dangerous language. In consequence, people stopped speaking Arabic in public, and also to their children as a survival instinct. Whole generations have been struggling with feelings of alienation, being out of place, excluded from conversations with their families, at the same time as being reduced to Arabic, by the greater public. People like the artist Mariam Benbakkar talk about a feeling of incompleteness or split between two cultures: "I am perceived as Moroccan, but I don't speak Arabic, which makes me feel illegitimate, as if I wasn't complete."(51) In consequence, teachers have highlighted that many parents discourage their children to opt for Arabic. They abandoned the idea of teaching their children their mother tongue due to fears of exclusion by the greater society, which pushed them even further to abandon their language.

(54) https://www.beurfm.net/mauvaise-langue-diffuse-sur-france-2-un-documentaire-pour-briser-le-tabou-de-la-langue-arabe-en-france

According to the linguist Nisrine Al Zahre, director of the Centre for Arabic Language and Civilisations at the Arab World Institute in Paris, instead of viewing Arabic as a language with a rich cultural history, "in the collective imagination, Arabic is the language of the former colonised people and immigrants from the Maghreb who came to work in France; it is in a way the language of the poor."(**52**) In consequence, it is never celebrated by the public, but rather always problematised. Vallaud-Belkacem argues that, "this language continues to be perceived as the Trojan horse of the Great Replacement, of this fantasised invasion, of this Islamism that scares." She recalls the challenges she faced in 2016 when she tried to promote Arabic in the French educational system and the wider society in general. Vallaud-Belkacem recalls the violent opposition of right-wing politicians to her proposal: "I was accused of wanting to impose the 'language of the Koran' on all French children," she explains, lamenting a lack of understanding of the diversity of Arabic speakers, who also include atheists, Christians and many others.

Today, France has only c.150 Arabic teachers for the entire secondary school education system. In fact, the number of CAPES (Certificat d'aptitude au professorat de l'enseignement du second degré) offered, in other words the Certificate of aptitude for secondary school teachers in 2024 was only seven, in comparison to 784 for English, 287 for Spanish and 165 for German. As a result, there is limited access to classes, teachers and resources that are mainly concentrated on the main cities and neighbourhoods mostly inhabited by people with a migration background. According to Wakim, "there are entire [regions] where no Arabic classes are available because of the lack of willing on behalf of the Department for Education, chief education officers and principals." He believes that some school directors do not open Arabic courses intentionally so as not to attract too many

(55) https://www.imarabe.org/fr/agenda/rencontres-et-debats/langue-arabe-quelles-pratiques-en-france-aujourd-hui

students from the lower classes. The element of class needs to be highlighted here since according to Wakim it is particularly low-income families that are more perceptible to the degraded image suffered by Arabic in France. In consequence, parents discourage their children to opt for Arabic and the continuity of the classes is not further ensured. Linguist Al Zahre explains that "more well-off Arabic-speaking circles do not suffer from it because they believe that they have assets to assert. They are also more involved in transmission." **(53)**

On the note of further marginalisation of the Arabic language on a political level, the ELCO (Teaching of Language and Culture of Origin) system, which taught languages like Arabic, Turkish, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and Serbian to 80,000 primary school students annually (1.2% of the student population), was terminated by French President Emmanuel Macron in October 2020. Macron justified the decision by citing concerns over foreign teachers, particularly Arabic-speaking ones, who lacked French proficiency and were outside the control of France's National Education ministry. He suggested that some teachings were incompatible with French laws and values. The announcement coincided with Macron's campaign against "Islamist separatism," aiming to reduce foreign influence on Islam in France. This effort culminated in the 2021 "law consolidating the principles of the republic," (54) which broadened grounds for closing mosques, introduced a "separatism" offence, and faced criticism for targeting Muslim communities.

(56) Loi n°2021-1109 du 24 août 2021 confortant le respect des principes de la République dite « loi CRPR »: https://www.seine-maritime.gouv.fr/index.php/Actions-de-l-Etat/Securite-et-Defense/Securite-publique/Lutte-contre-la-radicalisation-et-le-terrorisme/Loi-du-24-aout-2021-confortant-le-respect-des-principes-de-la-Republique-loi-CRPR/Loi-n-2021-1109-du-24-aout-2021-confortant-le-respect-des-principes-de-la-Republique-loi-CRPR

Moreover, there is a lack of qualified teachers since many Arabic teachers lack formal pedagogical training and rely on personal language skills. Due to insufficient resources and materials, such as textbooks and audiovisual aids, are often outdated or insufficiently adapted to the French educational context. An additional challenge faced by teachers is the marginalisation of the Arabic language in the curriculum resulting in less funding programmes and Arabic being offered as a secondary or extracurricular language rather than part of the core curriculum. Moreover, teachers of Arabic in France often lack access to professional training programs or pedagogical support specifically tailored to teaching Arabic as a foreign language. Bureaucratic hurdles include: difficulty obtaining certification or recognition for teaching Arabic, the need to adapt to varying curricular demands (no universally standardized Arabic curriculum in France), limited support from school administrations, particularly in institutions where Arabic is a low-priority subject.

In addition, teachers must carefully navigate cultural and religious topics to avoid controversy in secular public schools. Teachers may also feel pressure to avoid certain topics due to societal perceptions or institutional policies. This is all on top of needing to contend with negative stereotypes surrounding the Arabic language due to its association with migration, Islam, or political tensions.

Main challenges faced by institutions teaching Arabic in France include socio-political challenges due to a high stigmatisation and stereotypes which has already been mentioned earlier.

(57) L'arabe, une langue taboue en France? https://www.leconomistemaghrebin.com/2025/01/02/larabe-une-langue-taboue-en-france/

An additional challenge is secularism and cultural sensitivities due to its link to religious educational studies, which can create tension or misinterpretation of the language's broader cultural and historical significance. In addition, due to insufficient public funding, some institutions rely on funding from foreign governments (e.g., Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia), which can lead to concerns about external influence on curricula. Other institutional challenges include a lack of integration into the public education system, shortage of qualified teachers, fragmented approaches to teaching Arabic, limited resources and materials. Administrative and bureaucratic hurdles include: insufficient certification and standardized tests, curricular inflexibility, policies surrounding language education in France prioritize European languages, creating barriers to the expansion of Arabic programs.

Funding for Arabic teaching in France comes from a combination of domestic government support (French Ministry of Education), specialised institutions such as Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), foreign government contributions (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Saudi-Arabia and the Gulf countries, Qatar Foundation, Emirati cultural initiatives, or the Kingdom of Morocco's Ministry of Education), private organizations such as Institut du Monde Arabe (IMA), religious institutions such as mosques and islamic centres, community efforts, international organisations (UNESCO, EU) and tuition fees. However, the level of funding and institutional support varies significantly across different types of programs, with public education often underfunding Arabic compared to other foreign languages. Due to limited public funding there is a strong dependence on foreign governments. Expanding and diversifying funding sources could improve the availability and quality of Arabic instruction in France.

In fact, she argued that because it is so poorly supported by the state, and therefore outside its 'control', most language courses are provided by communities and associations, or religious groups.

Practical challenges for the learners of Arabic include: divergence between spoken and written Arabic, pronunciation and phonetics, Arabic script, grammar complexity and addressing diverse learner profiles (heritage and non-heritage learners). An additional challenge is the difficulty to choose which variety of Arabic to teach. In France, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (al-fuṣḥā) is the primary variation of Arabic taught in schools and universities. MSA is the standardized and formal version of Arabic used in writing, media, and formal speech across the Arab world. This is despite the fact that Maghrebi Arabic dialects (particularly Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian Arabic) are more widely spoken informally in France, however, they are generally learned at home or in communities rather than taught formally in schools.

Cube game to practice writing in Arabic, Sindiane's workshop (Marseille, 2024)

LIST OF THE MOST IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONS/ORGANIZATIONS TEACHING ARABIC IN FRANCE

1. Public educational system: secondary schools (collèges and lycées) (LV2 and LV3), primary schools

2. Higher Education (Universities)

- Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) (Paris): https://www.inalco.fr/
- Sorbonne University (Paris): https://lettres.sorbonne-universite.fr/faculte-des-lettres/ufr/ufr-etudes-arabes-et-hebraiques
- Université Lumière Lyon 2: https://www.univ-lyon2.fr/licence-2-langues-litteratures-et-civilisations-etrangeres-et-regionales-arabe
- Aix Marseille University: https://allsh.univ-amu.fr/fr/formation/diplomes-etablissement/du-langues-cultures-arabe#pacome-connaissances-a-acquerir-7876
- Université de Strasbourg: https://etudes-arabes.unistra.fr/
- Université de Bordeaux: https://formations.u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr/fr/catalogue-des-formations/licence-XA/licence-arabe-KQM34F91.html
- Université de Montpellier: https://www.univ-montp3.fr/fr/formations/offre-de-formation/diplome-d-universite-niveau-licence-1/arts-lettres-langues-ALL/diplome-d-universite-langue-et-civilisation-arabes-hnd95u9g.html
- Université de Toulouse: https://www.univ-tlse2.fr/accueil/formation-insertion/licence-arabe

3. Religious and cultural institutions

- Arab World Institute (Paris): http://www.imarabe.org/fr
- Centre Musulman de Marseille: https://cmm-marseille.fr/
- L'Institut Musulman des Bleuets: https://asso-bleuets.com/la-madrassah-des-bleuets/
- Mosquée des Cèdres Marseille: https://www.facebook.com/mosqueedescedres13
- Mosquée Arrahma Marseille Busserine: https://www.facebook.com/mosqueearrahmabusserine

4. Private Language Schools (Marseille)

- ALAM: https://www.arabe-academy.fr/
- Atout Langues Sud: https://www.courslangueetrangere.com/arabe/
- American Center: https://www.americancenter.fr/details-cours+d+arabe+tous+niveaux+a+marseille+et+aix-en-provence-294.html
- CIMA: http://ccima.free.fr/
- Levantine Institute: https://www.levantineinstitute.com/marseille
- Centre International de Langues: https://www.centreinternationaldeslangues.fr/cours-de-langues/arabe/
- Community schools and heritage programmes (Consulates of Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia)

TEACHING HUNGARIAN IN FRANCE

The presence of the Hungarian language in France is linked to historical migration waves, educational initiatives, and cultural exchanges between the two countries. Although not as widely represented as other heritage languages such as Arabic, Spanish, or Portuguese, Hungarian occupies a specific niche within France's multilingual landscape. This article explores some historicl element and the current situation of Hungarian language education in France, the challenges it faces, and its future prospects within the framework of heritage and foreign language teaching.

Hungarian migration to France has occurred in multiple waves, most notably after World War I, following the Treaty of Trianon (1920), and after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. These migration waves brought intellectuals, political refugees, and workers to France, contributing to the Hungarian-speaking community.(**58**)

Despite being a relatively small community, Hungarian expatriates and their descendants have sought to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity. The need for Hungarian language education arose primarily within the framework of community-driven initiatives and later gained limited institutional recognition.

Unlike major immigrant languages, Hungarian was not included in the Enseignement des Langues et Cultures d'Origine (ELCO) agreements established by France in the 1970s. Instead, Hungarian language instruction has historically been organized through:

(58) Hárs, Ágnes. Hungarian Migration Trends in the 20th Century, Budapest: CEU Press, 2008.

- Community Schools and Associations: Hungarian cultural centers and associations, such as the Association des Hongrois de France, have played a crucial role in maintaining language instruction for younger generations.(**59**)
- Embassy and Consular Support: The Hungarian government, through its embassy in France, has periodically supported Hungarian language and cultural education, often in collaboration with community initiatives.(**60**)
- Private and Supplementary Education: Some private institutions and international schools in Paris and other major cities have provided Hungarian language classes on a demand basis.(**61**

THE RECENT SITUATION OF HUNGARIAN AS HERITAGE LANGUAGE

In a study, published in 2014, we have resumed the situation of Hungarian learning based on our experience in working in collaboration with local associations in the Parisian region:

> Teaching Hungarian as a heritage language presents several unique challenges stemming from its linguistic characteristics and its status as a lesser-known language. Hungarian belongs to the category of so-called "small languages," which are spoken by relatively few people outside their native countries. Unlike global languages such as English, Spanish, or French, Hungarian is not perceived as offering significant professional advantages. As a result, most learners of Hungarian have a personal motivation tied to family heritage or intellectual curiosity, rather than career-oriented goals.

(59) Association des Hongrois de France. "History of the Hungarian Community in France." https://www.hongroisdefrance.org
(60) Hungarian Embassy in France. "Language and Cultural Initiatives." https://www.mfa.gov.hu/paris
(61) European Language Observatory. "Minority Language Education in France," 2021.

Teaching Hungarian as a heritage language presents several unique challenges stemming from its linguistic characteristics and its status as a lesser-known language. Hungarian belongs to the category of so-called "small languages," which are spoken by relatively few people outside their native countries. Unlike global languages such as English, Spanish, or French, Hungarian is not perceived as offering significant professional advantages. As a result, most learners of Hungarian have a personal motivation tied to family heritage or intellectual curiosity, rather than career-oriented goals.

Another challenge is cultural accessibility. While world languages provide access to multiple cultures and facilitate international communication, Hungarian primarily offers insights into Hungarian culture and history. The distinctive grammatical structure of Hungarian, which differs significantly from most European languages (including features like case suffixes, free word order, and vowel harmony), adds another layer of difficulty for learners.

One consequence of Hungarian's limited reach is that translations of Hungarian literary works into other languages are often produced by native Hungarian speakers. This restriction significantly limits the availability of Hungarian literature in translation, further contributing to the language's perceived isolation.**(62)**

In multicultural environments like those found in Western European capitals, multilingualism is common. However, children of Hungarian heritage often struggle with linguistic identity. While heritage speakers of widely spoken languages (such as English, German, or Spanish) recognize the advantages of bilingualism, children with a Hungarian heritage may feel alienated. Some Hungarian parents report that their children, despite speaking Hungarian fluently before starting school, begin to refuse to speak the language after interacting with peers who are unfamiliar with it. In France, many children have never even heard of Hungary before encountering a Hungarian-speaking peer, making integration more challenging.

Compared to other heritage languages spoken in France, Hungarian faces distinct obstacles. While languages like Arabic and Turkish also fall outside the mainstream of European languages, they benefit from strong community networks that help sustain their usage. These linguistic communities are often reinforced by religious, cultural, and social organizations, allowing children to interact with peers who share their linguistic background. As a result, children speaking these languages do not perceive them as barriers to integration but rather as tools for connecting with their cultural roots.

In contrast, Hungarian communities in France are relatively small and dispersed. Unlike larger heritage language groups, Hungarians in France do not form tightly-knit communities, partly because Hungarian culture is perceived as being relatively close to French culture. Although online searches reveal numerous Hungarian cultural, historical, and educational organizations in France—such as the Paris-based Balassi Institute and the Hungarian Catholic Mission—these communities remain fragmented due to the relatively small Hungarian population in France. Some associations offer Hungarian language learning opportunities, particularly in Paris and surrounding areas, but the overall infrastructure remains limited. **(63)**

(62) A Fordítás ma. Az interpretatív modell (Translated: Csizmadia Dominka, Keresztély Kata) Budapest, Equinter, 2008; original title: La taducton aujourd'hui - le modèle interprétatif (1994) Paris, Hachette, « collection F »,

(63) Keresztély, Kata and Légrády, Orsolya (2014) SZÁRMAZÁSNYELV TANÍTÁSA FRANCIAORSZÁGBAN ÉLŐ MAGYAR(-FRANCIA) GYEREKEKNEK Származásnyelv tanítása Franciaországban élő magyar (-francia) gyerekeknek. THL2 (2). pp. 45-50. ISSN 1787-1417, available online: https://real.mtak.hu/73408/

THE CURRENT SITUATION OF LEARNING HUNGARIAN IN FRANCE

Since 2014, during the last ten years the situation has significant changed, mostly due to the digital transformation.

Today, Hungarian language education in France exists mainly in the following forms:

- Secondary School Level: The Lycée Jacques Decour is the only lycée in France to teach Hungarian at secondary level.
- University-Level Instruction: A few French universities offer Hungarian language courses, primarily within Slavic and Central European studies departments. Institutions such as Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris provide structured Hungarian language programs. Other universities are: Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle (Centre Interuniversitaire d'Études Hongroises et Finlandaises (CIEH-CIEFI), LEA, Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, Sorbonne Université - Faculté des Lettres - Études slaves - parcours Études centre-européennes, Sciences-Po; Université de Lille; Université Marc Bloch de Strasbourg, Département d'Études Hongroises. (**64**)
- Private language courses: Even though there is no official data concerning the number of Hungarian learners within languages courses offered by private teachers, this sector is also significative because of the limitedness of the offers to learn Hungarian. Actually, in 2025, on one of the most used research platform for private courses(**65**), 18 trainers offer online or offline courses for the French speaking public, equally mostly online.

(64) When Hungarian is not the main subject of their studies, university student has the option to learn Hungarian as a third foreigner language. But, these language trainings are often not longer than one trimester which is barely enough to learn the basics of the language.
(65) Superprof : https://www.superprof.fr/s/hongrois,France,,,,.html?s=1 consulted: 04.02.2025

- Heritage Language Education: Hungarian is taught within Hungarian communities, often through weekend schools, cultural centers, such as the Liszt Ferenc Institute in Paris, associations and family-led initiatives. Courses focus on literacy, oral comprehension, and cultural heritage .

CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATION OF HUNGARIAN AS HERITAGE LANGUAGE

Several associations dealing with the maintain of interest in Hungarian culture and language haave emerged during the last 20 years. Many of them were short living. (**66**)The functioning of some of the associations with the mission of maintaining links with the Hungarian language and culture and are centrally supported by the Hungarian Government in the framework of the Balassi Bálint diaspora program.(**67**) But, resources are limited and without a budget available to have a local, many of these trainings went online since the COVID crises which adds additional difficulties both for the teachers and the children.

Even though online language training ensures a more regular participation of children, as there is no need to take the transport and the activity does not require more time than the training session itself, it is more difficult to maintain the concentration and motivation of the children in distance learning and also to build a confidential relationship with the parents and, without personal encounters to involve them into their children's learning process. The feeling of belonging to a community of native speakers is also much more challenging in this situation.

(66) In the list collected by the Liszt Ferenc cultural institute, out of the 55 associations only a few still exist. S:ource: https://cdn.culture.hu/uploads/documents/0/04/043/043f2f8925358c4cc143ae8132e52b6d0f08fcc.pdf, consulted on the 04.02.2025.
(67) https://balassieducation.hu/

Limited Institutional Recognition represents also an important challenge. Unlike languages with ELCO/EILE support, Hungarian lacks strong governmental backing within the French national education system.

The small learner base and the specific profile of learners is also a challenge. The number of students interested in learning Hungarian remains relatively low, which makes it difficult to justify large-scale educational programs.(**68**)

For families of migrants who arrived in France during the first half of the 20th century, multilingualism was not a priority or an added value. On the contrary, due to the political situation, impossibility to keep regular contact with the family members in their home country, but also because of the current vision about integration and inclusion, many of the second generation migrant of Hungarian origin were not even taught encouraged to speak the language of their parents. This was not only the case when only one of the parents were Hungarian, but in many cases, event when both parents were Hungarian and used the language between themselves within their homes. (69)

Nowadays, when multiculturalism is more supported on a state level, speaking one's heritage language is considered by most of the families as a value. In spite of this change of vision, today's children, who are often « third generation migrants », have very few opportunities to practice Hungarian within their communities and often they can not receive support of their parents either, who are themselves in need of assistance of a teacher to learn and practice the language.

Therefore, adult and mixed education with parents and children in this field is part of the solution to have a better accessibility to language and culture of origin.

France has a system to support adult education in the framework of the so called CPF (Compte Professionnel de Formation). Adults can access courses with low personal contribution since 2025 corresponding to 100 euros, including training in foreigner languages. Until 2023, it was also possible to learn Hungarian in this framework, but currently, there are no trainings available for most of the « small languages »(**70**) in spite of being official languages of the European Union, such as Hungarian, Romanian, Serbe, Croatian, etc.

Teacher Availability and Resources: The scarcity of trained Hungarian language teachers and teaching materials in French educational institutions poses an additional barrier.(**71**)

(68) Ministry of National Education, France. "Foreign Language Enrollment Statistics," 2022..
(69) Experience based on COTA's learners profiles

(70) Source: Mon compte de formation - CPF official website: https://www.moncompteformation.gouv.fr - consulted 04/02/2025
(71) https://balassieducation.hu/

To ensure the continuation and development of Hungarian language education in France, the following steps could be considered:

- **Integration into Multilingual Education Programs**: Encouraging the inclusion of Hungarian within elective language courses in schools and universities.
- **Increased Diplomatic and Community Support**: Strengthening cooperation between the Hungarian government, French authorities, and local Hungarian associations to provide structured language programs.
- **Development of Online Learning Resources**: Expanding digital and distance learning opportunities, making Hungarian language instruction more accessible across France.
- **Enhancing Cultural Exchange Programs**: Promoting student exchanges and cultural collaborations between France and Hungary to increase language exposure.
- **Freely available experience and method sharing opportunities among teachers, trainers and facilitators of Hungarian language:** Even though such a community of associations exist already with annual encounters and conferences - called AMIT (**72**)- since 2013 coordinated by the American Hungarian Schools Association, its business model is based on the American system and participation in their conferences is conditioned by a relatively high participation fee for the public - complicated to ensure for Europe based organisations working with low budget.

(72) COTA has presented its Játékos Magyar Nyelv method https://www.magyarnyelv.org/ - online teaching of Hungarian as heritage language through art and gamification - within the 2024 annual conference :https://amit-ny.org/korabbi-eloadasok

CONCLUSIONS

The teaching of Hungarian in France remains a niche but significant element of linguistic diversity. While the challenges of institutional recognition, learner base, and teaching resources persist, community-driven efforts and diplomatic support continue to play a vital role in preserving and promoting the Hungarian language. As multilingual education evolves in France, integrating Hungarian into broader linguistic programs could further enrich the country's cultural and educational landscape

Developing writing skills playfully, workshop by COTA (Aubervilliers, 2024)

TEACHING ROMANIAN N GERMANY

ROMANIAN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN GERMANY: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Romanian language, a Romance language with Latin roots, has seen a growing presence in Germany due to migration, cultural exchanges, and educational initiatives. While Romanian is not as widely spoken as Turkish, Arabic, or Russian in Germany, its significance has increased in recent years due to the rise in Romanian expatriates. This article explores the history of Romanian language education in Germany, the challenges it faces, and its future prospects within the framework of heritage and foreign language teaching.

Romanian migration to Germany has intensified, particularly after Romania joined the European Union in 2007. Large waves of Romanian workers, students, and families have settled in Germany, contributing to the linguistic diversity of the country.(**73**) The 2010s saw a significant increase in the number of Romanian speakers, making it one of the most commonly spoken migrant languages in Germany.(**74**)

Despite this growth, Romanian has not yet achieved widespread institutional recognition in Germany's educational system. However, the need for Romanian language instruction has emerged, especially within Romanian communities eager to preserve their linguistic and cultural heritage.(**75**)

Unlike major immigrant languages, Romanian has not traditionally been part of Germany's structured foreign language curriculum. Instead, Romanian language instruction has primarily been offered through:

- Community Schools and Cultural Associations: Various Romanian cultural organizations and diaspora groups have established weekend schools and language courses for children of Romanian descent,(**76**) such as the Romanian Cultural Institute and the Romanian-German Cultural Association.
- Embassy and Consular Support: The Romanian government, through its diplomatic missions, has supported language and cultural programs for the Romanian diaspora.(**77**)
- University-Level Instruction: Universities, particularly those with a strong focus on Eastern European studies, offer Romanian language courses as part of their curricula,(**78**) including Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Humboldt University Berlin, and University of Leipzig.

Letter recognition through visual creativity, workshop by Koopkultur (Berlin, 2024)

(73) Eurostat. (2020). "Migration Statistics." Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat
(74) German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. (2021). "Migration Report."
(75)Institut für Deutsche Sprache. (2022). "Multilingualism in Germany."

(76) Romanian Cultural Institute. (2023). "Language and Identity among Romanian Migrants."
(77) Embassy of Romania in Germany. (2023). "Cultural and Educational Initiatives."
(78) Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. (2021). "Romanian Studies Program."

THE CURRENT STATE AND CHALLENGES OF ROMANIAN LANGUAGE TEACHING

At present, Romanian language education in Germany is mainly available in two forms:

- Heritage Language Education: Romanian is taught within diaspora communities, focusing on literacy, oral skills, and cultural traditions. Weekend schools and informal classes play a crucial role in maintaining language transmission.(**79**) Some notable programs include the Romanian Language School in Munich and the Romanian School in Frankfurt.
- Academic and Professional Instruction: Some German universities and language institutions offer Romanian courses, primarily targeting students in linguistics, international relations, and business studies.(**80**)

Despite the increasing demand for Romanian language education, several challenges persist:

- Limited Institutional Support: Romanian is not widely included in public school curricula, making it difficult for children of Romanian descent to receive formal instruction.(**81**)
- Lack of Qualified Teachers: The availability of trained Romanian language teachers remains scarce, limiting access to structured learning opportunities. (**82**)
- Community Dispersal: Romanian communities in Germany are geographically dispersed, making it harder to establish centralized language programs. (**83**)

(79) Romanian Diaspora Council. (2022). "Heritage Language Maintenance Efforts."
(80) Humboldt University Berlin. (2021). "Romanian Linguistics and Cultural Studies."
(81) German Ministry of Education. (2022). "Foreign Language Policies in German Schools."
(82) European Commission. (2023). "Teacher Training and Language Education Policies."
(83) German Census Bureau. (2021). "Demographics of the Romanian Community in Germany."

- Community Dispersal: Romanian communities in Germany are geographically dispersed, making it harder to establish centralized language programs.(**84**)
- Perceived Lack of Utility: While Romanian is an official EU language, it is not perceived as highly valuable for professional advancement in Germany compared to languages such as English, French, or Spanish.(**85**)

To enhance Romanian language education in Germany, several initiatives could be pursued:

- Integration into Multilingual Education Programs: Encouraging the inclusion of Romanian as an elective language in schools, especially in areas with high Romanian-speaking populations.(**86**)
- Strengthening Diplomatic and Community Support: Enhancing cooperation between the Romanian government, German educational authorities, and Romanian diaspora organizations to expand language programs.(**87**)
- Developing Digital Learning Platforms: Investing in online courses and digital resources to facilitate remote Romanian language learning,(**88**) such as the Romanian Language Online Platform.
- Cultural Exchange and Awareness Programs: Promoting Romanian language and culture through events, bilingual literature, and school partnerships.(**89**)

(84) GEuropean Union Language Policy Report. (2023). "Multilingualism and Language Inclusion."
(85) Goethe Institute. (2022). "Language Preferences in the German Job Market."
(86)Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. (2021). "Romanian Studies Program."
(87)Romanian-German Cultural Association. (2023). "Educational Programs for Romanian Migrants."
(88)Online Learning Consortium. (2022). "Digital Language Learning Trends."
(89) Romanian Literature Institute. (2021). "Bilingual Education and Cultural Identity."

ROMANIAN AS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE: UNIQUE CHALLENGES

Teaching Romanian as a heritage language presents distinct challenges. Many Romanian-speaking children in Germany experience language attrition as they become more immersed in German culture and education. While multilingualism is generally encouraged, Romanian heritage speakers may struggle with linguistic identity, especially if Romanian is not widely spoken among their peers.(**90**) Parents often report that their children, despite speaking Romanian fluently at home, gradually shift to German once they enter school. This phenomenon is common among heritage speakers of smaller languages, where peer influence and the dominant language environment play a significant role in language retention.(**91**)

Compared to other heritage languages, Romanian faces distinct challenges. Unlike Turkish or Arabic, which benefit from strong community networks and religious institutions, Romanian is primarily sustained through cultural organizations and informal family efforts.(**92**) Although Romanian communities exist in cities like Berlin, Munich, and Stuttgart, they lack the institutionalized support seen in larger migrant language groups.(**93**)

Despite these challenges, Romania's growing economic ties with Germany and the increasing number of Romanian-speaking residents present an opportunity to strengthen Romanian language education. A more structured approach, combining diplomatic, community, and educational efforts, could enhance Romanian language visibility and accessibility in Germany.(**94**)

(90) German-Romanian Forum. (2023). "Challenges of Heritage Language Acquisition."
(91) Deutsche Welle. (2022). "Heritage Languages in German Society."
(92) Migration Policy Institute. (2023). "Comparative Study on Heritage Languages."
(93) Romanian Embassy Berlin. (2023). "Community Support Programs."
(94)German-Romanian Business Forum. (2022). "Economic and Cultural Ties between Germany and Romania."

CONCLUSION

The teaching of Romanian in Germany is a developing but crucial element of linguistic diversity. While it faces significant challenges, such as a lack of institutional support, teacher shortages, and community dispersal, the growing presence of Romanian speakers and cultural organizations provides a foundation for improvement. Strengthening Romanian language education requires collaborative efforts from policymakers, educators, and community leaders to ensure sustainable and accessible learning opportunities.

By integrating Romanian into multilingual education policies, expanding digital learning resources, and fostering stronger cultural exchange programs, the visibility and status of Romanian can be elevated within Germany's linguistic landscape. Furthermore, investing in teacher training and developing bilingual educational materials can support heritage speakers in maintaining their linguistic identity.

As Germany continues to embrace its multicultural and multilingual society, recognizing the value of Romanian as a heritage and foreign language will contribute to a richer and more inclusive educational environment. By addressing current obstacles and leveraging community-driven initiatives, the Romanian language can continue to thrive for generations to come in Germany.

TEACHING POLISH IN GERMANY

THE POLISH LANGUAGE IN GERMANY BEFORE 1990

Historically, German interest in Polish as a foreign language in its eastern parts and the western regions of Poland, both with a mixed population, goes back to the period between the sixteenth and eighteenth century, as witnessed by numerous teaching manuals and language guides published at the time and the presence of Polish at German schools in these areas.(**95**) After the three partitions between 1772 and 1795 led to the disappearance of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Polish at first kept its place as a foreign language in Prussian school curricula.(**96**) In the second half of the nineteenth century, Polish was, however, increasingly perceived as the language of agricultural labourers and, later, industrial workers, whose presence on German territories was seen as problematic by nationalist circles.(**97**) Towards the end of the century, the Polish language became the target of explicitly discriminating measures and then of germanisation policies. The period also saw considerable, mostly internal labour migration of Polish-speaking populations, in particular to the Rhineland (i.e. present-day North Rhine-Westphalia) where about half a million found work in the coal, iron and steel industries before World War I.(**98**) Their numbers diminished to about a third in the interwar years due to emigration to France or other countries and remigration to the new Polish state.(**99**) Similar large numbers of Polish speakers and Jewish immigrants from Poland settled in Berlin until 1918, when in particular the better-off Polish speakers left. (**100**) Some 100,000 continued to live in Berlin there during the Weimar Republic. Contrary to the Polish-speaking workforce in the Rhineland, their linguistic and cultural identity seems to have been of a more hybrid nature. In 1925, only 15,000 Berlin residents claimed Polish as their mother tongue.

In contrast to the new states of eastern Europe (e.g. Poland and Czechoslovakia), Germany was not obliged by the Allied and Associated Powers to sign declarations on the protection of minorities after World War I, but voluntarily undertook to protect them in the hope of obtaining better conditions for German minorities in lost territories, such as in Poland.(**101**) Students with German citizenship but of a non-German linguistic background (fremdsprachige Volksteile) were subject to compulsory schooling and benefited from some educational rights as members of a national minority, those without German citizenship could be granted an equivalent status on the basis of bilateral agreements, as the one with Poland, while the education of others fell under the responsibility of their country of origin. The latter group of students could either attend a private school or a German school (without particular rights). In principle, this meant that minority schools for German citizens could be funded be the state, supervised by the school inspectorate and teaching staff be recruited by the state, if the financial and organisational situation allowed it.

(95) For an overview of German and Polish linguistic policies and the teaching of Polish as a foreign or heritage language in Germany, see Magdalena Telus (no date) 'Polnisch in Deutschland (Sprache)', Handbuch der deutsch-polnischen Kommunikation. Available at http://www.polska-niemcy-interakcje.pl/articles/show/1050/de, and Erika Worbs (2018) 'Polnischunterricht und Polonistik. Polnisch ist nicht schwer', pp. 323–326 in Dieter Bingen, Andrzej Kaluza, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver Loew (eds) Polnische Spuren in Deutschland. Ein Lesebuchlexikon, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

(96) Official data of the Prussian government at the time of the creation of the German empire (1871) estimated that some 42% of Prussian citizens were speaking Polish as their first language.

(97)ISee the sociologist Max Weber's famous survey and essay on the situation of agricultural labourers in Germany east of the river Elbe, 'Die Lage der Landarbeiter im ostelbischen Deutschland' (1892).

(98)According to official data, some 4m Poles lived in Germany in 1914 compared to about 1m in the Weimar Republic. See Andrzej Kaluza (n.d.) 'Polen in Deutschland. Einbildungen und Tatsachen über eine Minderheit', Handbuch der deutsch-polnischen Kommunikation. Available at http://www.polska-niemcy-interakcje.pl/articles/show/1009/de.

(99) On the so-called 'Ruhr Poles', see Dietmar Osses (2018) 'Ruhrpolen. Historie und Gegenwart einer "Minderheit"', pp. 354–361 in Dieter Bingen, Andrzej Kaluza, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver (eds) Polnische Spuren in Deutschland. Ein Lesebuchlexikon, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

(100) See Basil Kerski (2018) 'Berlin. Die deutsch-polnische Kulturmetropole' pp. 36–45 in Dieter Bingen, Andrzej Kaluza, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver Loew (eds) Polnische Spuren in Deutschland. Ein Lesebuchlexikon, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

(101) Irina Mchitarjan (2007) 'Schulpolitik für ethnische Minderheiten in Europa. Geschichte und Gegenwart', Tertium comparationis, 13(1): 64–93.

Polish-speaking students thus could attend a German public school with (partial) instruction in Polish or a private Polish primary school and later two private Gymnasien in Beuthen (1932) and Marienwerder (1937), with support by the German state, while other linguistic minorities (e.g. the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein) had to self-organise instruction in their language through private schools or by other means. The Polish-speaking minority could also rely on the strong presence of Polish organisations and associations affiliated to the Bund der Polen (Polish League), created in 1922, and the long-standing existence of Polish school associations established in the nineteenth century, some of which are still active today in heritage language teaching (e.g. Oświata in Berlin and Polska Macierz Szkolna w Niemczech in North Rhine-Westphalia). Other minority rights, granted by Art. 113 of the 1919 Weimar Constitution, included the right to free association and the use of the Polish language for administrative purposes and in public, but did not result in the legal recognition of a minority status or measures to promote Polish language and culture. The actual situation of Polish speakers varied considerably throughout the Weimar Republic owing to frequent political and economic tensions between Germany and Poland. On the one hand, Polish speakers were politically represented in national and regional parliaments, as well as in municipal councils, had their own cooperatives, agrarian, commercial and trade organisations, publications, welfare institutions, cultural, educational and sports associations; on the other, they were subject to discrimination, insults and violent attacks, and the authorities tended to regard Polish organisations with distrust.(**102**) After the mid-1930s, conditions deteriorated rapidly through increasing discrimination and repression and, later, deportation, persecution and extermination.

(102) See Andrzej Kaluza (n.d.), op. cit. During the Nazi regime, the situation of the Polish-speaking minority temporarily improved after the signature of a non-aggression pact with Poland but not for long.

During the war, an estimated 2.3m to 3.5m Polish citizens were brought to Germany as foreign civil workers, forced labourers, prisoners of war and internees of concentration camps. Only some 80,000 to 100,000 people, mostly older and ill persons with their families, remained in the Federal Republic after 1951, out of almost 1m Polish displaced persons who found themselves after the war in the occupation zones of the Western allies, while those in the Soviet occupation zone were rapidly repatriated or deported to Poland. (**103**)

In 1949, members of the 'older emigration' revived the Bund der Polen in Deutschland (Rodło)(**104**) but internal strife on the issue of political neutrality towards the People's Republic of Poland led to a scission in 1952 and the establishment of rival organisation (Zgoda), financially supported by the Polish state. Membership of the former dropped from ca. 35,000 in 1949 to 6–7,000 in the 1970s, while the second had some 10,000 members, after registering increased interest in the 1960s, mainly because members were not subject to exchange foreign currency at the official rate during stays in Poland. At the same time, the upcoming generation lost interest in these organisations: 'Polish identity' had largely become a private affair as a result of continuing cultural and linguistic assimilation; communist Polen was not an appealing reference; and societal developments in late-1960s western Germany deemphasised questions of national and cultural identity.(**105**)

(103) See Dietmar Osses (2018) 'Displaced Persons. Neue Heimat für heimatlose Polen', pp. 95–99 in Dieter Bingen, Andrzej Kaluza, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver Loew (eds) Polnische Spuren in Deutschland. Ein Lesebuchlexikon, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. Many Poles and surviving Jews from the western occupation zones emigrated to the United States, Canada, Great Britain or Palestine, while the majority – voluntarily or not – resettled in Poland.
(104) Rodło stands for rodzina ('family') and godło ('coat of arms'). The organisation's logo, designed in 1932, includes a graphical representation of the course of the Vistula. On the organisation's history until 1990, see Krzysztof Ruchniewicz (2022) 'Der Bund der Polen in Deutschland', published on the occasion of the centenary. Available at https://www.porta-polonica.de/de/atlas-der-erinnerungsorte/der-bund-der-polen-deutschland?singlepage=yes.
(105) See Andrzej Kaluza (n.d.), op. cit.

During this period, small numbers of political refugees arrived from Poland; political asylum was the only way to remain in the West for those allowed to travel to western Germany for professional or private reasons. The declaration of martial law in Poland (1981) led to a significant exodus of Polish citizens for political reasons ('Solidarność emigrants')(**106**) and because of worries about a possible economic break-down in Poland. During the 1980s, an estimated 130,000 – or 190,000, according to other sources – Polish citizens lived in the Federal Republic and West-Berlin, whose presence was as first tolerated and who were later granted leave to remain, that is without legal access to the labour market.(**107**) Their radically different outlook meant that they had little in common with either older emigrés or ethnic Germans and their family members who immigrated from Poland as 'repatriates' (Aussiedler or, after 1976, Spätaussiedler) and, in some cities such as Berlin, led to a blooming political, cultural and social life in the 1980s, which ended after the fall oc communism in Poland.

Numerically, the latter group was by far the most important one, with more than 1.5m people, mostly from former Eastern Prussia (Masuria) or Upper Silesia. Not all German citizens or members of the German minority in these formerly German territories had fled westwards in the last year of the war or left in its aftermath. Those who remained often had a dual cultural and linguistic identity, speaking German and a Polish dialect and having ties to both cultures. The new Polish state regarded them as 'autochthonous' populations, or 'germanised Poles', to legitimise its claims on the recently won territories.(**108**) They were considered to have voluntarily opted for Polish citizenship, which also put a halt to any calls for recognition as a minority. Emigration (to both German states) took place in successive waves between 1956 and 1990: until 1984, on demand and for the official reason of 'family reunion', but subject to approval by the Polish passport authorities and associated with the loss of Polish citizenship; later emigrants travelled to western Germany with a tourist visa and could retain their Polish passport.(**109**) All, including descendants and Polish spouses of former German citizens and of members of German minorities in all of pre-war Poland, had an automatic right to German citizenship, legally interpreted as a 'restitution' by the Federal Republic.(**110**) Emigrants to the GDR were less numerous and called Umsiedler ('resettlers'), who had to abandon their partially Polish identity because contacts with Poland were regarded with suspicion.(**111**) Somewhat similarly, emigrants from Poland in the Federal Republic overall kept a low profile until the 1980s.

(106) See Dieter Bingen (2018) 'Solidarnosc im Exil. Polnische Gewerkschafter organisieren sich im Westen', p. 384 in Dieter Bingen, Andrzej Kaluza, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver Loew (eds) Polnische Spuren in Deutschland. Ein Lesebuchlexikon, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.
(107) Ibidem. This economically precarious situation led to further migration to other western countries and also to the emergence of stereotypical representations that persisted in the 1990s and which associated Polish migrants with the informal economy (e.g. undeclared work, 'Polish markets' in the early 1990s) or semi-legal or illegal activities, smuggling and car theft.

(108) In ideological terms, the westward shift of the Polish borders as a result of the war was reinterpreted in historical terms as a return to the territory of the first Polish kingdom of the Piast dynasty.
(109) Emigration came to a halt in 1960, at the height of the cold war, but restarted and increased in the 1970s to the Federal Republic, as a result of a more liberal Polish passport policy, two bilateral agreements on family reunion and generally liberal German policies towards immigrants from the 'communist bloc'.
(110) Criteria for a presumed German affiliation were relatively vague and consisted of a bundle of indicators (e.g. use of German as a family language, family recipes for 'German' dishes). In the literature, the main motivations are said to be the feeling of being cut off from German culture, prohibitions on the use of the German language, various forms of social discrimination, distrust by the Polish authorities, proximity to relatives living in Germany and the hope of greater social and economic mobility. Some sources also mention that the procedure was also used by candidates for emigration for more opportunistic reasons. See Kaluza (n.d.)
(111) The share of Polish speakers in the new federal states is today estimated at 7% of all Polish-speakers in Germany. See Andrzej Kaluza (2002) 'Zuwanderer aus Polen in Deutschland', Utopie Kreativ, 141-142. Available at https://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Veranstaltungen/2002/Kommen_und_Bleiben/polen_in_deutschland1.pdf

Over time, the share of Aussiedler who had been schooled in Polish only and therefore were fluent Polish speakers increased rapidly, with German having become a heritage language for many before emigration. After arrival in Germany, the status of the two languages often reversed: Under the influence of the majority language, i.e. German, most became fluent in German, while Polish-language proficiency suffered from attrition and turned these emigrants into heritage speakers of Polish. A large majority of them have maintained Polish traditions and cultural practices, which may also be associated with a Polish regional identity (e.g. Upper Silesian).

Table 1. Number of Polish citizens emigrating to Germany as Aussiedler or Spätaussiedler

Period	Number of immigrants
1950–1959	292,181
1960–1969	110,618
1970–1979	202,711
1980–1989	632,800
1990–1999	204,078
2000–2009	2,701
2010–2020	163

Until 1990, the situation of Polish-language teaching differed considerably in the (old) Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. In the former, Aussiedler and Spätaussiedler from Poland whose mother tongue was Polish were legally granted the possibility of choosing Polish as a first or second foreign language, though actual offers remained sparse. In the latter, Polish was taught as an optional foreign language, including as a subject for the baccalaureate, at several upper secondary schools (Erweiterte Oberschulen), as in (eastern) Berlin, Leipzig, Magdeburg and Görlitz, and accompanied by exchange programmes for students and teachers.(**112**) Heritage language teaching of Polish therefore played only a marginal role in both German states.

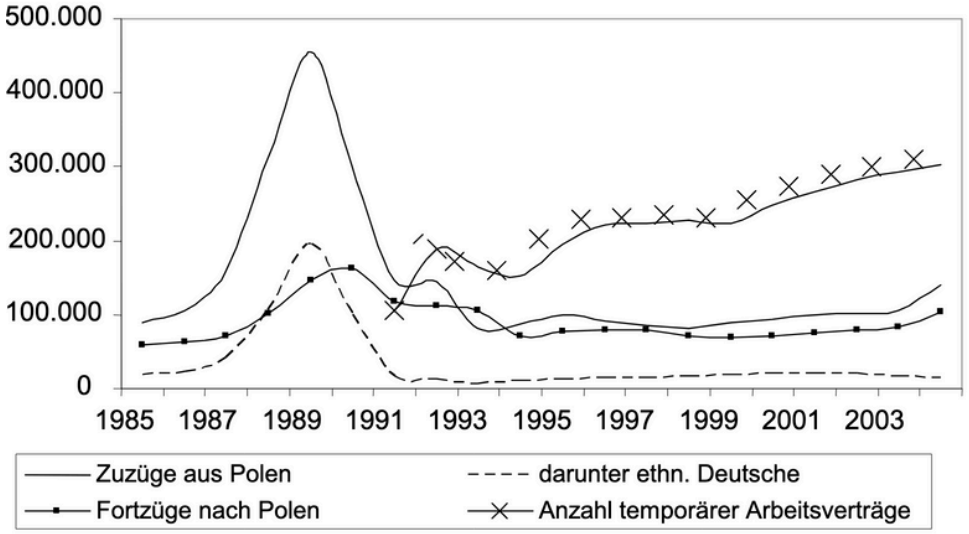
POLISH EMIGRATION TO GERMANY AFTER 1990

As mentioned above, a significant number of Polish citizens 'without a German background' had settled in western Germany since 1981 with an uncertain legal status. Official immigration reached a peak in the years 1988 (ca. 300,000) to 1990 (455,000), as did the numbers of those who returned to Poland (100,000 and 160,000 respectively).(**113**) In the early 1990s, the German government severely limited the permanent settlement of immigrants from Poland: 'repatriation' was no longer promoted (see Table 1); family reunion and marriage migration were subject to various restrictions; and labour migration was strictly regulated, with exceptions for company founders and high-skilled workers (i.e. 'Polish craftsmen'). Common legal forms of labour migration

(112) See Erika Worbs, op. cit., p. 324.
(113) See Frauke Miera (1996) 'Zuwanderer und Zuwandererinnen aus Polen in Berlin in den 90er Jahren. Thesen über Auswirkungen der Migrationspolitiken auf ihre Arbeitsmarktsituation und Netzwerke', discussion paper published by the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung. Available at https://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/1996/i96-106.pdf

from Poland at the time included seasonal labour contracts, contract work, transboundary shuttle migration and fixed-term contracts as 'guest workers' with quota. At the same time, liberal visa policies resulted in undeclared forms of work. These restrictions were only gradually lifted until 2011 when Polish citizens finally benefited from the principle of 'free movement of labour' for citizens of EU member states. The reason were German concerns that expected large-scale Polish immigration would lead to wage dumping, as there existed no legal minimum wage.

Figure 1. Polish migration to Germany, 1985–2004. (Source: Glorius 2007)(**114**). The caption reads (from left to right) immigration from Poland, of which ethnic Germans, departures to Poland, number of fixed-term employment contracts.



(114) Birgit Glorius (2007) 'Transnationale soziale Räume polnischer Migranten in Leipzig', pp. 136–159 in Magdalena Nowitcka (ed.) Von Polen nach Deutschland und zurück, Bielefeld: transkript Verlag.

After Poland had joined the European Union in 2004, five old member states introduced transitional rules for labour migration.(**115**) Germany adopted the '2+3+2 model, which allowed it to restrict access to the labour market for a period of up to seven years. In fact, large-scale immigration from Poland failed to materialise, but numbers took off in 2011, with net migration to Germany reaching a peak in 2015 (63,045).(**116**) The increasing number of legal avenues for labour migration also led to a deep change in the perception of Polish immigrants, who are today mostly seen as well-integrated, skilled, well-educated and industrious, in short as 'model immigrants', although some forms of social discrimination persists.

By the end of 2023, some 888,000 residents with Polish citizenship lived in Germany and ca. 2.2m had a Polish migrant background, making them the second-largest group after immigrants of Turkish origin (2.9m) and ahead of those from successor states of the Soviet Union (1.69m) and Romania (1.1m). In 2020, immigrants with Polish citizenship accounted for 7.6% of all foreign residents, with an average mean age of 38.6 years and an average mean time of residence of 10.7 years; less than a quarter had been living in Germany for more than 15 years. One of the main characteristics of recent Polish (and Romanian) immigration are relative modest positive rates of annual net migration with strong fluctuations. In 2019, for example, 128,600 Polish citizens settled in Germany, while 126,600 left the country.

(115) See Arnold Bug (2001) 'Arbeitnehmerfreizügigkeit nach der Osterweiterung der Europäischen Union. Chancen und Risiken für den Arbeitsmarkt', info letter of the Scientific Services of the German Parliament. Available at https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/191742/2fe22b0fca7cbd5342713e4bb0a608b1/arbeitnehmerfreizuegigkeit_nach_der_osterweiterung.pdf.
(116) This number and the following ones are based on micro-census data published by the German Federal Statistics Office.

Between 1991 and 2020, 100,298 children born in Germany had a Polish father and 219,426 a Polish mother.(**117**) German-Polish marriages had first risen in the 1980s and their number quadrupled in the 1990s before dropping in recent years from 4,505 in 2017 to 2,043 in 2022, compared to 393 in Poland in 2019.(**118**) A marriage between a German husband and a Polish wife is roughly four times as frequent as one between a Polish husband and a German wife, a ratio that has remained stable.

As their numbers have grown, Polish speakers in German benefit today from a vibrant social and cultural life in areas with high concentrations. Early attempts to organise the rising number of recent Polish immigrants go back to the establishment of the Polnischer Sozialrat e. V. (Polska Rada Społeczna T. z.) in 1982 in West Berlin with the aim of mutual self-help.(**119**) Numerous others followed soon, but the number of active members in each organisation generally remained small and political cooperation rare.(**120**) Many dissolved after 1990. Among the remaining organisations were different professional organisations (Verband polnischer Ärzte in Deutschland e. V., Deutsch-polnische Juristenvereinigung e. V), cultural, economic and sports organisations, as well as church-sponsored groups. After many failed attempts, four umbrella organisations of the Polonia succeeded in establishing the Konvent der Polnischen Organisationen in Deutschland (Konwent Organizacji Polskich w Niemczech) on 4 April 1998 to represent the interests of the Polish diaspora by federating the large majority of the estimated more than 150 Polish organisations present at the time in Germany. Only a few, among them the Bund der Polen Rodło, did not join. One of the Konwent's initial main aims was the recognition of all immigrants of Polish origin as a 'national minority' – this would have included those Germans 'repatriated' after World War II on the basis of mostly strong ties with Polish language and culture –, a better legal status and better funding for its activities – a controversial, and until today unsuccessful, demand. After the 2011 update of the German-Polish Neighbourhood Treaty through a bilateral agreement, the Konwent was, however, charged with the organisation of a German-funded office to represent the interests of all Polish organisations in Germany. Some of its member organisations (e.g. Oswiata) have been and are still active in heritage language teaching. Another major actor is the Polish Catholic Mission, whose activities also include heritage language teaching.(**121**)

(117) Magda Roszkowska (n.d.) 'Geschichten von Kindern aus deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen', Goethe Institut / weekend.gazeta.pl. No comparable data are available for Poland.
(118) Data for 2022 by the German Federal Statistics Office only distinguish between Spouse 1 (either a male partner or the older partner in a same-sex marriage) and Spouse 2 (either a female partner or the younger partner in a same-sex marriage). In 1,635 cases of the 2,043 German-Polish marriages, Spouse 1 had German citizenship. In the same year, 461 marriages were concluded in Germany where both partners were Polish citizens. Note that the place of marriage does not necessarily imply place of residence.
(119) For a short overview, see Andrzej Kaluza (2018) 'Polnischer Sozialrat. In Berlin zu Hause, deutschlandweit aktiv' in Dieter Bingen, Andrzej Kaluza, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver Loew (eds) Polnische Spuren in Deutschland. Ein Lesebuchlexikon, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.
(120)Andrzej Stach (2018) 'Polnische Organisationen in Deutschland. Einigkeit und Zwist und Vielfalt – Organisationsstrukturen nach 1945', pp. 313–316 in ibidem. The main umbrella organisations were the League of Poles 'Zgoda' (Związek Polaków 'Zgoda' w RFN T. z.), the Polish Congress in Germany (Kongres Polonii Niemieckiej T. z.), which left in 2013, the Federal Association of the Polish Council (Polska Rada w Niemczech – Zrzeszenie Federalne T. z.) and the Christian Centre for the promotion of the Polish language, culture and tradition in Germany (Chrześcijańskie Centrum Krzewienia Kultury, Tradycji I Języka Polskiego w Niemcuzech T. z.).

(121) See Thomas Kycia (2018) 'Polnische Katholische Mission. Mehr als nur die Heilige Messe in polnischer Sprache', p. 312 in Dieter Bingen et alii, op. cit.

POLISH-LANGUAGE TEACHING IN GERMANY AFTER 1990

Already in 1989, the Federal Republic and the People's Republic of Poland signed a Common Declaration, in which both parties declared their willingness to promote the language of the partner country, in Germany through increased offers of Polish as a foreign language in upper secondary schools and the expansion of Polish Studies at universities, while Poland committed herself to expand the role of German as a foreign language at schools in all parts of the country with German support for teacher training and teaching materials. In 1991, the two countries concluded the Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Friendly Cooperation, inspired by an earlier treaty with France in the 1950s. Articles 20 and 21 refer particularly to the status of German citizens of Polish 'descent' and Polish citizens of German 'descent', who were to be granted a right to their linguistic, cultural and traditional identity (e.g. free use of their language in private and public contexts, original spelling of names) and to instruction in their first language. Article 25 stipulates that both countries would allow for a comprehensive access to the language and culture of the partner country for all interested persons. Similarly, Article 4 of the 1997 German-Polish Cultural Agreement mentions a 'broad access to the culture, language, literature and history of the other country' for all interested parties.

Poland's language policy, thus, initially focused on Polish as a foreign language, whose status in Europe and worldwide was to be reinforced. As an expert opinion from the University of Wrocław, ordered by the Foreign Ministry, makes clear, this meant in practice an increased prestige, the reduction of a stereotypical representation of Polish as a difficult language and raising awareness for the proximity of Polish to other European languages, while also emphasising advantages of Polish-language skills in labour markets, including by stressing mutual comprehension with other Slavic languages. The promotion of Polish abroad should be consolidated and coordinated by a dedicated institution modelled upon the British Council, the Alliance Française and the Goethe-Institute.(**122**) Another expert opinion by a working group at the University of Kattowice, ordered by the Ministry for Science and Higher Education in 2018, added another focus, on Polish-speaking minorities in eastern Europe and the role of Polish as a heritage language and identity-promoting tool. Since the mid-2010s, nationalist-conservative circles in Poland and the PiS-led coalition government, frustrated by the low numbers of Polish learners in Germany compared to the stronger presence in Poland of German as a second foreign and, since 1997, protected minority language, repeatedly accused Germany of an unsatisfactory implementation of the 1991 Neighbourhood Treaty and, in 2022, introduced significant budget cuts for support of German as a minority language, taught to some 50,000 students, with the aim of using the savings made for the promotion of the Polish language in Germany, a decision reverted by the newly elected government in 2024.

In Germany, the implementation of the 1991 Neighbourhood Treaty has been shaped by the federal nature of the country's educational system. In practical terms, this meant taking into account regional particularities while maintaining an overall homogeneity of the general education system to facilitate students' mobility between federal states.(**123**) In its 2013 Strategy Paper on the Promotion of the Heritage Language Polish, the KMK defined the goals of heritage language teaching as integration into the majority society and the recognition of multiple linguistic and cultural identities in a context of increasing transnational mobility.

(122) A key concept used in this context is that of moc języka, or 'language power'.

(123) See in particular the successive reports of the Standing Committee of Ministries of Education of the federal states (Kultusministerkonferenz or KMK) on Polish-language teaching, and notably KMK (2020) 'Zur Situation des Polnischunterrichts in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Beschluss der Kultusministerkonferenz vom 22.08.1991 i. d. F. Vom 26.11.2020), and KMK (2013) Strategiepapier zur Förderung der Herkunftssprache Polnisch.

In short, the current situation of Polish language teaching in Germany can be summarised as follows: In the western federal states, and especially in North Rhine-Westphalia (ca. 5,000 students annually in recent years), Polish tends to be taught mainly as a heritage language and in the federal states bordering Poland (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Brandenburg and Saxony) mostly as a foreign and neighbouring, or contact, language with a focus on communicative aspects, mostly in areas near the border.

In recent school years (2019–2022), state-organised heritage language teaching of Polish was offered in ten of the sixteen federal states (for more than 7,500 students during the school year 2021-2022) and consular instruction in Polish in three (Bavaria, Bade-Württemberg and Berlin, which also has public offers). There are no offers for heritage languages in Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia, while offers of heritage language teaching do not include Polish in Bremen, Schleswig-Holstein and Saarland. Designations vary from Muttersprachlicher Unterricht ('instruction in the mother tongue') to Herkunftssprachenunterricht ('heritage language teaching') and Erstsprachenunterricht ('instruction in the first language') as, more recently, in Berlin, reflecting different policy goals and pedagogical approaches. Attendance of these heritage language classes is on a voluntary basis, though sometimes included in school reports, and in the form of an extracurricular activity, mostly at primary schools and, more rarely, at secondary schools; this also pertains to consular instruction. In some federal states, public offers of heritage language classes are also open to interested students who are not heritage speakers. Teaching content is generally related to the everyday experience of students and seeks to promote communication and basic reading and writing skills, while also including lessons on the history, geography and culture of the 'home country'. The target level for proficiency is A1 or A2, according the Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR) for language learning.

Moreover, heritage language classes open to young people are provided by various public and private actors, such as local adult education centres (Volkshochschulen), church organisations cultural or other organisations and associations and private language schools. (**124**)

In addition, Polish can be chosen in principle as a first foreign language at primary school or as a second foreign language at lower secondary school starting in grade 6 or 7, but in practice there are only learning groups for heritage speakers in this configuration. In areas near the Polish border there exist offers even at the pre-school level. Mostly, Polish is being taught as a compulsory optional or optional third foreign language or in the form of an extracurricular activity (Arbeitsgemeinschaft) starting in grades 8, 9 or 10 in lower secondary schools. In upper secondary schools, it can be continued, or started as a new foreign language, in two variants: basic course (Grundkurs) and performance subject (Leistungskursfach). Polish is recognised as a subject for the baccalaureate in all federal states, but in practice apparently chosen only by students in three federal states (Bremen, Hamburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). Target levels are B1+ to B2 for students who started learning Polish in lower secondary school and B1 to B1+ for those who started later. No official data are available for student numbers, who are likely to be very low. An exception is the bilingual-binational Augustum-Annen-Gymnasium in Görlitz, Saxony, where Polish is a compulsory subject for the baccalaureate with a target level of B2/C1. In Hesse, students aged 14 to 18 have the possibility of obtaining a language certificate by an accredited

(124) On Polish organisations in Germany, see Andrzey Stuch (2018) 'Polnische Organisationen in Deutschland. Einigkeit und Zwist und Vielfalt – Organisationsstrukturen nach 1945', pp. 313–316 in Dieter Bingen, Andrzej Kaluza, Basil Kerski and Peter Oliver Loew (eds) Polnische Spuren in Deutschland. Ein Lesebuchlexikon, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung.

organisation (TELC Język polski Szkoła B1/B2), and in Berlin, students can replace Polish as a foreign language with a similar certificate obtained through a municipal adult education centre. There are also a number of schools that offer bilingual sequences or have bilingual branches, as well as fully bilingual schools.

The number of Polish learners (both foreign and heritage language teaching in more or less equal parts) at public schools have been slowly rising over the last decade, for which (incomplete) official data are available, from some 8,300 students during the school year 2011–2012, about half of them heritage language learners) to more than 11,000 in 2015–2016 and almost 15,000 in 2019–2020. Since immigration from Poland has peaked in 2015, it is uncertain whether this number will be growing significantly in future.

The most active regions and the ones with the highest linguistic growth potential are probably located near the Polish borders, where available housing as the result of a shrinking German population has attracted many young Polish families. In 2019, the Committee on Spatial Planning of the German-Polish Governmental Commission for Regional and Transboundary Cooperation published a joint future scenario, Vision 2030, that called for the creation of appropriate language-learning offers for all interested parties in the two neighbouring languages, a break with demand-driven policies of the past. In the same vein, the federal state of Brandenburg developed a Neighbourhood Strategy Brandenburg-Poland with a 'linguistic offensive Polish'. Since the early 2000s, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has cooperated with the Polish voivodeship of Western Pomerania, to enlarge language-learning offers for both languages on both sides of the border and to ensure that offers will be available at all level s of the general education system. In its study Project Smart Integration, Saxony aims at promoting Polish-language learning and bilingual encounters, along with employment of Polish-speaking staff, to overcome its perception as a peripheral region. In July, it has established the Kompetenz- and Koordinationszentrum Polnisch (KoKoPol), an educational centre that is meant to 'promote the knowledge, dissemination and popularisation of the Polish language in Germany', including through the creation of low-level Polish language learning offers for professionals in particular industries.

POLISH IN BERLIN – A LOCAL VIEW

In Berlin, where almost 120,000 residents had a Polish migrant background in 2021, slightly more than half (57,226) with German citizenship, the number of Polish learners at public schools have been almost steadily growing from 341 during the school year 2003–2004 to 1399 in 2019–2020.(**125**) During that last period, there existed 29 bilingual Polish-German nursery schools (KiTas), working on the principle of one-person-one-language (OPOL) with at least half of the time in either language. Five primary schools, to be expanded to three other schools, offered heritage language classes (Erstsprachenunterricht) to 85 students aged 6.5 to 12.(**126**) Some 400 students had chosen Polish as a foreign language at five schools. In 2021-2022, 45 students attended consular instruction in Polish and an unknown number heritage language classes of the Polish school association Oswiatim. There is a bilingual branch at the primary school Katharina Heimroth and a bilingual secondary school, Robert-Jungk-Oberschule, while the Katholisches Mariengymnasium offers Polish as a second foreign language and the Gabriele-von-Bülow-Schule

(125) Data provided by the Berlin educational authorities to a parliamentary question on the current implementation of the German-Polish Neighbourhood Treaty with regard to the promotion of Polish-language teaching. See Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin (2022) Drucksache 19/11945.
(126) Instruction in the first language, on a voluntary basis, requires a local quorum of at least twelve students.

as a third foreign language. The municipal adult education centre in the Tempelhof-Schöneberg district offers courses for young people with the possibility of obtaining an accredited language certificate, which can replace Polish as a foreign language at school. No detailed data on student numbers are available for these offers and others at public and private private schools. A planned linguistic survey on the languages spoken by school-entrants seems not yet to have been implemented. Overall, Polish can be learned in all school forms, from nursery schools to the baccalaureate, including at vocational schools and municipal adult education centres. The regional government also supports the Deutsch-Polnisches Jugendwerk, an organisation based in Potsdam and Warsaw that mainly initiates and promotes exchange programmes for young people, as well as numerous activities and associations that are working in the field of German-Polish relations. The last KMK report describes Berlin as a good practice example for the implementation of goals defined in the 2013 KMK Strategy Paper on the Promotion of the Heritage Language Polish.

In addition, heritage language classes are also offered by a wide range of non-state actors. These include the Polish school association Oswiata, private language schools, some of which offer courses for children, young people or parent-child courses, church organisations, such as the Polish Catholic Mission, and municipal education centres that offer courses for children and young people, as well as more informal teaching by non-profit organisations or self-organised by parents.

Important too in this context are the numerous activities and events organised for young heritage speakers of Polish, and sometimes for parents and children, in Polish or Polish and German, such as language cafés, cultural exchanges, study trips to Poland, scout groups, school tutoring, sports clubs (e.g. Polnischer Olympia Club Berlin e.V. / Polski Klub Olimpijski w Berlinie), theatre groups for children and young peoples, choirs or dance groups. Young families with small children often meet informally during the weekend to organise joint activities. Frequent family trips to or stays with relatives or at a holiday camp in Poland are fairly common – Szczecin can be reached by suburban railway and Warsaw is only five and a half hours away by train. This practice also ensures easier access to printed or multimedia content in Polish, because parents often acquire such material during a visit to Poland. Finally, most young people have internet access, which allows them to consult online language courses or video tutorials and, more generally, all kinds of Polish-language content, while also offering opportunities to communicate in Polish with friends in Berlin, Poland and elsewhere through social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) or messenger services.

A recent longitudinal study on young heritage speakers of Russian and Polish in three German cities (Berlin, Hamburg and Leipzig) came to the following conclusions for heritage speakers in Berlin between grade 7 and 10. These feel that both the family language Polish and the majority language German are significant parts of their identity, have a positive image of Poland similar to that of their parents, perceive distinct advantages of being proficient in Polish and handle their bilingualism with confidence. Moreover, the study showed that young heritage speakers of Polish, similar to those of other languages, often served as linguistic mediators for parents with weak German skills. They explain, for example, key scenes and concepts while watching television with

(125) Data provided by the Berlin educational authorities to a parliamentary question on the current implementation of the German-Polish Neighbourhood Treaty with regard to the promotion of Polish-language teaching. See Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin (2022) Drucksache 19/11945.
(126) Instruction in the first language, on a voluntary basis, requires a local quorum of at least twelve students.

other family members, make phone calls on behalf of parents and interpret for them during medical appointments. The highest proficiency levels in Polish were found among young people who both use Polish as the family language and regularly attend Polish lessons of several hours weekly over several years. Factors influencing the first are presented in Table 2 and those favouring the second in Table 3.

Table 2. Pros and Cons of Polish as a family language

PRO	CONTRA
– intuition	– goal: linguistic objectives for child's proficiency in German
– transmission of the language by parents and grand-parents	– linguistic preparation for nursery school and school
– weak proficiency in Germany of the mother	– concerns about emotional and cognitive problems at school
– child born in Poland	– advice from early childcare educators
– experience that German can be learned rapidly	– working mother, German partner and German-language social enviroment
– bilingualism as a desired goal	

Table 3. Arguments by parents and children in favour or against attending heritage language classes

	PRO	CONTRA
Parents	– child learns how to read and write, Polish history and literature – no pressure on performance – numerous additional activities and events – social contacts (incl. with other parents)	– concerns that proficiency in both languages will suffer in a bilingual school – 'natural' transmission of Polish – lack of time and other priorities – Polish can be improved later – doubts about the usefulness of learning Polish
Children	– improve Polish, including writing skills – Polish lessons are fun and interesting – learning Polish at school with friends – benefiting from existing linguistic knowledge	– content with current proficiency level – reading and writing skills not absolutely necessary – new foreign language preferable – no time for heritage language classes – 'lazy'

Moreover, the study showed that young heritage speakers of Polish, similar to those of other languages, often served as linguistic mediators for parents with weak German skills. They explain, for example, key scenes and concepts while watching television with other family members, make phone calls on behalf of parents and interpret for them during medical appointments.

In addition, the published results gave examples for reading and writing activities in the heritage language (Table 4) and for difficulties encountered in Polish and German when confronted with written texts (Table 5).

Table 4. Examples of reading and writing activities in the heritage language

Reading	Occasions for writing and written productions
Short messages on mobile phone (text messages, WhatsApp)	
Chats (chat function of Skype)	
Comics (1 heritage speaker)	Emails (with the help of parents, online translators)
Facebook (and other short online texts)	Post cards and letters to relatives (greetings from holidays, felicitations)
Magazines, newspapers	Short notes to parents (1 speaker) (greetings, compliments)
Books (e.g. Mała biblia dla dzieci, Szkoła makijażu)	Shopping lists (1 speaker)

Table 5. Problems with written texts in German and Polish

In German	In Polish
While reading aloud	While reading aloud
	Understanding task
	Grammar (cases, endings)
	Lacking vocabulary
Spelling ('s' phonemes, upper and lower case)	Spelling (ż vs. rz, ę/en/em, ą/on/om, u vs. ó, diacritical marks, 'sibilants', e.g.. capka instead of czapka)
	General writing of texts Stylistics, conceptual writing, vocabulary and structures typical of educational language.

A second study, published in 2014 by Joanna Błaszczak and Marzena Żygis, looked into the question whether German-Polish bilingual children and young people aged 9 to 18 who are attending bilingual schools in Berlin felt rather Polish or German, or both in similar proportions, as well as into factors that influence national identity and into the role of the mother tongue in this.(**127**) In the rest of the paragraph, we describe some of the characteristics of the students, which do, however, not allows to draw general conclusions on the profile of students in German-Polish bilingual schools(**128**) Among the respondents, 58% were born in Germany and 38% in Poland, the remaining elsewhere or not answering (2% respectively). About half (51%) had always lived in Germany, 27 % for more than five years and 22% for less; 55% declared having grown up in Germany, 8% in Poland and 37% had grown up in another country. In most cases (94%), the mother was of Polish and only in 6% of German origin, while 69% of the fathers were of Polish, 21% of German and 10% of a different origin. Almost half wrote they had only Polish (47%) relatives, 45% German and Polish relatives and the remaining 8% either only German relatives or Polish and other than German ones. A large majority (84%) declared their acquaintances to be both of Polish and German origin, and 12% only of Polish origin. Polish was said to be the first language (59%) and German of only 16%, whereas 24% claimed both languages as their first. Unsurprisingly, a large majority characterised their Polish as very good (53%) or good (37%), while 22% described their German as less good or good (51%). Only 6% of the respondents declared that they would prefer to communicate only in one language. Interestingly, 57% attributed no

(127) Joanna Błaszczak and Marzena Żygis (2014) 'Bin ich Deutscher oder Pole? Eine Studie über nationale Identität der deutsch-polnischen Kinder und Jugendlichen in Berlin', Polnisch in Deutschland. Zeitschrift der Polnischlehrkräfte in Deutschland, 2: 35–50. The results are based on answers of 48 respondents to a questionnaire with 166 questions on five main topics.
(128) The reasons are that the sample of respondents cannot be considered representative, because we have no data on all young Polish heritage speakers in Berlin or on a control group of them attending a German-language school.

importance to their being perceived as different for linguistic reasons (against 41%) and 65% would show through their pronunciation (e.g. a rolling R) that they are Polish, even if they could speak accent-free German.

Asked whether they felt more Polish, German or both, 44% answered Polish, 35% both and 12% German. Among those who indicated German as their first language, 62% identified both as German and Polish, while 64% of those with Polish as their first language felt they were Polish; more than half (55%) of those who claimed both German and Polish as their first language also claimed a dual national identity. A large majority of those born in Poland (82%) felt Polish, but 55% of those born in Germany emphasise their dual national identity, which suggest that other factors are here at play. Time of residence in Germany was similarly significant: a Polish identity was claimed by nine out of ten who had spent less than five years in Germany and by almost seven out of ten who had arrived in Germany more than five years ago. Those with a father of Polish origin tended more often to feel Polish (61%) than both German and Polish (35%), whereas those with a German father felt more often both (50%) than German (40%). As 94% of the respondents had a Polish mother, no relationship with feelings of national identity can be inferred with confidence. The national identity, or identities, of the circle of acquaintances, of the best friend and of relatives also correlate strongly with the self-perceptions of national identity. High proficiency ('very good') in Polish goes often hand in hand with strong self-identification of being Polish (67%), but a 'good' command of the Polish language is more often associated with a dual identity (50%, against 28% who feel Polish). By contrast, those who qualify their Polish as 'less good' or 'rather bad' never indicate Polish as their national identity, but rather German or both respectively. On the other hand, no significant relationship can be observed between proficiency in German and feelings of national identity.

CONCLUSIONS

Official heritage language teaching in Germany is organised at the level of the federal states, which are responsible for education. Its two main forms are

- The historically older 'consular instruction', based on agreements between diplomatic representations of immigrants' countries of origin and a ministry of education. Here, consulates employ teachers and provide school manuals and curricula, while the school authorities usually make available classrooms at local schools but exercise no or only minimal oversight;
- Heritage language classed organised by the school authorities of a federal state at certain local schools if organisational requirements are met.

In both cases, attendance takes place on a voluntary basis within the framework of extracurricular activities, mostly but not exclusively at the primary level, and is limited to either students who are citizens of the organising country (consular instruction) or those with a relevant linguistic background (first language other than German) and exceptionally all interested students (state-organised classes). Heritage language classes generally include teaching content on the history, geography and culture of the country where the heritage language is the official or majority language. In practice, the federal states have adopted over time different policies and practices as a result of regional particularities (e.g. a high share of heritage speakers) and political preferences, reflected in the denomination of heritage language teaching: (complementary) instruction in the mother tongue, in the heritage language (Herkunftssprachenunterricht) or in the first language (Erstsprachenunterricht). Broadly, four situations can be distinguished: federal states that organise themselves heritage language classes, those that have only consular

instruction, those with both forms and those with none. The number and kind of heritage languages taught varies greatly across federal states; state offers may include, for example, minority languages (e.g. Kurdish, Twi).

In addition, heritage languages are, more rarely, taught as a foreign language, most often as a (compulsory) optional third foreign language at secondary schools, including as a subject for the baccalaureate, or as an extracurricular activity and in various forms of bilingual education (e.g. bilingual sequences, branches or schools) in public and publicly recognised private schools. They also play an important role in reception classes for new arrivals and in linguistic support for students who lack fluency in standard German.

Finally, heritage language classes, and similar language-related activities, are offered by a wide range of private actors, ranging from cultural, educational, religious and other organisations to private language schools and municipal education centres.

Polish as a heritage language is a comparative late-comer in this field in post-war Germany, despite its importance before World War II. Although the accompanying minors of immigrants of 'German descent' from Poland were in principle granted the possibility of choosing Polish as a foreign language, actual offers at schools remained sparse in the old Federal Republic, while foreign-language teaching of Polish in the German Democratic Republic was confined to a handful of upper secondary schools. At the same time, most descendants of older immigrant generations lost interest. This situation only changed slowly after large numbers of Polish citizens started to settle permanently in Germany in the 2000s. Since its inception in the 1960s, heritage language teaching in general has always been demand-driven with varying political and educational support; the only exception are recent attempts to provide a comprehensive linguistic offer for Polish-language-learning and German-Polish bilingual education in the border areas near Poland, characterised by incoming migration and transboundary commuting. This raises the question of parents' and students motivation in favour of the latter attending heritage language classes.

Studies have shown that parents of heritage speakers are in general strongly attached to the transmission of a heritage language to their children and often go to considerable lengths to ensure that the latter acquire communicative and, if possible, basic reading and writing, skills. This is reflected in the presence of heritage languages in intra-familial communication and in early childhood education, as well as interest at primary-school level, if appropriate offers are available (e.g. proximity, scheduling). However, as children become older, several factors militate against attending, or continuing to attend, heritage language classes or a bilingual education.

First, many parents are content with the proficiency level acquired by their children. If both parents have a first language other than German (sequential bilingualism of their children), they are often apprehensive that the latter's academic performance at the German school might suffer if their standard German is not sufficiently developed. Young heritage speakers with a German parent (simultaneous bilingualism), who tend to be less proficient in the heritage language, and those with little proficiency in general (receptive bilingualism) often lose interest when attending a heritage language class along more proficient students. Concerns that bilingualism might affect linguistic competences in both languages are still widespread. More generally, parents of heritage speakers are also frequently convinced that their children will be able 'to catch up later in life' if this will become necessary.

Second, after young heritage speakers enter school, German tends to become increasingly the

dominant language used, including with siblings and, sometimes, even with parents when discussing topics related to school. Moreover, length of residence in Germany correlates positively with an increased use of German at home.

Third, as young heritage speakers approach adolescence and transition to secondary school, heritage language offers become even scarcer and not all students are prepared to choose the heritage language as a foreign language, if at all possible, at the expense of other educational goals (e.g proficiency in a foreign language such as English or other subjects) or private interests. Even if as rich and diverse as in Berlin, heritage language classes and activities, which often take place during hours peripheral to the lesson plan or on Saturdays, have to compete with a wide range of extracurricular activities (sports, musical and artistic activities, literature and reading groups, social learning, etc.) for the attention of heritage speakers. Communication within the peer group of friends is often in German or limited in scope with other Polish-speaking friends (e.g. spoken and online communication). Reading and writing skills very much depend on how much parents read. Exposure to other Polish speakers may become reduced after visits to relatives in Poland become less frequent.

Fourth, contemporary language learning is largely focused on communication (the 'communicative approach' has to a large extent replaced older teaching methods, such as 'grammar and translation' and pronunciation or vocabulary drills). This also pertains to heritage language teaching. As a result, Polish heritage speakers may, for instance, experience difficulties in distinguishing sibilants or correctly using diacritical marks (see Table 6) and are often less knowledgable about more complex features and linguistic structures of the heritage language (e.g. word order, use of pronouns, etc.), because a message can be communicated and understood without paying much attention, for example, to irregular case or verb endings (morphology) or complex syntax structures. Digital communication favours this neglect as a number of tools (spellcheck, online translation, etc.) and the informal nature of online communication does not require attention to such linguistic details. Lack of exposure to different language registers and varied kinds of written productions, compared to native speakers, breeds unfamiliarity. Consequently, heritage speakers often risk getting stuck at an intermediate level of proficiency.

While most of the above applies to all heritage languages, Polish has several specific characteristics. Parents of Polish heritage speakers are probably worrying a lot less about its usefulness that those of many other heritage speakers. Within the European Union, Polish is the Slavic language with the largest number of speakers and partial mutual intelligibility with other Slavic languages gives it a prominent place within this language group. Poland is also an important political and economic partner (and rival) of Germany, with both countries sharing a long history. At the same time, Polish is struggling to improve its ranking in foreign-language teaching, including in Germany. Few German students choose Polish as a foreign language and the numerous visitors to Poland are more likely to communicate in English or German, which is the second foreign language taught in Poland after English. Despite a growing interest in Poland since the 1990s, adult German Polish learners often abandon their efforts at a low proficiency level (A1 or A2), as witnessed by the small number of language courses offered with a target level of B1 or higher.

As data on migration movements show, a significant share of Polish migrants to Germany stay there for a limited time period or successive shorter periods before returning to their home country or moving elsewhere and many others immigrate from a country other than Poland (e.g the United Kingdom since Brexit). This may explain the importance of heritage language teaching

and especially German-Polish bilingual education as places of linguistic transition for students, who have either arrived recently or whose parents are planning to resettle in Poland.(**129**) Other parents, in particular from an educated middle class background or in mixed marriages, seem to have adopted attitudes similar to those of their German peers and are sometimes unhappy with the nationalist undertones prevalent in some forms of heritage language teaching. Still others wish, on the contrary, to transmit certain Polish cultural values along with Polish language skills, as evidenced by the role of heritage language teaching provided by Catholic organisations or other traditionalist organisations. Overall, the rich diversity of heritage language teaching offers can be understood as a reflection of the diversity of profiles of parents of heritage speakers and their, and their children's, preferences. While immigration from Poland has stabilised in recent years and the number of German-Polish marriages has dropped, the number of children with a Polish father and/or mother has continued to grow. In federal states where heritage language classes are offered at school, the educational authorities continue to expand their offers but often face budgetary constraints. Where only consular instruction in Polish is available, civil society actors tend to fill the void.

(129) Some Polish heritage speakers also choose Polish as a foreign language by sitting for an external exam and obtaining an accredited language certificate instead of learning another foreign language, such as Spanish or French.

Furniture upcycling using egg tempera to practice drawing and writing skills, workshop by COTA (Paris, 2024)