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Teaching and learning resources for minority language certifications in Europe: A comparative overview of availability for Catalan, Galician, Irish, Welsh, Upper Sorbian, and Lower Sorbian

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Abstract

The creation of standardised certifications is a complex procedure, even for major world languages. For many minority and minoritised languages, the development of relevant criteria, specifications, and accreditations may be complicated by historical, societal, and political factors. In developing the author's previous work on the topic, this contribution will analyse the teaching and learning resources relating to the official certifications for six languages which are generally viewed as minority languages: Catalan, Galician, Irish, Welsh, Upper Sorbian, and Lower Sorbian. Noting that certification possibilities are available in a wider range of minority languages, the principal selection criterion for the present interdisciplinary study was that the relevant official certifications comprised a portfolio of independent qualifications which were available at different levels and were explicitly aligned to the CEFR. Based on analysis of the official materials available on the websites of the relevant certifications, the study delves deeper into the types of teaching and learning resources available, including specimen examination papers, specially-designed textbooks, online training courses, and other pedagogical materials. In addition to summarising the current state of play for the six languages profiled, it also aims to offer suggestions on how resources for other minority language certifications could be expanded in the future.

Keywords: language testing; minority language certifications; teaching and learning minority languages; teaching materials for minority languages

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Introduction

In a world characterised by strong geographical mobility, there is a clear need to maintain academic and professional standards, as well as ensuring national and international comparisons between different qualifications in various domains (Méhaut & Winch, 2012, p. 369). In the European context, relevant initiatives spearheaded by supranational institutions such as the European Union and the Council of Europe include the Bologna Process, which provided a format for standardised tertiary education across the continent (Wächter, 2004), the European Qualifications Framework (Europass, 2024), as well as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2024). Devised at the beginning of the current century, the CEFR was developed to scaffold language skills in accordance with a six-level proficiency framework, offering straightforward (self-)evaluation of an individual's language skills in accordance with clearly-defined criteria framed in positive terms: the so-called “can do statements” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 27).

As discussed elsewhere (e.g., North, 2005, pp. 31-40; Hoyte-West, 2023a, pp. 78-80), the original six-level iteration of the framework encompasses competency at the following levels ranging from novice to mastery: Basic User (CEFR A1 & A2), Independent User (CEFR B1 & B2), and Proficient User (CEFR C1 & C2). Accordingly, this allows for easy comparisons between different languages and differing skill levels. Over time, the CEFR has evolved to become well-known to language students, teachers, employers, and many other institutions across Europe and elsewhere (Wernicke & Bournot-Trites, 2011; Savski, 2021; Sahib & Stapa, 2022). As will be presented here, it has also been used as a basis and a guideline for many of the international language examinations and certifications offered in different European languages and typically (but not necessarily exclusively) aimed at non-native or L2 learners (Jones & Saville, 2009, p. 53). Indeed, a glance at the current full membership list of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) – an international body which, as at 2024, has coverage of over 35 organisations and 26 languages (see ALTE, 2024a) – confirms that the uptake and integration of the CEFR into language-based qualifications has been notable. In addition, further scrutiny reveals that several qualifications representing languages which may be considered as having minority status also feature in ALTE's listings.

Aligning with the topic of this special issue, the present article aims to outline the teaching and learning resources relating to the official certifications for six European languages which are generally viewed as minority languages: the Romance languages of Catalan and Galician, the Celtic languages of Irish and Welsh, and the Slavic languages of Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian. It develops the author's previous comparative work on current certifications available for a range of European minority languages, which emerged in direct response to his own practical interests as an active learner of several of these languages. As such, three case studies have appeared to date: a brief synoptic pilot analysis based on Catalan, Irish, and Upper Sorbian (Hoyte-West, 2021a); a more detailed work focusing on the modern Celtic languages of Breton, Cornish, Irish, Manx, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh (Hoyte-West, 2023b);

and the most recent on the Romance minority languages of Aragonese, Asturian, Catalan, Corsican, Galician, Occitan, and Romansh (Hoyte-West, 2024).

In contrast to this article, these previous publications focused primarily on presenting and analysing the types of certifications on offer, their availability and accessibility, as well as the recognition accorded to these credentials in local and/or international spheres. Mindful of the wide variety of language qualifications on the market, the previous case studies all evaluated qualifications that were offered irrespective of attendance, enrolment, or participation in any given preparatory programme or course. In sum, these were certifications which were offered to adult candidates, and – in the vast majority of the case studies – provided a standardised assessment of candidate performance in accordance with the CEFR, leading to the award of a certificate at a given proficiency level.

In going beyond these prior analyses, this article is of relevance given that, in common with all standardised qualifications, the development of language certifications is underpinned by the creation of specific teaching and learning materials which, even for majority languages such as Polish, can be a “relatively time-consuming process, because it should be established exactly what kind of materials are required” (Bartosik, 2019, pp. 288-289). Yet, in addition to ensuring quality, these materials do not only assist teachers and students in preparing for the examinations in an effective manner but can also serve as valuable pedagogical tools. For minority languages, given that these tongues often have a history of educational and/or social marginalisation, as well as a lack of funding and other resources, the value of these materials can be said to be heightened even more. Indeed, their importance has been reflected in recent scholarly literature (see Valijärvi & Kahn, 2023).

Drawing on theoretical and applied literature from sociolinguistics, education studies, and minority studies, the interdisciplinary insights contained in the present study will be presented according to the following structure: in the first section, general remarks on the specific nature of teaching and learning resources for minority languages will be presented. This will be followed by a section which provides brief sociolinguistic information on each of the six language case studies, together with a concise summary of the relevant official language certification linked to the CEFR. Then, after a short presentation of the chosen methodological approach, the focus will shift to the analysis of the relevant types of open-access teaching and learning resources available for each of the six languages. Based on examination of the relevant official websites for each certification, this will include *inter alia* specimen examination papers, specially-designed textbooks, bespoke online courses, as well as other appropriate pedagogical materials.

General remarks on teaching and learning resources for minority languages

As demonstrated by the long history of formalised foreign language teaching, the creation of teaching and learning materials for language study has taken place for centuries (see Sánchez, 2014; Wilhelm, 2018, pp. 20-22; Extermann, 2018, pp. 40-42; etc.). Nowadays, in common with trends across education (Carmody, 2012), the development of pedagogical

materials – especially for major languages such as English – has also become a significant commercial enterprise, as a visit to the languages section of any large bookshop or a browse on an e-commerce website will attest. In addition to physical items traditionally viewed as pertaining to language education (such as textbooks, dictionaries, self-study guides, grammar books, flashcards, etc.), there has also been a growth in digital tools (such as portals, apps, games, etc.) which exploit the inexorable technological advances in the realms of language learning and teaching and additionally have “profoundly changed the traditional relations between producers and consumers of educational materials” (Blyth, 2009, p. 174). In addition, market demands have additionally influenced not only the volume of materials (anecdotally, international languages such as English, French, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese may seem to dominate in terms of the range and scope of resources), but also the content of the resources made available for language learners (e.g., see Littlejohn, 2012).

It is important to underscore that pedagogical materials (both traditional and digital) have of course also been created for many less-widely-spoken languages and minority languages. Online self-study applications could also be included within this category, with platforms such as Duolingo adding a gamification element to language learning (see Shortt et al., 2023), and recent technological advances such as ChatGPT have also had an impact on the design and implementation of materials for in-class learning and teaching (Chirobocea-Tudor, 2024).

In noting what could potentially be considered as comprising teaching and learning resources within the concept of the present study, it should be underlined that the question of what can be considered teaching materials remains open. Indeed, following their visits to numerous language classrooms around the world, TEFL scholars Brian Tomlinson and Hitomi Masuharu noted that they “have seen many examples of resourceful teachers creating useful homemade materials when effective commercial materials were not available” (Tomlinson & Masuharu, 2017, p. 3). In addition, Tatar-language advocate and researcher Sabira Ståhlberg has also outlined the value that widely-available online platforms and resources can potentially represent for minority and vulnerable languages (Stahlberg, 2021). And in integrating the teaching of minority languages with current pedagogical trends such as cooperative learning, the importance of the teacher’s role as a “facilitator and organiser” with the remit of “prepar[ing] aesthetically pleasing and interesting teaching materials” (Ciszewska, 2024, pp. 117) cannot be underestimated.

For the purposes of this article, given its focus on official certifications for selected minority languages, the associated resources are pedagogical resources designed specifically for a particular aim – i.e., a given certification at a defined level. In adopting this narrower definition, these resources may include the creation of specific textbooks, websites, or online portals aimed at teachers and/or test-takers. In addition, these resources may be aimed at a particular setting – for example, there may be a focus on class-based tuition, or on self-access study. And though teaching and learning resources are usually – but not always – focused on a specific target group (such as young learners, school pupils, or refugees, etc.), the items analysed in present study are directed at adult examination candidates, irrespective

of linguistic, ethnic, or sociocultural background (for more on the discussion of ‘native’ and ‘new’ speakers in minority language contexts, please see O’Rourke, Pujolar, & Ramallo, 2015).

Though focusing solely on this conceptualisation of teaching and learning resources, attention should also briefly be turned to the use of ‘authentic’ materials and texts – in other words, those materials not originally designed for pedagogical purposes but rather for a wider public, such as society at large (Ciornei & Dina, 2015, pp. 275-276). Though outside the scope of this study, these authentic materials (such as radio and television broadcasts, newspaper and magazine articles, leaflets, posters, and pamphlets, etc.) taken from real-world settings are commonly used in language classrooms; this has been done for many years (see Gilmore, 2007). Accordingly, similar materials may also feature in certification examinations, especially for tests at the higher levels of the CEFR such as C2 (see Steiner, 2014, p. 19; Instituto Cervantes, 2024, pp. 8-12; etc.). And, as exemplified by the usage of relevant media materials in Swedish lessons in Finland (see Jaakkola, 2024), the usage of authentic texts in the minority language context may also be valuable, given that appropriate textbooks and other pedagogical aids may be somewhat limited (or, in some circumstances, may not even exist).

Yet, despite the seemingly ever-growing role of education technologies in teaching and learning (Stošić, 2015), textbook-related aspects nonetheless remain of importance in teaching and learning (Oates, 2014). In general terms, it is well-attested that textbooks “always contain and enshrine underlying norms and values; they transmit constructions of identity; and they generate specific patterns of perceiving the world” (Fuchs & Bock, 2018, p. 1). With regard to linguistic aspects, therefore, this means that they can advance particular perspectives not only about a language and its speakers, but also on its sociocultural and historical milieu. Such aspects are especially pertinent for minority languages, where textbooks and other teaching and learning materials may not always be relevant to the specific communities concerned – for example, with regard to minority languages spoken as majority languages in neighbouring kin-states, such as Swedish in Finland (e.g., Jaakkola & Straszer, 2024), Hungarian in Romania (e.g., see Papp, 2019, p. 22), or in the unique sociolinguistic context of the Balkans which is characterised by educational offerings in a number of different minority languages (see Kouzinovska & Papazis, 2014; Stoica, 2023; etc.). Indeed, a common refrain in relevant Council of Europe reports on various nations’ compliance with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities often relates to the lack of suitable textbooks for ethnic and linguistic minorities (Carstocea, 2021); a 2017 European Parliament report involving thirteen minority-language case studies also observes that “in view of the different situations in multiple countries, it can be concluded that teaching material for teaching in the minority language forms a general challenge shared by all cases” (van Dongera, van der Meer, & Sterk, 2017, p. 29).

However, with language often widely considered a key part of ethnic and cultural identity (Hoyte-West, 2025b), the creation of materials can also serve as a type of cultural diplomacy, and this – as demonstrated at the nation-state level – is exemplified by the presence of cultural institutes (see Paschalidis, 2009) as well as by associated institutions such as museums and libraries (Mariano & Vårheim, 2022). Funding issues, too, are also of

relevance, with some textbooks subsidised by governments or private organisations, others published by commercial enterprises, and some made freely available in open access format (e.g., see Sammler, Müller, Otto, & Macgilchrist, 2016). For many minority languages, and especially for those which are not national languages of relevant kin-states, the development and supply of textbooks may reflect other issues (Valdés, 1995; Tabatadze, 2015). For example, pedagogical materials may be written in a standardised form which may not necessarily reflect local usage, given the often-uncertain status that many minority languages have had and the prevalence of diglossia with national languages. Historical factors, such as a ban on the usage of a particular minority language or its exclusion from the educational system, may also create added challenges (for example, in the case of the Nordic language of Kven, see Lane, 2015; 2017; etc.). In this regard, speakers may be orally fluent but with limited literacy skills, or may lack vocabulary, or may feel ashamed to use the language due to ingrained social mores. Indeed, though societal attitudes may also complicate the situation further, political aspects can also play a role as to whether a given minority language receives funding, or if it is even acknowledged as being a separate tongue from the national language (for example, see the ongoing debates on the recognition of Silesian in Poland (e.g., Gorzelik, 2023; Jaroszewicz, 2023)). The convergence of these factors may also lead to funding issues, as the creation of materials in minority languages commonly requires significant financial outlay. These and other similar factors may run the risk of being seen by some as unnecessary, a perspective echoed by Peter K. Austin and Julia Sallabank when they write that “economic necessity or pragmatism are often cited as reasons for abandoning a minority language, since there may be little instrumental motivation for learning it” (Austin & Sallabank, 2013, p. 313).

Notwithstanding these challenges, the development and dissemination of teaching and learning resources for minority languages also brings with it numerous positive benefits. Combined with other efforts, the creation of attractive and engaging materials can play a role in the promotion and revitalisation of the minority language, thereby assisting its long-term survival, usage, and prestige. In addition, as a recent study on the Albanian minority in Ukraine (Dugushina, 2024, p. 66) has illustrated, the development of highly-specialised materials (in this case, a dictionary and phrasebook) focused on the aims and needs of the local communities can assist greatly in awareness-raising processes and in stimulating use of the language. The usage of tailored local materials can also reflect domestic needs arising from the demands and requirements of particular education systems (see van Dongera, van der Meer, & Sterk, 2017, pp. 29-30).

Many of the challenges and benefits outlined in the preceding paragraphs with regard to materials also hold true with regard to the development and promulgation of specific language certifications for minority languages. As outlined, these range from small grassroots initiatives (such as for Asturian and Aragonese) to highly-standardised international credentials like those for Irish and Welsh (Hoyte-West, 2023b; 2024). As noted previously, though these certifications are awarded independently, there often are preparatory language courses or other forms of tuition available. In addition, as with any language examination,

practices need to be adhered to. This is particularly apparent in the cases – as will be presented – of those language examinations associated with ALTE member institutions, for which strict criteria are applied (ALTE, 2024b). It is also the case with regard to the requisite descriptors and outcomes of given CEFR levels. As such, effective teaching and learning resources need to be coordinated and linked with the goals of the specific qualification, thus making sure that teachers and candidates are well-prepared for success in language examinations at an appropriate CEFR proficiency level.

The six languages and their official certifications: A brief overview

Before outlining the research approach and the specific teaching and learning resources available for each of the selected certifications, this section of the article provides some brief sociolinguistic and sociocultural background on the six relevant languages. Presented in pairs according to language family, it also introduces the certifications which are currently available, together with some short general observations.

Catalan and Galician

Speakers of the two Romance languages analysed here, Catalan and Galician, are found primarily in the Iberian peninsula, and are co-official languages (with Castilian Spanish) of the Kingdom of Spain. Catalan is spoken mostly in the northeastern part of the peninsula, in Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearics (Majorca, Ibiza, and Menorca), as well as in very limited areas of France and Italy; in addition, it is the official language of the Principality of Andorra. Galician is spoken in the northwestern part of the peninsula, in the province of Galicia.

Though they both share lengthy histories as languages of literature and culture, the dominance of Castilian Spanish culminated during the twentieth century when the public usage of all of Spain's other languages was largely proscribed under the rule of Francisco Franco (Fisher, 2022, pp. 3-7). Since the return to democracy in the mid-1970s, Catalan and Galician have however recovered some of their linguistic vitality, being both widely used in their respective autonomous regions within Spain. Ethnologue categorises the two languages as “Institutional”; in other words, as tongues “used and sustained by institutions beyond the home and community” (Ethnologue, 2024a; 2024b). Yet, the new UNESCO *World Atlas of Languages* (2024a; 2024b) denotes both tongues as “potentially vulnerable”, thus demonstrating, given the lingering legacy of linguistic oppression and minoritisation as well as the ongoing bilingual presence of Castilian Spanish, that both languages can fall under the general classification of ‘minority’ languages. There are currently just over 9 million speakers of Catalan (Posner & Sala, 2024) and around 4 million Galician speakers (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024); however, “the fact that all linguistic communities, including especially minoritised ones, are discursively and ideologically complex” (Moore, Pietikäinen, & Blommaert, 2010, p. 3) means that calculating an exact total may be challenging.

As also observed in Hoyte-West (2024), in its attempts to ensure greater linguistic plurality, language policy in post-Franco Spain has become a key part of public life through

various administrative and educational measures. Under the auspices of so-called linguistic normalisation programmes, usage of Catalan and Galician has become important in the relevant geographical region, and certifications have evolved to validate speakers' skills for the labour market. These qualifications are aimed at a wide audience, including native/L1 and heritage speakers of the languages, as well as others residing in those areas.

For Catalan, given that it is dispersed over a wide geographical area (Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands, as well as Andorra), five different certifications have been created. As mentioned elsewhere in more detail (Hoyte-West, 2024), four of the certifications are offered by the various regional governments (in the case of Andorra, by the national government). These certifications are known as the *Certificats de català* in Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2024) and the Balearic Islands (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2024a); as the *Certificats de coneixements de valencià* in the Valencian Community (Junta Qualificadora de Coneixements de Valencià, 2024a), reflecting the local nomenclature for the language in the province (i.e., as Valencian); and finally, as the *Diplomes oficials de llengua catalana* in Andorra (Govern d'Andorra, 2024). Qualification levels are offered in line with the CEFR, ranging from A2 Basic User to C2 Proficient User – an A1-level diploma is also on offer in Andorra, and post-C2 specialist professional linguist qualifications are available in Valencia and the Balearics. A further institution is the Institut Ramon Llull, which has its origins as an interinstitutional cultural organisation initiated by several different regional governments from the Catalan-speaking areas (Alsina, 2021, pp. 75-77). Named after the mediaeval Majorcan polymath (Priani, 2021), its activities include the provision of Catalan language examinations outside the traditional Catalan-speaking areas – i.e., in other parts of the Iberian peninsula as well as overseas. It too, offers *Certificats de català* qualifications, again aligned with the CEFR and spanning from A2 to C2 level (Institut Ramon Llull, 2024). All of the five different certifications schemes are officially recognised across the Catalan-speaking world and elsewhere in Spain; in addition, the qualifications awarded by the Institut Ramon Llull and the regional government in Catalonia are both internationally accredited by ALTE (2024b).

For Galician, the official certification on offer is the Celga, an acronym denoting the Certificado de Estudos de Lingua Galega (Xunta de Galicia, 2024a). As presented elsewhere (Hoyte-West, 2024, pp. 148-149), it is awarded by the Galician parliament (the Xunta de Galicia), and is available at five levels (from Celga 1, which corresponds to CEFR A2, to Celga 5, which certifies CEFR C2 proficiency). However, only four levels (Celga 1-4; CEFR A2-CEFR C1) can be obtained through sitting an examination. Like their Catalan counterparts, the Celga examinations are fully valid throughout Spain, as well as internationally by virtue of the Xunta de Galicia's full membership of ALTE (2024b).

Irish and Welsh

Both spoken in the British Isles, the two Celtic languages surveyed here, Irish and Welsh, have a lengthy social and cultural history which has been strongly impacted by the historical

dominance of English and associated reductive linguistic and societal policies and practices. With Irish the first official language of the Republic of Ireland (and, since the 2022 Identity and Language Act, an official language in Northern Ireland (Edwards, 2024)), and with Welsh now official (alongside English) in Wales since 2011, this political acknowledgement of the status of these languages occludes the different realities on the ground. Though Irish has been an official language of the European Union since 2007 (Ó Riain, 2010), with full official and working status since 2022 (Hoyte-West, 2025a), the UNESCO *World Atlas of Languages* (2024c) categorises it as “definitely endangered” and Ethnologue (2024c) views it as “endangered”. On the other hand, for Welsh – considered by UNESCO to be “potentially vulnerable” (UNESCO World Atlas of Languages, 2024d) and as “institutional” by Ethnologue (2024d) – the prospects are somewhat more optimistic. Indeed, thanks to favourable government policies encouraging the use of Welsh in daily public and professional life, it is often considered to be the Celtic language with the highest vitality at the present time (Greene, 2024). According to the 2024 statistics from the Welsh Government, just over 850,000 people in Wales (out of a total population of 3 million) attested they could speak Welsh (StatsWales, 2024). This can be contrasted with the situation in the Republic of Ireland, where the returns from the 2022 census determined that even though 1.8 million people (from a total population of 5 million) were able to speak Irish, a very small minority (under 75,000) did so in regular daily life (Central Statistics Office, 2023).

As detailed elsewhere (Hoyte-West, 2023b), official certification schemes to demonstrate candidate skills have been developed for both languages. With documentation of Irish-language proficiency often needed for positions in teaching, the civil service, and allied domains, the *Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge* (TEG), also known as the European Certificate in Irish (TEG, 2024a), is the principal stand-alone qualification offered throughout the island of Ireland as well as overseas. The headquarters of the qualification are at Maynooth University, and the examinations are ALTE-accredited with a special award for quality in language testing, the ALTE Q-Mark (ALTE, 2024c). TEG certifications assess candidate proficiency at five levels of the CEFR, starting from A1 up until C1 level (TEG, 2024b), and have been widely incorporated into tertiary education and teacher training in the Republic of Ireland (Batardière et al., 2023, p. 48; Burns et al., 2024).

For Welsh, the official certifications in the language are linked to a framework of language courses under the title of ‘Welsh for Adults’. However, the associated examinations (also known as Welsh for Adults or *Defnyddio'r Gymraeg*) can be taken without necessarily participating in a course (WJEC, 2024), thus meriting their inclusion in this study. Testing is available at four levels, from CEFR A1 up to B2; no certifications at the Proficient User (CEFR C1 & C2) level seem to be on offer at present. In addition to being certified by the WJEC, the major accrediting body in Wales, the Welsh for Adults certifications are also internationally recognised by ALTE (2024b).

Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian

Spoken in eastern Germany, Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian are commonly considered to be the smallest standard Slavic languages, or even as microlanguages (Dulichenko, 2017, p. 12). The two languages are closely related but distinct from each other, with Upper Sorbian spoken primarily in the surroundings of the city of Bautzen, in the German federal state of Saxony, and Lower Sorbian in the area around the city of Cottbus, in the federal state of Brandenburg. After historical denigration under the German Empire and then under the Nazi regime, both languages were recognised as minority languages during the existence of the communist East German state, with relevant cultural bodies created which are still in existence (Norberg, 1994, pp. 79-88). After 1989 and reunification, the languages are two of Germany's recognised minority languages (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat, 2024), with special rights to be used in certain administrative and legal proceedings (Kamocki, Lobin, Witt, & Wöllstein, 2025, p. 9) and efforts have been made to continue revitalisation efforts through education and training programmes, publishing activities, and so forth (Hoyte-West, 2021b, pp. 8-12). This is necessary given that, even with a generous estimate, there are probably fewer than 25,000 speakers of Upper Sorbian and fewer than 7,000 of Lower Sorbian, all of whom are bilingual with German (Brězan & Nowak, 2016, p. 11).

With the two Sorbian languages demonstrably smaller in terms of number of speakers than the other languages profiled here, both are considered 'endangered' by Ethnologue (2024e; 2024f), and the UNESCO *World Atlas of Languages* (2024e; 2024f) categorises Upper Sorbian as 'endangered/unsafe' and Lower Sorbian as "definitely endangered". Yet encouragingly, among other attempts to raise awareness and encourage transmission of the languages, the local academic and cultural organisations have created an official certification programme. These certifications are aimed not only at school pupils attending bilingual education programmes, but also (and thus of relevance to the present study) for adult learners and speakers of the two languages. In association with relevant partners, the official language centre for both Sorbian languages, WITAJ-Sprachzentrum, has developed two sets of parallel qualifications for Lower Sorbian and Upper Sorbian (Sprachzertifikat Sorbisch, 2024a), building on WITAJ's history in developing pedagogical materials (see Norberg, 2007). Examinations in both tongues are currently offered from CEFR A1-B2 levels, and it appears that advanced qualifications at the Proficient User (CEFR C1 & C2) levels are in the pipeline. Yet, given the current sizes of the speaker communities, numbers remain small. Taking the Lower Sorbian certifications as an example, twelve certifications at the B1 level and three at the B2 level had been obtained by successful candidates as at spring 2023 (Wojto & Asmus, 2024, p. 163). Thus, as the qualifications in both Sorbian languages can be considered as relatively new and locally-focussed initiatives, it also appears that the qualifications are not internationally accredited with ALTE at present.

Approach, research questions, and methodology

Building on the presentations provided above for the Catalan, Galician, Irish, Welsh, Upper Sorbian, and Lower Sorbian contexts, the core objectives of this study is to identify and

present the available teaching and learning resources for the respective language certifications as presented on their official websites. In taking a comparative approach (Das, 2012), it aims to outline the type and volume of materials offered, as well as any similarities or differences in the provision between the different minority languages which are the subject of this analysis. At this point, it is important to underline that though they may differ in vitality, geographical spread, and historical usage, the choice of the selected languages is not arbitrary. Rather, in developing the author's previous work on certifications across a wider range of language, the selection provides a useful cross-selection of the current state of play across several different minority language contexts, an approach also espoused in a recent comparative study of minority language media for Basque, Ladin, and Upper Sorbian, which vary in size, status, and vitality (Volgger & Röggl, 2024). The two preliminary research questions for the present study, therefore, are as follows:

- What are the specific teaching and learning resources available for the official certifications for the six selected languages?
- What is the quantity (and availability) of these resources?

Similarly to the author's prior works on the topic, the current interdisciplinary study takes a qualitative and desk-based approach (Bassot, 2022) to identify the answers to these interlinked questions, involving an exploratory analysis of the teaching and learning resources available on the official websites of the different qualifications. As depicted in Table 1 below, the relevant language certifications are defined as follows:

Language	Qualification	CEFR levels	Awarding body	Official website
Catalan	<i>Certificats de català</i>	A2-C2	Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia)	https://llengua.gencat.cat/ca/serveis/acreditacio_coneixements/certificats_de_catala/
	<i>Certificats de català</i>	A2-C2	Institut Ramon Llull (aimed at candidates outside of the Catalan-speaking areas)	https://www.llull.cat/catala/aprendre_catala/certificats_intro.cfm
	<i>Certificats de català</i>	A2-C2	EPAB (Government of the Balearic Islands)	https://www.caib.es/sites/catalaebap/ca/certificats/
	<i>Certificats de coneixements de valencià</i>	A2-C2	Junta Qualificadora de Coneixements de Valencià	https://jqcv.gva.es/va/
	<i>Diplomes oficials de llengua catalana</i>	A1-C2	Govern d'Andorra (Government of Andorra)	https://www.govern.ad/ca/tematiques/cultura-i-esports/llengua/examens-oficials

Galician	<i>Celga – Certificado de Estudos de Lingua Galega</i>	A2-C1 (C2 only available by validation)	Xunta de Galicia (Government of Galicia)	https://www.lingua.gal/o-galego/aprendelo/celga
Irish	<i>TEG – Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (European Certificate in Irish)</i>	A1-C1	Maynooth University	https://www.teg.ie/
Welsh	<i>Welsh for Adults/ Defnyddio'r Gymraeg</i>	A1-B2	WJEC	https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/welsh-for-adults-qualification-suite/
Upper Sorbian	<i>Rěčny certifikat hornjoserbšćiny (Sprachzertifikat Obersorbisch)</i>	A1-B2	WITAJ-Sprachzentrum	https://www.sprachzertifikat-sorbisch.de/
Lower Sorbian	<i>Rěčny certifikat dolnoserbšćiny (Sprachzertifikat Niedersorbisch)</i>	A1-B2	WITAJ-Sprachzentrum	https://www.sprachzertifikat-sorbisch.de/

Table 1: Official language certifications analysed in this study.

Source: The author, based on Generalitat de Catalunya (2024); Govern d'Andorra (2024); Govern de les Illes Balears (2024a); Institut Ramon Llull (2024); Junta Qualificadora de Coneixements de València (2024a); Sprachzertifikat Sorbisch (2024b; 2024c); TEG (2024b); WJEC (2024a).

For the purposes of this study, an official certification website was defined as the homepage for the specific certification – for Irish, this was a dedicated individual website; for Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian, the two qualifications shared variants of the same website. Yet for the other qualifications highlighted here, the certification homepages were part of much larger websites referring to other areas of administration and governance or – as in the case of Welsh – additional qualifications in different academic and professional domains. In addition, as may be expected by the official status accorded to each of the qualifications analysed here, several of the certifications were hosted directly on official (regional) government websites. This, for example, was demonstrated in the cases of the Catalonia, Galicia, and Andorra-based qualifications, thus showing clear interlinkage between these official certifications with other broader aspects of digital governance (see Lee-Geiller & Lee, 2019). In other instances (such as in the cases of Welsh, Irish, and the two Sorbian languages), the official nature of the qualifications was highlighted through the visual usage of appropriate logos and motifs on the certification websites, as well as by the inclusion of relevant links to other websites. With particular regard to the websites for the qualifications concerning the Galician and Catalan languages, the narrower scope adopted by this study sought to determine whether teaching and learning resources were explicitly included or directly linked to on the official website of the certification concerned – in other words, links to external resources (such as a commercially-produced textbook or publisher) were judged to fall outside the purview of the present study.

Each of the websites for the certifications presented above was visited to obtain relevant information regarding appropriate teaching and learning resources. Bearing in mind the bilingual or multilingual potential audience for such qualifications, the websites were commonly available in more than one language, always including the dominant majority language of the country concerned. Based on the author's language proficiency, the Catalan and Galician certifications were consulted in those languages, the Irish and Welsh qualifications were primarily consulted in English, and the Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian websites were mainly consulted in German.

Teaching and learning resources for the minority language certifications

Catalan and Galician

As mentioned previously, the presence of the five certification schemes relating to Catalan are largely linked to geographical aspects. All five schemes had comprehensive websites containing key practical information about the different qualifications, with details of the different levels, examination formats, entry procedures, and availability, as well as accreditation. In general terms, the websites offered for four of the qualifications were relatively limited in terms of the teaching and learning resources available. These were the three *Certificats de català* qualification schemes awarded by the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2024), the Institut Ramon Llull (2024), and the Andorran government (Govern d'Andorra, 2024), as well as the *Certificats de coneixements de valencià* offered by the Junta Qualificadora de Coneixements de Valencià (2024a). With regard to the materials, in most instances these were largely limited to one or two specimen papers to display the sample format and requirements for a given level; in the case of the *Certificats de coneixements de valencià*, multiple past papers were provided dating back several years (for example, see Junta Qualificadora de Coneixements de Valencià, 2024b), thus illustrating real examples of actual examination papers taken by candidates in preceding examination sessions.

However, more extensive offerings were available on the website of the Balearic Islands certification (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2024a), which included a link to MATCAT, a specific portal which contained useful pedagogical materials used by higher-level courses offered by the institution (Govern de les Illes Balears, 2024b). The resources were available at the CEFR B2, C1, and C2 levels, as well as for the post-C2 specialist exam in language administration (EBAP en obert, 2024a). They included workbooks in PDF format and associated audio files relating to various topics covered in the official certifications. Taking the B2-level certification as an example, in addition to material on phonetics, orthography, syntax, and morphology, other resources also focused on reading comprehension and the development of written and oral communication skills (EBAP en obert, 2024b). There was also some practical sociolinguistic information provided about the different varieties and registers of Catalan, complemented by helpful audio materials (for example, relating to the specific pronunciation of certain sounds in the Balearic dialects of the language).

Turning to Galician, in addition to the expected administrative information such as specimen examination papers, the website for the Celga certifications also contains a selection

of teaching and learning resources related to the qualifications (Xunta de Galicia, 2024a). Corresponding to Celga 1-4 (CEFR A2 to C1), these materials comprise downloadable open-access PDF versions of the four levels of the *Aula de Galego* series. This textbook series is often used in classrooms to teach Galician (including outside of Galicia), and the Celga portal includes the volumes designed for students as well as the manuals for teachers. In addition, links are provided to class materials (such as audio files and transcripts) which support each of the units which comprise the different sections of the *Aula de Galego* textbooks. A further section links directly to other available resources for studying Galician for various purposes (Xunta de Galicia, 2024b); however, except for information regarding the possibility of taking distance-learning preparatory courses for the Celga examinations, these appear to be not specifically related to the certification programme and thus reflect more general publications, videos, and media programmes related to Galician language, culture, and society. Nonetheless, as highlighted by Laura Lesta García, an assistant professor who developed a Galician course at the well-known Middlebury College in Vermont, teaching and learning resources are somewhat limited for Galician, and thus access to *Aula de Galego* and other offerings on the website is a boon, even if Celga certification is not an objective in itself (Lesta García, 2024).

Irish and Welsh

For Irish, the official TEG website contains a section with guidelines and information about the examination format and syllabi as well as advice for teachers (TEG, 2024c). There is also a link to an online placement test (TEG, 2024d) for candidates to gauge their general proficiency in Irish and therefore to orient their preparation towards a specific level of the TEG. In terms of specific teaching and learning materials, the website also includes a comprehensive list of topics relating to the TEG examinations at CEFR A1 to B2 levels (TEG, 2024e), which comprises audio files and associated student worksheets (in Microsoft Word format), lists of recommended vocabulary, as well as sample class-based activities. In addition, there is a general 'Resources' page (TEG, 2024f) which contains external links to items such as online dictionaries.

The website of the WJEC Welsh for Adults certifications provides a comprehensive overview of the four qualifications available (WJEC, 2024a), including information such as examiners' annual reports on candidate performance as well as the qualification specifications. In addition, the candidate information section for each level provides information on the past papers available, and folders (in .zip format) provide additional sample assessment material for future test-takers. There is also a candidate booklet available for each certification level. Turning to specific pedagogical resources, taking the basic A1 *Mynediad/Entry* level as an example, the materials listed include supplementary information on the speaking portion of the exam as well as useful word lists – for example, showing dialectal variations (WJEC, 2024b). A general 'Resources' tab on the main website (WJEC, 2024a) also provides suggestions for commercially-available material, including flashcards as well as books about Welsh literature and culture. In addition, whilst noting that most Welsh for Adults courses use more modern

textbook resources, the webpage also includes information about the old CBAC-WJEC Welsh for Adults coursebooks. Save for a few out-of-print materials (such as audio recordings originally distributed on compact discs) which have already been uploaded to the site for public use, these older coursebooks are not downloadable in open-access format at present. It is mentioned, however, that “when the stock comes to an end [the textbook series] will be freely available on this website, where possible” (WJEC, 2024a).

Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian

Given that both certifications have been spearheaded by the same organisation, the certifications for Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian share a variant of the same website (Sprachzertifikat Sorbisch, 2024a), with bilingual language versions in German and Upper Sorbian or Lower Sorbian depending on the certification. Both certifications have a general information page about the specific qualification (Sprachzertifikat Sorbisch, 2024b; 2024c), and other pages profile each individual certification level available, as well as the mooted CEFR C1 and C2 qualifications. From levels CEFR A1-B2, the pages contain the specimen papers for each certification, together with short, highly-focused units which deal briefly with the examination format and topics.

In terms of broader teaching and learning materials, the *Sprachzertifikat Sorbisch* website links to other resources, such as *Soblex*, the Sorbian online dictionary, as well as to *Serbsce Lochko*. Also designed by the WITAJ-Sprachzentrum, the latter is conceived as an additional learning resource, mostly accessible for self-study work. Some of the materials are directed at school pupils, and thus are outside the scope of the current analysis. Yet, the portal also contains other conversational material in “Easy Sorbian” (Materialien in sorbischer Sprache, 2024a), as well as a e-learning portal, *SOL* (Materialien in sorbischer Sprache, 2024b), which contains a wide range of units to download, videos, and other materials.

Discussion

In providing a brief outline of the different teaching and learning resources for the official certifications for Catalan, Galician, Irish, Welsh, Upper Sorbian, and Lower Sorbian, the findings regarding these six European minority languages can be summarised as follows.

For Catalan, despite the relatively large number of certifications options available, the official websites of the five qualifications largely focus on the specifics of the certification itself (e.g., administration, entry, format, recognition, etc.), rather than on specific additional teaching and learning materials. This could be ascribed to the robust vitality of the language in the geographical areas concerned, where there is additionally a long tradition of teaching the language and for preparing candidates – both L1 and other speakers – for the relevant certifications. Accordingly, there is a wide range of commercial textbooks available for the language (by way of example, popular series are *Veus* and *A Punt*), and thus – aside from the offerings related to the Balearic Islands certifications – specially-composed teaching and learning materials for the examinations may not currently prove to be necessary.

The situation with Catalan can be contrasted with that of Galician, where the Celga web portal contains a veritable multitude of teaching and learning materials aligned to the official certification. These resources allow candidates to acquire and develop their language skills whilst also simultaneously completing the syllabus for the relevant Celga certification levels. In making a well-known Galician textbook series available for free online, it also ensures that candidates and teachers have a range of materials to assist with their preparation for the Celga examination. However, as detailed by the author elsewhere, possibilities for sitting the Celga examinations outside of Galicia are generally limited in terms of their availability.

For Irish, the TEG website contains many useful additional resources for preparing for the different examinations from CEFR A1 to B2 levels. Although no complete textbook appears to be available, the documents and audio files are structured by unit, therefore presenting a possible progression through the relevant materials, and links to general resources are provided. In this regard, it is similar to the situation for the Welsh for Adults qualification suite, where a wide variety of certification-related teaching and learning resources are on offer for the four levels. However, though specific textbooks are mentioned, these are not currently freely available in open-access format.

Interestingly, though the website for the Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian certifications is well-developed and furnished with several links to useful sources, there does not seem to be a link to the open-access online language courses devised for the language (Sorbian Online, 2024). These consist of independent self-access online courses in either Upper Sorbian or Lower Sorbian, with A1 and A2 levels taught bilingually alongside English or German, and the B1 level taught solely in Upper Sorbian or Lower Sorbian. As the website details, these contain over 500 units on grammar and vocabulary; in addition, these courses also explicitly prepare test-takers for the certificates in Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian, with the English version noting that “The contents and focuses of the courses comply with the requirements for the exams to obtain the Certificate Upper Sorbian or Lower Sorbian as well as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” (Sorbian Online, 2024).

As such, though all the teaching and learning resources examined for the certifications profiled in this study appear to be of high quality, this brief study has highlighted that these materials do, however, vary in terms of quantity. In this regard, the online resources for the Celga certification for Galician, the Balearic Islands certification for Catalan, TEG for Irish, and the Welsh for Adults qualifications suite can arguably be considered the most numerous. Indeed, the comprehensive resources can be viewed as a template to follow for other languages with nascent certification programmes such as Aragonese or Asturian (see Hoyte-West, 2024).

Conclusion

It is to be reiterated that the development of pedagogical materials often involves numerous stakeholders and interest groups, and this is also true in terms of teaching and learning resources relating to official certifications. In terms of suggestions, the development of digital materials is highly recommended, though it is to be noted that other aspects (such as funding

and accessibility) may also need to be taken into account. In addition, particularly relevant in the age of artificial intelligence and large language models, issues relating to intellectual property and copyright would also require consideration (Adams, 2025, p. 37).

As a desk-based study, the limitations of this exploratory analysis would be overcome by complementing the findings with interviews with those involved in the certifications concerned, including subject-matter experts in the minority languages involved, experienced teachers and trainers with expertise in the development of pedagogical materials, relevant accreditation bodies, and so forth. In addition, candidate perspectives on the relevant teaching and learning resources could also invite additional discussion on the appropriateness and value of particular materials, especially given the changes in teaching and learning which have marked the post-pandemic world. Such methods could also be expanded to include those minority languages which are currently in the process of developing their certifications.

In sum, this synoptic study has demonstrated that there is clear body of valuable teaching and learning resources for the six minority languages profiled. Indeed, as the digital age progresses, and technological advancements continue to gather pace, it is certain that the needs for language-related certifications and credentials will not cease to evolve. As such, especially for the specific context of minority languages, the development and uptake of such materials will be increasingly necessary and represent a valuable resource. In this way, it is expected that these resources will play a part in continuing and promoting the spread and vitality of these languages in the years to come.

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