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María Luisa Pérez Cañado *Editor*

Competency-based Language Teaching in Higher Education

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Preface

Languages in the European Higher Education Area

Introduction

More than ERASMUS grants, transferable ECTS credits or Bologna-compatible qualifications frameworks, languages are the principle key to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Linguistic diversity is a major feature of Europe – even though most Europeans perceive but a small part of its rich and complex reality – and this raises major issues about the learning and use of languages in higher education in Europe, both in curricula and for the purpose of mobility. While the "old" ideal of full integration of mobile students into the host university's normal curriculum is still highly valued by many educators, and remains an actual option for some students in some countries/languages, the linguistic reality of Europe is relegating this ideal to merely one option among many, in particular in view of the growing acknowledgement of the role of "global English" as a means of communication not delimited by national context or mobility itinerary.

Multilingualism in Europe

Most of the 500 million citizens of the European Union's 27 Member States are not aware that their language is but one of 23 official languages using three different alphabets (Roman, Cyrillic and Greek) and belonging to three different families (in addition to Indo-European languages such as the Roman, Slavic, Greek and Germanic languages, the EU counts three Finno-Ugrian official languages – Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian – and one Semitic language – Maltese). In addition, there are some 60 regional and minority languages, not to mention a variety of immigrant languages, some of which – Arabic and Turkish, for example – count a large number of native speakers throughout the Union. Several European languages have come to be widely spoken as native languages outside Europe – English of course, but also Spanish, Portuguese and French – and widely learnt as foreign languages in other countries.

In the 47 nations that constitute the European Higher Education Area, the number and diversity of languages is correspondingly greater than in the EU: It suffices to refer to the Russian, Serbian, Albanian, Turkish, Kazakh, Azeri, Georgian or Armenian languages. How many Europeans are aware that in the EHEA the language that counts the highest number of native speakers is Russian, followed – at a distance – by German and Turkish, both of which are well ahead of English or French?

Moreover, Europe is multilingual not only in the sense that Europeans speak so many different mother tongues. It is also multilingual in the sense that a substantial – and rising – proportion of Europeans are able to speak one or more languages in addition to their own. According to a Eurobarometer survey carried out in 2006,[1] 56% of EU citizens declare that they are able to hold a conversation in at least one language other than their mother tongue; 28% can do this in two foreign languages and 11% in three.

These figures, however, mask the fact that multilingualism is very unevenly distributed across Europe: while 44% of Europeans attest to not knowing any other language than their mother tongue, they form a majority in 6 of the 27 member states: more than 60% in Ireland and the UK, and more than 55% in Italy, Hungary, Spain and Portugal.

Some 83% of Europeans find that knowing another language is "useful" or "very useful" (a ten percentage point increase over the previous Eurobarometer survey in 2001). One in every five Europeans is an active language learner, even though many others acknowledge that they lack the time, motivation or money to learn languages. The perceived benefits of knowing another language range from humanist values (dialogue and communication, understanding other people and cultures, promoting peace and citizenship) to practical (possibilities to travel, study and work abroad) and increasingly to professional notions of "employability". Indeed, the effort involved in learning a foreign language seems, increasingly, to be justified by the practical benefits expected from the exercise, mainly in the professional sphere as an enhancement of employability (for nearly 60% of language learners). A survey of European graduates from several countries shows that – except in English-speaking countries – a large proportion of Europeans (41%) see their (insufficient) fluency in a foreign language (usually English) as an educative handicap in their professional development, and this proportion rises to 62% among Spanish graduates.[2] This trend towards practicality becomes even more remarkable when placed alongside another major linguistic phenomenon of contemporary Europe, i.e. the rather narrow concentration of language learners on a small number of foreign languages: 38% of all EU Europeans speak English as a foreign language, followed by French and German (14% each), Spanish (6%), Russian and Italian (3% each). Only 5% of language learning in Europe relates to a language other than one of these six. The era when the most important language to learn was that of one's neighbouring nation is over.

[1] Eurobarometer, *Europeans and their languages*, 2006.

[2] REFLEX, http://www.aneca.es/informesyestudios/observatorio.aspx#1797.

The importance of multilingualism as a challenge and an opportunity for Europe has been the subject of many studies and much research by the European Commission, both before and after the recent jump from 15 to 27 Member countries. The most recent Communication of the European Commission on this subject[3] stresses the increased challenges and opportunities attending multilingualism for the enlarged EU in the world context. The Commission wants to promote the learning of all languages, not just the major ones, and emphasises the role of multilingualism in enhancing employability in Europe and the competitiveness of the EU in the world, exploring in particular the 'external dimensions' of multilingualism in Europe and ways of increasing the effectiveness of language learning by Europeans. Yet, the Communication does not address specifically the main and most controversial issue, i.e. the role of learning and speaking *English* as a crucial dimension of the debate about the role of learning and speaking languages in Europe.

The Issue About "Global English"

Is the expansion of English into a 'predator' language that sooner or later kills all other languages (and the cultures to which they belong) an irresistible process, as it gains learners and speakers across Europe and the world? To what extent does it, unconsciously, inculcate in millions of non-native learners of English the values and ideology of the USA and UK? What does this mean in the world of international education, and more specifically in the European Higher Education Area? Is being or becoming fluent in English indeed an unwarranted advantage or privilege in studying and working in Europe? All these questions tend to be assessed from a mainly idealistic, nationalistic or ideological viewpoint rather than through neutral, pragmatic and dispassionate eyes. English is indeed the native language of Europeans living in the UK, Ireland and Malta, and in this context it is connected, like any other language, to the literature, culture, history and role of those people and countries in today's world. It could be argued that using 'their' language inevitably involves using their (national, or maybe nationalistic) way of naming and interpreting places, events and people. Yet is it not also arguable that the English language has acquired a distinctive role in the world, one much more distanced from its roots, which is less nationalistically, ideologically or culturally loaded and thus more neutral. This role is functional – a means of communication between persons from different, non-English speaking countries who happen to have English as their only language in common. This kind of "international" or "global" English is the language used by a Chinese pilot talking to air traffic control in Dubai, or, most likely, by a French engineer talking technology with a Polish client. Michael Woolf (a Briton himself) provocatively asserts that British English, and even American English, have become

[3] Communication of the European Commission to the European Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions, COM(2008)566 of 18 September 2008.

no more than regional dialects of "international" English.[4] International English is a language that is spoken more widely – and with many regional variations – as a foreign language than English as a mother tongue in today's world. Even though these "international" or "global" versions of the English language are not disconnected from their common origin, they are quite distanced from the cultural background of the language's origins and come with a huge variety in vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation and even grammar.

English as a Key to Progress in the European Higher Education Area

A traditional standard of quality in international education is the integration of the mobile student in the normal courses and student group of the host university, in the language of the host country. This has been the ideal of the ERASMUS programme and many other overseas study schemes for decades, and it is clear that this kind of international experience comes with a deep immersion in the host language and culture and associated benefits in terms of intercultural competencies.

Hence, from these viewpoints, this model guarantees a high level of "quality". But it would be wrong to establish it as the only qualitative standard in international education. This ideal model can function properly in only a limited number of situations, characterised by students who already have an excellent command of the language of the host country on commencing their studies abroad. This may be a realistic expectation in some cases, e.g. for future language teachers or other foreign language majors, for students of linguistically homogeneous "area studies" such as French Studies or German Studies (as opposed to Asian or Mediterranean Studies covering regions with a variety of languages) and for those studying abroad in their own or a related language (e.g. Danish students in Sweden). In most cases, however, requiring that incoming students have a sufficient command of the language of the host university would be completely unrealistic and would stem the flow of international students to that university and that country. This is the case with the vast majority of students studying disciplines other than languages and area studies and is also the case with the majority of countries and languages in Europe: even universities located in countries using one of the most-learned languages of the world cannot expect students in all disciplines to arrive fluent in their language, if they want to internationalise their campus. Universities located in other countries may only attract a very small number of foreign students who, for whatever personal reason, are interested in studying their language, but need to turn to an "international" language (nearly always English) if they want to fully participate in international education exchanges and take advantage of the EHEA. Accepting only

[4] EAIE Occasional Paper 17, 2005: *I Gotta Use Words When I Talk to You,* ed. Michael Woolf (Chap. 5, *English Language and International Education: Beyond Stagnation*, pp. 45–51).

students who are fluent in the local language would drastically reduce the number of foreign students who get a chance to study in that country, and would impoverish all the stakeholders in international education schemes, whether incoming students, host university, host community, or local students. The only broadly applicable and functional solution is to use English as an international medium of communication. Experience shows that even groups conversing in, say, German, feel compelled to resort to English as soon as a non-German speaker joins the conversation. There is growing acknowledgement in the higher education community that admitting foreign students into courses delivered in English has the advantage of exposing them nonetheless to the national language and way of life, and that most will acquire a basic knowledge of the host language, allowing them to function in that environment. Indeed, some may, as a result, benefit from learning of a language and country that would otherwise have been denied them. Integrating local students who have sufficient command of the English language offers the added advantage of providing an opportunity of interaction and avoiding the possible ghettoization resulting from on-campus courses or "islands" for foreigners only.

Whether they like it or not, the majority of universities in the majority of countries in the EHEA are faced with this reality. Some may choose to protect the would-be purity of international relations in their own language only, at the risk of cutting themselves and their students off from mainstream internationalisation. The majority will have to find accommodations using the English language as the only multilateral means of communication for students in all disciplines from all countries, including foreign students as well as their own. The more universities accept this reality and develop courses in English for native and incoming students, the sooner the EHEA will become a tangible reality, allowing students to choose from its diversity of courses and institutions – even though they have to use English as a means of communication.

Conclusion

I trust the present book will contribute to consolidating the linguistic foundations of the European Higher Education Area. In tune with what most students (and their families and employers) expect from "European" curricula and mobility, it looks into competency-based language teaching/learning – in English for all students, in other languages for some. I trust also that the book will increase readers' appetite for internationalisation and provide them with a broad but realistic view of the linguistic options open to students. This is enough merit and I wish to congratulate the authors for their work and their contributions to a functioning, user-friendly European Higher Education Area.

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Chapter 1
Introduction and Overview

María Luisa Pérez Cañado

1.1 Language Teaching in Higher Education

It is an uncontested fact that we are currently being confronted with a "language challenge" (Tudor 2008: 42) in our increasingly multilingual and multicultural society. Language education is in turmoil (Lorenzo 2010) as a result of the new forces at work in our postmodern world: globalization, mobility, integration, and fusion (Coyle et al. 2010; Mehisto et al. 2008). We are living through what Mehisto (2008) terms a period of disjuncture, characterized by the tension between the previous order and a new pedagogical approach which changes the *status quo*. The demands of this new global order reverberate directly through to the curriculum (Marsh 2006), and the need for what Aronin and Hufeisen (2009: 105) denominate "a new linguistic dispensation" arises, which is reconfiguring higher education (HE) across continents and informing what for many is a paradigm shift in language education (Benito and Cruz 2007; Blanco 2009). In response to the demands imposed by these powerful forces, both Europe and North America are grappling with broadly similar issues (cf. Pérez Cañado 2010a) of "language use, learning, and teaching across national and international boundaries" (Brantmeier 2008: 308).

This change is being channeled via specific policy frameworks in both continents: in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through its report *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World* (2007), and in North America by the Modern Language Association (MLA) through its position paper *Transforming College and University Foreign Language Departments: A Proposal* (Pratt et al. 2008).

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Although both movements have been driven by different circumstances – Europe's desire to improve its economic development and international competitiveness, and North America's sense of crisis around its so-called language deficit after 9/11 – they involve very similar views of what successful language learning entails and of what lies ahead for HE in this area. There seems to be a transatlantic consensus that students' competencies need to be developed, in an attempt to link the knowledge and skills acquired at university with what society requires of them (e.g., Salamanca Convention 2001; Wellmon 2008). Interinstitutional and interdisciplinary collaboration, involving research partnerships and instructional alliances, comes to the fore in both European and North American settings (e.g., Berlin Communiqué 2003; Green et al. 2002; Pratt et al. 2008), as do internationalization efforts. The promotion of FL study abroad is underscored by the MLA (2008: 288), and the imperative need for mobility, comparability, and transparency have been at the core of the EHEA from its very origins (cf. Bologna Declaration 1999).

The integration of the teaching and research missions in the two zones is also deemed essential (Berlin Communiqué 2003; Pfeiffer 2008), something which will favor staying abreast of the latest trends in the field (Brantmeier 2008: 297) and incorporating innovation in language teaching (Glasgow Declaration 2005; Schechtman and Koser 2008: 311). A further divide which should be overcome is that between the language and content components of the curriculum – both should be taught in an integrated, cohesive manner so as to achieve the main objective of the most recent MLA paper (Pratt et al. 2008) – translingual and transcultural competence (TTC) – which is in line with the European Centre for Modern Languages' concept of "interculture" (Glaser et al. 2007).

These objectives will naturally entail revamping plans, redesigning curricula, and reconfiguring departments (Pratt et al. 2008), something which pervades the MLA paper and which is already underway in many European countries. All in all, the thrust of these global FL movements is a much-yearned-for revitalization of language education at the tertiary level. Transformations such as those spurred by the EHEA and the MLA are an invaluable opportunity for renewal, change, and improvement, as Michavila Pitarch (2007) has pointed out.

1.2 Competency-Based Language Teaching in Higher Education

For many (e.g., Benito and Cruz 2007; Blanco 2009; Poblete Ruiz 2006), the cornerstone of this transformation is to be found in the application of competency-based teaching. As Rylatt and Lohan (1997: 18) rightly foresaw, "It can confidently be said, as we enter a new millennium, that the business of improving learning competencies and skills will remain one of the world's fastest growing industries and priorities".

On both sides of the Atlantic, the onus is now on developing a set of competencies which will prepare graduates to become successful professionals who can meet

societal needs (Pratt et al. 2008). In an increasingly globalized world, developing key competencies becomes paramount for citizens to participate actively in society and contribute to sustainable economic growth. As Grognet and Crandall (1982: 3) put it, they are "necessary for individuals to function proficiently in the society where they live". A competency-based approach to language education represents, according to Rué (2008), an attempt to adjust training models to the demands of our time. Higher education has now been linked to societal needs, thereby increasing the efficiency of universities and achieving a more transparent and accessible tertiary education system (Yániz 2008). Indeed, reform in this area tends to adjust student qualification to the requirements of employers in order to facilitate graduates' access to the European labor market by boosting employability (Mackiewicz 2002). As Green et al. (2002: 21) document, "higher education plays a key role in preparing students for the global workforce". A more holistic type of learning is favored (Blanco 2009), where theory and practice are not dissociated and where there is coherence between the students' academic and professional profiles. The aim is no longer for students to be mere content-specialists in their respective areas of study, but for them to deploy a set of abilities, skills, and attitudes which will allow them to succeed in their chosen professions (De Miguel Díaz 2006; Rodríguez Esteban 2007). The ultimate aim of the competency-based model is thus to form flexible and adaptable professionals who can apply competencies to the varied, unforeseeable, and complex situations they will encounter throughout their personal, social, and professional lives (Cano García 2008; Pérez Gómez et al. 2009b), and who can thus become active and useful citizens in our democratic society.

The incorporation of these competencies in institutionalized education is essential for the attainment of such goals. In the USA and Canada, Bousquet (2008: 305) highlights that curricular reorientation should be geared to preparing graduates to "face the challenges of this world, be they academic, economic, humanitarian, diplomatic, strategic, or otherwise", and Humphreys (2005: 31) underscores the importance of incorporating approaches that "teach students to apply academic concepts to real-world contexts". This will involve moving towards "a complex of competences and abilities that would require broader types of knowledge" (Wellmon 2008: 293) and making sure students can adapt the "skills learned in one situation to problems encountered in another: in a classroom, the workplace, their communities, or their personal lives" (AACU report 2002: 21). In Europe, the creation of the European Higher Education Area and the implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) revolve around the notion of competencies. The Graz (2003) and Glasgow (2005) Declarations and the Bergen Communiqué (2005) all press the case for the definition of learning outcomes and competencies and for their adoption as a basis for each of the three cycles of higher education. Since then, the concept of competencies has been gathering momentum and the Lisbon (2007) and Budapest-Vienna (2010) declarations, and London (2007) and Leuven (2009) communiqués all stress the need to use them to reorient curricula and make the link with the labor market explicit, as well as to empower students to become active citizens and to enrich their personal growth.

1.3 Definition and Characterization of the Notion of "Competency"

Competency-based language teaching emerged in the United States in the 1970s (Richards and Rodgers 2001), closely linked to the notion of observable and measurable learning outcomes, or statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand, and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of learning. However, in higher education, it has only been since the onset of the so-called Bologna Process in 1999 that the concept of competency has been brought to the forefront of language education. Since then, it has been subject to unrelenting cross-examination and it has caused considerable confusion and controversy (Zabalza Beraza 2004). This is why it is crucial to begin by clarifying the concept of competency, its most salient features, and the main taxonomies which have been deployed regarding this term.

First of all, it should be underscored that no academic consensus has been reached regarding the difference between "competence/competences" and "competency/competencies". For Fleming (2009), the former terms refer to a broad capacity or capability, whereas the latter involve a narrower use of the term to describe particular abilities. Exactly the opposite is maintained by Pennock-Speck (2009: 172), whose "working definition of competencies would include the meaning of competence, which I see as the ability to carry out tasks and also the behaviours and attitudes needed to carry out the tasks successfully". Adopting a neutral stance are the *Report of the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks* (February 2005) and Rychen and Salganik (2003), who employ both terms interchangeably, since "Examining the usage of *competence* and *competency* in the literature does not reveal any hard-and-fast rules, and English dictionaries do not further elucidate how these words are distinctive. […] In the plural, only the term *competencies* is used in this book." Following Rychen and Salganik (2003), this monograph will employ the singular form of *competence* and *competency* synonymously, but will always adopt *competencies* in the plural.

Whatever the terminology employed, it seems incontrovertible that the notion of competency involves not only knowledge, but also skills, attitudes, and values, and entails the capacity to perform successfully in an academic, professional, or social environment. These components run through the following definitions of competency (see Table 1.1).

Thus, competencies represent an initial attempt to overcome the traditional European university model based on transmission of knowledge through *ex cathedra* lecturing (Tudor 2006) in favor of a student-centered, meaning-based one where critical thinking skills are promoted (Pérez Gómez et al. 2009a). They do not, however, preclude knowledge or content; on the contrary, they comprise and mobilize it, infusing it with new life by transferring and applying it to real-world contexts, complex situations, or problem resolution (Pérez Gómez et al. 2009a; Perrenoud 2008). Consequently, they involve what Barnett (2001: 32) terms a shift from "knowledge as contemplation" to "knowledge as operation", and provide a more nuanced and unambiguous formulation of what the university graduate should be able to know and perform upon completion of tertiary education (Blanco 2009: 13).

Table 1.1 Definitions of *competency*

"*Competences* are the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions."	CEFR (2001: 9)
"A competence is defined as the ability to successfully meet complex demands in a particular context. Competent performance or effective action implies the mobilization of knowledge, cognitive and practical skills, as well as social and behaviour components such as attitudes, emotions, and values and motivations. A competence – a holistic notion – is therefore not reducible to its cognitive dimension, and thus the terms competence and skill are not synonymous."	OECD, DeSeCo (2005: 2)
"the necessary knowledge, skills and capacity to perform in a profession, …to solve occupational problems in an autonomous and flexible manner and…to contribute to his professional environment and the organization of work."	Bunk (1994: 10)
"Key competencies represent a multifunctional and transferable set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, inclusion and employment."	European Commission (2004: 7)
"Las competencias son una combinación de conocimientos, habilidades (intelectuales, manuales, sociales, etc.), actitudes y valores que capacitarán a un titulado para afrontar con garantías la resolución de problemas o la intervención en un asunto en un contexto académico, profesional o social determinado."	MEC (2006: 6)

In this sense, some of the key features associated with competencies include the following:

- They are dynamic and evolve with activity and learning (Rué 2008).
- They can be expanded or restricted throughout life and must be updated via their constant application to new contexts, problems, and professional situations (Pérez Gómez et al. 2009a). Lifelong learning is paramount in this sense (Mackiewicz 2002).
- They are transferable and demonstrable (Ledford 1995).
- They are linked to a specific task or activity and are a consequence of experience (Levy-Leboyer 1997).

In the language teaching arena, the most notorious categorization of competencies has undoubtedly been that propounded by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) (2001). Two main types of competencies are distinguished: ***general competencies***, applicable not only to language, but to actions of all kinds, and ***communicative language competencies***, which comprise *linguistic competencies* (lexical, phonological, and syntactic knowledge), *sociolinguistic competencies* (pertaining to sociocultural

conditions of language use), and *pragmatic competencies* (which have to do with mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence).

General competencies are related to the following abilities:

- *Knowledge (savoir)*: "…understood as knowledge resulting from experience (empirical knowledge) and from more formal learning (academic knowledge)" (*CEFR* 2001: 11). It is fundamentally related to concepts.
- *Skills and know-how (savoir-faire)*: "…the ability to carry out procedures…" (*CEFR* 2001: 11). It refers to procedures and strategies.
- *Existential competence (savoir-être)*: "…the sum of individual characteristics, personality traits and attitudes which concern, for example, self-image and one's view of others and willingness to engage with other people in social interaction" (*CEFR* 2001: 12). It has to do with attitudes.
- *Ability to learn (savoir apprendre)*: "knowing how, or being disposed to discover 'otherness' – whether the other is another language, another culture, other people or new areas of knowledge" (*CEFR* 2001: 12). It encourages autonomous learning and lifelong learning.

However, perhaps the most influential taxonomy of competencies in current higher education is that set forth by the TUNING Project (*TUNING Educational Structures in Europe* 2007). This project has informed the official documents which have guided the convergence process in European countries, thereby trickling down into the Bologna-adapted degree structures, plans of study, and ECTS course catalogues (cf., for example, the white paper on degree structures commissioned by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA)). These competencies are again of two types: ***cross-curricular generic*** (which identify those elements common across all degrees and domains) and ***subject-specific*** (related to each thematic area or field of study).

Generic competencies are, in turn, subdivided into:

- *Instrumental competencies*: These involve cognitive, methodological, technological, and linguistic abilities which guarantee the student's basic academic development (e.g., capacity to analyze and synthesize, knowledge of a second language, basic abilities in computing, research abilities).
- *Interpersonal competencies*: These are related to individual abilities and social skills (e.g., ability to work autonomously, leadership, capacity to work in an interdisciplinary team).
- *Systemic competencies*: These pertain to abilities and skills concerning whole systems and entail a combination of understanding, sensibility and knowledge (e.g., capacity to learn, problem-solving, decision-taking).

In turn, ***specific competencies*** are broken down into:

- *Disciplinary knowledge*, or theoretical contents applied to a specific thematic area (e.g., knowledge of English grammar, knowledge of literature in the English language, knowledge of the theoretical and methodological trends in linguistics).

– *Academic competencies*, or the abilities which need to be deployed in a concrete field of study (e.g., capacity to receive, understand and transmit scientific production in the languages studied, capacity to evaluate bibliography critically and to contextualize it within a theoretical perspective, capacity to identify problems and research topics and evaluate their relevance).
– *Professional competencies*, or know-how in a specific professional area (e.g., capacity to communicate and teach acquired knowledge, capacity to translate texts of different genres, capacity to write reviews).

1.4 Competency-Based Language Teaching in Higher Education: Where Do We Stand?

A clear-cut set of generic and specific competencies has thus been established in official curricula for acquisition by university language graduates across Europe. We are at that crucial moment of moving from theorizing to practice in this area, of translating the general European agenda into a successful local one. As the Graz Declaration (2003: 5) states, "the main challenge now is to transform the multitude of legislative changes that have been taking place across Europe in the past few years into meaningful academic aims and institutional realities".

Where do we currently stand in this challenging and exciting process of implementing and assessing competencies? Diverse studies reveal that language practitioners in tertiary education are aware of their existence (Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa 2010) and of the need to develop and evaluate them (Mir Acebrón 2008). However, despite a progressive and firm acceptance of this concept in academic and professional contexts (Benito and Cruz 2007), its concretion is still vague, given the complex and multifaceted nature of the term. As Pérez González (2009: 106) highlights, "The lack of precision in their formulation poses methodological and assessment problems."

Indeed, this lack of familiarity on the part of many HE professors with the notion of competency has resulted in a rash of misconceptions, which in turn have plagued initial attempts at its implementation and assessment (cf. Pérez Cañado 2010b). For example, in making the necessary qualitative leap and mind-shift required to teach competencies and not merely contents, many educators mistakenly associate the other components of a competency with unsubstantial activities – movies or games, for example – failing to realize that teaching competencies requires considerably greater effort than transmitting contents (Martín Ortega 2008). To take a case in point, it is much easier to teach students the basic features that have characterized the diverse language teaching methods which have proliferated from the mid-eighteenth century up to today, than to, in addition, enable them to critically appraise, compare, and cross-examine such methods in terms of their merits, pitfalls, and contributions to the language teaching panorama.

Another common misrepresentation affects the methodology associated with competency-based instruction. It is still often assumed that the skills and abilities involved alongside contents need not be overtly taught. Exactly the opposite is true: competencies need to be explicitly addressed and incorporated into HE teaching (especially cross-curricular generic ones), as, otherwise, we run the risk of not covering them at all. If they are left to be implicitly picked up – as has largely been the case prior to the creation of the EHEA – competencies will most probably not be developed at all (Martín Ortega 2008). This is a risk we cannot take, given the importance potential employers currently attach to competencies: as De Miguel Díaz (2006) emphasizes, employers not only look for professionals who are content specialists in their respective areas of study, but those who can work in a team, think creatively, demonstrate leadership abilities, or solve problems in the workplace – all of which are generic competencies which now need to be overtly developed in the new EHEA degree programs.

Regrettably, this is still not generally the case in Europe, as a recent study has revealed (Pérez Cañado, coord. 2010). According to the more than 300 European students in the sample, these systemic competencies which employers foreground and which involve critical thinking skills, creativity, problem-solving, or capacity to adapt to new situations, are precisely the ones they consider to be least developed and evaluated in HE language degrees. Mir Acebrón (2008), in a study with nearly 4,500 students at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, also observed a discrepancy between the high value attached to generic competencies and the paucity of time devoted to their development.

Thus, important questions continue to arise regarding the definition, methodology, and evaluation of competencies, largely due to the fact that we are still sorely lacking in empirically validated proposals for their implementation and assessment, an area which is in urgent need of research (Pérez Cañado, coord. 2010). Indeed, there has been extensive theorizing on the topic and attempts have been made at a local level to define the components of generic competencies (Blanco 2009; Villa Arias and Poblete Ruiz 2008), but none provide research-based guidelines for the practical development and evaluation of competencies. The dangers of this are underscored by Pérez González (2009: 106): "The reforms of educational systems frequently prove sterile because they go no further than theoretical manifestations and are incapable of explaining to teachers how they should be put into practice in teaching and learning activities."

It is precisely the right moment to offer practical specifications for integrating, teaching, and evaluating a competency-based model in language teaching, as newly designed language degrees are starting to be implemented across Europe. These Bologna-adapted plans of study will need to incorporate competencies into their different subjects and modules and each university will be judged on their implementation and assessment by undergoing yearly evaluations at national level. Furthermore, the implementation of a competency-based model has a crucial bearing on pedagogy, evaluation procedures, and student and teacher roles in the EHEA (Benito and Cruz 2007; Blanco 2009; Bolívar 2008; Cano García 2008; De Miguel Díaz 2005, 2006; Perrenoud 2008; Rodríguez Esteban 2007; Yániz 2008). The model could well become the lynchpin of the new European Credit Transfer System.

The urgent need to address this obvious lacuna is highlighted in a recently published volume on the adaptation of language teaching to the EHEA:

> It appears that this new way of understanding educational objectives has reached its maximum level of theoretical saturation and has produced considerable theoretical reflections. However, practical specifications are needed to guide teachers in their professional activity. …The move needs to be made from their theoretical formulation to their concretion in the educational curriculum. (Pérez González 2009: 107).

This is precisely what the proposed monograph aims to do: to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of competency-based teaching in tertiary language education, in order to furnish concrete guidance to the post-secondary educator on how to approach, teach, and evaluate competencies in the new Bologna-adapted plans of study. To achieve this, it will present new findings by reporting on the outcomes yielded by prominent European research projects, pedagogical innovation programs, and thematic networks as well as by pooling the insights of a set of prestigious scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers from diverse parts of Europe and the U.S.

1.5 Overview of the Volume

1.5.1 Part I: Adapting to a Competency-Based Model in Tertiary Education: Necessary Changes in Language Teaching

To achieve its objective, the book is subdivided into three main parts. The guidelines derived from the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* will serve as the overarching theme which guides and connects all three sections. ***Section I*** examines the necessary changes which have to take place in language teaching in order to adapt to a competency-based language model. Concrete proposals for implementing these will be put forward, developed from the outcomes of a recent governmentally financed research project (ADELEEES[1]). The reconfiguration of student and teacher roles in the EHEA will also be examined, together with the challenges involved in the adoption of a competency-based approach.

Indeed, in order to adapt to a competency-based model in tertiary education, a series of fundamental changes need to be made. The first of these involves promoting a shift in the mindset of all the agents involved as a stepping-stone to bolstering the transformation process. Poblete Ruiz (2006) equates the paradigm shift involved in making the transition to a competency-based model with the Copernican one, given

[1] Project *ADELEEES: "Adaptación de la enseñanza de lenguas al EEES: Análisis del estado actual, establecimiento de redes europeas y aplicación de los nuevos títulos de Grado"*, financed by the *Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación* ("Subvenciones de acciones destinadas a la mejora de la calidad de la Enseñanza Superior y de la actividad del profesorado universitario en el año 2008", Programa Estudios y Análisis, Ref. EA2008-0173).

its transcendent and far-reaching effects. In this sense, a sustained effort needs to be made in order to supersede the traditional notion of teaching as the transmission of knowledge, and learning as reproduction of content (Pérez Gómez et al. 2009c), in favor of a more profound and relevant type of education which involves lifelong learning and critical thinking skills. ***Ian Tudor***'s chapter offers practical guidelines to attain this goal, illustrating how the CEFR can be used to guide goal-setting, course development and evaluation in the new language teaching panorama confronting Europe.

In forging these new structures, we also need to take as our point of departure a realistic analysis of the main hurdles we are currently facing in adapting to a competency-based model, one based on accurate information and findings as opposed to perceptions. This is precisely what ***María Luisa Pérez Cañado***'s chapter strives to do, by offering a detailed diagnosis of where we currently stand in this process of adaptation to competency-based higher education in Europe. Since this model impinges on all curricular and organizational levels in language teaching, she offers the results of the recent European study ADELEEES, carried out with nearly 500 students and teachers of more than 15 different language degrees across Europe, which assessed the current state of competency development and evaluation, different types of learning modalities and groupings, student-centered methodologies, and evaluation procedures and strategies, with a view to addressing and overcoming the major lacunae detected therein.

1.5.2 Part II: Teaching Competencies in Tertiary Language Education

Part II focuses on the actual teaching of competencies in tertiary education. It sets forth proposals – based on the new student-centered methodological approaches propounded by the ECTS – to teach both specific and generic competencies which have been identified as central to language degrees across Europe. It provides a valuable bank of materials, procedures and ideas, based on accounts of successful practice and experiences, for the practical implementation of competencies in language education.

The aspect of the curriculum perhaps most affected by competency-based approaches is methodology (Cano García 2008; Pérez Cañado 2010c; Perrenoud 2008). Student-centered learning is a key goal, and this stronger student focus should guide curricular reorientations. The transition is thus made from a "bulimic" form of education, where students merely reproduce what they have learned, to a more critical learning that sticks. Post-secondary teaching should now be focused on equipping learners with the tools they need to find, select, interpret, and use the vast amount of data they have within their reach (Pérez Gómez et al. 2009a). Competencies such as critical thinking skills and the ability to synthesize and analyze should be developed, and the move should be made towards a self-directed, autonomous learning where students' independence, involvement, and participation are fostered.

This shift can be facilitated by fostering pedagogical innovation and a "methodological plurality" (CIDUA 2005: 26, 29) or method "synergistics" (Canagarajah 2002). Within the latter, the traditional lockstep lecture does not disappear, but is used alongside other student-centered methods such as problem-based learning (PBL), project-oriented learning (POL), case studies, or cooperative learning (De Miguel Díaz 2006).

The second set of chapters included in this volume make a substantial contribution in this sense. ***Daniel Madrid*** and ***Stephen Hughes*** illustrate how an entire degree – Second Language Teacher Education – has been reconfigured to adapt to these innovative methodological tenets. ***Melinda Dooly*** and ***Manuel Jiménez Raya***, in turn, offer practical guidelines and examples to tackle, respectively, project-oriented language learning and pedagogy for autonomy.

Technological or digital competency could not be missing from this methodological account. In addition to being one of the core generic competencies that most European universities have worked into all their Bologna-adapted degrees, its potential for enhancing the student-centered learning process has been highlighted in the official EHEA literature. According to Benito and Cruz (2007: 104), ICT is not a new fad, but a crucial tool which, in combination with the EHEA, will foster pedagogical innovation and allow all the agents involved in the teaching and learning process to expedite knowledge-building and competency development. Much the same is claimed by Pennock-Speck (2008: 70):

> ICT in the field of education is an exciting opportunity for teachers and students. With more and more teachers being expected to apply more student-centred teaching, even if they do not particularly want to (Bailey 2008), practically all teachers will end up using ICT to teach or at least to communicate with or evaluate students to a greater or lesser extent.

The CIDUA Report (2005) already foregrounded the effectiveness of new technologies and virtual learning environments in boosting student motivation, in fostering their active involvement in the learning process, and in answering to their needs, interests, and expectations. Manifold quantitative and qualitative investigations into the use of ICT to teach competencies have confirmed its many merits. The positive effects on language learning within ECTS contexts of the following ICT options have been documented in the recent specialized literature: Data-driven learning (Pérez Cañado and Díez Bedmar 2006), virtual learning environments (Brígido Corachán 2008; Pérez Cañado 2010d), online language learning and resources (Fernández Martín 2008; O'Dowd 2008), podcasting (Torralbo Jover 2008), blended learning (Zaragoza Ninet and Clavel Arroitia 2008), e-portfolios and multimedia products (Pennock-Speck 2008, 2009), telecollaboration (Pérez Cañado and Ware 2009), and computer-mediated communication (Jordano de la Torre 2008).

Two chapters focus on the use of ICT for the acquisition of competencies: ***Barry Pennock-Speck***'s and ***Greg Kessler*** & ***Paige D. Ware***'s. The former describes the design, implementation and assessment of activities using ICT in several English linguistics modules to facilitate students' acquisition of content-specific knowledge and generic and specific competencies, including English. The latter, meanwhile, operationalizes a set of competencies with computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and ICT by presenting several fully fleshed-out scenarios which analyze

how these competencies might be thought about from a pedagogical perspective, and describes a set of sequenced activities that incorporate CALL/ICT to help meet the competencies as well as considerations of assessment and feedback.

1.5.3 Part III: Evaluating Competencies in Tertiary Language Education

The ***final part*** deals with evaluation, perhaps the most challenging and least-defined aspect of competencies at present. Diverse proposals for coming to grips with this complex issue are presented in this third section, with specific guidelines, indicators, and descriptors being provided to evaluate the hitherto abstract concept of competency.

As we shall see, in the process of adaptation to competency-based models of language teaching, evaluation comes across as "el apartado más problematico" (Blanco 2009: 32). This final curricular aspect must be completely attuned to, and coherent with, the competencies and methodology followed (Benito and Cruz 2007; Cano García 2008). In competency-based assessment, knowledge should be evaluated, but always alongside the other components of a competency – abilities, attitudes, and skills. This new type of assessment thus involves a shift from an evaluation *of* learning to an evaluation *for* learning (Benito and Cruz 2007: 87). A series of clear-cut traits have been identified as characterizing competency-based assessment. It should:

- Be transparent and made known to students from the very outset of instruction (Benito and Cruz 2007; Martínez Clares and Echevarría Samanes 2009).
- Be process-oriented, formative, and constant (De Miguel Díaz 2006; Martínez Clares and Echevarría Samanes 2009; Pérez Gómez et al. 2009d; Poblete Ruiz 2006). It should not be a frozen snapshot of the contents mastered by the students at a certain time and should favor the development of higher-rank competencies (such as analysis, synthesis, or reflection) over lower-order ones (such as memorization and reproduction of information).
- Be authentic, involving the application of knowledge to real-world contexts (Benito and Cruz 2007; De Miguel Díaz 2006; Riesco González 2008).
- Provide constant feedback to the student so that necessary readjustments and revisions can be made on the part of both students and teacher (Benito and Cruz 2007; Cano García 2008; Pérez Gómez et al. 2009d; Riesco González 2008).
- Favor student ownership through self- and co-evaluation, in addition to teacher assessment (Blanco 2009; Cano García 2008; De Miguel Díaz 2006; Pérez Gómez et al. 2009d).
- Be diversified, incorporating a variety of strategies and procedures, such as long- and short-answer objective tests, oral interviews and presentations, papers and projects, reports and diaries, portfolios, observation techniques, self-assessment systems, attitude scales, or global assessment sessions (De Miguel Díaz 2006; Riesco González 2008).

– Include a battery of descriptors and indicators based on observable behaviors, with different levels of assessment assigned to each of them in order to guarantee their mastery (Benito and Cruz 2007; Villa Arias and Poblete Ruiz 2008).

All these issues are addressed in the chapters comprising this third and final section. ***Kent Löfgren*** focuses on the type of feedback which can be provided to students regarding generic skills. ***María José Terrón*** & ***María José García***, in addition to expounding on how to integrate feedback to students, provide self-explanatory templates and self- and peer-assessment tests or surveys, among other evaluation tools, within which they include assessment criteria, grade descriptors and marking schemes for competency-based teaching. Finally, ***Marta González-Lloret*** approaches performance-based, student-centered assessment by elucidating what innovative technologies have to offer in this area.

1.6 Conclusion

The ultimate aim of this volume is to provide a practical delineation of the concept of competency in tertiary language education. It furnishes concrete guidance to the post-secondary educator and policy maker on how to conceptualize, teach, and evaluate competencies in the new language studies programs which are being implemented in European universities.

In order to usher in a new era of meaning-based HE which centers on competency development, it is incumbent upon us to be aware of the full implications of this new concept for language teaching and to make a conscious effort to integrate it adequately into our HE language programs. We hope the guidelines offered in this monograph contribute to bolstering this process of adaptation and to ensuring it truly affects the core of our teaching structures (Bolívar 2008; Cano García 2008; Rué 2008).

This will be no small feat: as Schechtman and Koser (2008: 312) rightly point out, "Transformations will not be easy". But with information, reflection (Jiménez Reina et al. 2006), and commitment (Miedes Ugarte and Galán García 2006) on the part of all those involved, the road towards competency-based language teaching will be paved and the Bologna Process will be a feasible reality, and not an impractical ideal.

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Part I
Adapting to a Competency-Based Model in Tertiary Education: Necessary Changes in Language Teaching

Chapter 2
From Content to Competency: Challenges Facing Higher Education Language Teaching in Europe

Ian Tudor

2.1 A Changing Linguistic Landscape

Recent decades have seen a dramatic increase in international mobility and exchanges in all fields of life, and the "global village" has become a tangible reality in the everyday life of many, if not most, Europeans. Within the European continent itself, the European Union (EU) has expanded to include 27 countries with a population exceeding 500 million. It has 23 official languages and around 60 regional languages which enjoy an official status in one form or another; then, there are the numerous languages of the EU's substantial immigrant populations. This makes Europe an intensely multilingual and multicultural area in its own right, quite apart from the languages of the EU's political, economic and cultural partners. This situation has evident implications for the role which languages and language learning should play at all levels of education, including higher education (HE). Furthermore, the need for HE institutions to evaluate and, if necessary, rethink the role they accord to language learning has been intensified by the launching of the Bologna Process.

Indeed, languages play a key enabling function in the realization of the Bologna Process, which gathers together 47 European countries and nine additional or consultative members, including the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the European University Association. The goal of the Process as stated in the Preamble to the Berlin Communiqué (2003) is "the development of a coherent and cohesive European Higher Education Area by 2010". The Communiqué stresses "the necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes as well as proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning, so that students can achieve their full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability" (op.cit., 6). The role of languages in the realization of the

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Bologna Process is particularly marked with respect to mobility, employability, and the promotion of the European dimension in higher education. It would, in fact, be reasonable to say that the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will become a reality only if students, researchers, academics and other institutional actors are able to communicate effectively with one another. This clearly calls for attention to be given to languages and to language learning. This, in turn, obliges HE institutions to re-evaluate the role they accord to languages in the academic and professional training they offer to their students.

2.2 The Language Challenge Facing Higher Education in Europe

The importance of languages in the realisation of the goals of the Bologna Process sets a challenge to HE institutions across Europe. If HE institutions wish to participate fully in the EHEA they clearly need to accord attention to language learning. Indeed, in the increasingly multilingual and multicultural workplace of Europe and beyond, the quality of the academic and professional training which HE institutions offer to their students depends crucially on the presence of language learning and language contact possibilities. Furthermore, language learning in HE has both immediate and longer-term advantages. In the short term, language skills open up practical opportunities to students, graduates and researchers in terms of both mobility and employability. In a longer-term perspective, the learning of any language fosters the development of transferable skills which can then be applied to the learning of subsequent languages as and when circumstances make this necessary. Language learning in HE is thus a preparation for life-long language learning.

This situation has given rise to the goal of "languages-for-all" in HE, and to the concept of HE language policy (cf. ENLU 2004–2007, the European Network for the Promotion of Language Learning among all Undergraduates). A number of HE institutions have set up language policies designed to extend language learning opportunities to students and other institutional actors, even if there would appear to be no one single most effective HE language policy model, as specific choices depend on a variety of factors that include the linguistic situation in the target country or region, as well as institutional traditions and priorities (Tudor 2008; Tudor and Mackiewicz 2009). However, the changing context outlined above does call upon HE institutions to initiate reflection on the role which languages and language learning should play in the academic programmes they offer.

The challenge, though, does not stop there. In addition to allocating an enhanced role to language learning in academic programmes, it is also necessary for HE institutions to look closely at the goals of language teaching and learning, how these goals are translated into course design and teaching-learning tasks and materials, as well as evaluation procedures. In other words, the current linguistic situation in Europe, and thus also in European HE, sets HE institutions at least two challenges. One is to cater in a constructive manner for language learning; the other is to gear

the content and goals of language teaching to the needs of the various actors involved: students in the first instance, but also other HE personnel such as researchers, teachers, and administrative or managerial staff. This chapter will focus on the second of these two challenges, firstly by discussing the rationale for a competency-based approach to language teaching, and then by highlighting the specific contribution of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001) to the realisation of such an approach.

2.3 Towards a Competency-Based Approach to HE Language Teaching and Learning

The changes outlined above have exerted a significant influence on the context in which HE institutions operate and for which they are preparing their students, and this calls for careful consideration of the role to be played by language learning in the design and implementation of academic programmes. In this respect, it is relevant to bear in mind that, until fairly recently, languages in HE were one specialist domain among others: some students opted for physics, economics, law, or whatever, while others decided to specialise in languages, whether from a philological perspective or applied to professional tasks such as translation or interpretation. The objective of languages-for-all clearly raises questions as to the goals which language teaching in HE should pursue. This challenge may have already been addressed in varying degrees by the many HE institutions in Europe. It is, however, relevant to recall that a considerable amount of research has been conducted over the last four decades with a view to developing frameworks for the creation of courses geared around the needs of non-specialist language learners wishing to deploy those languages in practical situations.

Two seminal works in the field of what came to be called communicative language teaching both appeared in 1978. One was Widdowson's *Teaching Language as Communication*, and the other Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design*. The former argued for a new perspective on language teaching based on the goal of enabling learners to use the language effectively in a range of pragmatic and communication-oriented situations. The latter laid the bases for the analysis of learners' needs in the target language, geared to the situations in which they would be required to use this language. Both works have been built on in an extensive body of research and development which includes, among many others, Brindley (1984), Brumfit (1984), Robinson (1991), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), and West (1994).

Furthermore, since the launch of the Modern Languages Project (MLP) in 1963, the Council of Europe has played a significant role in promoting a pragmatic and competency-based approach to language teaching and learning. Trim (1980) states that the MLP rejected "a systematic taxonomic division of language as subject matter in favour of an analysis of learning situations [since it] makes little sense to subscribe to a 'learner-centred, motivation-based' approach unless the needs of learners find direct expression in the context of courses and associated tests and

examinations" (1980: 53). The approach to language teaching which emerged from the MLP involved the identification of learning goals based on an analysis of the learner's target uses of the language defined in terms of language *situations* (specified in terms of *agents* – the interlocutors involved – together with reference to the *time* and *place* of the communicative act) and *operations* (namely the *functions* to be fulfilled by the communicative act in question, the *objects* to which it relates, and the *means* by which it is produced) (cf. Richterich 1973). The approach to goal-setting developed within the MLP thus rests on an analysis of the functional and communicative demands of the situations in which the learner would wish, or be required, to use the language.

These trends in research and development in the language teaching field may all be seen as reflecting a 'learner-centred' approach to language teaching in the sense that they attempt to attune the content of teaching and learning to students' pragmatic and communicative needs. Thus, the starting point for the development of a language learning programme is not the language as an *object* of study in its own right, but rather the subsequent *uses* of the language by the target learners. The goal, then, is the development of pragmatically relevant competencies in the language, rather than the assimilation of a pre-ordained body of knowledge about the language. Knowledge of the language does of course play a crucial role but, in a competency-based approach, the selection of linguistic content is subordinate to the identification of the relevant communicative competencies.

Within the context of HE, the question is thus what learners will need to do in the language. To take just a few practical examples, students may need to learn the language in order to:

- participate in a mobility programme;
- gain access to specialised academic material in the target language, whether in the written or the spoken form;
- follow courses, write assignments and take examinations in the language;
- use the language to present their research at conferences;
- operate in a range of professional situations, such as meetings or negotiations.

These, then, are the pragmatic competencies on which the students' learning programme must focus.

Within the increasingly mobile and multilingual context of HE in Europe, consideration also needs to be given to the development of transferable learning skills within the framework of lifelong learning, including life-long language learning. Here, too, we can speak of a competency-based approach to language teaching but, in this respect, the relevant competencies relate to the process of language learning itself. Target competencies of this nature include:

- the ability to assess one's current skills in a language;
- the ability to set relevant and realistic goals;
- the ability to identify one's preferred learning style and strengths as a learner;
- the ability to identify and exploit relevant learning options and materials.

This sets a further agenda in a competency-based approach to language teaching and, as Mackiewicz (2002: 3) suggests, "lifelong learning requires a new pedagogy, i.e. a shift in emphasis from knowledge acquisition to competence development as well as a shift from teaching to learning".

To sum up this section, two main points need to made. The first is that the current situation in Europe calls for a change to what may be seen as 'traditional' language teaching practice, at least in certain institutions or educational systems. The second is that the move to a competency-based approach calls for careful consideration of the goals of language teaching with respect to both the objective learning outcomes of programmes, and also learners' reflective engagement in the learning process itself.

2.4 The CEFR and the Bologna Process

The CEFR is one of the most influential and widely used manifestations of the work of the Council of Europe in the field of languages. Indeed, the CEFR's common reference levels (A1 to C2) have been adopted by an increasing number of educational bodies, including HE institutions and testing organizations such as ALTE (the Association of Language Testers in Europe) as a means of defining learning outcomes. They have contributed to a far greater degree of transparency in language teaching and assessment throughout Europe. The CEFR has clear implications with respect to the goals of the Bologna Process, and specifically the promotion of mobility within the EHEA.

The use of the CEFR's common reference levels allows for transparency and comparability in terms of what learners are able to do in a language at a given point in time. Traditionally, educational systems in Europe have operated with a more-or-less explicitly norm-referenced system of assessment, i.e. one which measures students' abilities with respect to a pre-specified population rather than in absolute terms. With greater mobility in both academic and professional fields, however, this can create difficulties in assessing what educational qualifications mean in practice. A student who has attained a final mark in their language examination of 18/20 in Belgium, 1/6 in Germany, or 29/30 in Italy may reliably be considered to be placed within the upper achievement bracket within their national assessment system. However, it is by no means clear what these results mean in terms of students' competencies in the language. There are also evident difficulties in terms of comparability. The use of the CEFR's common reference levels, however, makes it possible to assess the pragmatic competencies of individuals on the same scale and according to comparable criteria. This is clearly of great value for institutions who wish to enrol students or recruit staff from other countries. In this way, the CEFR allows for greater transparency in terms of learning outcomes across national borders, and thus offers valuable support to the goal of enhanced mobility.

2.5 The CEFR and the Development of Pragmatic Competencies

In terms of the development of pragmatically relevant teaching, learning, and assessment procedures, the CEFR is arguably the most coherent single reference document currently in existence, and is in a very real sense the expression of more than three decades of research on language teaching and learning within the Council of Europe and beyond. This is manifested very clearly in the "Can Do" statements which specify the common reference levels (CEFR Chap. 3). These are categorised in terms of

- Understanding (listening; reading)
- Speaking (spoken interaction; spoken production)
- Writing

and outline what the learner is able to do within the reference level in question at a certain level of proficiency. For example, the skill of spoken interaction at level B1 is specified in the following terms: "I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions" (2001: 26).

Further specification of the various skills that learners may need to develop is provided at various points in the CEFR. However, even at this level of specification, it is clear that the focus is on competency – what the learner can do in the language.

Furthermore, the specification of skills is cross-referenced with a series of other variables linked to the external context of use (2001: 49). These are:

- Domains (personal; public; occupational; educational)
- Locations
- Institutions
- Persons
- Objects
- Events
- Operations
- Texts

This cross-referencing of skills with context of use serves as a guide to the identification of learners' needs in the language. In this way, the CEFR offers support to teachers and course developers seeking to identify learners' needs and, on this basis, to construct a relevant learning programme, from the setting of learning objectives, through the choice of learning materials and tasks, to the selection of assessment formats and procedures. The CEFR thus provides a set of guidelines for the identification of pragmatic communicative competencies as the basis for the development of relevant teaching-learning programmes.

Having said this, and at the risk of stating the obvious, the CEFR is a *framework*, and it does not claim to offer tailored solutions to the challenges of specific

teaching-learning contexts; nor indeed is this its intention. In the introductory section entitled "Notes to the user", the authors of the CEFR state:

> Neither the categories nor the examples claim to be exhaustive. If you want to describe a specialised area, you may well need to sub-categorise further than the present classification. The examples are suggestive only. You may well wish to keep some, reject others and add some of your own. You should feel free to do so, since it must be for you to decide on your objectives and your product. Remember that what you find unnecessary in the Framework is there because someone else, with a different background working in a different situation and responsible for a different set of learners, may find it essential. In the case of 'conditions and constraints' for instance, a school teacher may find it quite unnecessary to take noise levels into account, but a teacher of airline pilots who fails to train them to recognize digits 100% in appallingly noisy ground-to-air communication may condemn them and their passengers to death! (2001: xiii)

The CEFR does not claim to be either exhaustive or definitive. It is a rich document which offers guidelines for the identification of learner needs and the development of pragmatically-relevant teaching-learning and assessment procedures. It should, however, be viewed neither as a constraint nor a sacred text to be followed to the letter. On the contrary, it is a tool which has been designed to be used in, and adapted to, local contexts and local needs. This is simultaneously the strength of the CEFR and its challenge to users.

So, to conclude this section, it may safely be claimed that the CEFR offers assistance to anyone engaged in the design of language teaching programmes by offering a comprehensive (but neither exhaustive nor definitive) guide to goal-setting, programme design, and assessment. This holds true at all levels of education, including HE. Within the specific field of HE, however, the CEFR also offers invaluable support in designing pragmatically-relevant and competency-based language learning programmes which have a high degree of transparency and comparability at a European level.

2.6 The CEFR and Life-Long Language Learning

Trim (1980), cited earlier in this chapter, states that the Council of Europe's MLP subscribed to a 'learner-centred and motivation-based' approach to teaching and learning. With respect to the notion of learner-centeredness, it is worth highlighting the fact that the phrase is used to refer to various perspectives on the learning process (Tudor 1996). One relates to learning content, and specifically to the establishment of learning goals on the basis of learners' practical communicative needs in the language. It is this aspect of learner-centeredness that was the main focus of attention in the previous section. This having been said, the ultimate success of any learning programme depends on more than just the objective relevance of learning content. It also depends on a willingness to work with learners as full human beings, and not just as language users in a disembodied or technical sense. This involves consideration of students' learning strategy preferences (O'Malley and Chamot 1990; Oxford 1990) and of their broader affective involvement with the language and the learning process (Arnold 1999; Skehan 1989). It also calls for consideration of their attitudes to the language and

their often culturally based expectations of the learning process (Coleman 1996; Holliday 1994; Tudor 2001). No matter how relevant a learning programme may be in objective terms, it is unlikely to achieve its goals unless it also accommodates these aspects of learners' interaction with the language and/or with the learning process.

Furthermore, the active and reflective involvement of learners in the process of language learning can help them develop transferable learning skills which they can then apply to the learning of other languages or to the further development of their mastery of a known language. This, too, is an area of research which has attracted considerable attention in recent decades (among others, Brookes and Grundy 1988; Holec 1987; Littlewood 1999). The CEFR can play a significant role in the achievement of this goal.

Indeed, a key aspect of the approach to language teaching proposed by the CEFR is its emphasis on learner involvement. The CEFR's "Can Do" statements use the first person – "I can". In this way, they seek to engage learners actively in their interaction with both language learning and language use. Thus, while the common reference levels certainly do offer tools to external agents in assessing individuals' achievement and competency levels in one or more languages, they also serve to provide learners themselves with a set of reference points for planning their learning and thus for assuming a greater sense of personal ownership of the learning process. Hence, one significant goal of the CEFR is learner empowerment, based on a progressive and reflective involvement of learners in their language learning. It would thus be a mistake to view the CEFR as an externally manipulated or technocratic tool for imposing learning goals. This aspect of the CEFR clearly has significant potential with respect to the goal of lifelong language learning. Whatever level of competency students achieve in one or more languages at the end of their degree programme, it is very likely that they will wish or need to pursue their language learning at a subsequent stage of their academic or professional life. Equipping students for this challenge is a major goal of language teaching, including, or perhaps even especially, HE language teaching. Here we are looking at competencies relating not just to the ability to use a given language, but also the ability to plan and to interact with language learning in an informed and self-directed manner. A coherent competency-based approach should thus logically accord attention to learning-process-oriented competencies within a framework of goals related to learner empowerment and life-long language learning.

A broad consensus exists in the language teaching profession that motivation is a key factor (if not *the* key factor) for success in language learning (cf. Dörnyei 2000, 2001). A recent project which focused specifically on the factors which motivate HE students in learning languages (MOLAN 2007–2010) observed that a wide range of factors can serve to enhance the motivation of HE students for language learning. Two of these factors, however, are the practical relevance of learning content and the transparency of course structure (Tudor 2009). In this respect, the CEFR can play a significant motivational role, by helping learners to engage actively in the definition of practically relevant learning goals, as well as by making learning goals and achievement transparent.

To sum up, the CEFR offers significant potential in terms of learner empowerment and, thus, the development of the transferable language learning skills which students need in order to pursue the goal of life-long language learning. It is thus unsurprising that another product of the Council of Europe, the European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe), is closely linked to the CEFR both in terms of the use of the common reference levels and with respect to the goals of motivation, learner empowerment, and the development of transferable language learning skills. The two documents are in fact complementary. The decision to launch a competency-based language learning programme could therefore usefully be informed by both these documents. This would serve to broaden the scope of competency-based learning to include, on the one hand, pragmatic, communication-oriented competencies and, on the other hand, process-oriented competencies relating to the joint goals of learner empowerment and life-long language learning. In the current context of HE in Europe, both sets of competencies are necessary and arguably, from a long-term perspective, of equal importance.

2.7 The CEFR – Opportunity and Challenge

This chapter has argued that a competency-based approach to language teaching is necessary if HE institutions are to respond to the challenges identified in the Bologna Process by equipping their students to participate fully in the EHEA and to be prepared for the demands of the European labour market. It has also highlighted the role which the CEFR can play in the realisation of a broad and inclusive competency-based approach. This having been said, the use of the CEFR as a tool for creating a competency-based approach to language teaching may represent a significant change in practice for individual language teachers or language teaching departments.

To begin with, although the CEFR offers invaluable guidelines for the development of pragmatically relevant learning programmes, it does not offer prescriptive solutions to local challenges – these have to be worked out in each context by the teachers and course developers concerned. Furthermore, the CEFR is a complex document with numerous parameters and scales. The common reference levels are relatively transparent, but moving from an initial analysis of learners' needs to a closer specification of the tasks, activities, and linguistic elements which are needed for learners to achieve their communicative goals is not an easy task. For example, it is by no means simple to match the "Can Do" statements with a detailed specification of the linguistic parameters identified by the CEFR, such as general linguistic range, vocabulary range, vocabulary control, or grammatical accuracy. Then there is the question of developing transferable learning skills, which may imply a change in methodology, not just in terms of the way in which learning outcomes are defined, but also with respect to the relative roles of teachers and learners. This may be particularly marked in educational systems which have traditionally operated with a teacher-centred pedagogy based on knowledge transmission.

In other words, the adoption of a competency-based approach to language learning can represent a significant challenge for teachers. The success of a competency-based approach to language teaching in HE, as of any pedagogical innovation in fact, depends crucially on the skills and professional readiness of the teachers who will be required to implement it. The decision to adopt a competency-based approach is a question of quality, and, in particular, of the will to gear HE language teaching to the needs of students and other HE actors in the context of the Bologna Process and of the EHEA. Teacher skills, however, play a key role in the achievement of quality teaching (Tudor 2006). The decision to adopt a competency-based approach to teaching, including the use of the CEFR, should therefore entail an evaluation of the preparedness of teachers for such an approach and, if necessary, the setting in place of appropriate teacher support and development structures.

2.8 Conclusions

The creation of the EHEA and the demands of an increasingly multilingual labour market in Europe have made it necessary for HE institutions to re-assess the role they accord to language learning. In addition to catering for a meaningful inclusion of language learning opportunities in the academic and professional training they offer to students, this also entails reflection on the goals which language teaching and learning should pursue. Within this purview, the chapter has argued for a competency-based approach to language teaching in HE. In the first instance, this relates to the communicative goals to be pursued, though it equally entails consideration of the preparation of students for life-long language learning. The chapter has highlighted the very positive role which the CEFR can play in the pursuit of both of these objectives, firstly by offering guidelines for the identification of pragmatically-relevant learning goals, and secondly by creating a framework for engaging learners in an active and self-directed manner in their language learning. This having been said, the CEFR does not provide off-the-shelf solutions to the many challenges which HE language teachers may face, either in terms of the identification of pragmatically relevant learning goals, or in terms of the creation of a pedagogical approach geared to the development of transferable learning skills. For this reason, the decision to adopt a competency-based approach to language teaching in HE may well require investment in teacher support and development structures.

The current situation in Europe, and in particular the changes initiated by the Bologna Process, call upon HE institutions to re-assess their priorities and current practice in the field of language teaching. The move to a pragmatically driven and competency-based approach to language teaching is clearly necessary. This may, however, call for varying degrees of adaptation in pedagogical practice, depending on the pedagogical traditions of individual institutions or educational systems.

The construction of the EHEA is a significant challenge to all concerned, including those persons involved in the promotion of language learning. There can be little doubt that HE language teaching needs to be competency-driven, both in terms of the identification of pragmatically relevant learning outcomes and with respect to

the development of the transferable learning skills needed for life-long language learning. Research is, however, needed to assess how this goal can best be achieved in different learning contexts, especially regarding its compatibility with current pedagogical practice. Research is also required to assess the challenges which teachers may encounter in adopting such an approach, including the use of the CEFR. On the basis of his involvement in the MOLAN project (op. cit.), the author suspects that this might usefully be achieved by means of the preparation of case studies detailing the implementation of a competency-based approach to teaching in a range of different institutions. This would enable a fuller understanding of the factors which contribute to the success of this approach, as well as of those factors which can give rise to tensions. In this way, it would be possible to identify the practical measures which could be taken to support the successful implementation of a competency-based approach adapted to the heterogeneous specificities of the contexts in which language teaching is lived out across the landscape of Europe.

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Chapter 3
Adapting to a Competency-Based Model in Tertiary Education: Lessons Learned from the European Project ADELEEES

María Luisa Pérez Cañado

3.1 Introduction

The adaptation to a competency-based model in higher education (HE) has considerable implications for language teaching which affect all curricular and organizational levels. It is uncontested that the *mise-en-scène* of this new system involves a drastic reconfiguration in the methodology, types of groupings and learning modalities, teacher and student roles, and evaluation procedures associated with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Benito and Cruz 2007; Blanco 2009; Bolívar 2008; Cano García 2008; De Miguel Díaz 2005, 2006; Perrenoud 2008; Rodríguez Esteban 2007; Yániz 2008) (cf. Chap. 1).

In order for this competency-based model to come to fruition, objectives need to be formulated in terms of key generic and specific competencies to be acquired, and they must be linked to concrete learning outcomes. A "methodological plurality" (CIDUA 2005: 26, 29) is strongly advised, which allows the incorporation of student-centered approaches to language teaching and which favors critical, autonomous, and lifelong learning. New learning modalities (De Miguel Díaz 2005, 2006), involving a vast range of classroom organizations, are advocated. Teacher and student roles are being redefined, with the emphasis now falling on successful learning rather than on the teaching provided (McLaren et al. 2005: 27). Finally, the model prescribes that evaluation become more personalized, diversified, and transparent (Miedes Ugarte and Galán García 2006: 4), attaching a greater importance to formative, process, or on-going assessment (Madrid Fernández and Pérez Cañado 2004) and to the amount of individual, private, or personal work put in by the student.

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However, are these theoretical changes actually trickling down to the curricula of language degrees across Europe? Providing empirical data to answer this question has been precisely the main aim of the European project *ADELEEES*.[1] The project has sought to carry out an in-depth analysis of the changes being implemented in the current application of a competency-based model of language education in all those European universities piloting the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). To this end, it has designed, validated, and applied four sets of questionnaires which have allowed a detailed diagnosis of the way in which the new model is being applied and which has involved both agents in the teaching-learning process.

In this sense, questionnaires have been designed to analyze the competencies which are actually being developed and evaluated across language studies degrees in Europe, to estimate the real workload which the ECTS is imposing on both teachers and students in pilot programs, to determine the main methodological aspects involved in the teaching-learning process, and to measure the degree of satisfaction of the participating teaching and student bodies. After being validated, the questionnaires have been deployed in all those European universities piloting the new credit system in language studies. The ultimate aim of the project has been to provide a fine-grained picture of progress up to 2010 in the process of adaptation to competency-based higher education and to identify the main lacunae to be addressed in this area. Only then will we be able to base necessary future decisions on empirically grounded guidelines in order to continue pushing forward the Bologna Process.

After outlining the objectives, procedure, participants, and methodology employed in the study, this chapter will expound on its results regarding competency development, student-centered methodologies, and the new evaluation procedures and strategies which need to be implemented in order to conform to the *zeitgeist* of the EHEA. It will conclude by foregrounding the main outcomes obtained and by setting forth suggestions for improvement and future research in this area, all with a view to guaranteeing a smooth transition to competency-based teaching in Bologna-adapted language degrees.

3.2 Research Design

In order to determine whether we are adapting to a competency-based model in tertiary language degrees, the present study has sought to meet the following objectives[2]:

[1] Project *ADELEEES: "Adaptación de la enseñanza de lenguas al EEES: Análisis del estado actual, establecimiento de redes europeas y aplicación de los nuevos títulos de grado"*, financed by the *Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación* ("Subvenciones de acciones destinadas a la mejora de la calidad de la Enseñanza Superior y de la actividad del profesorado universitario en el año 2008", Programa Estudios y Análisis, Ref. EA2008-0173).

[2] In addition to the aforementioned objectives, this project has also determined whether there are statistically significant differences in terms of competencies, workload, methodology, and satisfaction between students of different age, gender, nationality, university, degree, and grade, as well as between professors of different age, gender, nationality, university, degree, type of subject, and teaching experience. Thus, it has investigated the modulating effects exerted by the identification variables outlined in Sect. 3.2.3. (Participants). For these results, cf. Pérez Cañado, coord. (2010).

3.2.1 Objectives

1. To determine whether the key generic and specific competencies associated with language degrees in the ECTS are being developed and evaluated.
2. To identify which methodologies, materials, and learning modalities associated to the EHEA are being applied in language studies degrees piloting the ECTS across Europe.
3. To establish which evaluation techniques and procedures propounded by competency-based models are being implemented in language studies degrees piloting the ECTS in European universities.
4. To determine if there are statistically significant differences between students' and teachers' perceptions regarding competencies, methodology, and evaluation.

3.2.2 Procedure and Instruments

3.2.2.1 Questionnaire Design and Validation

In order to accomplish the afore-mentioned objectives, two different questionnaires have been designed, validated, and applied in order to determine which competencies are being developed and evaluated in language degrees piloting the ECTS across Europe (included in the first questionnaire) and which methodologies, types of groupings, and evaluation procedures are being employed to adapt to this competency-based model (these comprise the second survey). These questionnaires – with different versions for students and teachers and in both English and Spanish – constituted the instruments of the present investigation.[3]

The first questionnaire includes a nomenclature of competencies based on that established in the white paper on language degree structures commissioned by the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA 2004), which, in turn, is informed by the TUNING Project's categorization of generic and specific competencies (2007). It encompasses 52 items, grouped under two main sections: *cross-curricular generic competencies* (20 items) and *subject-specific competencies* (32 items). In turn, the former comprise three subtypes of competencies: *instrumental* (7 items), *systemic* (5 items), and *personal* (8 items). The latter also subsume three sections: *disciplinary knowledge* (19 items), *professional competencies* (8 items), and *academic competencies* (5 items). At the end of this survey, the interviewees are provided with an open question for which they can add up to three competencies: "In your opinion, which competencies *not at all* (1) developed or developed *to some extent* (2) should receive greater attention in your degree?"

[3] The English and Spanish versions of all four questionnaires can be found in Pérez Cañado (coord.) (2010).

Table 3.1 Reliability of the questionnaires

Questionnaire	Number of subjects	Number of items	Cronbach α
Competencies students	54	81	**0.955**
Competencies teachers	10	81	**0.846**
Methodology students	54	51	**0.858**
Methodology teachers	10	51	**0.817**

The questionnaire on methodological and evaluation aspects comprises a similar total number of items – 51 – subdivided into 5 main sections: *types of groupings* (5 items), *learning modalities* (6 items), *teaching methods* (9 items), *materials and resources* (18 items), and *evaluation* (13 items). At the end of each block of questions, the interviewee can include up to two (in the case of the first three sections) or three (in the final two) options not contemplated in the closed questions.

Once they had been designed, the questionnaires were validated via a twofold process. In order to guarantee their validity and reliability, they were initially submitted to the scrutiny of six external experts and, subsequently, to a pilot study. After introducing the modifications suggested by the experts, the surveys were completed by a representative sample made up of 10 teachers and 54 students in the English Philology degree program at the University of Jaén, Spain, in December 2008 and January 2009. The feedback received from both agents of the teaching-learning process led us to reformulate the phrasing of certain items, add information and new questions, specify data, break down questions, and reduce the length of certain questionnaires (particularly that pertaining to competencies, where the initial 82 closed items it subsumed were grouped into a final 52).

The data obtained in the pilot study was used to analyze the reliability or internal consistency of the questionnaires (February 2009). It was determined using *Cronbach α*, and the extremely high values obtained for this coefficient amply guaranteed the reliability of both surveys (cf. Table 3.1).

3.2.2.2 Administration of the Questionnaires

The administration of the questionnaires followed their design and validation. In order to increase return rates, a series of strategies was deployed, in line with Brown's recommendations (2001: 85–89). In order to reach as wide an audience as possible across Europe, an online system of application was chosen for the questionnaire, through the use of *SurveyMonkey* (http://www.surveymonkey.com) (cf. Fig. 3.1).

A *covering letter* (in Spanish and English) was sent out introducing the project, its objectives, and the affiliations of the researchers, together with details of the links through which to access the surveys. Following Brown's guidelines (2001: 86), it was brief and thanked potential participants in advance. The questionnaires themselves were also kept as *short* as possible, with a predominance of closed questions which could be answered simply by clicking on the desired option. An *incentive* (comprising two laptops and five 4 GB pen drives) was offered to the

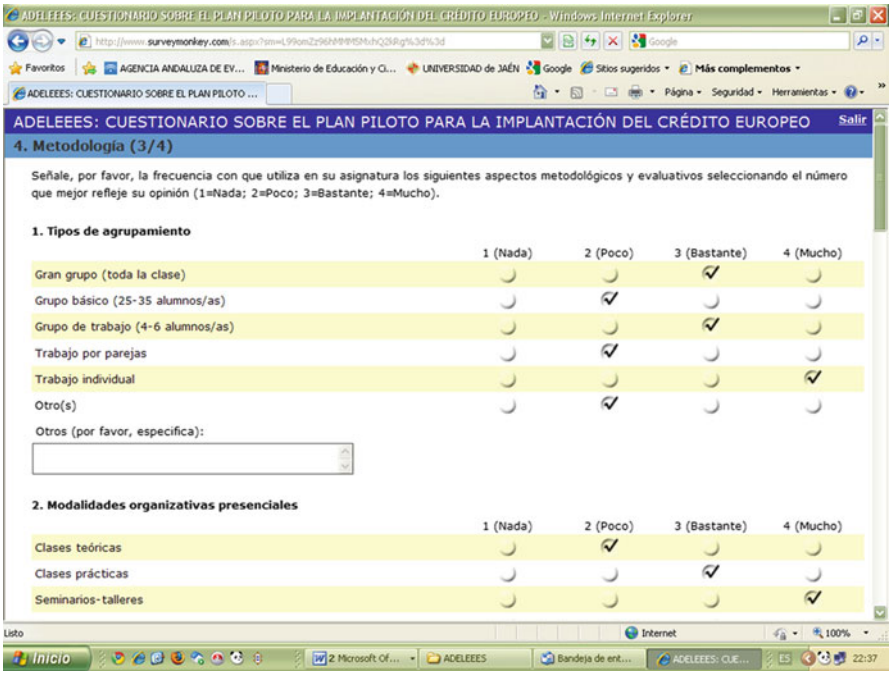


Fig. 3.1 Screenshot of the methodology questionnaire

participants. *Follow-up phone calls* were made to ECTS coordinators at two different moments: before mailing the questionnaires and after their reception, in order to monitor the process and solve possible problems which had arisen. Finally, the questionnaire was also made available "to a large group of people at one time" (Brown 2001: 89) at the University of Jaén, by taking *large groups of students* to the computer lab in order to supervise their completion of the surveys and thereby ensure their participation.

3.2.3 Participants

The sample group which participated in the investigation is detailed in this next heading. The global figures are initially presented, followed by a more detailed rendering of the teachers and students who answered the questionnaires, subdivided into variables of gender, nationality, university, and degree.

3.2.3.1 Global Figures

The total number of participants was 469, 69.1% of which were students (324) and 30.9% teachers (145).

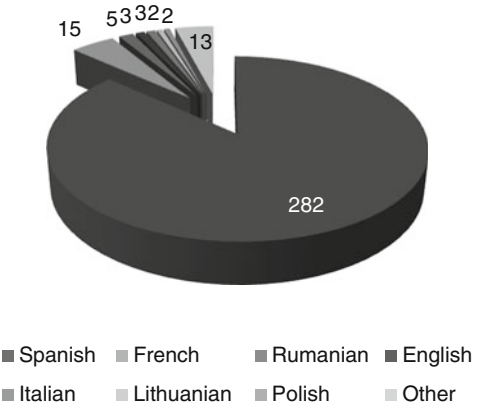


Fig. 3.2 Nationality of the students

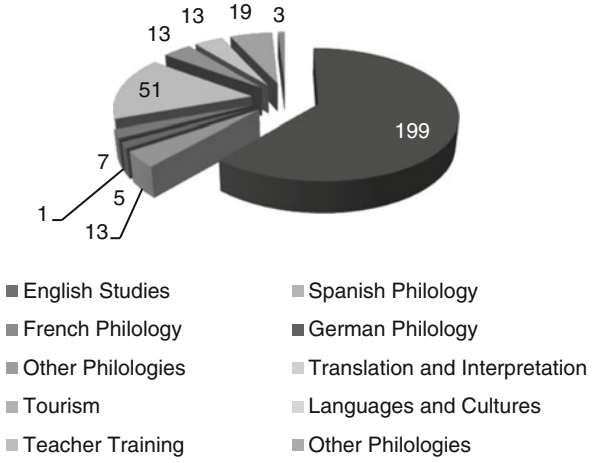


Fig. 3.3 Students' degrees

3.2.3.2 Students

Almost three-quarters of the participating students were women: 71.3% (231), while only 28.7% (93) were men.

In terms of nationality, there was a clear predominance of Spanish students (87%, or 282 of the 324 participants). France, Rumania, England, Italy, Lithuania, and Poland follow in terms of interviewees' nations of origin (cf. Fig. 3.2).

In line with these figures, Spanish universities were the most participative, with 301 students (92.9% of the total). Central and northern European universities contributed 16 and 4 students, respectively.

Finally, taking degree courses into consideration, there was a majority of students from English Studies (56.2%). The other four degrees whose students formed the majority of participants in the study were Translation and Interpretation (15.1%), Teacher Training: English as a Foreign Language (5.9%), Tourism (4%), and Spanish Philology (3.4%) (see Fig. 3.3).

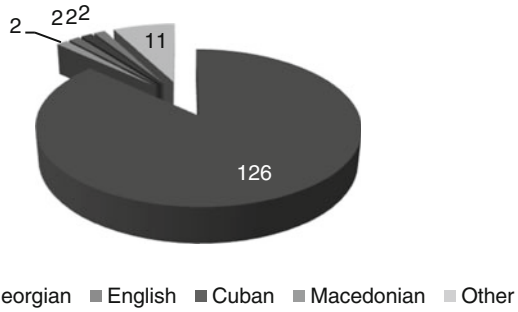
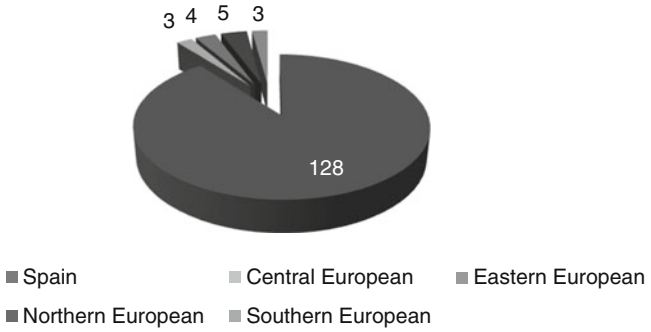


Fig. 3.4 Nationality of the teachers

Fig. 3.5 Teachers' universities



3.2.3.3 Teachers

Of the 145 participating teachers, 59.31% (86) were women and 40.69% (59), men. The same tendency observed for the students is once more discerned in this second group, albeit in a slightly more balanced proportion.

Regarding nationality, an almost identical percentage of Spanish teachers and students took part in the investigation: 86.21% (125 of the 145 participants). The remaining 13.79% includes teachers from Cuba, Georgia, England, and Macedonia[4] (see Fig. 3.4).

A very similar tendency is perceived in terms of universities: 88.3% of the teachers are from Spanish ones, followed by Northern and Eastern Europe, with 5 and 4 participants respectively (see Fig. 3.5).

[4] Thus, it should be explicitly emphasized that the sample, although comprising teachers and students from across Europe, is particularly representative of Spain, as the number of respondents from this country outnumbers those from other European nationalities.

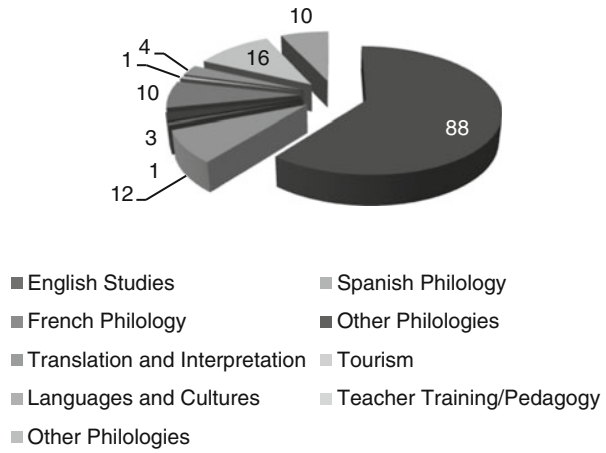


Fig. 3.6 Teachers' degrees

Finally, more than half of the professors teach in English Studies degrees (57.24%). The rest conduct their teaching activity in exactly the same degrees as the students interviewed (with the exception of Tourism): Teacher Training and Pedagogy (11.03%), Spanish Philology (8.28%), and Translation and Interpretation (6.9%) (see Fig. 3.6).

3.2.4 Statistical Methodology

Employing the SPSS computer program in its 16.0 version, the following statistical operations were performed:

1. To determine the reliability of the questionnaires, *Cronbach* α was used.
2. To attain objectives 1 through 3, the following descriptive statistics were employed:
   2.1. Central tendency measures:
      2.1.1. Mean
      2.1.2. Median
      2.1.3. Mode
   2.2. Dispersion measures:
      2.2.1. Range
      2.2.2. Standard deviation
3. To achieve the fourth objective, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the *t test* were used.

3.3 Results and Discussion

The outcomes of the study are now presented and discussed. Five headings are considered in determining how language studies degrees across Europe are adapting to a competency-based model at all curricular and organizational levels: *competency*

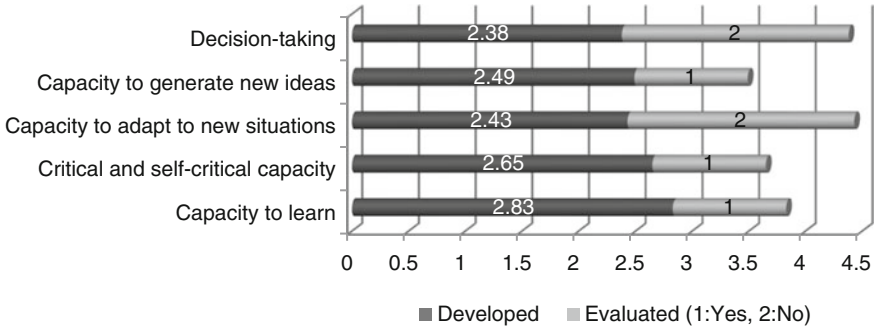


Fig. 3.7 Generic systemic competencies (students)

development and evaluation, *types of groupings and learning modalities*, *methodology*, *materials and resources*, and *evaluation*. Both students' and teachers' perceptions are considered[5] and subsequently compared to determine if statistically significant differences can be discerned between them in each of these headings.

3.3.1 Students: Global Results

3.3.1.1 Competency Development and Evaluation

In the generic and specific competencies considered, their development and evaluation are substantially harmonized, according to the participating students: those competencies which are most often worked on are also most frequently assessed. According to the students, the *generic competencies* which receive most attention in class are instrumental and personal ones, to the detriment of systemic competencies (cf. Fig. 3.7). Only two of the latter are considerably worked on: "Capacity to learn" and "Critical and self-critical capacity". This is quite an unfavorable finding, given the fact that this block of competencies is crucial for the promotion of lifelong learning and the training of students to become successful citizens in a complex and changing society

[5] The study is thus a qualitative account of the perceptions of both stakeholders involved in ECTS piloting within language degrees, not an objective, quantitative account of the way it is functioning. It nonetheless observes the main requirements associated in the specialized literature (Brown 2001) to qualitative research. To begin with, its *credibility* (loosely analogous to internal validity in quantitative research) is ensured via multiple triangulation procedures and the use of peer debriefing in the external ratings approach. Secondly, *transferability* (roughly corresponding to external validity) is guaranteed by providing a detailed description "with enough detail so readers can determine for themselves if transferability is justified" (Brown 2001: 226). Finally, *confirmability* (closely akin to objectivity) is secured by careful record-keeping and retention of data for further scrutiny.

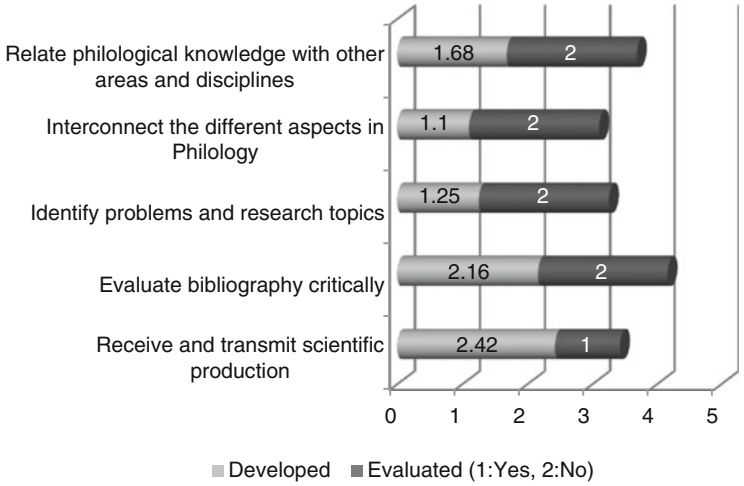


Fig. 3.8 Specific academic competencies (students)

to which they can contribute actively and usefully (Pérez Gómez et al. 2009). The means obtained for personal competencies are considerably higher, except for "Leadership", "Project design and management", and "Initiative and enterprising spirit", another negative outcome, considering these are among the competencies most highly valued by potential employers (De Miguel Díaz 2005). This scanty development of generic competencies (despite acknowledging their importance) is also documented in Mir Acebrón's study (2008), carried out at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra with nearly 4,500 subjects.

Specific competencies are, in general terms, considerably more developed than generic ones, from the students' viewpoint. This finding is sustained by those of Martín Ortega (2008) and Poblete Ruiz (2006), who assert that a conscious effort must be made to integrate cross-curricular competencies into teaching programs, as otherwise we run the risk of not working on them at all.

The subtypes of competencies which are most developed are professional ones, while those which receive least attention are academic competencies. Disciplinary knowledge is also underemphasized (11 out of 19 competencies in this heading receive little or no attention). The most developed in this section are "Instrumental mastery of the English language" and "Knowledge of English grammar", a very positive finding since these are precisely the disciplinary contents most underscored by social agents (cf. ANECA 2004) and those which constituted most lacunae in a recent study by Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa (2010). Academic competencies are scarcely or not at all developed, and only one of them is evaluated: "Capacity to receive, understand and transmit scientific production in the languages studied" (see Fig. 3.8). This finding is consistent with the outcomes obtained for evaluation, as, according to the learners, there is a clear predominance of tests which favor the memorization and reproduction of contents. It also tallies with the results of Rodríguez Esteban and Vieira Aller's study (2009), which revealed that, in specific competency development, theory clearly prevailed over practice.

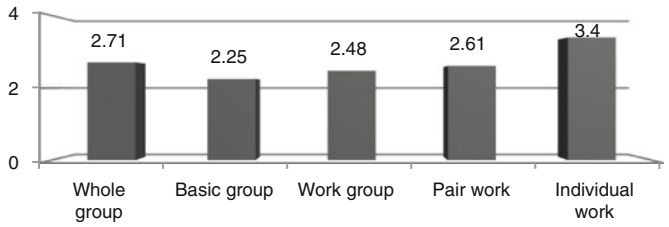


Fig. 3.9 Types of groupings (students)

3.3.1.2 Types of Groupings and Learning Modalities

The *type of grouping* which is most used in the ECTS, according to the students, is individual work, followed by the whole group (entire class) and pair work. The work group (4–6 students) and the basic group (with 25–30) are scarcely used, so that, apparently, these two novel options recommended by the CIDUA (2005) report are not being adequately incorporated, from the learners' point of view (see Fig. 3.9).

This lack of variety also appears in the *learning modalities* employed. Uniformly (the standard deviation is comparatively low in this heading), the interviewees consider that the most widely used option is the theoretical class (which presents a mean of 3.57 and a mode of 4), followed by the practical session, which is also considerably employed. However, seminars and workshops, group and individual tutorials, and conference attendance are sparsely or not at all used. This is congruent with the studies conducted by Madrid and Hughes (2009) and Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa (2010), which found that seminars were not adequately incorporated, and with Pascual Garrido's outcomes (2007), which suggest that the number of subjects which fully incorporate the variety of groupings and modalities advocated by the EHEA is reduced. The latter finding is confirmed in our research: the huge variety of learning modalities advocated by the new credit system (De Miguel Díaz 2005) and which has been evinced in other studies (Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa 2010; Ron Vaz and Casanova García 2007) is not evident in the results of this investigation, where there is an almost exclusive reliance on the traditional theory-practice dichotomy. This can be graphically observed in the bar chart on p. 44 (Fig. 3.10)

3.3.1.3 Methodology

Learning methods are, however, more varied, in line with what Ron Vaz et al. (2006) and Ron Vaz and Casanova García (2007) highlight. However, in accordance with the results obtained in previous headings, the most widely employed method is lockstep lecturing, most often used either 'considerably' or 'very much'. These outcomes concur with the qualitative study carried out with English Philology students at the University of Jaén (Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa 2010), where the participating student body points to teacher-centered *ex cathedra* lecturing as the predominant teaching method.

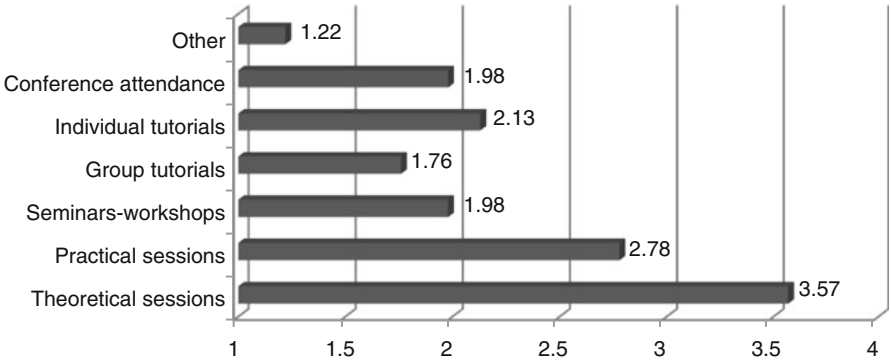


Fig. 3.10 Learning modalities (students)

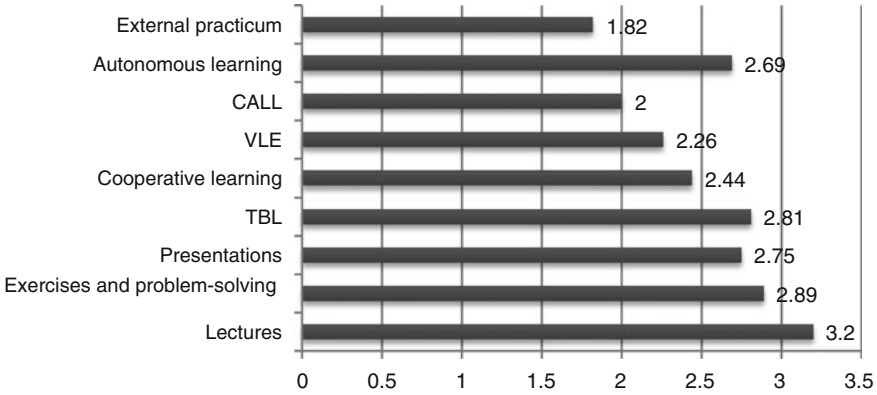


Fig. 3.11 Methodology (students)

Exercise and problem resolution are also widely employed, together with task-based learning, oral presentations, and autonomous learning (consistent with the predominance of individual work as a type of grouping). Deployed to a lesser extent are cooperative learning, virtual learning environments, and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (corroborated by the results obtained for materials and resources below) and, most conspicuously, external training. In the latter two headings, the mode is 1, which indicates that the majority of the students have never experienced these methods (see Fig. 3.11).

3.3.1.4 Materials and Resources

This limited use of ICT for language teaching is clearly confirmed in the next heading, devoted to *materials and resources*. There is little or no incorporation (with the mode coinciding with this last option) of webquests, wikis, blogs, *Second*

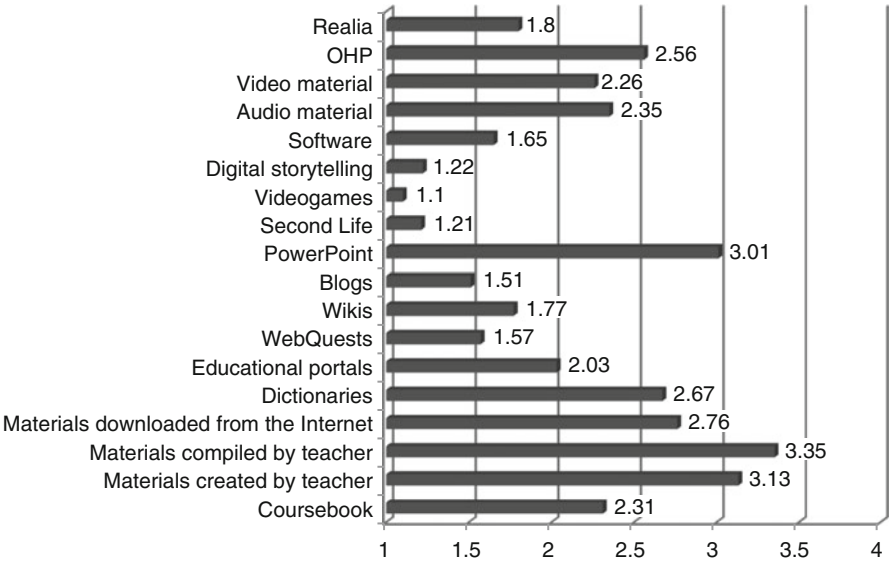


Fig. 3.12 Materials and resources (students)

Life, videogames, digital storytelling, or teaching software. Authentic materials or *realia* are also sparsely employed in the classroom. Educational web portals are used to a greater extent, as well as audio and video materials, although they are still seldom used. It is interesting to note that the textbook is also meagerly employed. These findings are surprising, particularly in view of the extremely beneficial effects which ICT is exerting on language learning and competency development, as has been revealed by numerous recent studies (Brígido Corachan 2008; Gregori-Signes 2008; Jordano de la Torre 2008; O'Dowd 2008; Pennock-Speck 2008, 2009; Zaragoza Ninet and Clavel Arroitia 2008), which propound the incorporation of these resources into the language classroom (CIDUA 2005).

The most frequently used materials are those compiled by the teacher, created by him/her, and downloaded from the internet. Online and printed dictionaries are also quite regularly employed, together with *PowerPoint* presentations and, surprisingly, the OHP (see Fig. 3.12).

3.3.1.5 Evaluation

Finally, the picture which can be gleaned from our data for evaluation also indicates a traditionalist stance. There is a predominance of long-answer objective testing, which favors the memorization and reproduction of contents. This finding is sustained by those of Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa (2010), who observed that the final exam with long essay-like questions still overshadows all other evaluation techniques within the ECTS, although a greater diversity in strategies can also be discerned.

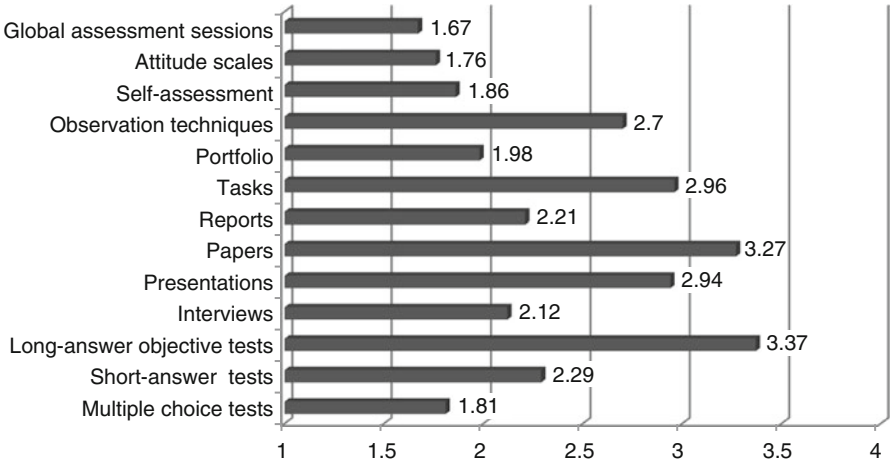


Fig. 3.13 Evaluation (students)

These findings are supported by the present study, as, according to the participating students, other evaluation procedures are also frequently incorporated for competency-based assessment, such as papers and projects, task-based testing (something which accords with the outcomes for methodology, thereby reinforcing the internal consistency of our results), oral presentations, and observation techniques. Less commonly employed are short-answer and multiple choice objective tests, reports and/or diaries on practical sessions, and oral interviews. Portfolios, self-assessment systems, attitude scales, and global assessment sessions are hardly ever used (see Fig. 3.13).

Thus, although a greater variety and diversification in evaluation techniques can be discerned in the new competency-based model, there is still a clear predominance of traditional testing procedures, while other more student-centered approaches are not finding their way into the classroom. This contrasts with the more optimistic – albeit not empirically grounded – observations of Ron Vaz and Casanova García (2007).

3.3.2 Teachers: Global Results

3.3.2.1 Competency Development and Evaluation

According to the global descriptive results obtained for teachers, most competencies are scarcely developed. Nonetheless, the means for this group are slightly higher than those for the students, so that professors seem to view competencies as worked on to a greater extent than do the learners. There is once more a correlation between the figures for those competencies which are most/least developed and evaluated.

Regarding *generic competencies*, teachers' views appear to be in harmony with those of the students in terms of instrumental and personal competencies (they have

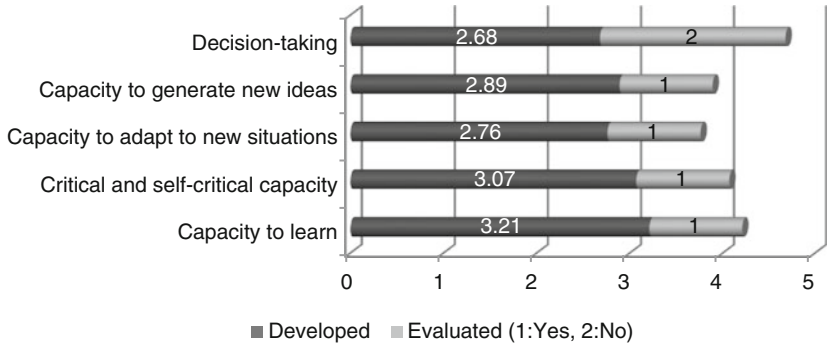


Fig. 3.14 Generic systemic competencies (teachers)

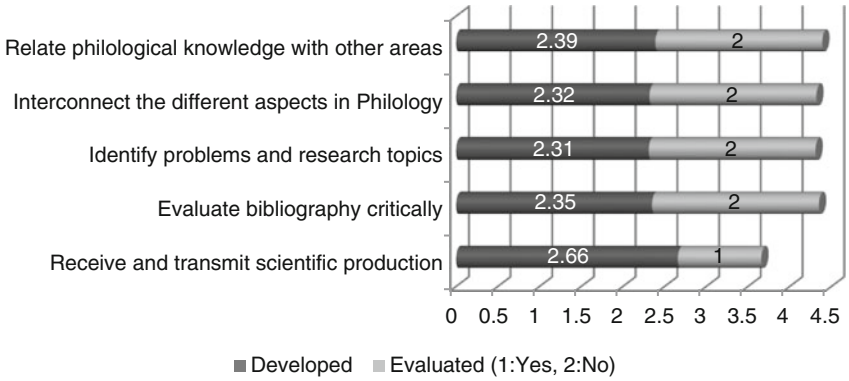


Fig. 3.15 Specific academic competencies (teachers)

comparatively higher means for both agents of the teaching-learning process). However, there is a greater discrepancy regarding systemic ones, which the instructors consider to be considerably more practiced and evaluated than do the learners (see Fig. 3.14).

Exactly the opposite seems to be the case with *specific competencies*. From the teachers' viewpoint, these are seldom worked on. Perhaps this is due to the fact that, while the students completed the questionnaire taking the entire degree into account, the teachers have only borne in mind the specific subjects they teach. Disciplinary knowledge is rarely or not at all developed, except for "Instrumental mastery of the English language" and "Knowledge of English grammar", thus coinciding with the students' perspective. Fifty percent of the professional competencies are hardly taught at all, and academic ones are barely worked on, with only one of them being evaluated – "Capacity to receive, understand and transmit scientific production in the languages studied" – again in line with the learners' responses (see Fig. 3.15).

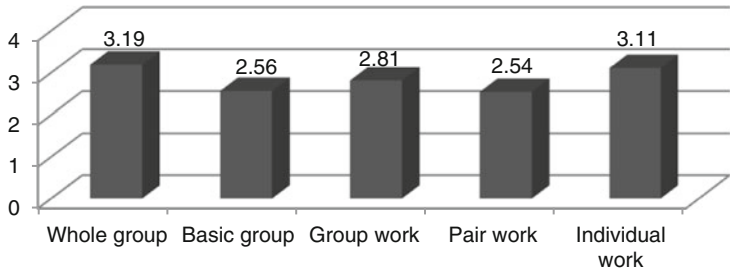


Fig. 3.16 Types of groupings (teachers)

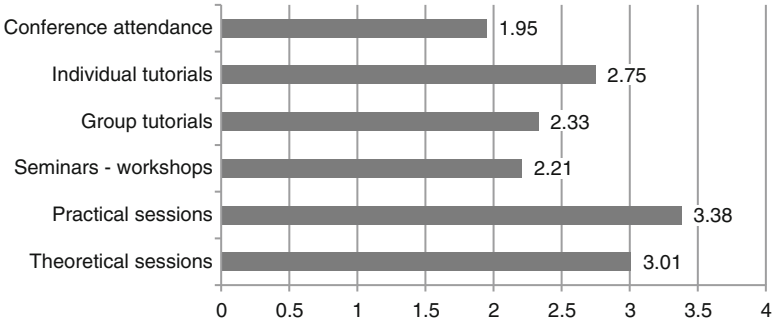


Fig. 3.17 Learning modalities (teachers)

3.3.2.2 Types of Groupings and Learning Modalities

Turning now to the *types of groupings*, we find that, according to the teachers, there is a predominance of the whole group, followed closely by individual work (both have very similar means and a mode of 4). The work group is also quite frequently employed, after which the basic group and pair work ensue. Thus, it transpires that the instructors' view of the use of groupings is considerably more optimistic than that of the learners, as higher means are obtained on all the items comprised in this heading (see Fig. 3.16).

Much the same occurs with *learning modalities*: Practical sessions are, from the teachers' point of view, the most widely used modality, followed by theoretical classes and individual tutorials. Group tutorials are also widely employed, in their opinion, and, slightly less so, seminars and conferences (cf. Fig. 3.17).

We thus detect an important difference here with respect to the students' outcomes, who consider that theory prevails over practice and that the remaining modalities are given little weight in the current curriculum. Section 3.3 will confirm that these differences are statistically significant.

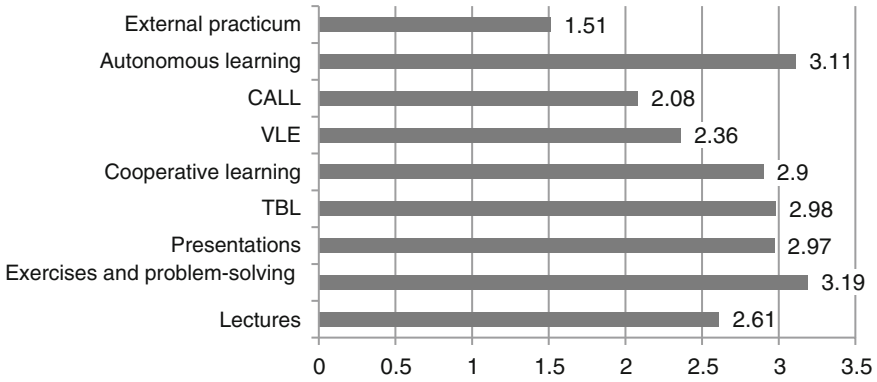


Fig. 3.18 Methodology (teachers)

3.3.2.3 Methodology

This divergence between the two cohorts is also clearly appreciable in the *methodology* section. According to the teachers, and in line with the outcomes obtained for learning modalities, the most expansively used method is practical exercise resolution, followed by autonomous learning, TBL, presentations and debates, and cooperative learning. *Ex cathedra* lecturing is at the bottom of the list (occupying a sixth place, while in the students' view it is the very first one). All these methodological options have considerably high means and modes of 3. The only two methods with 1 as mode are CALL and external training, exactly the same as in the learners' case (see Fig. 3.18).

3.3.2.4 Materials and Resources

In the *materials and resources* section, there are more similarities than differences between the teachers' and students' perceptions. Those resources related to ICT are once again very sparsely used (*Second Life*, videogames, digital storytelling, wikis, blogs, webquests, teaching software), something which reinforces the outcomes obtained in the previous heading. The textbook, educational web portals, *realia*, audio and video material, and online and print dictionaries are not very frequently employed, albeit more assiduously than those materials related to new technologies. On the opposite side of the cline are materials compiled or created by the teacher, *PowerPoint* presentations, and Internet downloads, which come across as the most frequently employed resources by teachers. However, the OHP is scarcely used, something which contrasts with the students' opinion (see Fig. 3.19).

3.3.2.5 Evaluation

Finally, a completely different reality transpires for teachers and students in terms of evaluation. According to the former, the most commonly employed assessment

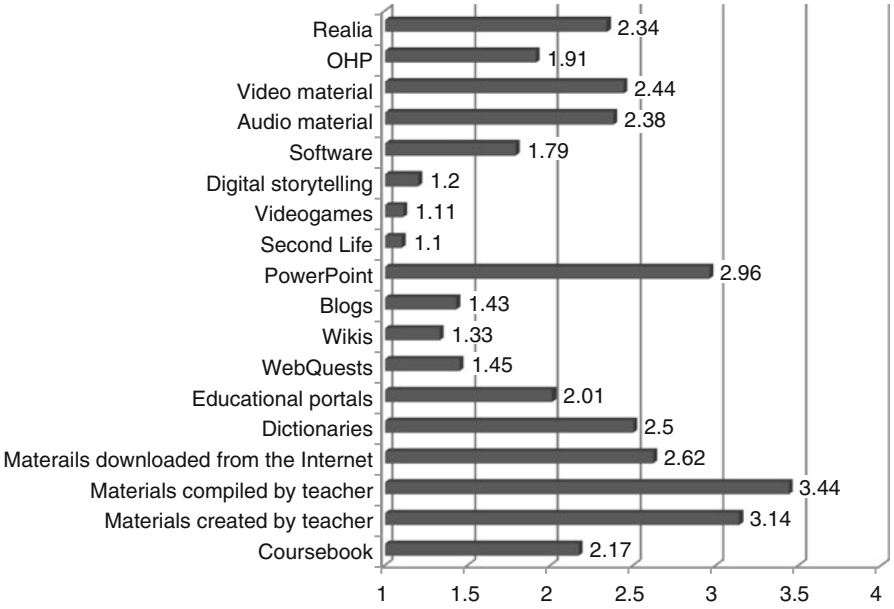


Fig. 3.19 Materials and resources (teachers)

technique is task-based testing (again, in line with their perception of the most frequent methods implemented), followed by papers and projects, observation techniques, oral presentations, and long-answer objective tests (which, according to the students, are the most regularly employed). Short-answer objective testing is also generally used. The lowest means and modes (1) are obtained for oral interviews, multiple choice tests, self-assessment, global assessment sessions, diaries on practical sessions, portfolios, and attitude scales. The results for many of these aspects concur with those of the learners (see Fig. 3.20).

3.3.3 Comparison of Student and Teacher Outcomes

Are these differences we have been observing in the global analyses of results sustained statistically? The ANOVA and *t test* have allowed us to confirm that this is indeed the case.

3.3.3.1 Competency Development and Evaluation

In terms of the subtypes of competencies, statistically significant differences are discerned for practically all *specific competencies* (in both development and evaluation), but in a lesser number of *generic ones* (a considerable number of differences can be found in their development, but fewer ones for evaluation).

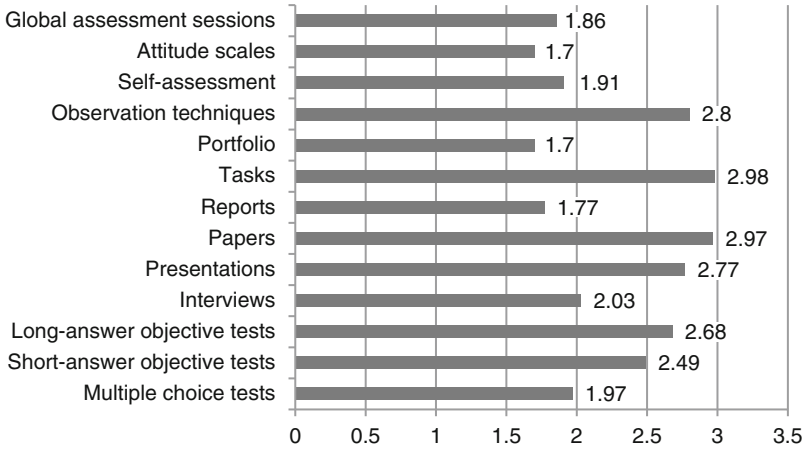


Fig. 3.20 Evaluation (teachers)

For the latter type – cross-curricular generic competencies – the ANOVA and *t test* have allowed confirmation of the trends observed in the descriptive analysis. In instrumental and systemic competencies, all the statistically significant differences found are in favor of teachers, both in terms of development and assessment. The instructors are also the ones who consider personal competencies are worked on to a greater extent. However, it is the students who claim that they are more frequently evaluated, as statistically significant differences in their favor have been detected for the following competencies: "Teamwork" ($p = .000$), "Personal abilities" ($p = .000$), "Leadership" ($p = .007$), and "Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism and knowledge of cultures and customs from other countries" ($p = .041$).

The opposite tendency can be discerned for disciplinary knowledge and professional competencies within specific ones: the students consider they are developed and evaluated more than the teachers. These differences are reduced with regard to academic competencies: There are none in terms of evaluation and all the statistically significant ones in their development are in favor of professors.

3.3.3.2 Types of Groupings and Learning Modalities

Statistically significant differences can be observed on all the *types of groupings* considered, except for pair work. They are always in favor of teachers, except for individual work, which the learners consider is used to a greater extent. Thus, the instructors' view of the incorporation of diverse groupings is much more optimistic (see Table 3.2).

These differences paint an interesting picture of the application of the ECTS, which is very much in line with the outcomes of other studies on the topic: while the teachers consider they are employing a the full gamut of groupings in the new competency-based

Table 3.2 Differences between students and teachers in types of groupings

Types of groupings	gl	F	Sig.
Whole group (entire class)	1	15.242	.000
Basic group (25–35 students)	1	5.423	.020
Work group (4–6 students)	1	8.994	.003
Pair work	1	.412	.521
Individual work	1	10.489	.001

Table 3.3 Differences between students and teachers in learning modalities

Learning modalities	gl	F	Sig.
Theoretical sessions	1	43.510	.000
Practical sessions	1	40.356	.000
Seminars-workshops	1	5.001	.026
Group tutorials	1	37.930	.000
Individual tutorials	1	43.663	.000
Conference attendance	1	.107	.743

model and that the latter is feasible for students, the learners are living a very different reality, in which the amount of individual work is overwhelming (Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa 2010; Ron Vaz et al. 2006) and where lockstep lecturing with the whole class prevails, without incorporating an adequate use of basic and work groups (Madrid and Hughes 2009; Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa 2010).

This same tendency is confirmed for *learning modalities*, where again there are statistically significant differences on all the subheadings considered except for one (conference attendance). The teachers' means, once more, are always significantly higher, except on theoretical classes. Students do not observe the desired variety in learning modalities, while the teachers do consider they are deploying the bevy of options which the ECTS offers. The instructor sees his/her teaching as eminently practical, while the student views it as essentially theoretical (see Table 3.3).

3.3.3.3 Methodology

Much the same occurs for *methodology*. We once more come across statistically significant differences on all the items considered, except for virtual learning environments (which both protagonists of the learning process consider are infrequently used) and CALL (seldom exploited, according to both). On all the remaining methods, teachers again obtain higher means, which reflects their positive outlook on the application of student-centered methods in the language classroom. They believe the use of *ex cathedra* lecturing has decreased (coinciding with Ron Vaz and Casanova García's 2007 results), exactly the opposite of the students, who see it as the most commonly employed method (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Differences between students and teachers in methodology

Methodology	gl	F	Sig.
Lectures	1	36.864	.000
Exercises and problem resolution	1	12.109	.001
Presentations and/or debates	1	6.814	.009
TBL	1	3.708	.055
Cooperative learning	1	23.347	.000
VLE	1	.847	.358
CALL	1	.481	.488
Autonomous learning	1	20.055	.000
External practicum	1	10.447	.001

Table 3.5 Differences between students and teachers in materials and resources

Materials and resources	gl	F	Sig.
Coursebook	1	1.625	.203
Materials created by the teacher	1	.004	.952
Materials compiled by the teacher	1	2.063	.152
Materials downloaded from the Internet	1	2.290	.131
Online and print dictionaries	1	2.350	.126
Educational web portals	1	.037	.848
WebQuests	1	1.747	.187
Wikis	1	22.657	.000
Blogs	1	1.061	.304
PowerPoint presentations	1	.235	.628
Second Life	1	3.492	.062
Videogames	1	.124	.725
Digital storytelling	1	.134	.714
Teaching software	1	1.894	.170
Audio material	1	.109	.742
Video material	1	3.376	.067
OHP	1	32.543	.000
Realia	1	23.135	.000

3.3.3.4 Materials and Resources

This divergence diminishes in materials and resources, as was noted in the general comments for teachers. The only significant differences detected affect wikis ($p = .000$) and the OHP ($p = .000$), which the students consider are more frequently employed, and the use of *realia* ($p = .000$), where exactly the opposite holds true (see Table 3.5).

3.3.3.5 Evaluation

In terms of evaluation procedures, the differences between both groups of interviewees expand once more. The outcomes obtained in this final heading are in complete harmony with those of the previous ones: The students consider that

Table 3.6 Differences between students and teachers in evaluation

Evaluation	gl	F	Sig.
Multiple choice objective tests	1	3.029	.083
Short-answer objective tests	1	4.114	.043
Long-answer objective tests	1	53.341	.000
Oral tests: interviews	1	.839	.360
Oral tests: presentations	1	3.161	.076
Papers and/or projects	1	11.620	.001
Reports and/or diaries on practical sessions	1	14.328	.000
Task-based testing	1	.046	.829
Portfolio	1	6.145	.014
Observation techniques (records, attendance sheets, etc.)	1	.752	.386
Self-assessment systems	1	.317	.574
Attitude scales	1	.373	.542
Global assessment sessions (with both teachers and students)	1	3.901	.049

long-answer exams are much more frequent than the teachers seem to think and that papers and projects are also more extensively used than the teachers perceive them to be. This finding is sustained by the data from other studies (Pérez Cañado and Casas Pedrosa 2010; Ron Vaz et al. 2006) which have evinced the pressing need to step up coordination among teachers and to increase their awareness of the fact that there is a tendency to accumulate assignments at certain times in the academic year (especially at the end of each term), something which greatly compresses the students' workload and requires an excessive effort on their part. This is a major hurdle which needs to be overcome (cf. Sect. 6, suggestions for improvement). The teachers, in turn, believe they use short-answer objective testing and global assessment sessions significantly more than the students feel they do (see Table 3.6).

3.4 Conclusions

The main conclusion which can be reached with respect to the *first objective* of the present investigation is that both students and teachers consider that competencies are not only being scarcely developed, but also seldom evaluated. The instructors appear to have a more positive outlook on competency development and evaluation than the learners, a circumstance that will continue to come to the fore in the remaining aspects under consideration. This is especially the case for generic

competencies, which the professors interviewed deem to be worked on to a greater extent, while the students believe this occurs with specific competencies. There is less of a discrepancy between both stakeholders with regard to academic competencies, which neither considers to be incorporated actively in language degrees.

Vis-à-vis our *second* and *third goals*, it has been extremely interesting to ascertain that both agents have widely differing visions of how the methodological and evaluative adaptation to a competency-based model is playing out. Both groups' perceptions are similar in terms of the scarce use of external training and ICT. However, they diverge radically on the rest of the aspects considered. While the students believe that the methodological options associated with a transmissive model of education are still predominant, teachers are much more optimistic as regards the variety of groupings, modalities, methods, materials, resources, and evaluation techniques which they are incorporating into their classroom within the ECTS. In this sense, the cohort of learners considers that whole group lockstep lecturing clearly prevails, together with theoretical classes and long-answer exams which favor the memorization and reproduction of contents. Conversely, the instructors believe that practice trumps theory and that a greater variety of modalities and groupings (especially of different types of tutorials) are being incorporated, and also that the traditional exam is being superseded by task-based testing. This data points to the urgent need to increase the information provided to all stakeholders in the process of adaptation to this new model in order to ensure that the scientific, pedagogical, and organizational aspects of the ECTS reach them with an adequate degree of homogeneity and clarity. Only thus will such a divergent interpretation of these elements be overcome.

As regards the *fourth* and final *aim* of this investigation, it is evident that there is a staggering amount of statistically significant differences between the cohorts on both questionnaires. Students and teachers appear to inhabit considerably different realities regarding the adaptation to a competency-based model in language teaching. For the latter, the picture is invariably more positive, while the former do not perceive much change from the traditional teacher-centered paradigm. It is thus imperative that more precise information reaches both agents.

3.5 Implications of the Study: Suggestions for Improvement

The present study has allowed us to carry out a detailed analysis of the adaptation to a competency-based model of language degrees across Europe and to detect the main strengths and weaknesses of this process. The positive findings include the broadly optimistic and positive view which teachers harbor of the implementation of the new model, the awareness on the part of both stakeholder groups of competency development and evaluation, and the heightened methodological and evaluative diversification to which the ECTS is leading.

However, our outcomes have also revealed a set of deficiencies or lacunae which need to be addressed in order to guarantee the correct functioning of the new system.

To begin with, it would be highly advisable to promote global assessment or focus group sessions with both students and teachers in order to re-engineer and adjust the two radically different visions which our study has evinced that they hold regarding the adaptation to competency-based teaching. These sessions would foster dialogue, communication, and coordination among the protagonists of the process, something essential for the adequate implementation of the ECTS.

According to our data, it would also be necessary to provide additional information to both agents on competencies: what they comprise, how to work on them, and how to incorporate them into the evaluation process. In this sense, it would be advisable to design courses, seminars or workshops to this end.

It also becomes paramount to take into account the increased workload which the new system is creating both for students (including more realistic and feasible contents, fewer competencies, and a reduced number of papers and projects in each subject), and teachers (ensuring their teaching load is compatible with other research and/or administrative duties). This would contribute to increasing the commitment and satisfaction of both cohorts within the ECTS.

In terms of methodology and evaluation, the suggestions for improvement are profuse, according to our results. It would be desirable to reinforce external training in order to strengthen the link with the professional sphere; to increase the variety of groupings and modalities beyond the traditional theory/practice dichotomy; to deploy seminars adequately; to incorporate ICT to a greater extent; to diversify the types of tutorials and evaluation techniques; and, all in all, to make the shift from a transmissive and memory-based model of education to a more critical, student-centered paradigm.

3.6 Lines for Future Research

Our data has also allowed us to detect certain areas which require further research. We now propose some of the key aspects into which we would like to continue delving deeper with future studies, some of which have already been tackled via the research group ESECS (www.esecs.eu).

It would first of all be extremely interesting to complement the outcomes obtained in the present study with a quantitative investigation which compares traditional and competency-based models. This study is already being undertaken through a biannual R&D project (*FINEEES: La Filología Inglesa en el Espacio Europeo de la Educación Superior*[6]), thanks to the privileged situation of the University of Jaén, which allows the comparison of the ECTS in English Philology and of the traditional teaching system in English Philology + Tourism. The study aims to determine whether the success and performance rates, globally and by specific subjects, and the

[6] Project *FINEEES: "La Filología Inglesa en el Espacio Europeo de la Educación Superior"* (Evaluado por la ANEP, Universidad de Jaén, Plan de Apoyo a la Investigación, Acción 16, Ref. UJA_08_16_35).

results which reflect the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge are superior in a competency-based model (in English Philology) or with the traditional credit system (in the double degree).

It would also be worthwhile to administer the competency and methodology questionnaires to other degrees piloting the ECTS across European universities, in order to carry out a detailed diagnosis of how it is functioning in all areas.

Another desirable line of research would involve grouping and reducing essential competencies for language studies degrees and developing and empirically validating a proposal for the teaching and assessment, of this new concept. There are numerous categorizations in this sense, but none of the taxonomies which have been set forth have been validated (Pérez González 2009). It is thus an area in urgent need of research.

As our outcomes have revealed, ICT is still not being adequately incorporated into competency-based models of language teaching, despite its many merits (cf. Pennock-Speck 2008, 2009). It would thus be desirable to analyze in greater depth which aspects of ICT are being employed to develop and evaluate competencies (cf. Chaps. 6, 7, and 11), the main hurdles being faced in their incorporation into language teaching, and which measures can be adopted to overcome them and thus ensure a heightened presence of technology-enhanced teaching options in Bologna-adapted language degrees (CIDUA 2005).

Finally, it would be necessary to continue probing the causes of the diverse tendencies described in this investigation. It would be desirable to determine why both sets of stakeholders in the learning process hold such divergent views of the adaptation to competency-based language teaching. Focus group sessions through ethnographic interviews with source triangulation (students – teachers – ECTS coordinators) would be a valuable starting point to determine such causes, which would then be articulated in questionnaires to be administered at European level.

The ultimate aim of all these actions is to guarantee that the decisions taken in relation to the new Bologna-adapted degree structures are based on empirical data and on national and international referents. Armed with the knowledge that this stocktaking has allowed us to glean on where we currently stand, we will hopefully be able to pave the way towards a smooth transition into competency-based language teaching at the 2012 crossroads.

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Part II
Teaching Competencies in Tertiary Language Education

Chapter 4
Competences and Foreign Language Teacher Education in Spain

Daniel Madrid Fernández and Stephen Hughes

4.1 Introduction

During the last decade, the concept of competence (often expressed as either "competencies" or "competences") has become pervasive in education systems throughout Europe. The OECD's (2005) *Definition and Selection of Key Competencies* (DeSeCo), the European Commission's identification of eight *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (COM 2005, 2007) and the importance attributed to competences in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) have, in effect, set the agenda in European educational policy. During the past five years, in the case of Spain, there has been a simultaneous adoption of competency-based legislation at all levels of education, from primary schools to higher education institutions (HEIs), which has brought with it new challenges for teachers and teacher trainers alike.

Competence is by no means new to language educators. From Canale and Swains' (1980) description of "communicative competence" to the compilation of descriptors of competence set out in the Common European Framework (CoE 2001), FL teachers and teacher trainers may, in many cases, have had more time to assimilate the developments which have taken place in competency-based learning than professionals from other subject areas.

Nevertheless, given the respective proposals outlined by the European Commission and OECD on competences and competencies and further subject-specific developments observed in language-specific initial teacher training projects such as the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (Newby et al. 2007), the issue of competence in general has taken on a new dimension in language learning and language teacher education. In addition to what has been a generally

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accepted focus on communicative competence in the classroom, as teacher trainers we are also expected to prepare future educators for the responsibility of developing other essential life skills. This role for language teachers is recognized by Bedynska and Kowalczyk (2003), who state:

> The responsibility today is to train young people to become the European citizens of tomorrow, citizens who – without losing their national identity – are capable of integrating into a multilingual and multicultural European society and of learning and succeeding in their professional and personal life there… Therefore teachers become the main agent of the transformation and are responsible for transmitting to their students not only the knowledge and skills of their subject but also human values and "existential" competences. (Bedynska and Kowalczyk 2003: 21)

The language classroom may indeed have the potential to contribute significantly to these "existential competences"; at the same time, however, it would appear that there are several operational constraints and inconsistencies in practice. While we examine these areas, our main objectives in this chapter are: (a) to examine the new legislative demands that arise with the introduction of competency-based learning in Spain with a specific focus on language teaching and learning, and, (b) to look at the implications that recent developments have for the training of future language teachers. While we focus on the Spanish education system, it is possible that several of the concerns expressed here may also be of relevance to other similar educational contexts. This may be particularly true for teachers and teacher trainers who must guarantee the mastery of aspects traditionally associated with individual subjects while meeting new demands introduced by international educational bodies. However, we do acknowledge at this point that, while drawing on studies of international developments, our study is very much limited to the area of education in Spain. In this context, the introduction of competence throughout the educational system is particularly important for teacher trainers since, on the one hand, they are expected to familiarise student teachers with the use of competencies specifically assigned to pupils in primary or secondary education and, at the same time, plan, apply and assess another set of general and specific competences in higher education. Given the recent pervasiveness of the notion of competence throughout the system, while our focus will be on teacher training at HEIs, the changes which new language teachers must face in the classroom in terms of competency-based education will also be addressed.

4.2 Competence and Teacher Education

4.2.1 Competences and Competencies

Before embarking on an examination of competence in language teacher education, it would appear necessary to point out that there is a certain degree of confusion surrounding the terms "competences" and "competencies", which have often been

used interchangeably in educational and other fields. For good or for ill, the Spanish language, like several other European counterparts, has one term (i.e. *competencia*) which is used to encompass both concepts. In English, this is not the case. In a review of the literature on this issue, Moore et al. (2002), for example, speak of 'competence' in an area of work while they understand 'competency' as being the behaviours that support the area of work, and describe 'competencies' as the attributes which underpin such behaviour.

The OECD definition provided in the DeSeCo project, describes a "competency" as being:

> [M]ore than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context – for example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual's knowledge of language, practical IT skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating. (OECD 2005: 4)

The European Commission, on the other hand, describes "competence(s)" in the following way:

> In accordance with international studies, 'competence' is defined here as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to a particular situation. 'Key competences' are those that support personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment. (COM 2005: 3)

Both of these definitions appear to move away from the widely criticised behaviourist notion of competencies which formed part of the Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) movement that took hold particularly in vocational training systems during the latter part of the twentieth century. Critics of CBET found fault in its atomised yet reductionist and over-generalised nature. In addition, the exclusion of underlying attitudes and interpersonal factors, as well as the presence of underlying market values which provided the rationale and driving force for their existence and implementation, added to the negative view of the use of competencies (see Kerka 1998).

The extent to which these renovated competencies have addressed the numerous controversial factors is a matter of some debate, and while certain elements, such as the incorporation of social aspects and individual attitudes, appear to break away from previous trends, there are other potentially contentious points which are still to be addressed. Nevertheless, in the sector of higher education, the most important use of the term competence in all likelihood comes from the guidelines drawn up by the European Commission, in the form of the ECTS. Here, competence is defined as a "dynamic combination of cognitive and metacognitive skills, knowledge and understanding, interpersonal, intellectual and practical skills, ethical values and attitudes" (EC 2009: 35). Unlike the basic or key competences employed in other sectors of education, the competences employed in HEIs include both generic and subject-specific ones. The identification of these generic and specific competences in several European countries has been one of the goals of the Erasmus-sponsored Tuning Approach

(see Tuning 2008) and is an ongoing development in undergraduate and postgraduate studies in teacher training in Spain.

4.2.2 Basic Competences in Primary and Secondary Education

Before turning to the question of language education in HEIs, it should be pointed out that, alongside the development of competence-based training at universities in Spain, there has been a parallel focus on basic or key competences in primary and secondary education. This is important because of the fact that it necessarily changes the paradigm in language teaching to focus not only on language learning, but also on a series of shared basic competences which are to be developed and evaluated collegiately.

Among the pedagogical implications which derive from this new focus on competences, Pérez (2007: 23) highlights that the central idea is not to transmit information, but to encourage the development of basic skills and abilities and to allow students to reconstruct their own mental models and ways of thinking. At the same time, the adoption of competency training means that teachers must actively involve students in processes of reflection, study, experimentation and communication of knowledge and in linking what is learned to previous experiences and learning situations and to changeable circumstances.

While, in theory, these components may appear to provide a sound foundation for the construction of competences, in practice, there is a risk that the multiple considerations related to the operational characteristics may lead to an inconsistent interpretation and/or application of constructs. Conversely, it is possible that the implementation and assessment of competences could take place in a more reductionist fashion, based on general headings or titles provided in nationally or internationally defined indicators.

Given the potential for disparity in (as seen for example in OECD 2005; COM 2005) and frequent interchangeability of terms, several elements related to competences may or may not be readily clear to those responsible for developing skills and knowledge. This situation may be further compounded when the above-mentioned documents speak of “key competences” and “key competencies”.

In the case of the DeSeCo Project, for example, there are nine Key Competencies which are divided into three general categories (OECD 2005: 10–15):

1. Using Tools Interactively
   (a) The ability to use language, symbols and text interactively
   (b) The ability to use knowledge and information interactively
   (c) The ability to use technology interactively
2. Interacting in heterogeneous groups
   (a) The ability to relate well to others

(b) The ability to cooperate
(c) The ability to manage and resolve conflicts

3. Acting Autonomously

(a) The ability to act within the big picture
(b) The ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects
(c) The ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs

Some of these general competencies are, to a certain extent, comparable to the European Commission's proposal of eight Key Competences, which include the following (COM 2005: 13):

1. Communication in the mother tongue
2. Communication in foreign languages
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology
4. Digital competence
5. Learning to learn
6. Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences and civic competence
7. Entrepreneurship
8. Cultural expression

Like the OECD's description, the Commission's definition of "competences" also implies the incorporation of skills and attitudes, although here, it is possible to see a more specific and direct treatment of these, in contrast to the perhaps arguably more vague labels, such as "the ability to act within the big picture" provided by the OECD.

The idea of competences has been adopted by the majority of participating OECD countries. Spain, along with its EU counterparts, began to reformulate school curricula around this complex and powerful concept, although the terminology employed in individual state contexts has not always been the same. Terms include "basic abilities" (France), "basic skills" (USA), "core skills" (UK), "key competencies" (Australia), and "basic competences" or *competencias básicas* (Spain).

If we examine these basic competences proposed for primary and secondary education in Spain, we can observe that the legislation (decrees contained in BOE 2006, 2007) coincides to a large degree with those defined by COM (2005):

1. Competence in linguistic communication
2. Mathematical competence
3. Competence in knowledge and interaction with the physical world
4. Information and digital competence
5. Social and citizen competence
6. Cultural and artistic competence
7. Competence in learning to learn
8. Autonomy and personal initiative

The introduction of these competences throughout primary and secondary education is cross-curricular. For language teachers in Spain, this means including at least six of the eight key competences in language programmes (those not specifically mentioned for FLT are mathematical competence and knowledge and interaction

with the physical world). Theoretically, this requires language teachers to integrate the said competences into their class programming and implementation; it also requires them to assess the competences and provide a final score (on a scale of 1–5) at the end of the year alongside the traditional score (on a scale of 1–10) given for the specific subject.

The introduction of competences in language education in Spain may be considered by some to be a confusing and time-consuming distraction in a subject that has, for the most part, had a fairly clear idea of its main mission, particularly since the publishing of the Common European Framework, which aims to enable students to be communicatively competent in a foreign language. Nevertheless, it can certainly be argued that apart from those competences which directly affect language learning (i.e. linguistic competence and, to a large degree, cultural and artistic competence), language instruction does appear to be a good scenario for the development of other skills which are intended to help students to form part of society and at the same time to continue to learn.

The Spanish educational administration has perceived this to be the case and in legislation for primary and secondary schools, specific examples are provided to show how FL classes may contribute to the development of these more general attributes. There are several challenges involved, however, with the introduction of competences in the curriculum, which this chapter does not aim to address. Suffice it to say that in terms of initial teacher training in HEIs, the new systems of evaluation have necessitated the inclusion of training in the planning, implementation and assessment of competences as an important course component. Thus, trainee teachers in HEIs must not only demonstrate their own professional competences; they must also be able to incorporate and apply the very concept of competence-based learning into their future teaching role.

4.2.3 General and Specific Competences in Language Teacher Education

Along with the introduction of competence in the curricula for students in primary and secondary education, this concept has also been adopted in teacher education throughout the European Union. Several authors who have examined competences in the Spanish context (e.g. Gimeno et al. 2008; Pérez 2007; Rial 2007) agree that they consist of a combination of knowledge, skills and strategies which, in conjunction, are used to process and apply information. Additionally, these competences also incorporate underlying attitudes, which generate a willingness to deal with diverse problems, conflicts and situations. In this way, the concept of competence is presented as an ability to use personal resources to face external situations or to develop activities in an appropriate way using knowledge, thought processes and practical skills, as well as attitudes, values and emotions.

Unlike behaviourist-based competency approaches used during the second part of the twentieth century, which to a large extent were based on observable performance,

Table 4.1 Generic competences for teacher education in Spain (ANECA 2005: 84)

Area	Competences
Instrumental competences	The ability to analyse and synthesise
	The ability to organise and plan
	Oral and written communication in the mother tongue
	Knowledge of IT which is relevant to the area of study
	The ability to manage information
	Problem-solving skills
	Decision-making skills
Personal competences	Teamwork
	Interdisciplinary teamwork
	Work within an international context
	Interpersonal skills
	Recognition of diversity and multiculturalism
	Critical reasoning
	Ethical commitment
Systemic competences	Autonomous learning
	Adaptation to new situations
	Creativity
	Leadership
	Knowledge of other cultures and customs
	Initiative and entrepreneurship
	Sensitivity towards environmental issues

the proposals for competences in today's education systems deal with the more complex areas of interpersonal structures and motivations, along with the necessary cognitive and behavioural attributes which enable people to deal with different situations and contexts. Among the main implications that arise for teachers with the introduction of competences in the curriculum, Pérez (2007: 23) mentions the need to provide a safe and pleasant environment for learners that allows students to feel confident enough to explore, make mistakes, obtain feedback and continue trying. At the same time, he considers that the teacher's role in the development of competence includes those of designing, planning, organising, encouraging, accompanying and guiding different learning processes.

Furthermore, there is currently a legislative focus on generic and subject-specific competences for teacher education. This has been completed in the case of Spain by ANECA, which is the national agency responsible for quality and accreditation in education. As we can observe from the Table 4.1, while certain instrumental competences coincide with those for lower-level educational institutions, there is an increased focus on more teacher-oriented concerns such as "ethical commitment".

Within the paradigm of competency training, ANECA also establishes a series of specific teacher competencies judged on a four-point scale (Table 4.2) which is intended to help teachers attain the objectives marked by the curriculum for foreign languages in each Autonomous Community within the national context (see also

Table 4.2 Specific competences for modern language teachers (ANECA 2005:114)

Competences	Pts
To have mastery in communicative competence, as well as good linguistic knowledge (phonetics, phonology, grammar and paradigmatic knowledge) and socio-cultural knowledge of the target language	3.7
To be able to plan what is to be taught and assessed, as well as to select, think of, and elaborate teaching strategies, types of activities and class materials	3.5
To design activities intended to obtain sufficient oral communication by students in the new language, establishing individual plans for those students who need them	3.4
To progressively develop general, linguistic and communicative competences in students through the integrated practice of the five skills in the FL class	3.4
To know the main pedagogical trends in foreign language teaching for children, as well as the application of these in the FL classroom in the different levels established in the curriculum	3.2
To apply diverse ways of assessing student learning: planning for what will be assessed, the degree of success, assessment criteria and instruments, and the moments in which assessment will take place	3.1
To assess previous knowledge and needs, introducing different strategies for each level/typology of student and for the characteristics of the educational context	3.1
To encourage the development of oral and written language, paying special attention to new technological resources and elements from distance education	3.1
To know the cognitive and linguistic bases for the acquisition of first and consecutive languages	3.0
To have sufficient knowledge of the culture(s) and language that is taught, along with its principal manifestations	3.0
To be able to encourage the development of metalinguistic/metacognitive skills for the acquisition of the new language, through relevant tasks which are meaningful and proximate to students	3.0
To be able to develop attitudes and positive, open representations towards linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom	3.0
To show a receptive attitude towards errors in production/understanding guiding work through analysis	3.0
To select and design educational resources from children's literature in the target language and from written and audiovisual sources of media	2.7
To use corporal expression techniques and dramatization as communicative resources	2.7
To collaborate in, design and, where appropriate, to guide activities involving cultural exchange with residents from other countries, showing management skills in these processes, including local, regional, national and international student and teacher exchange programmes	2.6
To have sufficient communicative competence in at least one other EU language (English, French, German, Italian, etc.) or language from other countries (Arabic, Russian, Chinese, etc.)	2.1
To encourage collaboration of the families of students – especially in these where communication in more than one language is present – in order to promote respect for other languages and cultures	2.0

Bueno et al. 2005: 29–30; Madrid and Hughes 2009: 229–230; Madrid and McLaren 2004: 24–26; Vez 2007: 36–37).

ANECA (2005) mentions, on the one hand, that the highest scoring competences (i.e. mastery of the target language) coincide with the main transversal competences. It also highlights the fact that relatively less value is ascribed to knowledge of a third language and the skills required to organise cultural exchange visits. In response to these comments, it might be reasonable to state that, while the promotion of other foreign languages has a role in the training of teachers in language education, the main priority is that of the specific language system that students are to teach in the future. With regards to the second point, it could be argued that the organisation of student exchange visits can be greatly enhanced by the previous experience of teachers who are currently employed. As will be discussed at a later stage, however, it appears that several important factors which are taken up in international language teacher profiles are omitted or merely hinted at within this group of competences.

4.2.4 Assessment of Competences

While several of the above-mentioned competences are seen as a useful reference point for teacher educators, there is a view that many objectives need to be more clearly expressed, particularly since both teacher trainers and student teachers should know exactly what is to be assessed (see Artigas et al. 2006). As Argudín (2007) indicates, the focus on competences and on efforts made throughout the process involves not only making changes in curricular design, but also entails using discrete teaching and assessment practices where, up to now, these have focused on retention of information. With competences, there must be a joint assessment of students' knowledge, skills and attitudes throughout the process. Similarly, given the need for active student participation, it would appear useful, now more than ever, to include mechanisms which encourage self-assessment and reflection on learning.

From a constructivist standpoint, the assessment of competences centres less on product and more on the processes related to learning, hypothesis-making and the interpretations made by students, as well as the extent to which they develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in ways which are socially acceptable. The results obtained should be more than mere scores; they must also provide guidelines for the student which facilitate reflection on learning and give useful information for the teacher in terms of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes that have taken place.

Regarding assessment, it seems that the most suitable instruments or procedures would be those which provide rich sources of information as to the development and acquisition of subject matter and skills. Registers of progress, group activity analysis and the solving of problematic situations are examples of techniques to be used (De Keteke and Roesgiers 1995). Similarly, it is important to consider that students may act both as learners and teachers, and thus potentially increase their own recognition of

errors and efforts to overcome them. This implies an institutionalization of cooperative work patterns which require higher levels of solidarity, respect and tolerance.

At the same time, González (2003) points out that there are a number of factors which must be considered when establishing assessment criteria. Firstly, it is argued that we must take into account both the importance of the competence and the difficulties involved in attaining performance indicators. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the size of the competence in terms of conceptual, procedural and/or attitudinal elements involved, as well as the context in which teaching actions are to take place.

Bedynska and Kowalczyk (2003) argue that the major responsibilities of language teachers in the context of new developments in Europe include: (a) enabling students to communicate as users of the FL; (b) making them aware of linguistic and cultural diversity; (c) helping students relativise their own value systems and opinions in order to avoid stereotypes and superficial views; (d) educating against xenophobia and prejudice and for respect for tolerance and diversity. In reference to more specific roles and tasks, the authors argue for the following:

1. The establishment and management of one's own teaching career, which includes continuing professional development, the choice and use of strategies based on learner needs, the selection, improvement and utilisation of resources and the use of rational self-assessment procedures;
2. The act of language teaching, which involves the transmission of declarative and linguistic knowledge as well as existential competence, enabling students to direct their own learning, and teaching pluricultural and plurilingual competence;
3. The use of constructive assessment, which takes into account the assessment of students' achievements, knowledge and use of diverse assessment instruments, and education for student self-assessment (including the European Language Portfolio).

In relation to this last point, it is perhaps worth remembering that student teachers are required not only to fulfil the general and specific competences based on recommendations by ANECA; an important part of their career as future teachers will also involve the planning and assessment of student competences in primary or secondary education. This, we have seen, is problematic in itself, given the disparity of criteria and application of competences in individual schools, and provides us with yet another reason to provide clear guidelines for those who are working within the system.

Perhaps one of the most complete compilations of competence descriptors for language teacher education is to be found in the Council of Europe Project titled The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages, or EPSTL (Newby et al. 2007). One of the main aims of the EPSTL is to encourage student teachers to "reflect on the competences a teacher strives to attain and on the underlying knowledge which feeds these competences" (Newby et al. 2007: 5). Self-assessment in the Portfolio employs 193 competence descriptors divided into seven major areas: context, methodology, lesson planning, conducting a lesson, independent learning,

Table 4.3 Examples of general and specific competences in the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (Newby et al. 2007)

Area	Generic competence	Language-specific competence
Context	I can take account of long-term aims based on needs and expectations.	I can take into account the differing motivations for learning other languages.
Resources	I can select and use ICT materials and activities in the classroom which are appropriate for my learners.	I can locate and select listening and reading materials appropriate for the needs of my learners from a variety of sources, such as literature, mass media and the Internet.
Lesson planning	I can identify curriculum requirements and set learning aims and objectives suited to my learners' needs and interests.	I can decide whether to formulate objectives in terms of skills, topics, situations, linguistic systems (functions, notions, forms etc.).
Conducting a lesson	I can relate what I teach to current events in local and international contexts.	I can present language content (new and previously encountered items of language, topics, etc.) in ways which are appropriate for individuals and specific groups of learners.
Assessment	I can identify strengths and areas for improvement in a learner's performance.	I can use assessment scales from the Common European Framework of Reference.

resources and assessment. These descriptors include generic competences and language specific-competences, examples of which are included in Table 4.3.

This document includes many fundamental aspects (e.g. the use of the European Language Portfolio) which are not directly included in the competences mentioned by ANECA (2005). In this sense, it would now be especially useful for those responsible for the planning of language teacher education in higher education institutions to judiciously provide more finely tuned programmes of study by taking into account the different localised, national, legislative and international contexts to ensure a more adequate implementation of competences in language education.

4.3 Conclusion

Following international trends, competences in Spain have taken on a doubly important role in language teacher education. On the one hand, student teachers are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes which will allow them to become competent professionals. At the same time, they are to familiarise

themselves with and become adept in the use of competences in their future fields of work. These two areas share certain characteristics, but both also have a series of operational constraints. The need to clarify, to avoid reductionism and to contextualise requires the application of the same basic competences, such as vision and leadership, by those responsible for the promotion of these very competences within the education system.

It cannot be denied that the classroom is an appropriate scenario for the development of other, diverse forms of knowledge, along with social skills and personal attitudes. It would be useful, nonetheless, to remember that for any innovation of this kind to take place there is a need not only for it to be pedagogically sound, but also to be implemented in a way that reduces inconsistent and, hence, potentially erroneous approaches to the treatment of competences. In order for this to happen, it would appear that further levels of professional, social and institutional investment are needed in order to ensure that all those responsible for language teaching and learning have access to the necessary information to be able to successfully fulfil those objectives which are seen to be worthwhile, without forgetting that language learning and communicative competence are the main goal of the language professional.

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Chapter 5
Promoting Competency-Based Language Teaching Through Project-Based Language Learning

Melinda Dooly

5.1 Introduction

The notion of competencies as a key element of learning and teaching has become a central element in European Union policies (OJEU 2006). According to the US Department of Education, a competency is "a combination of skills, abilities, and knowledge needed to perform a specific task" (2001: 1). Voorhees (2001: 5) argues that "the interest in competences and measuring specific learning is accelerating throughout the world". Along these lines, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR 2001) promotes competencies as a basis for language teaching and learning, in particular concerning "the definition of objectives and (self) assessment" (Little et al. 2007: 21). Indubitably, the concept of 'competencies' continues to generate debate concerning the precision with which competence frameworks can be applied to contextualized situations (Betts and Smith 1998; Fleming 2006); nonetheless, the significance which the CEFR (2001) attaches to performance-based language tasks designed to promote an interactive approach should not be underestimated. The advantage of performance-based teaching and assessment (defined here as an activity-based "framework for learning systems" (Voorhees 2001: 8)) "resides in its potential to engender and sustain positive washback on the teaching and learning process" (Lynch 2003: 1).

This link between integrated language competencies and sequenced, purposeful activities elucidates why project work is an effective medium for language learning (AEEP/REEP 1997; Beckett and Chamness Miller 2006; Levine 2004; Tsiplakides and Fragoulis 2009). This current focus on competency-based instruction and performance-based frameworks of learning is in alignment with the pedagogical principles

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underlying various methodological derivatives of Communicative Language Teaching (Richards 2005), including Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL): "What characterizes a competency-based approach is the focus on the outcomes of learning as the driving force of teaching and the curriculum" (Richards 2005: 42).

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is founded on contextualized, learner-centred outcomes and social practices that emerge as the participants collaboratively move toward shared goals and output. This chapter focuses on the learner-centred approach of PBLL, which is based on contextualized cooperative learning (Beckett and Chamness Miller 2006) and can be implemented as a competency-based learning platform. Stemming from Project-Based Learning, the implementation of PBLL aims to foster the development of language learners' cognitive, social and communicative skills through their engagement in authentic activities (and sub-activities that lead up to the project output). The activity sequence is carefully designed by the teacher so that it is essential for the learners to deploy integrated competencies and thereby reach the intended output of the project. "Teachers...[find] that project work [helps] them to focus intentionally not only on language skills but also on non-language skills within the affective and cognitive domains" (AEEP/REEP 1997: 3).

5.2 Competencies in Language Learning

Since the early 1980s, understanding of what it means to know a language has shifted more and more towards the notion of communicative competence. Largely stemming from Dell Hymes' (1964) work on language use, the idea of communicative competence has been increasingly adopted by models for language teaching (Richards 2005). Generally speaking, models of communicative competence feature three or four of the following subdivisions: linguistic or grammatical competence, pragmatic or discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence.

Usually linguistic or grammatical competence is held to be the ability to use (and not just know of, or know about) the forms of a language (sound system, lexicon, sentence structure, etc.). "Discourse", or "pragmatic" competence refers to the ability to understand how instances of language use are internally constructed and to use this knowledge to create forms of the language that are longer than sentences (emails, for example). This type of competence helps the language learner recognize if a text is, or is not, coherent in its context, and connects language knowledge with world knowledge. Underscoring this competence is the fact that language and culture are intrinsically linked and therefore there are different expectations for text forms and different ways of defining what communication consists of in relation to the socio-cultural situation of the language. In a similar manner (and sometimes seen as overlapping), "sociolinguistic competence" refers to the know-how of using language appropriately in different contexts, according to socially and culturally constructed norms and expectations. Finally, "strategic competence" is the ability to

compensate for gaps in the other language competence areas. These are often referred to as "language learning strategies", although this competence goes beyond formal strategies in the classroom.

The CEFR (2001) accentuates three competences: linguistic competence; sociolinguistic competence; and pragmatic competence. These three communicative competences are, however, sub-categories of four general language learner competences:

1. Declarative knowledge (*savoir*) that results from experience or formal learning;
2. Skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*), which encompasses the ability to carry out tasks and apply procedures;
3. Existential competence (*savoir être*), involving self-knowledge concerning social interaction;
4. Ability to learn (*savoir apprendre*), referring to the ability to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge.

Underlying all of these competences are specific strategies related to language use which the language learner develops and deploys, defined by the CEFR as Reception, Production, Interaction, and Mediation.

These notions of communicative competence have had a significant impact on language teaching, in particular, the recognition and promotion of what is commonly known as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach.

> Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method. Thus, although a reasonable degree of theoretical consistency can be discerned at the levels of language and learning theory, at the levels of design and procedure there is much greater room for individual interpretation and variation than most methods permit. (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 83)

CLT upholds an integrated, interactive approach that accommodates the teaching of language competencies mentioned by the CEFR (2001). In a similar fashion, PBLL endorses an interactive, competency-based approach (AEEP/REEP 1997). The amount, and type, of interaction in PBLL – decision making, activity design, task allocation, progress reporting, problem solving, output production, etc. – ensures that there is continual communication between participants and facilitates integrated use of language competencies (grammatical, pragmatic, discursive, sociolinguistic and strategic), through different modes (reception, production, interaction and mediation). Moreover, the interpersonal competencies stressed in the CEFR are essential for the type of interaction that takes place in PBLL, foregrounding a further nexus between competency-based teaching, CLT and PBLL: small group interaction and socially oriented lessons (essential to cooperative learning). As Goodall (2007) points out, cooperation in the classroom is a significant building block for the students, apart from the language learning taking place: "Cooperation, empathy, self-respect and respect for others, and conflict resolution are key themes in any personal and social education" (Goodall 2007: 34).

5.3 Project-Based Learning and Project-Based Language Learning

Project-based learning is not new in the field of education, as is attested by Dewey's (1916) advocacy of "learning by doing". As constructivist and socio-constructivist learning theories have gained ground in education (see Tharpe and Gallimore 1988; Vygotsky 1978), so too has PBL become more favoured in education, including second- and foreign language teaching (Beckett and Slater 2005; Fried-Booth 2002; Stoller 2006).

Central to the premise of PBLL is the notion that language projects are authentic, not simulated language situations. Within the parameters of PBL, authenticity might reside in different domains of the learning activities (e.g. purposeful project topics and contexts, outside-the-classroom collaborators, project output and project audience within the community, etc.). For PBLL educators, this authenticity of task (and roles) underscores the purposefulness and authenticity of the target language use (Beckett and Chamness Miller 2006; Beckett and Slater 2005; Stoller 2006):

> Project learning is a collaborative approach to teaching and learning in which learners are placed in situations where they use authentic language to accomplish particular objectives. As part of the process, learners plan, work on complex tasks, and assess their performance and progress. A project is designed around issues, questions, or needs identified by the learners. (AEEP/REEP 1997: 6)

Nonetheless, there is no exact consensus on what an educational project is (time-span, coverage, etc.). The Buck Institute for Education (BIE) (a research and development organization focused on problem- and project-based instruction) states that there is no single accepted definition of project-based learning, although they do indicate that PBL is

> [A] systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks. (BIE 2003: 4)

BIE adds that an outstanding project must necessarily:

1. Recognize students' inherent drive to learn;
2. Engage the students through the curriculum;
3. Lead students to in-depth exploration of authentic and important topics;
4. Use tools and skills as part of the learning process;
5. Generate multiple output that requires research, problem-solving, feedback and reflection;
6. Incorporate performance-based assessment;
7. Involve collaboration (BIE 2003: 4).

It should be noted, too, that project-based learning and problem-based learning are often confused, especially since PBL is used as an acronym for both terms. The main difference between the two approaches lies in the way in which students are given greater autonomy in the project-based approach, whereas the other approach focuses particularly on problem-solving.

Turning to the specific field of language teaching, Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) hinges on the idea that language learning is engendered through an approach that connects content and target language to students' lives, often in collaboration with teachers from other disciplines (Dooly and Masats 2010). According to Stoller (2006), Project-Based Language Learning allows students to set and evaluate their own language learning goals, as well as content learning goals and other related skills and learning strategies. This also ensures enhanced language learner motivation and confidence, as well as making assessment more transparent and integrated into the overall learning process (AAEP/REEP 1997).

There is often confusion between task-based language teaching (TBLT) and PBLL. This is quite understandable, since TBLT also promotes second-language acquisition as an organic process, fostered through cognitively challenging, meaningful use of language. Language learning tasks are goal-directed and focused on meaning, with clearly defined outcomes. Bygate et al. (2001: 11) state that "a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning to attain an objective". However, the word "task" carries many different connotations, from both within and outside the parameters of language teaching. Long (1985: 89) points out that the notion of "task" exists within the educational world (with its particularized connotations) alongside a more mundane concept of task as "the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between". It seems understandable, then, that teachers might be confused about what constitutes a task or a project in language teaching.

Within the TBLT approach, tasks are pedagogically focused, contextualized, and have a clear purpose (see Ellis 2003 for more in-depth description). For instance, students might be asked to take on the role of rock band managers and work together to devise a publicity campaign. Still, it should be pointed out that, in a case like this, the task's content is simulated and created by the teacher as a means of ensuring target language use, rather than an authentic purpose selected by the learners themselves and linked in some way to their context inside or outside of the classroom.

It can be argued that CLT has generated several communicative, competency-based approaches, including, but not limited to, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBL), Telecollaborative Language Learning (TclLL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and PBLL. The fact that the sequence of PBLL activities is embedded in a potentially real-life situation differentiates PBLL from other CLT approaches; PBLL is a move away from language instruction based on pre-defined linguistic goals or simulated activities or roles. Indeed, PBLL is designed as a series or sequence of activities (tasks and sub-tasks) that lead up to at least one clearly articulated outcome (AEEP/REEP 1997). Moreover, project-based learning implies that this final output should have an impact on an audience outside the school and be embedded in the community itself (BIE 2003). This helps the language learners see the cohesion between their output and other learning processes taking place in the pupils' lives. It also underscores the correlation between what they are studying and the context in which they are living, while seeking to relate to their interests and needs. Moreover, PBLL gives learners the opportunity to acquire "life skills" (AEEP/REEP 1997: 4) associated with the affective and cognitive

domains. Optimally, the language learner sees that there is an authentic purpose for carrying out the work (not just a display of knowledge).

5.4 The PBLL Environment

Successful PBLL requires careful planning and management skills so that it is not simply a "divide into groups and discuss" approach, but a truly cooperative learning environment. Unfortunately, there is no easy recipe that guarantees that all language competencies will be integrated: "There are myriad issues, both internal and external, that affect progress in learning a new language" (AEEP/REEP 1997: 2). Some general steps can be unpacked from the overall complexity of PBLL planning, however. A first step consists of choosing a project topic or theme that not only lends itself to language teaching, but which is also germane to the students' lives. This implies that the project must fit naturally into the use of the target language (e.g. a project aimed at contacting an EU parliamentary member) and be relevant for the students (e.g. petition for more focus by the EU on youth unemployment and job creation for university graduates). Also, the authenticity of the project activities and output should be considered. For instance, creating a task force on noise pollution with the EU parliament as an audience accommodates a language learning project more easily than if the target is a local ombudsman, since the students would not need to address him or her in the foreign language being studied.

Another essential part of PBLL planning is anticipating limitations – what obstacles might exist (e.g. physical and temporal limitations) – as well as considering which parts of the curriculum can be effectively handled in a PBLL approach. This requires long-term planning in order to determine whether some areas of language learning might be more easily and quickly covered, or must necessarily be covered, through direct instruction (textbooks, lectures, and so on) outside of or parallel to the project. Once the topics and areas of the curriculum which can be handled through PBLL have been identified, the teacher must then take into consideration the students: what can they do by themselves? What might prove to be too difficult and potentially demotivating? How can students be gradually introduced to more autonomous learning during the course? This type of student profiling is essential for the initial planning.

Next, the project must ensure multiple (authentic) communicative outputs in varying forms (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in a wide variety of subactivities and activities, all within an array of contexts. It is suggested that planning should begin with the end result – decide the final product(s) first, and work backwards from there. At the same time, learners must be given time and opportunities for repetition of some activities to ensure that they are familiar with specific communicative events (being a scribe to keep record of group work, for example), so that they gain confidence in different language competencies (writing, speaking, etc.). In other words, there must be ample opportunities for reviewing language already learnt, with gradual introduction of more and more communicative events.

This means anticipating and allowing sufficient time in the PBLL calendar for all activity sequences.

Providing opportunities for different types of target language use requires scaffolding, perhaps more intensively at certain phases or during specific activities (e.g. providing "cheatsheets" for group leaders that will help them in group negotiations of tasks). Foreseeing these moments in the implementation means more planning and preparation, but will help the project run more smoothly. So, when sketching out the project, it is helpful to brainstorm as many of the different types of language needed to reach the final product of the project as possible and then to carefully plan language sub-tasks for each stage – preparation, execution and review – while ensuring that there is variety in the sub-tasks. To facilitate planning, the teacher might divide language use into different categories: for setting up tasks (receiving instructions, explaining instructions to others, etc.); for carrying out tasks (group discussion leader, presentations, report writing, note-taking, etc.); and for output (posters, interviews, letters, etc.).

At the same time, the teacher must not become overly focused on language use to the possible detriment of content, or at the risk of weighing down the project with schoolwork-type activities. Instead language input and language use should be part of a holistic, coherent milieu of activities leading up to authentic project output. Also, the sub-activities should encourage the use of higher order thinking skills and learning concepts along with more basic information retrieval.

PBLL implies student accountability in the learning process. To encourage learner responsibility, teachers can form partnerships with their students; for instance by involving students in planning and preparation. Anticipating different language requirements that may need to be revised or explicitly taught can be turned into part of the student ownership of the learning process by including collaborative tasks wherein the students themselves design and make the materials (cue cards for group work management, peer evaluation rubrics, instructions for some of the sub-tasks, etc.).

This aspect of planning highlights a significant difference between PBL and PBLL implementation. PBLL necessarily entails a bifocal perspective by the teacher on both the project content and the project language – language is both the object of study and the vehicle for the learning process (Seedhouse 2004). Seedhouse stresses the complexity and fluidity between language as focus of learning, language as vehicle of pedagogical intentions and, to add a third level of complexity, the possible presence of other languages in the classroom. Planning PBLL within this context requires balance; in a well-designed language project activity sequence, both form and fluency will be focused on at some point or other, along with open, creative opportunities for spontaneous communication. Elaborating a set of competence statements from the beginning of the planning can help pinpoint the "focus for the evolution of shared understanding" (Fleming 2006: 57).

With regard to assessment, the focus on performance-based teaching and assessment upheld by the CEFR (2001) is a key factor for PBLL, especially given that formative assessments are usually more suitable to PBLL situations (AEEP/REEP 1997). Typical assessment tools are rubrics, portfolios, learner diaries and peer assessment (AEEP/REEP 1997; Tsiplakides and Fragoulis 2009). Communicative competence

with previously studied target language as well as new target language introduced during the PBLL should be included in the assessment tools and these should be assessed by varying means so that all the competences (grammatical, pragmatic, discursive, sociolinguistic and strategic) are easily identifiable to the students as integrated elements of the learning objectives. The tools used – in particular rubrics – can be designed to provide descriptors of both performance and products of the learning process (through clear descriptors). Students can learn to use these descriptors to carry out peer and self-assessment throughout the learning process and can also be involved in the design of the rubrics through negotiation of the assessment process.

5.5 *Bon Voyage:* An Example of PBLL

PBLL is compatible with other communicatively focused language teaching approaches such as CLIL or TclLL (Dooly 2008). Thus, a TclLL/CLIL project is described here; however, for the sake of brevity it is not possible to give a detailed account of it. This example was originally designed for different student levels, from primary education through university, focusing on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching (in primary) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for future primary teachers at university level.[1] It begins with a project on town-twinning in the two areas where the partner schools and universities are located.[2] The rationale for the PBLL is not only to promote communicative competence (English is the lingua franca), but also to help promote a deeper understanding of the partners and to eliminate any patronizing or condescending attitudes held by the students who come from a more affluent area. Moreover, the project is linked to the wider community in being a response to a call from the mayor for ideas on how to bring different groups from the two towns into closer contact as well as promote current university exchange programs already in place (such as the Erasmus program).

For younger students, the project theme consists of uniting the two schools in an imaginary meeting point at some place in the geographic middle between the countries involved. The students choose the meeting place and then write a virtual travel blog as they plan and then take their imaginary journey towards their meeting. The learners share their thoughts with their partner school about how the journey is progressing, thus promoting linguistic and discourse competence while introducing notions of sociolinguistic competence (e.g. understanding the appropriate way to

[1] This PBLL example was originally designed for a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) school placement tutorial session and for students training to become geography teachers, as part of the Comenius project entitled MICALL: Moderating Intercultural Collaboration and Language Learning (118762-CP-1-2004-NL-Comenius 2.1). The author of this example is Melinda Dooly (Department of Language Teaching Methodology, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra).

[2] Town twinning was developed in Europe, after World War II, as a way of creating friendship ties and understanding between countries affected by the war. It is now quite popular world-wide.

address distanced partners through various mediums), as well as initiating some strategic competence (e.g. the use of resources during group work and finding solutions during online chats).

The main outcome is an online travel blog – elaborated through the entries of different collaborative teams – but there are cross-disciplinary areas and sub-products, too. For instance, the students learn geography and exchange cultural information so that the partners can plan their trip appropriately. The language learners must also use mathematics to calculate timing and residual distances in their trip. Moreover, the subject of arts and crafts comes into play as part of the end-of-collaboration closure.

At university level, the project takes place within a geography class (taught through English) and the learning process includes two types of content: specific geographic content from the class, as well as the pedagogical content of designing, planning and implementing a project for the students' future teaching.[3] In this case, a journey is collaboratively planned within each partner country so that students can explore and answer specific questions relevant to the geography curriculum. In turn, deductions about the correct answers concerning geography (as demonstrated in the virtual travel blog) is corroborated or debunked by actual excursions by both local and Erasmus exchange students to the sites in the travel blogs.

Through the series of sub-tasks such as personal introductions, negotiating of roles and tasks in online small-group work, the students are continuously working on linguistic and discourse competencies along with sociolinguistic and interpersonal competencies. The learners can be assessed through rubrics at different stages of the project – both by their peers and by the teacher (Fig. 5.1 shows an extract from a rubric for the discussion leaders of a working group).

For the young students, the journey ends at the agreed meeting point; this can be celebrated by a videoconference where the students get a chance to see their partners and exchange brief greetings. This can also be the moment for the teachers to hand out gifts that the students have made and sent. Planning the final day of the journey with an open-class day so that parents and community authorities can attend brings further authenticity to the project (it must be recalled that this project stems from the town-twinning).

At university level, the face-to-face and online collaborative groups are expected to compile their research findings into several outputs: a composite travel blog that identifies and explores key features of each country related to the curriculum of each geography class; 'expert' reports, based on the preliminary deductions and subsequent findings of on-site research, that include teaching recommendations that can be used by their peers in the future; and a revised design of the initial PBLL (based on self- and peer-assessment and reflection on their own experiences and those of their placement students).

[3] As future teachers, the students are expected to take part in placement teaching where they are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the previously described primary education PBLL projects.

	Unsatisfactory	Novice level	Break-through level	Expertise level
Language Use				
Instructions	Only tries to convey meaning to group in L1. Makes no attempt to use knowledge of target language.	Able to convey meaning only after considerable effort & re-phrasing. Mostly uses L1 with a few words in the target language.	Some relapses and re-phrasing but on the whole able to convey meaning to group in the target language. Mostly uses the "cheatsheet" appropriately.	Shows proficiency in giving instructions in target language. Uses the "cheatsheet" appropriately as a means of support, not as a substitute for leadership.
Use of language resources	Does not use available language resources to help in role as leader. Does not appear to have prepared any language strategies beforehand.	Tends to use only one resource (e.g. asking the teacher for ESP vocabulary; use of code-switching).	Uses rehearsed language chunks, integrated with content-specific vocabulary with others (peers, teachers) as well as "cheatsheet".	Shows autonomy in the use of resources (e.g. language chunks, online dictionary, delegating language search, etc.). Appears to have prepared language strategies beforehand.
		....		
Leadership	Unable to lead the discussion in a productive fashion. There is little benefit from the discussion concerning further understanding of the issues.	Is able to manage the group but does not really lead the group beyond superficial discussion.	Is able to lead the other group members to more in depth understanding.	Is able to guide the other group members to critical awareness of different issues by referring to other contexts and/or questioning underlying principles that emerge.

Fig. 5.1 Rubric extract: discussion leader

Through this holistic, integrated approach to PBLL, future teachers are placed in the role of both teacher and learner in circumstances that allow for the co-construction of specific content knowledge (geography and language) and pedagogical understanding of PBLL. They are also better able to conceptualize how competencies can serve as a basis for "the definition of objectives and (self) assessment" (Little et al. 2007: 21).

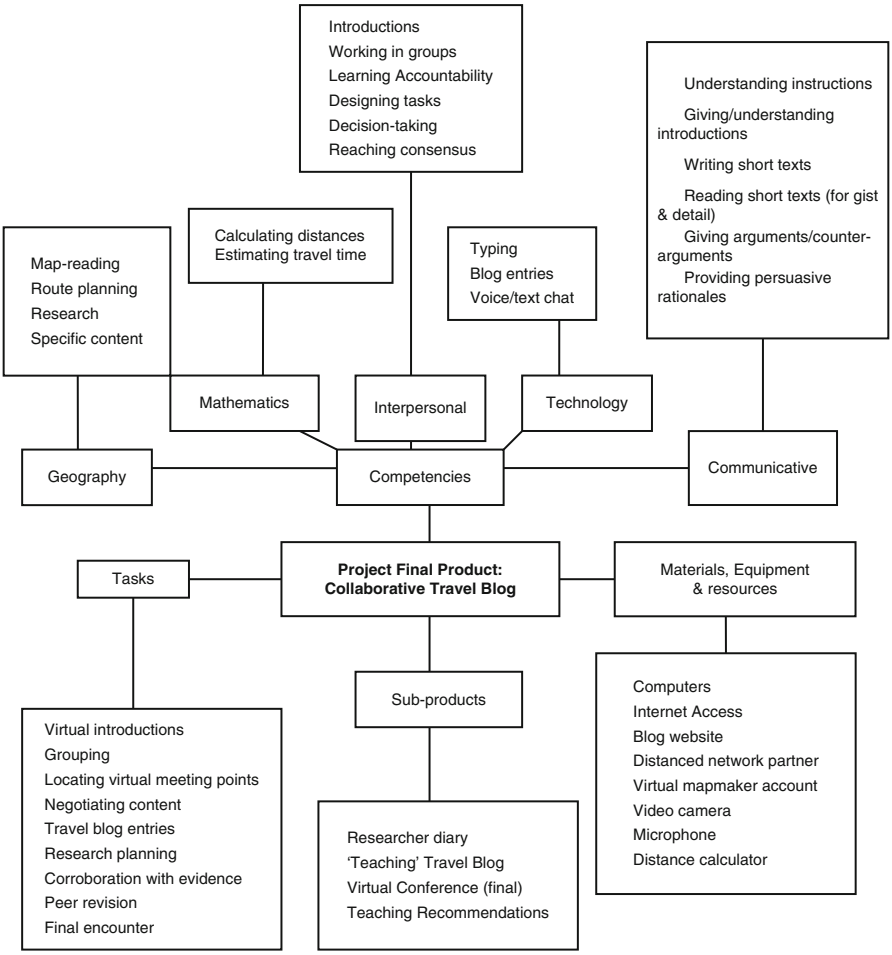

Fig. 5.2 PBLL map: Bon Voyage! (collaborative travel blog)

Figure 5.2 represents only a small portion the PBLL plan; there are many other curricular areas that can be explored through this project. Historical ties between the areas, accompanied by personal narratives and online interviews of experts; similarities and differences in biomes and ways they are changing or being preserved; or collaborative preparation of artistic products such as film clips, drawings, sculptures and paintings that represent the friendship between the towns are just a few examples of how the potential of town-twinning and PBLL can be fully exploited for language and content learning. Finally, it must be emphasized that throughout the project students must be provided opportunities to examine the issues that emerge (e.g. cultural, political, social), voice their opinions and ideas and be encouraged to interrogate their own perspectives in order to encourage critical thinking (Iwahama and Asada 2006; Stoller 2006).

5.6 Troubleshooting in PBLL Planning

A common concern in Project Based Language Learning is that lower-level language learners cannot participate in performance-based interaction and must be taught linguistic knowledge first. However, PBLL can be efficiently used at beginner levels if the project focuses principally on input-based activities designed to help develop initial proficiency. Inevitably, beginning language learners may feel insecure and be less willing to take risks in trying to communicate, especially if they are used to more controlled language practice. To sustain their confidence, the teacher must slowly build on more input-based activities in the project sequences so that learners are provided, very gradually, with what might be called 'structured communicative events'.

Students who do not have a great deal of experience with communicating in the target language – or who feel they do not have sufficient fluency – may be overwhelmed by the idea of using the target language to carry out a project. It should be made clear from the beginning that the target language use will be scaffolded and that the focus is on communicating basic ideas, not creating extremely complex output. Since the idea of projects is often associated with cognitively demanding outcomes, pupils may assume that this implies a good command of the target language for the project implementation and outcome and thus be averse to the whole idea. Teachers and pupils can negotiate the amount of target language that will be used and when; initiating students into PBLL does not necessarily mean that the target language must be used 100% of the time.

Gradually scaled communicative events must be planned into the project sequence so that there is possibility of repetition as well as building further complexity into the events. One way of doing this is to avoid lockstep teaching (all of the students working on the same activity at the same time) by having mixed activities and materials for smaller groups – all of which are designed to contribute, in one way or another, towards the completion of the project. This also provides time and opportunity for the teacher to work intensively with different groups or individuals as needed. Language resources (dictionaries, thesauruses, and online resources such as corpora databases) should be readily available in the classroom and the students must become competent in their use (again, this can be one of the initial sub-activities that form the project sequence). Also, the teacher must ensure that the planning of the activity sequences in the project is based on group work that involves trust-building and team-building activities.

Structured communicative events need not only take place as part of the products and sub-products; planning communication in group work is also important. For instance, communicative events may be integrated into the different roles given to the language learners during group work: for each group activity, there may be a leader (who ascertains the instructions for the day's activities, communicates them to the group and is responsible for that day's activities), a reporter (who records the events, participation and outcomes, and then informs the teacher or the whole class), a technical assistant (who is responsible for finding information or using the language

resources), and a group motivator (who encourages participation and evaluates performance of the group). The roles needed for group work can be decided at the beginning of the project; these are then rotated throughout the implementation, therefore enabling different communicative events to be tried out by the learners.

Another concern often raised about PBLL is that the complexity of the activity sequences may force students to resort to communicating in languages they feel more comfortable with rather than the target language. Research into the use of target languages during sequenced tasks indicates that communicative oral competence in the target language during task performance principally implies: (a) contributing to the management of the activity (turn-taking, dealing with topics, proposing focus of attention); (b) formulating appropriate utterances; and (c) overcoming communicative obstacles (Masats et al. 2007). Research reveals that learners pass through stages of increased target language use (beginning with occasional utterances) and move into more advanced levels of competence wherein they mostly use the target language and manage most of the activity in the target language; or through reformulations (Masats et al. 2007). In short, the learners will use the target language in greater measure as they feel more comfortable and secure with it – and this is best accomplished by having ample opportunities to use it in meaningful ways and over time, as proposed by PBLL (AEEP/REEP 1997; Beckett and Chamness Miller 2006).

Another assumed obstacle for communicative-based approaches is the difficulty of providing opportunities for all the learners to use the language in a purposeful way, especially in large classes. However, if one looks at the original premise of Project-Based Learning (not only projects focused on language learning), it is possible to see how the approach itself implies a much greater potential for communication to take place – through the different types of classroom interaction necessary for the project implementation – more so than many other approaches, including simulated language situations designed for elicited language practice that often end in sample displays of dialogue or similar output, performed primarily for the teacher.

5.7 Final Words

A main premise of PBLL is that the project should be connected with students' lives in such a way that it has an impact beyond the school walls, ensuring not only authentic use of the target language but a visible impact on the students and the intended audience or community (BIE 2003). At the same time, PBLL ultimately channels the focus to a more personalized learner-centered perspective that takes into consideration the students' interests, their needs, and the school and communities' opportunities and needs; then seeks to converge all of these factors with curricular aims. Fried-Booth (2002) argues that PBL is an optimal approach to teaching content-based second language education; it is proposed here that projects are equally optimal for foreign language teaching.

Moreover, PBLL expands the parameters of learning in more ways than simply spotlighting communicative competence; learners discover how to think

knowledgeably and critically about what they are saying; that is, how to properly understand and evaluate the learning content (Iwahama and Asada 2006; Stoller 2006). PBLL encourages learning methods for acquiring, understanding, and evaluating information rather than memorizing new and isolated facts; PBLL is a "competency-based approach to language teaching which provides life skills content in which language practice and application can take place" (AEEP/REEP 1997: 4). And in an increasingly complex society, having the know-how to continually learn in order to keep up with a rapidly changing world is an important gift to bestow on students.

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Chapter 6
Addressing the Language Classroom Competencies of the European Higher Education Area Through the Use of Technology

Greg Kessler and Paige D. Ware

6.1 Introduction

Competency-based instruction is becoming more prevalent in many learning contexts, and teachers across the globe are seeking ways to align their courses in ways that meet these standards. In particular, the growth of new technologies has given rise to competencies outlining ways for teachers to integrate technology into their teaching. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), for example, has defined standards for the use of technology from pre-kindergarten through higher education, and the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Organization (TESOL) has released technology standards for both teachers and students with a specific view to how technology intersects with language instruction. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) also includes a focus on technology across the general and discipline-specific competency frameworks. In this chapter, we will focus specifically on how competencies within the EHEA can be implemented using technology-based instruction with particular emphasis upon the examples of telecollaboration and local collaboration.

6.2 Telecollaboration as a Forum for Developing Discipline-Specific Competencies

Telecollaboration is a term used to describe synchronous or asynchronous interaction among disparately located partners using a variety of modes of interaction, from text-based discussion boards or blogs to videoconferencing and multimedia

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Table 6.1 Discipline-specific competencies developed in telecollaborative projects

Telecollaborative focus	Clusters of core and peripheral discipline-specific competencies
Critical cultural awareness (Furstenberg et al. 2001)	CORE: Ability to analyze literary and non-literary texts and discourses using appropriate methods of analysis Ability for critical reasoning/thinking skills PERIPHERAL: Mastery of instrumental use of native language Knowledge of sociolinguistics of English/language of study
Lexical focus (Pérez Cañado 2010)	CORE: Knowledge of text critique, revision, and editing Ability to provide advice and linguistic editing/corrections PERIPHERAL: Knowledge of the process writing approach/phases of editing Knowledge of rhetoric and stylistics
Metalinguistic awareness (Ware and O'Dowd 2008)	CORE Ability to provide advice and linguistic editing/corrections Theoretical and practical knowledge of translating into and out of English/language of study PERIPHERAL Ability to analyze literary and non-literary texts and discourses using appropriate methods of analysis Ability to communicate and teach acquired knowledge

Note: These competencies are translated by the authors from the Spanish of the White Paper published by the Agencia Nacional de Evaluación y Acreditación (2004: 332–334)

exchanges. Often, telecollaboration involves the use of at least two languages among participants representing different nationalities. We illustrate how telecollaborative projects can be used as a forum for developing discipline-specific EHEA competencies, through the examples of three telecollaborative research projects. Each of these projects demonstrates how individual competencies are weighted; that is, different projects emphasize a different set of what we are calling "core" and "peripheral" competencies. We call these "clusters of discipline-specific competencies" and discuss the unique set of pedagogical goals associated with each project. We also provide concrete examples of course materials and student data from one of the three exemplar projects to help illustrate the types of pedagogical tools that instructors use to support implementation of a telecollaborative project.

The discipline-specific competencies of interest in this chapter are drawn from the Tertiary Foreign Language Education Competencies Framework (ANECA 2004: 332–334). In Table 6.1 above, three research projects are aligned with a cluster

of competencies that highlight the unique contribution of each project conducted at the tertiary level. It should be noted that the studies were conducted before the wide dissemination of the European Higher Education Competencies, so the alignments we construct are imposed as illustrative frames and not necessarily as inherent examples that were included in the original design of the projects.

Core competencies emphasized in a study by Furstenberg et al. (2001) are the abilities to develop students' critical cultural reasoning and thinking and to analyze various texts and discourses as the focus of that development. Prior to their study, many projects had focused primarily on having students practice the target language online while discussing various cultural texts without an explicit and systematic focus on the development of critical cultural analytical skills. The novel contribution of the study by Furstenberg and her colleagues was to have French and U.S.-American students in their tertiary French-English telecollaborative project write only in their native language to their online peers, and to reserve the use of the target language for face-to-face in-class discussions. Students then systematically analyzed a variety of documents, starting with their own written responses as cultural texts, then progressing to both literary and non-literary texts such as cross-cultural questionnaires, opinion polls, online news media, movies and their remake versions, and textual excerpts from various genres. Such a focus emphasized students' ability to uncover the "silent language" of culture (2001: 55). Peripheral to this systematic, structured focus on analysis and critical reasoning, the telecollaboration inevitably also led students to develop the competencies of knowing about the sociolinguistics of their own language as well as the language they were studying (in this case French and English), since they were in weekly contact with native-speaking peers and thus negotiating interactions about complex topics.

Whereas the Furstenberg et al. (2001) study features a core cluster of competencies converging on the ability to think and write critically about various text types, the second focal study by Pérez Cañado (2010) examines the specific case of lexical development among students of English as a foreign language in Spain, who exchanged their writing with native English speakers in the United States of America. Her students focused in bi-weekly sessions on different genres of writing (description, narration), and their online exchange utilized a combination of the process approach to writing with a revision cycle that included peer feedback with students in the U.S.A. This telecollaborative project focused therefore on two core competencies: knowledge of critique, revision, and editing, and the ability to provide advice and linguistic editing/corrections. Students worked within two languages to provide advice on writing, and they became more familiar with patterns of interaction centered on constructive criticism. Somewhat peripheral, because they were not systematically addressed, were the competencies of developing familiarity with the various phases of editing and with cross-cultural linguistic and stylistic differences.

The third example is taken from a mixed-method study by Ware and O'Dowd (2008) that features a discrete cluster of discipline-specific competencies related to helping students develop a metalanguage for talking about linguistic forms and their functions. The two core competencies addressed in this study are those of providing advice and linguistic editing/corrections and of developing practical knowledge of

translating into and out of English. Peripheral competencies in this instance are the ability for students on both sides of the exchange to communicate what they were learning about grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic aspects of language as they provided linguistic advice. Also, students examined and discussed a wide range of literary and non-literary texts, from survey results to newspaper articles and movies. This knowledge base and its associated skills are particularly useful for foreign language students who choose to develop professional careers as language instructors, translators, or interpreters, as the focus is on analyzing and interpreting the native and target languages for peers with less background or training. A key feature of this project was its comparison of participants grouped according to two contexts: e-tutoring, in which a cohort of students in Spain and the U.S.A. were required to provide metalinguistic feedback on their partners' writing via a series of four self-selected prompts; and e-partnering, in which a cohort of students in Chile and the U.S.A. were encouraged to provide such feedback through a series of four teacher-selected prompts. Only some prompts were specifically tailored for a metalinguistic focus, as discussion of cultural texts and attitudes remained at the heart of both the conditions.

Findings from this study (Ware and O'Dowd 2008) show that even though all cohorts received instruction on how to provide metalinguistic feedback to their peers, only students in the e-tutoring group in which feedback was required made a substantial effort to provide advice and linguistic/editing corrections and to communicate and teach acquired knowledge, as specified in the discipline-specific competencies. Of interest to instructors who are aligning competencies to their own curricular objectives, this study demonstrates that students do indeed respond to the task of analyzing linguistic forms and functions as part of a telecollaborative project. The qualitative feedback gathered from questionnaires and focal group interviews indicates no difference between the two groups engaged in e-partnering and e-tutoring, either in terms of satisfaction with, or enjoyment of, the project. Given that many telecollaborative projects focus primarily on the cultural aspects of language learning, this shift to a metalinguistic process suggests that other objectives, with either a linguistic or metalinguistic focus, can provide productive environments for future telecollaborative exchanges.

To illustrate the link between the competencies and student learning, we draw on a sample of data from the Ware and O'Dowd (2008) study. First, the organization of the project entailed the collaborative development of a series of prompts, some of which directly elicited a focus on linguistic aspects of language and the provision of student feedback (see Table 6.2). Students were also provided with examples of student interactions from previous projects so that they could discuss various interactional approaches prior to the onset of the project.

In telecollaborative exchanges, instructors must establish and maintain a scope and sequence of activities such as those illustrated in Table 6.2, and the course materials developed require negotiation between instructors and an understanding of the institutional demands at each classroom site (Belz and Müller-Hartmann 2003).

Concrete examples of student data from this project illustrate the core competency of the ability to provide advice and linguistic editing/correcting. Ware and O'Dowd (2008) report on three categories of language-related episodes of feedback

Table 6.2 Sample tasks in a telecollaborative project

Task 1:	Introductions In these first two weeks of the English part of the exchange, you will do two things:
Part 1:	Students write an introductory text on themselves and their home town/culture focusing on aspects of their lives which may surprise people from the other culture.
Part 2:	Students have to visit tourist shops in their home town and report back on what they find there. Are the objects for sale really representative of their culture? Or are they simply stereotypical images of the home culture which do not correspond to reality? Discuss and ask each other questions about the two cultures.
Task 2:	Product Creation: Text Reconstruction You will be given a text entitled 'Spain fights to stop forest fires' which contains key words and phrases taken from an article describing the terrible events that happened in the Northwest of Spain this summer. The Spanish students should try to recreate full sentences using as many of the words and phrases as possible. The American students should then make suggestions as to how the text can be improved and made to sound more 'natural'. You can also talk together about the events in Galicia this summer.
Task 3:	Product Creation: Advertisement Adaptation. Students choose an advertisement (for example about Coke or some other product aimed at young people) and write an adaptation for the American market. You should change the content as well as the language style, so that the ad is appropriate for the other culture. Your partners should comment on the language, style, and cultural appropriateness of your version and maybe suggest changes. Try to agree on a final version of the adaptation that is agreeable to all group members.

provided by the students: morphosyntactic, lexical, and affective. They provide the example of a student providing lexical feedback: "Also 'dumb' is like saying she becomes stupid. If that's what you meant, fine, but it may be better understood if you said 'dumbfounded' or 'speechless'" (2008: 47). Additionally, students relied on two strategies of providing feedback: specific corrections and more general commentaries. The student "commentaries", for example, do not highlight specific errors, but instead make generalizations about patterns of errors found in one another's writing and provide advice on how to approach editing: "I don't know if I told you about the trick of using 'FANBOYS' or not.... Adding commas and semicolons in long sentences makes the sentence more understandable and easier to read. This is when you should use commas in a sentence, when you have any of the FANBOYS: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So" (2008: 47). These pedagogical and student examples illustrate the micro-level aspects of competencies that can be emphasized systematically in telecollaborative projects.

6.3 Local Collaboration as a Forum for Developing Competencies

Telecollaborative projects take a great deal of planning and collaborative strategizing, and many instructors foster such collaboration experiences for their students more locally – within single classes, across classes within a department, across

Table 6.3 Sample of EHEA across the collaborative autonomous language learning framework

1. The ability to use language to independently contribute personal meanings as a collaborative member of a group	
Instrumental competencies	Personal competencies
Knowledge of a second language	Working in groups
Ability to analyze and synthesize	
Basic skills in using a computer	
2. The ability to use appropriate strategies for communicating as a collaborative member of a group	
Instrumental competencies	Personal competencies
Planning and time management	Ability to work on an interdisciplinary team
	Ability to communicate with people who are not experts in the material
	Appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism
	Knowledge of cultures and customs of other countries
3. The willingness to demonstrate these abilities within the group	
Instrumental competencies	Personal competencies
Ability to apply knowledge to practice	Leadership
	Motivation to succeed
	Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit

nearby schools, and between classes and other groups within a community. Collaborative project-based learning benefits from a long and rich history of educational philosophy and creative language teaching and learning practices. Learners have engaged in collaborative activities, both in and out of the classroom, in varied ways. Some of these will be discussed with an emphasis on suggestions for local collaboration.

Kessler and Bikowski (2010) recently constructed a framework for developing collaborative autonomous language learning abilities within a computer-mediated context. This framework is not only intended to serve as a means of evaluating students' abilities, but also to promote the continued development of related abilities. Further, it is intended to be used across the spectrum of collaboration, including local and telecollaborative, as well as within discrete task-based and expansive problem-based learning. We will explore some projects that incorporate local collaboration while promoting the development of these autonomous collaborative abilities. Each project will be described in terms of the individual characteristics, skills, and abilities among students, as well as through examples of potential teacher intervention that would be likely to enhance individual collaborative abilities.

Adapted from William Littlewood's 'framework for autonomy' (Littlewood 1996), our framework recognizes student autonomy as comprising ability (knowledge and skills) and willingness (motivation and confidence). Each of these four characteristics can manifest themselves in varied ways. Table 6.3 illustrates these attributes in relation to aspects of the European competencies.

This framework supports the development of competencies through participation in collaborative project-based activities. In order to illustrate the potential of such development, we will explore this framework in relation to three recent local collaborative project-based studies. These studies have been selected solely due to their local collaborative contexts. The data from the studies is not re-examined or discussed. Rather, the focus is upon how such projects might be viewed within the framework for developing collaborative autonomous language learning abilities.

The first study was conducted by Ganem-Gutierrez (2009), who observed the processes of collaboration across three distinct tasks: a gap-fill activity, a trail quiz, and a form-focused dictogloss activity. These very brief tasks are common in language pedagogy and provide accessible opportunities for teachers to begin experimenting with Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). The gap-fill activity (also known as a cloze exercise) required students to collaborate, filling in missing words or phrases in sentences or paragraphs. These activities can be created using tools such as Hot Potatoes or Quia. The trail quiz required students to gather pieces of information in order to solve problems. These can be constructed using various authoring tools or by relying on globally available information through search engines and online encyclopedias. The dictogloss activity in this study involved a textual definition of terms replacing audio in a listening passage, but this could be adapted to allow for the glossing of optional information or elaboration through the use of a course management system such as Moodle or authoring tools such as Hot Potatoes. Each of the short-term tasks required students to work together collaboratively. These tasks address each of the collaborative autonomous abilities. While the extent to which the strategies are followed cannot be precisely determined, it is obvious that students could not be successful without demonstrating some knowledge of a second language, as well as the ability to work in groups in order to contribute their own independent meanings to these short-term tasks. Specifically, the gap-fill and trail quiz activities require students to analyze and synthesize, as well as demonstrate basic computer skills, as they gather information to complete the tasks. If they are unable to contribute the entirety of their personal meanings, the focus should be shifted to the benefits derived from participating in a collaborative activity in which they interact with colleagues, and observe others who are doing so. Students should be encouraged to offer some insight into other individuals' personal meanings and exit the task better prepared to contribute their own personal meanings to future collaborative tasks.

Students were required to demonstrate the instrumental competency of planning and time management as a collaborative member of a group to complete any of these short-term tasks in a timely manner. This task benefited from an appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism, as well as knowledge of the cultures and customs of other countries, since it was conducted in a Spanish classroom with native speakers from English-, Arabic-, and French-speaking backgrounds. Students finding it difficult to use these strategies in order to contribute as collaborative members of a group were encouraged to recognize the personal and group-related (as well as short- and long-term) benefits offered by these abilities. Successful demonstrations of these

abilities by were brought to the attention of their classmates, providing them with a positive model.

Finally, the dictogloss activity benefits from students' willingness to demonstrate their ability to apply prior knowledge to practice. One focus of this study was upon the use of L1 knowledge to complete this task. Willingness to lead, and the motivation to succeed, are also relevant to these tasks. The willingness to demonstrate abilities may often be a major barrier facing students, yet teachers are likely either to be unable to assess this, or unaware of the need to do so. By raising awareness of the advantages conferred by students' willingness to participate as collaborative members of a group within the classroom, and specifically while engaged in an explicit task, students may be guided toward success.

The second local collaborative study (Lewis and Atzert 2000) involved students of German researching topics in order to publish group Web pages collaboratively. Data were collected over a 3-year period from 1997 to 1999 and students migrated from primarily print sources to an almost exclusive reliance on internet-based sources. In addition, during the first 2 years topics were prescribed by teachers, but during the final year students were allowed to explore any aspect of German culture. Students in this project needed to demonstrate the ability to use language to independently contribute personal meanings as collaborative members of a group, as well as the ability to work in groups, and basic computer skills. Constructing a single document as a group requires establishing a division of labor and also a collective appreciation of each member's contribution, otherwise negative group dynamics can arise. Should negativity emerge, it is beneficial for a teacher to draw attention to the elements that contributed to the breakdown. Raising awareness of such issues can help individuals identify how they can work more effectively in groups. The gathering of information in this project requires students to have knowledge of the language, while the ability to sort through the information and discern what is worth retaining and incorporating into the final product requires the ability to analyze and synthesize. If a group produces a document that does not demonstrate synthesis, a teacher may want to plan a lesson focusing on that skill and using their document as an example.

The success of this project hinged on students' use of appropriate strategies for communicating as collaborative members of a group. In the case considered here, the classmates were studying German, but had varying academic majors. Thus it was deemed important for participants to work in an interdisciplinary team, as well as with people who were not familiar with the material. It is useful to view such exchanges as opportunities to reflect upon the benefits flowing to all members of a group from this constructivism (Vygotsky 1962, 1978). By encouraging knowledgeable students to share their understanding, we not only foster appreciation of collaboration, but also create opportunities to demonstrate leadership abilities and the exchange of unanticipated questions. These practices can also generate an environment in which students can feel responsible for the acquisition of knowledge, as well as the negotiation and evolution of what it signifies.

This kind of environment is ideal for students who are not yet willing to demonstrate their abilities within collaborative group exchanges. For example, students are

likely to feel more confident applying their knowledge in practice when they believe that their contribution will be valued. This sense of being appreciated enhances their motivation to succeed and helps develop an entrepreneurial spirit. Teachers can work toward the establishment of such environments by encouraging students to share their distinctive knowledge in a safe and unthreatening shared space. They can also promote openness to positive criticism and questioning, as well as a general sense of curiosity. This can be further enhanced by helping students learn to appreciate the unique insights that interested and educated non-experts can contribute to an established knowledge base.

The third local collaboration study by Kessler (2009) involved large groups, each collaborating to create a Wikipedia entry defining the term "culture" in English. This project was 'local' in the sense that all of the students were in one location in Mexico, at one institution, and, in fact, in one room during their frequent meetings, but the instructor was teaching the course using Moodle, along with various additional embedded technologies, from a distance. While the coursework involved extensive teacher involvement, the Wikipedia-related activity eschewed teacher intervention in order to allow assessment of student-initiated attention to form. This project required the student to demonstrate knowledge of English and basic computer skills as they independently contributed personal meanings as a collaborative member of a group. The abilities to analyze and synthesize were critical since students were engaged in numerous activities during the 16-week course, all of which interrogated the notion of culture. A teacher could intervene by monitoring contributions and making suggestions, either publicly or privately, to students in order to improve analysis and synthesis in posts that attempted these abilities without great success. Similarly, if difficulties emerged regarding working in groups, it was deemed prudent for the teacher to bring this to the attention of the entire class during regularly scheduled video conference meetings.

None of the students in this project were experts on the topic of culture, so it was important that all the students were able to communicate with non-experts. In order to successfully communicate as a collaborative member of a group, individuals need to be confident that their contributions are valuable – and valued. Therefore, it is important to encourage students to research topics in which they themselves are not experts. This project benefited from the nature of its topic. Defining culture inherently requires developing an appreciation of diversity and multiculturalism. It fosters knowledge of the cultures and customs of other countries. Thus, students who do not already demonstrate the ability to contribute collaboratively may benefit from the selection of topics that encourage varied interpretations, perspectives and opinions. Of course, the openness of any topic may not be obvious to students without repeated prompts and reminders. In short, it may be necessary to encourage students to work on developing these autonomous collaborative abilities.

The willingness to contribute as a collaborative member of a group is likely to be a big challenge in tasks wholly unmediated by a teacher. By establishing expectations of posting frequency, or by constructing rubrics to assess the quality of individual contributions to a project, we may be able to increase students' motivation to participate. The range of teacher interventions in any of these collaborative projects

can vary as greatly as the range of technologies available, so it is important to give them prior consideration. In some tasks, a teacher may find that it is important to intervene constantly in order to assist students as they develop basic skills, while in others little or no intervention may be required, as students demonstrate greater autonomy. As with any classroom activity, decisions made by the teacher are often the most important factors. Teachers must always focus on the goals of a given activity, and how these align with students' abilities and needs. We can see that these varied studies illustrate how local collaboration can be explored in a range of contexts at the same time as considering their curricular goals.

6.4 Resources for Language Teachers Integrating Technology with the EHEA Competencies

Language teachers have long relied on their creative abilities in addressing the needs of their students. Often this involves teachers generating activities and materials that grant students access to language resources or opportunities to interact within the target language. A starting point for considering activity design is provided by a synthesis of the tasks used in recent telecollaborative projects by O'Dowd and Ware (2009), which comprises a typology of 12 kinds of task, grouped into three categories: information exchange, comparison/analysis, and collaboration/product creation. While not all activities utilize tasks from all three of these types, a typical sequence can involve all of them. Considering the role of language teachers as creative designers of learning spaces and projects, teachers can think flexibly about how a variety of tasks, technologies, or projects can be deployed in a single course (Kessler and Plakans 2008; Pérez Cañado 2010).

A second consideration is the choice of technology, a decision that is often governed by the instructor's familiarity with particular technologies. In Table 6.4, we provide an overview of some of the most commonly used technologies in the language classroom as a reference for instructors wishing to expand their repertoires.

Typically, research and practice involve the use of a single type of technology integration within a course (distance telecollaboration, within-class synchronous chatting, virtual learning environments, etc.). In reality, however, a well prepared teacher can switch between technologies during a single project, just as an experienced teacher in a traditional setting might switch between delivery of information from a book, on a chalkboard, or through a digital projector, depending on numerous considerations related to the learning environment. The integration of competencies should therefore be approached with the creativity that language teachers often possess.

6.5 Conclusion

We can see that a wide range of collaborative activities and projects can address a variety of competencies while allowing teachers creative flexibility. These can be built upon a single technology or a combination of technologies and can range in

Table 6.4 Common technology tools in the language classroom

Technology tool	Common uses	Web resources
Written discussion forums	Learners write messages either in real or delayed-time. These are the most commonly implemented in collaborative projects.	Moodle (http://moodle.org) PB Wiki (http://pbworks.com) WikiSpaces (http://www.wikispaces.com)
Audio-based discussion forums	Tools for audio exchanges, allowing students and teachers to exchange speech samples.	Google Talk/Chat (http://www.google.com/talk) Nanogong (http://gong.ust.hk/nanogong)
CALL Professional Development	Sources of self-access CALL professional development for teachers.	'ICT for Language Teachers' (http://ictforlanguageteachers.blogspot.com) CALL Spot (http://callspot.libsyn.com)
Authoring tools	Tools for creating easy interactive exercises, including matching, cloze, crossword, grammar mix, quizzes and action mazes.	Hot Potatoes (http://hotpot.uvic.ca) Quandary (http://www.halfbakedsoftware.com/quandary.php) Quia (http://www.quia.com)
Professional forums	These are communities of practice online for language teachers to join colleagues in discussion about technology-integrated language instruction.	EuroCALL (http://www.eurocall-languages.org) CALICO (http://calico.org) Moodle for language teachers (http://moodle.org/course/view.php?id=31) Webheads (http://webheadsinaction.org) IALLT (http://iallt.org)

scope from a series of brief tasks to semester-long projects. By pairing tasks with appropriate technology, or with a combination of technologies, we can increase the number of competencies addressed. Collaborative activity by its very nature relies upon distributed participation and interdependence among students. In practice, there are always students who assume leadership roles in certain tasks, while others take on a more supportive role. This is often considered a negative reality of collaborative learning and leads to concerns over assessment, fairness and responsibility. However, every group requires a variety of roles in order to be successful (Dörnyei 1997). Successful groups benefit from the participation of leaders and individuals who contribute insights, as well as those who initiate brainstorming or provide other analytical or synthesized perspectives.

We anticipate an increase in research into varied collaborative practices across the language teaching and learning spectrum. Such investigation would, in all likelihood, address the roles and relationships of students engaged in these activities and exchanges. It would also be likely to reflect upon the use of multiple technologies

within single projects. Such research would provide additional insight into the potential of local and telecollaborative projects. The results of these studies would, in turn, inform the design of lessons and environments, as well as the varying roles that individual teachers play within collaborative projects.

Instructors must think creatively about their curriculum, the competencies, and their own learning curve with technology. As an instructor becomes comfortable with using a single form of technology for a particular task, (s)he should begin to identify potential alternative technologies for other, related, tasks. This way (s)he is also expanding his/her ability to help students develop competencies more effectively in the future. In order to accomplish this, it may be helpful for teachers to utilize some of the existing resources that other teachers learning to teach with technology have found helpful.

We should not see the use of technology as a separate competency, but rather as a vehicle for accomplishing other tasks directly related to, and in support of, language teaching and learning. Further, many of these pedagogical practices may not be limited to technologically mediated contexts. The appropriate and varied use of these tools in collaborative activities and projects can help to expand our students' abilities across a number of domains, including the competencies addressed in this article. After all, the goal of all language teachers should be to help students communicate with others as they engage in real-life tasks that incorporate the use of retrieved information as well as analytical and synthesizing skills.

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Chapter 7
Teaching Competences Through ICTs in an English Degree Programme in a Spanish Setting

Barry Pennock-Speck

7.1 Introduction

One of the major changes in university education in Europe in the last 5 years has been the introduction of the concept of 'competences' or 'competencies'. They constitute one of the major building blocks of European convergence in higher education. According to the Tuning Project, financed by the European Commission, competences "represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities",[1] which is practically identical to the definition in a U.S. Department of Education report: "skills, abilities and knowledge" (Jones et al. 2002: 1). Before the advent of these competences, university lecturers in modern language degrees focused mainly on teaching discipline-specific content, which is, of course, an essential part of what we do as university lecturers. If competences were acquired at all, they normally had more to do with the "knowledge" component of the definition than those of "skills" or "abilities". When skills and abilities were "part of" If not "delivered in" the curriculum it was normally a consequence of the nature of the module taught: linguistic skills would be picked up in a language skills class, to mention just one example. So, a competence such as acquiring a modern language was, conceptually, quite easy for most lecturers in modern languages to take on board. However, instructors have since been asked to develop a whole series of competences defined as "general". These have been more difficult to implement, in part due to their novelty, but also because many lecturers regard teaching interpersonal skills, for example, as something they have not been trained to do. Teaching competences – even those of a discipline-specific nature – is a challenge for teachers and, as pointed out by Pérez Cañado (2009: 16):

[1] http://www.unideusto.org/tuningeu/.

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> [I]t is much easier to teach students the basic features which have characterized the diverse language teaching methods which have proliferated since the mid-18th century until our days than to, in addition, enable them to critically appraise, compare, and counter-examine such methods in terms of their merits, pitfalls, and contributions to the language teaching panorama.

Initial resistance to such change has gradually subsided, although it must be said that pockets of resistance remain, and now competences – both specific and general – inform the way modules are designed and classes planned. In our new degree structure, competences can now be said to be on an equal footing with the teaching of content – indeed it may be that in some subjects competences are more important than the actual content. In the context of a degree in English in a non-English-speaking country such as Spain, providing opportunities for students to acquire content and competences must coincide with developing the most important of the specific competences, that is, the ability to communicate in English. Whenever possible, we have attempted to achieve both of these aims simultaneously. Also of great concern in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is the imperative to help students become more self-sufficient in guiding their own learning process. This means that, apart from explicit teaching, we attempt to devote time to providing students with necessary opportunities to absorb content and develop competences independently.

Alongside the introduction of competences, we have seen striking advances in the availability of cheap computer hardware and software. The speed of the internet has increased dramatically, too. Without these improvements, many activities which have become commonplace in our teaching would not be feasible. This has meant that many see innovation in higher education as virtually synonymous with the presence of ICTs. In this chapter, therefore, I will describe the design, implementation and assessment of activities in which competences are acquired either in part or entirely through the use of ICTs in several English language and linguistics modules in English Studies at the *Universitat de València*.

Although what I have to say about contents and competences focuses on what happens within modern language degrees and specifically the degree in English at our university, some of the lessons we have learned as teachers can also be applied to other languages and degree programmes in the humanities, and perhaps even to more divergent fields in tertiary education.

7.2 From CALL to ICTs

The deployment of computers and the internet in higher education, and especially in EFL, has come a long way since the time when it might have taken more than ten infuriating minutes to download a smallish photograph. Moreover, the evolution of computer-assisted learning has fuelled a rapid conceptual evolution. In the days when internet traffic was extremely slow, the dominant theory behind the use of computers in the language classroom was CALL. During this period, many people's experience of computer programs was, to say the least, not very encouraging. They

were inflexible and expensive, and they performed their functions mechanically, which made them boring. They provided absolutely no room for creativity on the part of the teacher, nor did they enable peer interaction between students (Toussaint-Clark and Clark 2008). Moreover, CALL by its very nature was based on the 'code theory' of natural language communication, which has since been found wanting (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995) as it does not take into account the cognitive processes which disambiguate oral and written discourse (Bou-Franch and Maruenda-Bataller 2009). Of course, CALL's biggest drawback is that it was not conceived to help students acquire competences of any kind other than perhaps grammatical competence and did not even develop the "communicative competence" defined by Hymes (1972).

Rapidly increasing processing power and affordability, along with today's near-ubiquitous connectivity, have changed our world for ever. Education, once notorious for its technological primitivism, has had to respond, particularly because it is a primary mediator of information and knowledge, and is charged with preparing young people for lives that must keep up with the dizzying pace of technological evolution. Perhaps due to the speed with which we can now upload, download and interact with a seemingly limitless profusion of web sites, ICTs have become the dominant paradigm in education, while the term CALL has almost disappeared from the teaching lexicon. Expenditure on expensive computer programs is no longer necessary. A brief search for language learning exercises and activities on the internet provides numerous free online materials, some of which can be quite useful and entertaining. Moreover, both teachers and students can employ their creative talents to make their own learning and teaching objects using freeware programmes. Users of ICTs have the feeling that they, and not the computers they use, are in control. The implementation of ICTs is permeated with philosophical and ethical undercurrents. The onus is on empowering teachers and students and providing them with free materials, especially in the field of language learning, as well as free or cheap tools such as *audacity, exe.learning, hot potatoes, respondus* and many more, so that they can design and create their own learning objects.

The myriad possibilities now provided by ICTs, and the temptation to overuse them, have made it necessary to introduce certain conditions for their use (Pennock-Speck 2009). The first is to employ ICTs when they bring something new or innovative to our teaching practice, the 'innovation condition' (CInnov). There is little point in employing ICTs when traditional methods work perfectly well and, if conditions two and three below are not met, using them may well be counterproductive. We have nothing against traditional, *ex-cathedra* classes *per se*; good in-class lectures can serve to introduce content in an entertaining and efficient way and motivate students to look for further information themselves. Therefore, we must always ask ourselves whether using ICT provides added value. We wish to augment the strategies that a teacher is able to employ, not replace traditional strategies with new ones just for the sake of it. So, our second condition, the 'economy condition' (CEcon), requires us to eschew projects necessitating expensive software that might not prove to be worth the financial outlay

and to use free or inexpensive tools and materials instead. The high cost of CALL software violated this condition and was thus a major drawback. The third entails not getting involved in ICT activities when it might result in excessive work for students and/or teachers compared to traditional methods, the 'effort condition' (CEffort). Ignoring these guidelines is likely to lead to frustration and, in some cases, a project's complete failure.

7.3 Competences in an English Degree Programme Within a Spanish Context

Unlike the older degree structure, competences have been built into our new English Studies syllabus right from the design stage. This means that our degree, which is part of the new degree system in Spain and Europe, is radically different from its predecessors, which were based on discipline-specific content. In the past, although there may have been a certain amount of overlap between the contents of one module and another, it was fairly simple to divide modules along content lines. Competences, on the other hand, are meant to overlap in many cases, so it is essential that there be coordination with regard to which competences should be focused on in each module. In fact, one of the first tasks undertaken in the planning stage of our new degree was to decide on the distribution of competences between the teaching units and departments involved. This is reflected in our teaching guides, which contain a section dedicated to the general and specific competences of each module. Some of these competences, such as the acquisition of Latin or the ability to communicate in a language other than English, are specific to a particular subject, but the majority are shared by many subjects. It was also essential to plan how competences would be introduced chronologically within our 4-year degree. Therefore, the implementation of certain more general competences has been scheduled in our degree in such a way that their acquisition will have taken place prior to their required use in more theoretical subjects later on in the degree.

I will be concentrating exclusively on the competences introduced and developed within modules given by lecturers in the English Language and Linguistics Unit (ELLU) in the last 3 years, several of which I shall describe below. In Table 7.1, I have included the competences which students are expected to acquire and which have been assigned to the ELLU.

ELLU has the task of teaching both EFL and English linguistics modules such as History of the English Language, Morphology and Lexicology of English, Phonology and Discourse Analysis. Naturally there are many differences between these subjects, although they do have one notable common feature, which is that English is the language of instruction. The central role of English might seem obvious, but one has to remember that it is still common practice in some British universities to teach literature in foreign languages in English and also English literature in Spanish in universities in this country.

Table 7.1 Competences in English language and linguistics

Competence	Students will be able to[a]:
3.	Define and defend their points of view and resolve problems within the area of linguistic and literary and cultural studies.
5.	Transmit information, ideas, problems and solutions within this field of expertise to both a specialist and non-specialist audience.
6.	Acquire learning skills that will enable them to go on to further specialized study or research with a high level of autonomy.
10.	Use the resources provided by new information and communication technologies.
11.	Work in a group and successfully apply interpersonal skills.
12.	Work and study independently and organize and manage their time.
13.	Design and manage projects, write reports, presentations, and papers taking into account the quality of the final product and the need to adapt to a variety of work environments.
14.	Attain communicative and social competence in the English language (listening and reading comprehension and written and oral expression; communicative interaction and mediation, including grammatical and stylistic correction) approaching the C2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.
18.	Show awareness of the theoretical and practical aspects of the following disciplines in English: phonology, lexicology, morphology, syntax and textual and discursive analysis.
25.	Show awareness of the techniques and methods involved in linguistic analysis and to know how to apply them in oral and written discourse in English.
28.	Show awareness of geographical, social and gender varieties of English including non-literary registers and be able to identify them.
30.	Use tools, programs and software designed specifically for the study of the English language and its literatures.

[a]Out of the 40 competences in the English language degree, 28 are assigned to the ELLU. Due to space constraints, I have only included those mentioned in this chapter

7.4 Teaching/Acquiring Competences Through ICT

In our case, the backing and stimulus provided by our university have been crucial in the move towards implementing ICTs inside and outside the classroom. In our department, the first attempts to teach competences through ICTs began timidly and very slowly with the first *Innovation in Education Projects* financed by the *Universitat de València*, which started around 2003. Even more important has been the financing of the *DocenTIC* projects, which began in 2008. These projects are designed specifically to encourage the introduction of ICTs in a blended learning environment. All these projects have helped us to reflect on the changes required by European convergence and none of the insights we have gained would have been

possible without them. One of the major lessons we have learnt is that the introduction of ICTs cannot be carried out efficiently on an individual basis. Coordination and teamwork are at the heart of the move to less teacher-centred classes in which ICTs play a significant role. What started out as a pilot scheme almost exclusively on our university's learning platform, *Aulavirtual,* now embraces a whole range of useful resources freely available through the internet. We have found ICTs invaluable in the teaching of both content and competences. In what follows I will look at some of the competences that students have acquired with the help of computers and the internet during our innovation projects.

Given the nature of our degree, 'competence 14', which refers to the attainment of a level close to C2 of the Common European Framework for Languages, is a part of all ELLU subjects. It will become evident in this section that this competence is present in all the activities we put into practice with the help of ICTs. This is partly because it constitutes a compulsory component of the assessment not only of EFL subjects, but also of all the English linguistics and literature modules. There is an abundance of publications about the learning and acquisition of this multi-faceted competence and so I will not say much about it here. Although the distinction between learning and acquisition is still being debated even in the field of L2 teaching (Gee 1992; Krashen 1982; Zaragoza-Ninet and Clavel-Arroitia 2010), we believe that there is a difference between consciously learning content and competences, acquiring them through comprehensible input, and giving students the opportunity to learn language through a series of activities in which language plays a major role. We favour helping the students to acquire communicative competence but without shunning overt teaching when necessary. We believe the acquisition/learning dichotomy also applies to learning discipline-specific content (see Alcantud-Díaz 2008 below) and competences such as ICT skills.

One of the main general competences is group work ('competence 11'). I employ this term to refer to what Gross-Davis (1993: 191) calls "formal learning group" work, that is, work in groups that lasts a number of weeks and not the ad hoc grouping of students to carry out a task in class. Within our teaching unit, we see group work as an essential skill and believe that the only way it can be acquired is by actually giving students the opportunity to carry out tasks with other students, thus fostering "negotiation, dialogue and participation" (Zaragoza-Ninet and Clavel-Arroitia 2010: 105). Working in groups can also push students to manage their time more efficiently ('competence 12'), as it is not possible, when working with others, to follow one's own self-centred inclinations. Group work in our degree starts in the second year, as we feel that students need time to acclimatize to life at university, which involves rather more autonomous study than they are accustomed to. The planning of group work by the instructor has to be detailed. The objectives have to be laid out clearly and the evaluation needs to take into account each individual's contribution to the work of the group as a whole, as well as how well these objectives have been realized. Group work illustrates the fact that, although one might want to concentrate on one particular competency, this is impossible in practice. Group work might involve a dozen different competencies at different stages, as we will see further on. Projects that involve working in groups can cause serious problems

Table 7.2 Rubric for assessment of ICT skills

	A 100-91	B 90-70	C 69-60	59-50	D 49-0
Proficiency in use of ICT activities.	Use of ICTs greatly enhances the group's work and outcomes.	Use of ICTs enhances the group's work and outcomes.	Use of ICTs enhances the group's work and outcomes to a certain degree.	Some use of ICTs but more thought needed on the use of ICTs.	Hardly any use or overuse of ICTs.

of work overload, so it is important to coordinate between different subjects in order to avoid this problem by making sure that at one given time in each semester students are not involved in more than two projects involving working in a team. The assessment of group work will also depend on the number of students in each class. In a Spanish context, this may range from 20 to more than 100.

My assessment of each individual's performance in a group involves aspects such as their participation in group activities, leadership and initiative, good interpersonal relations and compliance with objectives and deadlines. All these aspects, which are part of the 'process dimension' of the work, are extremely important. García-Aracil and van der Velden (2007: 223) point out that in the real world "monetary rewards depend most on competencies related to the capacity of the individual to manage a complex situation with leadership and personal involvement". The group's performance as a whole involves aspects such as originality, methodology, analysis, results, writing style and, finally, proficiency in ICTs. These aspects make up what we can call the 'result dimension' of the work. Table 7.2 consists of a rubric designed to assess ICT proficiency as demonstrated in the execution of a project similar to the one I describe below, as opposed to proficiency *per se* in ICTs.[2] In other words, we assess the users' ability to apply ICTs to the task at hand rather than ICT skills that contribute little to the project's outcomes. Thus, we take into account the fact that the "combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes" which makes up a competence must be "appropriate to the context".[3] ICT proficiency of this kind acknowledges the intelligent, creative use of ICTs and also whether these skills are over- or underused. For the kind of projects we have in mind, students should be proficient users of presentation programmes in office suites such as Microsoft Office, OpenOffice, Adobe Photoshop and also be capable of using video-editing software and writing blogs.

The specific group work I will describe is designed for an optional linguistics course such as Sociolinguistics, which usually involves classes of around 60 students (Pennock-Speck 2008a). In our degree, group work is also carried out in linguistics

[2] Some ideas adapted from: http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/rubric.html.

[3] *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework,* http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_394/l_39420061230en00100018.pdf.

courses such as Stylistics (Alcantud-Díaz 2008) and History of the English Language (Pennock-Speck 2008b). During my description of the group work, I will point out how the use of ICTs complies with the conditions I introduced above. Groups are made up of five students to avoid overloading the lecturer with too much work. Group work accounts for 40% of the final mark and consists of a series of stages, all of which entail ICTs to a greater or lesser extent. During the first stage of the course, the input for the group work is given during the first part of the semester and each group uses a blog (which they have previously been asked to create) to answer questions on the material provided. Blogs are ideal for a number of reasons including the fact that it is easy for the lecturer to obtain access to what the students are doing (CInnov) and also that they are free (CEcon). The task of answering questions on the theory component of the class is carried out in groups, not only because it tests their ability to work together, but also because it would be too time-consuming to mark and correct answers from each individual due to the class size (CEffort). Another advantage is that the lecturer can monitor who does what in each group, an issue that generates numerous complaints with regard to group work (Guzkowska and Kent 1994). Aside from this, students can answer questions on the input through on-line questionnaires with automatic feedback (CEffort).

The second stage of group work involves planning a piece of research on a sociolinguistic topic to be presented in front of the class using PowerPoint. The mark for the presentation is evenly weighted between the process and the final product. The students are required to liaise through the blog, thus obliging the student to engage in 'authentic communication', as it is often the case that students ask each other for clarification and offer advice or instructions. Obviously if students were restricted to using traditional methods of communication to plan their work and not a blog, the teacher would not be privy to any of this (CInnov). The interaction between students is often informal. However, the answers to questions on the input previously provided by the lecturer are of a more formal nature. As teachers of a degree in English Studies, one of our aims is for the student to acquire the competence of being able to discuss language with other students, teachers and ultimately with their own students and colleagues in the future ('competence 18'). This metalinguistic competence is essential for students who may go on to be English teachers, translators or have other jobs involving English. English graduates will be expected to be able to talk competently about the language. The blog provides students with the opportunity to use metalinguistic terms that they have learnt in the input phase of the course. Teachers monitor the blog in order to assess the students' ability to express themselves in written English, to follow the students' planning procedures, and to intervene if necessary. They can also assess whether students have grasped the theoretical concepts introduced in the input stage. Monitoring the activity is obviously hard work, but students know that their progress is being followed and therefore have a stimulus to do the work required of them. An important aspect of the work done in the blog is that it is not carried out in isolation, but rather it can, and does, continue in the classroom and in face-to-face communication after class.

The third and last stage of the group work consists of a presentation. Apart from other general competences, in order to carry out a successful presentation, students

will have the opportunity to acquire several competences, of which I shall mention two which involve ICTs. The first is the ability to 'transmit ideas to both a specialist and non-specialist audience' ('competence 5'), in this case, through a PowerPoint presentation. Just as in group work, the only way students can acquire this competence is by putting it into practice. Indeed, their presentation should involve at least two ICTs: the PowerPoint program itself, photo-editing tools, and video-editing tools ('competence 10'). A presentation on a particular aspect of sociolinguistics builds on the theoretical and practical aspects of disciplines such as phonology, lexicology, etc., which the students have already studied ('competence 18'). Moreover, it gives them the chance to use this knowledge to analyse a corpus.

Another ICT tool which facilitates the learning of content as well as competences is the online forum, which complies with all the conditions relating to the use of ICTs. In this regard, Brígido-Corachán (2009) experimented with the use of the forum tool included in our *Aulavirtual* learning platform, in order to involve more of our English-degree students in academic discussions ('competence 5') about discipline-specific content. She defines 'forums' as

> [V]ehicles that increase students' participation in two ways: by improving their collaborative skills and their active involvement in the construction of knowledge, and by strengthening their own autonomous learning processes. (Brígido-Corachán 2009: 143)

From her observations of students' use of the tool, she found that several weaker individuals benefitted by adopting the more advanced students' vocabulary and syntax, and that they learned this through the forum (Brígido-Corachán 2008: 37). Consequently they acquired learning skills ('competence 8'), improved their language skills ('competence 14') and made use of metalanguage ('competence 18'). Another advantage of the threaded online forums she used was that they gave some students the confidence to take part in classroom discussions. Zaragoza-Ninet and Clavel-Arroitia (2010: 105) also emphasize the advantages of collaborative learning of this type, which encourages students to engage in critical thinking.

Educational digital storytelling (EDS), that is, generating digital stories to fulfil a planned education purpose (Robin 2005), has also proved to be useful in the acquisition of several competences. Gregori-Signes (2008) describes the way EDS can be used innovatively to tell a personal story or even create a short video to explain or illustrate a grammatical structure. The students learned how to write digital stories during digital storytelling workshops for all our second-year students – an example of the coordination between lecturers. EDS allows students to practise their ICT skills ('competence 10') using freeware such as *Photostory 3, Audacity, Free CD ripper,* and *Windows Movie Maker*, among others. EDS also allows students to put into practice the 'design and management of projects' ('competence 13'), to 'define and defend their points of view' ('competence 3'), and to 'improve their English' ('competence 14'), as well as being relevant to a number of further competences. Generally speaking, EDS is engaged in as a group activity, but given favourable group numbers, it can be undertaken individually. Gregori-Signes (2008) states that EDS also increases students' motivation, as they are able to go beyond the limits of text and experiment with both static and moving images, music, voiceovers, and

narrative. Importantly, EDS creates opportunities for students to use their creativity within the context of an English language class. In Alcantud-Díaz (2008), the author describes how she used digital storytelling in her English Stylistics class. Students were asked to create a digital detective story in order to learn about the major characteristics of this genre by doing so in practice, rather than simply receiving input of a more theoretical nature. The ICT competences which students picked up in these subjects could then be exploited in other subjects from that point on.

Alcantud-Díaz (2008) also used ICTs to teach Stylistics using electronic portfolios. Students were required to write a newspaper report and an advertisement as part of a creative writing project ('competence 28': 'show awareness of different registers'). Again, the idea was to learn about the stylistic parameters of each genre by actually writing an example of each. This is another instance of the more hands-on approach that we favour. Teacher input came in the shape of feedback sessions in which students were asked to compare their own efforts with authentic examples of each genre.

Clavel-Arroitia and Fuster-Márquez (2009), Fuster-Marquéz (2010) and Fuster-Márquez and Clavel-Arroitia (2010) describe the introduction of corpus analysis tools in their Morphology and Lexicology of English and English Language classes, thus giving students practice in 'competence 30' ('the use of programmes and software designed specifically for the study of language') and 'competence 25' ('an awareness of the techniques and methods in linguistic analysis'). They point out that several corpora of general English are "freely accessible" and can be "exploited in interesting ways" (Fuster-Márquez and Clavel-Arroitia 2010: 206). One of these ways is to contrast native- and non-native speaker corpora. In the first stage, students are given input on the generic aspects of corpora, as well as how the latter can be used. In the second stage, students are instructed in the exploitation of *AntConc*, a free concordance program. During the third stage students employ *AntConc* to look at how "can" and "could" collocate with other verbs in native- and non-native corpora. Finally, the students completed a survey whose results showed that they regarded online concordance tools as useful in learning English.

7.5 Conclusions

Every country, and to some extent every university, has different needs and problems, but it is fairly safe to say that we would all like to make the implementation of ICTs in our teaching and assessment as efficient as possible. Above all, in my opinion, this entails coordination between lecturers, especially with regard to general competences and the ICT tools employed to help acquire them. In the English degree programme offered at the *Universitat de València*, coordination is present from the early stages of course design to the planning required for each academic year. After several years of experimenting with ICTs in a blended learning context, we have found that some tools give us the power to do things that were impossible in a traditional class, such as monitoring and assessing students' work on a group

blog. Other activities carried out with the aid of ICTs, such as engaging in online forums, digital storytelling, and digital portfolios, allow students to acquire competences that were unimaginable before the web02 revolution. Above all, ICTs give the students innumerable opportunities to acquire one of the most important competences in an English degree programme, that is, the ability to communicate on an informal and formal level in the target language.

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Chapter 8
Exploring Pedagogy for Autonomy in Language Education at University: Possibilities and Impossibilities

Manuel Jiménez Raya

8.1 Introduction

Lifelong learning, initiative and personal creativity are acquiring increasing relevance to occupational life. "The 'information' in the last decade of the twentieth century is that we are entering the age of information and that our social and cultural life will become restructured as we 'evolve' into the information society" (Marshall 1996: 268). As Marshall (1996) accurately observes: "… knowledge has been replaced by skills and *learning*." Thus, the transition from the industrial to the knowledge society calls for new capacities and competencies typically associated with the notion of autonomy and lifelong learning, namely, self-awareness, critical thinking, advanced cognitive and self-regulatory competencies, tolerance of ambiguity, cooperation and dialogic communication, among others (Jiménez Raya 2008). Consequently, a reorientation of our relations with this world seems to be required: how can we possibly remain citizens of this rapidly changing world, if we are incapable of changing along with it? We must, then, update our knowledge and skills constantly in order to keep up with the pace of the ongoing transformations.

Autonomy is regarded as one of the most essential values in contemporary Western culture. This centrality can be traced back to the moment when St. Augustine wrote his *Confessions*. From that moment on, a morally self-reflective, autonomous soul has, in our tradition, been prevalent in the conceptualization of the individual. Kant's contribution to moral philosophy was also an important landmark. Hill (1991) quotes Kant's definition of autonomy as "the foundation of human dignity

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and the source of all morality" (1991: 43). For Kant, each individual possesses a rational mind and has the ability to govern himself/herself, as opposed to being governed by his/her inclinations. In education, the Kantian *rationalist* tradition of autonomy gained prominence in the 1960s and 1970s. His influence is evident in the work of such philosophers of education as Robert Dearden, Richard Peters, Paul Hirst, and Charles Bailey (see Bonnett and Cuypers 2003). In fact, since the publication of Dearden's paper in 1972, autonomy has become the primary goal of all educational endeavour in Western countries and the central topic of some of the most renowned publications in philosophy of education in the last 30 years (Brighouse 2000; Callan 1988, 1997; Levinson 1999; White 1990).

There is no doubt that autonomy occupies a relevant position in theoretical accounts of persons, conceptions of moral obligation and responsibility, social policies, and many other areas of political theory. This, though, does not imply the absence of criticism. A concern for autonomy, then, is intrinsic to such important values as freedom, democracy, human rights, justice, and some versions of equality (Kerr 2002). The notion of autonomy conveys a conviction that all citizens, in some sense, have the right to participate in democratic life, and to choose for themselves how to live their own lives.

The notion of autonomy in education can be regarded principally as a concern about the freedom and well-being of the individual. Consequently, any liberal democracy would have the ideal of the "autonomous individual" as the primary goal of education (Callan 1988). Piaget (1965) reminds us that learners construct their thoughts through the interaction of new and existing knowledge, that they use what they already know to make sense of new information. For him, the ultimate aim of education was intellectual and moral autonomy. This goal is in sharp contrast with the goal of traditional education, which is to transmit knowledge and values from one generation to the next. For Piaget, intellectual autonomy is about helping the individual to develop the independence of thought to create new, original ideas rather than just recycle old ones. The autonomous individual is someone who determines the course of his/her life, establishes his/her own goals by evaluating their options in order to select the most worthy ones, and acts in a rational and effective way to realize them, while remaining at all times within the limits of what is possible. Nevertheless, as Boud (1988a:19) maintains, "autonomy is more than acting on one's own." It also implies the capacity to respond creatively to one's environment. This implies that autonomy grows from interacting in and with the world, and not in isolation.

European universities are introducing new pedagogies in response to changing social demands. Society is demanding students who have acquired competencies, knowledge and skills that will translate across disciplines and careers. In this sense, universities have become aware that employers are looking for young men and women possessing the capacity to think critically, analyze issues, solve problems, communicate effectively, and take leadership. These demands are motivating universities to experiment with new ways of educating students. To this end, many higher education institutions are focusing on what Ramsden (2003: 18) refers to as "general aims and higher level abilities",

including skills in self-direction[1]/autonomy in learning, learning how to learn, collaborative problem-solving, and team-building, as well as the more traditional abilities of identifying, accessing, assimilating and communicating information. The range of new pedagogical approaches being fostered and implemented is wide and diverse. The change that many universities are introducing in their courses and programmes is a shift towards a more learner-centred paradigm, including approaches such as experiential learning, task-based language teaching, communicative language teaching, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, discovery learning, and cooperative learning. Although we still lack sufficient evidence to assert the superiority of these approaches, Migletti and Strange (1998) observed a relationship between learner-centred teaching methods and student success.

The Bologna Process is an opportunity for universities to adopt research-supported models that promote more significant and transformation-oriented learning goals such as autonomy and initiative, motivation, self-regulation, self-efficacy, and creativity, rather than the "common-sense" approach of outcomes-based assessment that places the emphasis on the role of knowledge transmission and "measurable outcomes under the banner of accountability" (Salinas et al. 2008: 25). The most outstanding description of transformative learning theory is to be found in Mezirow (1997, 1998), who asserts that through the transformational learning process, individuals may liberate themselves from prejudiced or distorted ways of thinking and engage in more rational assessment and action. Transformational learning is especially relevant to andragogy[2] in that adults, by virtue of having both depth and breadth of life experience, have already formed particular frames of reference through which they interpret the world.

For adults to effectively engage in a learning experience that is transformational in nature after encountering a disorienting dilemma, critical reflection and rational discourse are essential. Critical reflection is the process through which adults evaluate their frames of reference by assessing the credibility of the latter, in the light of new experiences or information (Cranton 2002). Mezirow (1997) defined rational discourse as a dialogue in which individuals defend reasons supporting their beliefs and examine evidence supporting and refuting competing interpretations.

8.2 Defining Autonomy in Learning and Teaching

In an outstanding review and examination of the literature on the notion of self-direction, Candy (1991) suggested the existence of four major meanings of the word 'autonomy' in the literature. The four distinct but related phenomena

[1] Brockett and Hiemstra (1991: 29) define self-direction as the "characteristics of an individual that predispose one toward taking primary responsibility for personal learning endeavours".

[2] Andragogy is the art and science of helping adults learn. As Jarvis (1985) puts it, for Knowles, education from above is pedagogy, while education of equals is andragogy.

are: (1) personal autonomy, i.e., autonomy as a personal attribute; (2) self-management, i.e., autonomy as the willingness and capacity to conduct one's own education; (3) learner control, i.e., autonomy as a mode of organizing instruction in formal settings; and (4) autodidacticism, i.e., autonomy as the individual, non-institutional pursuit of learning opportunities in the natural social setting. This paper focuses on two different but related phenomena: *autonomy as an instructional process* (pedagogy for autonomy), where the learner is given the opportunity to assume responsibility for the learning process; and *autonomy as a personal capacity* for the assumption of this responsibility.

In real life, people usually take responsibility for their autonomy in many ways and in varied contexts. Autonomy often refers to independence in an economic sense, but also to the right of self-determination in a broader sense. In the literature on learner autonomy, there is a general consensus that autonomy refers to the individual's capacity and freedom to be psychologically, morally, and socially self-governing.

Autonomy can be displayed by any individual in the different daily activities and decisions for which they are responsible. Thus, the concept of 'autonomy' stands for 'personal freedom', as this underpins scores of practices and ideals in a democratic society. Autonomy's most important aspect, according to Dearden (1975), is intrinsic. For Dearden, what is involved in autonomy is the ability to use reason in making one's own choices. The exercise of such autonomy is said to be an important source of satisfaction and motivation. "The accomplishment of what we want or intend, under the description embodied in the intention, is necessarily a satisfaction, and our satisfaction is the greater the more there is of what we intend in what we accomplish" (Dearden 1975: 460). Autonomy is also an important component of a person's self-concept. *Self-concept*[3] refers to a student's perceptions of competence or adequacy in academic and non-academic (e.g., social, behavioural…) domains, and is best represented by a profile of self-perceptions across domains. Thus, 'self-concept' is the cognitive aspect of self (closely connected to one's self-image) and commonly refers to "the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence" (Purkey 1988). For Baumeister et al. (2003), it appears to be a consequence, rather than a cause, of high achievement. Individuals develop and maintain their self-concept through action informed by, and reflecting on what they have completed and on what others tell them. This reflection takes, as a starting point, actual and potential actions relating to our own expectations and those of others, and also to the characteristics and accomplishments of others (James 1890). The immediate implication is that self-concept is not innate, but is constructed and

[3] By far the most influential and persuasive voice in self-concept theory was that of Carl Rogers. He introduced an entire system of helping built around the importance of the self. In Rogers' view, the self is the central ingredient in human personality and personal adjustment. Rogers described the self as a social product, developing out of interpersonal relationships and striving for consistency. He maintained that there is a basic human need for positive regard both from others and from oneself. He also believed that individuals tend towards self-actualization and development so long as this is permitted and encouraged by a conducive environment (Purkey and Schmidt 1987).

developed by the individual through interaction with the environment and through reflecting on that interaction. This dynamic aspect of self-concept (and, by corollary, self-esteem) is crucial because it shows that self-concepts are potentially modifiable. Franken (1994: 443) comments on the existence of

> [A] growing body of research which indicates that it is possible to change the self-concept. Self-change is not something that people can will but rather it depends on the process of self-reflection. Through self-reflection, people often come to view themselves in a new, more powerful way, and it is through this new, more powerful way of viewing the self that people can develop possible [alternative] selves.

To resume our discussion of the notion of personal autonomy, it is important to state that it also involves the *power* to choose one's goals in life. For Winch (2002), it entails a complex of propositional, personal, and practical knowledge, because it involves the propositional knowledge of what is sanctioned as either a reasonable or a valuable life-choice, the personal knowledge indispensable to deciding what ends are proper for oneself, and the practical knowledge needed to evaluate the relative intrinsic worth of potentially suitable ends, as well as the various means appropriate to achieving them.

In the context of formal education, Jiménez Raya et al. (2007: 1) define autonomy as "the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation." The major assumptions underlying the definition are:

- Autonomy is developmental, so it varies across circumstances and time and is both a personal and a social construction. It is not an absolute concept because it involves a continuum in which different degrees of self-management and self-regulation can be exercised at different moments and in different aspects of learning. 'Disposition' and 'ability' are also of a developmental nature. In education, autonomy can be acquired through practice and experience. It is not something that individuals either have or do not have. In fact, different learners may have developed autonomy to varying degrees.
- Learners develop autonomy "naturally" (as part of general human development). Further, educational environments may assist or hamper the development of autonomy, but not impede it. Accordingly, autonomy can develop in spite of, in reaction to, or in line with educational goals and action.
- Both learner and teacher autonomy are viewed as a competence. 'Competences' are empowering and involve *attitudinal dispositions* (e.g., positive beliefs about learning, willingness to take on responsibility), *knowledge*, and *abilities* (e.g., strategic power) that develop self-determination, social responsibility and critical awareness. 'Competences' may or may not be translated into the actual exercise of autonomy, as autonomous behaviour is only an indirect sign of autonomy and is not to be equated with it.
- Self-determination and social responsibility are like the two sides of a coin; the exercise of both is influenced by, and influences, circumstances (it "results" from circumstances but also "creates" circumstances). Self-determination and social

responsibility can be defined in psychological and/or political terms, with obvious implications for pedagogical choices.

- Agency is central to autonomy. To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions. Agency embodies the endowments, belief systems, self-regulatory capabilities and distributed structures and functions through which personal influence is exercised; it does not reside in a particular place as a discrete entity. The core features of agency enable students to play a significant part in their self-development, adaptation, and self-renewal in changing times.
- The definition is anchored on a democratic view of education, which places emphasis on (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation as cross-disciplinary educational goals. This way, autonomy becomes a collective interest and a democratic ideal, so that the autonomy of teachers and learners should be regarded as two sides of the same coin.

The strength of this general definition of learner- and teacher autonomy, from the author's point of view, resides in the fact that it is intended to highlight the internal nature (competence) and the critical components (e.g., self-determination and social responsibility) of the concept of autonomy, thus emphasizing their focus on learner development and growth and providing an open environment for pedagogical reasoning and action.

8.3 Developing Learner Autonomy: Pedagogy for Autonomy in Higher Education

There is considerable agreement among educators that autonomy ought to be taken as a highly desirable aim of (modern language) education, (e.g. Benson 2001; Berka et al. 1998; Boud 1988b; Brookes and Grundy 1988; Dickinson 1987, 1992; Ellis and Sinclair 1989; Esch 1994; Holec 1981, 1988; Holec and Huttunen 1997; Jiménez Raya et al. 2007; Jiménez Raya and Lamb 2008a; Lamb and Reinders 2006; Pemberton et al. 1996; Vieira 1998; Wenden 1991; Wenden and Rubin 1987; Winch 2006). Accordingly, within pedagogy as a discipline, the goals of education are often formulated in terms that imply familiarity with concepts related to the notion of autonomy, such as personal responsibility, responsible self-determination, critical thinking, and the ability to make independent choices. As an educational aim, the development of autonomy equates to "the development of a kind of person whose thought and action in important areas of his life are to be explained by reference to his own choices, decisions, reflections, deliberations – in short, his own activity of mind" (Dearden 1972: 70). Accordingly, personal autonomy in a formal education context refers to the condition in which a person is able to choose and act responsibly upon the range of decisions concerning learning. It therefore entails developing the understanding, skills, and dispositions necessary to become critically reflective of one's own assumptions and to engage effectively in discourse to validate one's beliefs through the experiences of others who share universal values in the Kantian sense.

In what way can pedagogy promote autonomy? The current accepted view of modern education maintains that it should respond to the fragmenting tendencies of modern society with a shift towards universalism and formalism. Although it may be more economical, both in time and energy, to stick to the lecture method, some higher education lecturers think that their students learn less when the lecture is the only modality by which they deliver instruction. This traditional approach to lecturing does not give students the opportunity to be enriched by the material because they are incapable of making connections to their own life experiences (McCombs and Whisler 1997). Yet we have to acknowledge that the notion of autonomous learning has become, in many cases, something of a slogan – a buzz word – which few would doubt to be praiseworthy and necessary as a goal for all learners, in particular graduates. Pedagogy for autonomy represents an educational approach that involves theoretical and practical choices, but also political and moral positions and purposes. Moreover, it needs to be understood as a collective endeavour that involves various actors – lecturers and learners, educational researchers, politicians and managers – which is affected by various 'cultural' factors – personal, institutional, socio-political.

The way the argument for autonomy has been developed so far implies that autonomy requires knowledge and skill in choosing learning goals for it to be meaningfully exercised. In addition, it suggests a certain degree of intellectual, practical, and affective engagement with potential choices and decisions regarding learning, so that they can be made with the seriousness and responsibility that any choice about learning requires. To exercise autonomy (to be independent) is to enjoy the power and the permission to act according to one's own choices in the determination of ends and means. In this sense, pedagogy for autonomy grows out of the individual's acceptance of his or her own responsibility for learning. In fact, the learner is regarded as a decision maker who has the capacity to assume responsibility for learning decisions (Dickinson 1995; Holec 1985). Inherent in this ideal is the claim that learners should be capable of rationally forming, revising and pursuing a particular conception of the good life (Clayton 2001). In fact, the idea of producing rational humans is central to what has been called by Wardekker (1995) the "project of modernity.[4]"

Some educational philosophers, such as Peters and Scheffler, have formulated a revised, 'modern' version of this educational ideal, combining it with a cognitive developmental view of ontogeny (Wardekker 1995). In their view of formal education, learners appropriate various forms of thinking which have a universal validity. Since autonomous choice has to be rationally informed, the development of autonomy requires a number of developmental conditions, such as an appropriate education which enables individuals to reflect critically on the various choices available to them and assess which of these best fits with their essential goals in life. Thus, 'educating' implies showing the necessity to make choices and trying to choose

[4] In this model of identity, the upper, higher level of rationality controls the lower level of personality, the domain of choices, plurality and even contradictions.

authentically what one finds worthwhile (Lambeir 2005). Winch (2006) analyses several themes, but the most prominent of these is the character of autonomy and critical thinking. Critical thinking is, according to Siegel (1988), coextensive with rationality and a necessary condition of the exercise of autonomy. It goes without saying that the rational choice of a life-course requires the ability to critically appraise the different alternatives available. Critical rationality is indeed a necessary requirement of such choice, so that rational choice in learning requires the critical appraisal of the different possibilities available; such appraisal requires knowledge (including self-knowledge), as well as the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. Universities are considered to have the task of teaching logical thinking procedures and transmitting universally valid knowledge on which these procedures can operate, producing *rational individuals* who are able not only to rationally control their desires, but also to critically evaluate the prejudices and unnecessary ideas of everyday culture.

In the knowledge society, overloaded with information, more traditional instruction promoted through the closed and neatly-defined content-based curriculum can hardly meet all the needs of the learner. Besides, it is impossible to establish a closed and stable list of what a well educated person should know (Schank and Cleary 1995). In the knowledge society, as Marshall (1996: 269) observes, "…knowledge has been replaced by skills and *learning*. Everything which might have been seen as obtaining knowledge – an *object* of an activity – seems to have moved into an activity mode, where what is important is *process*". Accordingly, education and learning are redefined in terms of a process, because what once was understood as knowledge, has now become *information*. Therefore, what learners have to continuously re-learn is information. This has to be constantly "readjusted and restructured to meet the demands of the consumer in the service information industry" (ibid.).

Deciding how to promote autonomy depends upon what is meant by the word. Jiménez Raya et al. (2007) provide a conceptual analysis of learner autonomy that highlights its multidimensionality. For them, learner autonomy consists of several sub-competences grouped into the following:

1. Learning competence
2. Competence to self-motivate
3. Competence to think critically

These categories of the notion of learner autonomy, the authors argue, can help educators analyse their teaching practice, compare it with alternative ones, and by so doing, expand it in the direction they find most appropriate.

Pedagogy for autonomy is an educational process that takes diverse forms for different learners, forms that vary according to lecturers' views on the teaching and learning process and the students' interests and abilities. In this sense, Jiménez Raya and Lamb (2008b: 64) identify two main traditions with regard to classroom interventions:

- Manifestations of pedagogy for autonomy focusing on external factors that facilitate the learner taking responsibility for different aspects of the learning

process, such as planning, implementation and evaluation of learning and learning decisions (flexible learning, project work…), and
- Those that centre on internal factors that predispose learners to accepting responsibility and controlling one's thoughts and actions as a learner (learning to learn, self-regulated learning, strategy training).

Fostering learner autonomy among undergraduates calls for a continuous effort to help students process information in meaningful ways and become independent learners by developing effective strategies and transfer skills, as well as a greater sense of responsibility and agency in learning. One of the most outstanding features of pedagogy for autonomy is its emphasis on students' participation in curricular decisions by encouraging the assumption of a more proactive role in defining what and how they want to learn; this way pedagogy becomes curriculum-in-action (Barnett and Coate 2005) in which learning is always based on the interaction between student and educator within varying contexts of control.

In fostering autonomy, the emphasis is on creating an environment in which learners become increasingly adept at learning from each other, and helping each other learn, in problem-solving groups. The educator needs to act as a mediator concerned with empowering and facilitating the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and strategies students will need in order to progress, to learn independently, and to function effectively in a changing society, thus enabling them to meet new, emerging and unpredictable demands.

The aim of fostering autonomy is not to create environments without rules, but to generate structures that provide students with alternatives and information that will support their own learning process. Autonomy can only be developed through careful design, not by chance, since becoming autonomous entails an ongoing process which takes time, effort and support. In this crucial process, the teacher's role is to get to know the students, understand how they think, discover how to push that thinking forward, and negotiate with them a framework for teaching and learning. Obviously, what is implied here is a form of mediation, whereby student and tutor work collaboratively to arrive at a mutually agreed point of understanding. This necessarily implies a shift from student to learner and from teacher to educator.

Inescapably, the identification of a methodological framework that allows for the development of learner autonomy becomes a priority. The framework I am going to present was suggested by Jiménez Raya et al. (2007). It assumes that pedagogy for autonomy is operationalized through nine pedagogical principles. These are viewed as interrelated conditions that favour the development of autonomy and that can be used to analyse practical approaches to pedagogy for autonomy. The principles are:

8.3.1 Encouraging Responsibility, Choice, and Flexible Control

When students hold responsibility for their own learning, they develop self-regulation skills and intrinsic motivation, and also learn to value learning for its own sake and not because of external rewards. Research suggests that students should have

increasing responsibility for the learning process, including for attendance, choosing content, and setting and keeping their own objectives and timetables for projects. Accepting responsibility entails recognition of our social nature and that what we do has consequences for other members of society. "Responsibilisation" (Peters 2001: 59) means self-determination and self-responsibility in educational tasks.

Thus, pedagogy for autonomy requires the creation of a teaching-learning atmosphere that enables individuals to participate responsibly in the learning process, allowing them to assume responsibility for determining together with the lecturer what, when, and how they learn in formal as well as informal settings, and creating opportunities for learners to be sensitive to their responsibility. Autonomy is thought to be best supported through the provision of choice and the removal of external controls, such as pressures or rewards (Deci and Ryan 1994). Research on individuals' differences has also shown that students have varying skills, interests and concerns, so they should have choice, with support and scaffolding from a mediator/facilitator, regarding their own projects and graded assignments, and be able to select areas that are personally relevant. The assumption of responsibility helps them feel in control of their learning and their development. Control, that is, the extent to which students can direct their learning, is the prevailing framework of the self-directed learning process. The extent to which students self-regulate their learning process influences all other aspects of teaching and learning. Several factors affect the amount of control students exert on learning: curriculum constraints, educator characteristics, environmental characteristics, and student characteristics. The interplay of these factors requires a synthesis between personal agency and collaboration that mediation theory (Williams and Burden 1996) and scaffolding theory (Bruner 1996) consider essential to developing understanding. When working efficiently, scaffolding should "achieve not unanimity, but consciousness" (Bruner 1996: 97). As Bruner puts it, "more consciousness always implies more diversity" (ibid.). In addition, extra diversity implies greater levels of choice. This element of choice can only make sense in a classroom culture that promotes autonomy. Environments that support autonomy allow personal choice while providing structures that support individuals' success in learning.

8.3.2 Providing Opportunities for Learning to Learn and Self-Regulation

In the learning society, graduates should be able to organize their own learning, including effective management of time and information. From a pedagogical point of view, 'learning how to learn' has been defined as "the procedure by which learners obtain insights about the learning process, about themselves, about effective learning strategies, and by which they develop positive attitudes towards language and language learning" (Jiménez Raya 1998: 14). In turn, self-regulated learning refers to autonomous, academically effective forms of learning that involve metacognition, intrinsic motivation, and strategic action (Zimmerman 1989, 1990, 2002). The metacognitive component covers planning, setting goals, organizing,

self-monitoring, and self-evaluating at various points during the process of learning. The motivational component places emphasis on self-efficacy, self-attributions, and intrinsic motivation. Lastly, the behavioural component refers to selection, structuring, and creation of environments that enhance learning (Zimmerman 2002). From an academic standpoint, this includes planning and managing time, attending to (and concentrating on) learning, organising and coding information strategically, and using social resources effectively (Zimmerman 1994). It also incorporates motivational processes such as holding positive beliefs about one's capabilities, valuing learning, and experiencing positive affects with one's efforts. This competence enables learners to identify available opportunities, and instils in them the ability to overcome obstacles in order to succeed.

Learning to learn seeks to engage learners in building on prior life experiences and developing the capability to use and apply knowledge, strategies and skills in various contexts. Here, the emphasis is again on the development of the students' capacity to reflect on and verbalise their own learning process through metalearning activities. In promoting learning to learn, students are given the chance to gather their thoughts with regard to the learning process, and thus gain a new type of awareness that normally results in higher degrees of motivation and efficiency, enabling them to deal with the unexpected and to construct knowledge in their interactions with the world.

8.3.3 Creating Opportunities for Integration and Explicitness

Pedagogy for autonomy involves the integration of communicative and learning competencies, which means that learners *learn to use the language as they learn how to learn it.* We have to make different methodological decisions connected with teaching learning how to learn and self-regulation. The first has to do with the kind of treatment each is going to receive and whether we are going to integrate it with language/content instruction, or if we are going to allocate specific time to it. Various authors (Ellis and Sinclair 1989; Jiménez Raya 1998; Wenden 1986) advocate an integrated and informed approach, in which language instruction and the development of learning expertise take place at the same time because learning in context is generally agreed to be more effective. We say *informed* because the learner has to be conscious from the very first moment of the benefits it will yield; this approach tells learners why a given strategy is useful, as well as why, when, and *where* to use it. This entails pedagogical explicitness – that is, making the rationale, aims and procedures of language and learner development transparent to the learners, as a condition for learning awareness, involvement, and participation.

8.3.4 Creating Opportunities for Cognitive Autonomy Support

The concept of *autonomy support* means that an individual in a position of authority, such as a lecturer, takes the learner's perspective, acknowledges their feelings, and provides them with relevant information and opportunities for choice, while reducing to a minimum the use of pressures and demands (Black and Deci 2000: 742). Stefanou

et al. (2004) contend that pedagogy for autonomy needs to create opportunities for cognitive choices as well as organisational and procedural ones.[5] For these authors, organisational and procedural choice may be necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for deep-level student engagement in learning. Cognitive autonomy support promotes student ownership of the learning and typically includes teacher behaviours such as asking students to argue for their point, to generate their own solution paths, or to evaluate their own and others' solutions or ideas (Logan et al. 1995).

8.3.5 Developing Intrinsic Motivation

Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence. According to self-determination theory, autonomy-supportive learning contexts tend to preserve or boost intrinsic motivation and encourage identification with external regulations, while controlling contexts usually undermine intrinsic motivation and prevent internalization. Research has also found that autonomy-supportive classrooms are associated with more intrinsic motivation (Deci et al. 1981) and learning (Grolnick and Ryan 1989) than controlling classrooms. The curriculum that best promotes a learner's motivation and perseverance will be one in which the student is told why and how to do what s/he is required to do, and is encouraged to explain why and how s/he is doing what s/he is doing, as well as to ask for the reasons and purposes underlying what s/he is required to do.

Motivation to learn is also affected by dispositions. These dispositions represent readiness to act in a given direction. Skill and will are interwoven in reflections about learning; teachers must help learners believe in their own capacity to control and direct their learning. Otherwise, they will develop negative attitudes toward learning (Johnston and Winograd 1985). Individuals who develop and maintain positive perceptions of their abilities report higher performance expectations, more control over learning, and greater interest in learning (Covington 1992; Harter and Connell 1984). As Borkowski et al. (1990: 53) posit, "Although motivational states often direct and energise human behaviour, they also play more subtle roles in determining the actual strength, shape, or functioning of cognitive processes." Pedagogy needs to foster the idea of self-efficacy as entailing attributions to both effort and ability that result in a positive perception of competence (Paris and Winograd 1990).

8.3.6 Accepting and Providing for Learner Differentiation

In a higher education context, uniformity of instruction does little to help those learners who find it difficult to adapt because of their different learning styles, levels, strategies and interests. Accommodating teaching to such learner differences is one of the most

[5] *Organizational* autonomy support (e.g., allowing students some decision-making role in terms of classroom management issues), *procedural* autonomy support (e.g., offering students choices about the use of different media to present ideas), and *cognitive* autonomy support (e.g., affording opportunities for students to evaluate work from a self-referent standard).

fundamental challenges of education and often leads to politically and emotionally charged policies and reactions (Jiménez Raya and Lamb 2003). To differentiate instruction is to recognize students' varying background knowledge, readiness, learning styles, and interests and to react to these. The goal of differentiated instruction is to maximise each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where s/he is and designing instruction that matches learners' needs. Research conducted by Malett et al. (1983) found that college students who became aware of their learning styles consciously applied their preferred learning styles to their study skills. This resulted in improvement of work habits, time on task, and an increase in grade point averages. The process of learning for any student determines how they will interact with the curriculum content to arrive at personal understanding.

It is possible to effectively differentiate curriculum process by encouraging:

- Higher levels of thinking and reflection: Pedagogy should stress use rather than acquisition of information; students should apply information to new situations, use it to develop new ideas, and evaluate its appropriateness. Activities should include a greater percentage of open activities – those for which there is no predetermined right answer and which stimulate further thinking and research.
- Freedom of choice: Students should be given freedom to choose, when possible, what to learn, what to investigate and how to study in order to increase their interest in learning. Allowing people the freedom to be who they really are engenders greater responsibility for self-directed action (Deci and Flaste 1995: 72).
- Collaborative learning: According to Johnson and Johnson (1989), individual differences can be accommodated in an undifferentiated curriculum if the organisation of the classroom encourages learners to help each other. When students work in such groups they can work at different levels and at their own pace, but they can share a common sense of overall achievement.
- Discovery and inquiry: Inquiry is the engine of vitality and self-renewal (Pascale 1990). Inquiry typically means both the process of seeking knowledge and new insight as well as the method of teaching anchored in this process. Inquiry learning fosters the development of the processes and enabling skills involved in establishing concepts and facts, preparing the way for students to become researchers and lifelong learners. The active engagement with content results in deeper understanding and greater integration and internalisation of knowledge and learning to learn skills and strategies (Abdal-Haqq 1998). Inquiry as a teaching method aims to develop inquirers and to encourage them to use curiosity, that is, the urge to explore and to understand, as motivators leading to learning through personal engagement.
- Experiential learning: I advocate this approach on the grounds that it facilitates personal growth, helps learners adapt to social change, takes into account differences in learning ability, and is responsive both to learner needs and practical pedagogical considerations. In experiential learning, learning tasks should include a greater percentage of situations in which students use their inductive reasoning processes to discover patterns, ideas, and underlying principles. It comprises: (1) creating a positive climate for learning, (2) making learning purposes clear,

(3) fostering learner participation in the learning process and control over its nature and direction, (4) direct confrontation with practical, social, personal or research problems, (5) balancing intellectual and emotional components of learning, sharing feelings and thoughts with learners, an openness to change, and (6) organising and providing learning resources.

- Pacing, variety and variable support: Rapid pacing, when appropriate, in the presentation of new material, and the use of a variety of methods, maintains students' interest and accommodates different learning styles. Regarding support, differentiation can be achieved by providing different kinds and degrees of support to individual learners.

8.3.7 Encouraging Action-Orientedness

Learning is most effective if it is done actively rather than passively. In fact, students learn better when knowledge has to be applied, synthesized, and discussed (Claxton and Murrell 1987; Felder and Henriques 1995; Prince 2004). Therefore instruction needs to encourage active engagement in learning and participation in individual and group learning activities, instead of passive reception of information in a lecture.[6] Education is definitely best understood as challenging students to be active, because learning is not a spectator sport. This does not only mean providing them with more work to do, or with more complex tasks to improve and maintain their capabilities. It means addressing them in a way that stimulates the exploration of their own ideas and interests.

8.3.8 Fostering Conversational Interaction

Generally speaking, pedagogy for autonomy is fostered by an academic environment which is sensitive, flexible, democratic, and responsive to the needs of the students. Pedagogy for autonomy seeks to involve both lecturer and learner in an interactive process that supports learners' development and their capacity for independent and reflective judgement. Two of the goals pursued are the encouragement of a strong sense of purpose and motivation in the learner, and the *enhancement of discourse power* as learners engage in meaningful interactions among themselves and with the teacher (Jiménez Raya et al. 2007). We can become critically reflective about the assumptions we or others make when we learn to solve problems instrumentally or when we are involved in communicative learning. Learners must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences and apply it to their everyday lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves. As van Lier

[6] See Prince (2004) for a review of the literature on active learning.

(1996: 180) rightly observes: "Jointly managed talk has the potential to change learning situations, role relationships, educational purposes and procedures."

8.3.9 *Promoting Reflective Inquiry*

Reflection is a fundamental concept in educational theory, and to some extent we could say that it is just another word for thinking. If we accept this, then to reflect is also to think. The transformation of our frames of reference takes place through "*critical reflection on the assumptions* upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based" (Mezirow 1997: 7). The ways learners reflect vary depending on the nature of the subject area and the facilitation strategies used. Inquiry-based learning is one approach that helps improve the quality of undergraduate education by moving toward more student-directed, interactive methods of learning while focusing on learner development. In this way, reflection is linked to elements that are essential to autonomy, meaningful learning, and cognitive development:

- The development of metacognition, e.g., the capacity for learners to improve their ability to think about their thinking.
- The development of critical thinking, problem solving, and the capacity for learners to engage in higher-level thinking skills.
- The ability to self-evaluate, e.g., the capacity for students to form judgments about the quality of their work, based on evidence and explicit criteria, for the purpose of improving.
- The enhancement of lecturer understanding of the learner, in other words the capacity for instructors to know and understand more about the learners with whom they work. The result should improve the teaching and learning process.

The weighting/choice of the different principles is determined by such factors as (a) the learning environment; (b) students' characteristics; (c) the teacher's views on teaching and learning. Hence, the insistence on the need to establish a flexible pedagogical framework that allows for the transition from teacher control to a situation where shared responsibility is possible. In a sense, then, defining one's practical approach to autonomy requires the definition of the particular route one will follow, "what treacherous curves to negotiate, what institutional speed bumps one has to get through, and what unanticipated detours they have to take" (Kumaravadivelu 2001: 551).

8.4 Concluding Remarks

Thinking as an autonomous and responsible agent is essential for full citizenship in democracy and for moral decision making, particularly in a rapidly changing world. The development of autonomy requires a pedagogy that fosters the promotion of self-managed learning, as well as the acquisition of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, terms that imply familiarity with the concept of autonomy.

Pedagogy for autonomy is a (re)idealistic practice situated between what actually *is*, and what *should be*. Thus, it extends the limits of freedom and fosters the exploration of new territories (what *can be*) (Jiménez Raya et al. 2007). This shortening of the distance between reality and our ideal, in practical terms, often means taking small steps. These steps should be towards greater learner and teacher autonomy.

Improving the quality of learning requires improving the quality of teaching but the quality of teaching can only be improved through the implementation of policies that encourage professional development. To this end, I find Shulman's (2000) idea of the *scholarship of teaching and learning*[7] or the *Scholarship of Pedagogy,* as Vieira (2009) prefers to label it, particularly interesting in their potential to improve pedagogy in universities. The rationale for this concept rests on the assumption that pedagogy at university is a valuable, yet under-researched activity, so it should become a discrete field of inquiry. Such work helps guide our efforts in the design and adaptation of teaching in the interests of student learning. This is precisely the idea behind the notion of 'scholarship of teaching and learning'.

It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of the Bologna Process in universities, but we can say that the curriculum changes being implemented have already brought about an institutional concern with innovation and staff development. Nonetheless, we still need more institutional support for sustained professional development. What we need is professional development policies that encourage higher education teaching staff to become *pathfinders* as opposed to *pathfollowers* (Shulman 2004). Shulman uses these metaphors to refer to "those who behave as most of their disciplinary colleagues expect them to, and those who elect to go against the grain" (2004: vii). This transformative notion of pedagogy presupposes that higher education must concern itself with transforming the life-experience of students by empowering them – surely a fundamental purpose of higher education.

Engaging in pedagogy for autonomy, to my understanding, means cutting against the grain, thereby becoming a pathfinder, which, in turn, involves a self-initiated path to become a better educator. In a world where pathfollowing represents the dominant culture, this is usually motivated by professional concerns related to learner and teacher development; in other words, towards research-supported models that promote more significant learning goals, such as self-determination, initiative, self-efficacy, creativity, motivation, self-regulation and diversity, all of which are concepts related to autonomy.

Only through the continuous study of learning and teaching, and the education of students regarding research in this area, can we hope to turn education's focus away from practices that research has shown are more limiting, and towards accomplishing the crucial learning goals mentioned above, of seeking to facilitate change in institutional cultures and contributing to the advancement of the teaching profession

[7] "Summarized by three P's, our professional interest, our pragmatic responsibilities, and the pressures of policy. Scholarship of teaching and learning supports our individual and professional roles, our practical responsibilities to our students and our institutions, and our social and political obligations to those that support and take responsibility for higher education" (Shulman 2000: 53).

within a vision of the possible. This will greatly assist in the building of a new, more balanced idea of the scholarly career as a whole in the EHEA.

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Part III
Evaluating Competencies in Tertiary Language Education

Chapter 9
Competency-Based Corrective Feedback in Higher Education Second Language Teaching: Perspectives from Empirical Research and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Kent Löfgren

9.1 Introduction

The development of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has coincided with an increased academic interest in corrective feedback (CF) in second language teaching. As Lyster & Saito note, the "effectiveness of corrective feedback" in second language teaching "has been the topic of much discussion" in recent years, especially from a theoretical perspective (Lyster and Saito 2010: 266). Taking this increased interest in the CEFR and corrective feedback as its starting point, this chapter discusses the relationships between the CEFR and corrective feedback in higher education second language teaching. The focus is on teacher-introduced feedback, but attention is also given to student-induced feedback.

The CEFR is a guide for authorities, institutions, departments, and other concerned parties allowing assessment of language students' achievements (Council of Europe 2001). Its purpose is to act as a reference manual in matters related to the standardization of competencies (knowledge and skills) regarding language teaching and learning, regardless of what language is being taught or in what country this teaching takes place. The rationale behind the development of the CEFR, which was the result of an initiative by the Council of Europe in the 1990s, is to contribute to a more transparent and accessible pan-European language learning environment. From 2001 onwards, the use of the CEFR and its standards for describing and assessing six levels of language competencies have been established, by a Council decision, as an important part of the EU's language and teaching systems. The six levels with their technical names are as follows: 1. Breakthrough, 2. Waystage, 3. Threshold, 4. Vantage, 5. Effective operational proficiency, and 6. Mastery. It is

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possible to further divide each category into sub-categories such as, for example, "Strong Vantage".

The promotion of the CEFR by the Council has led to an accelerated acceptance of the system among nation-states and international organizations, and has also encouraged the development of national and regional systems of assessment and evaluation of language competencies for students. To aid this development, the Council has published separate guidelines for those organizations and institutions that wish to construct language examinations that are linked to the levels of the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001). This has further helped popularize and spread the use of the CEFR, a system initially used only in the European Union and which has gained substantial international acceptance over the years. In a report on language teaching in Canada, Eaton (2010) discusses the impact of the CEFR on second language teaching on a global scale and describes it as an important system "of valuing language and literacy skills that [has]… gained momentum in the first decade of the 21st Century" (Eaton 2010: 7). Teachers and scholars today agree that the six CEFR reference levels are among the most important standards – if not *the* standard – for grading students' second language skills. The official printed English edition of the CEFR is available from Cambridge University Press, and the online version can be found on the Council of Europe's home page (2001); numerous official translations are also distributed by governmental organizations – for example, the Swedish translation from 2009 commissioned by the Swedish National School Authority (Skolverket 2009).

Corrective feedback (CF), which is an important part of second language teaching in higher education, is defined as "teachers' feedback to learners' erroneous or inappropriate utterances to provide correct forms, hints, or clues to elicit the learners' reformulations of their errors or inappropriate utterances" (Yoshida 2010: 302). There are many different forms of CF – for example, written or oral and explicit or implicit – depending on the educational situation and on the educational traditions and norms at the various departments where the teaching takes place. One form of CF is oral recasts, in which the teachers reformulate the students' utterances without repeating the error. Another form is recasts with corrections; these are the same as recasts, but they make clear to the students what was wrong. CF can provide positive evidence to give students "models of what is grammatical and acceptable in the target language" or provide negative evidence that gives the student "direct or indirect information about what is unacceptable" (Zhang et al. 2010: 307). Another form is prompts, wherein the teachers provide feedback that prompts the students to reflect and search within their present knowledge for the correct forms. The use of prompts is popular in educational settings that are inspired by constructivism (Dewey 1933/1998; Vygotsky 1978).

Corrective feedback (CF) in higher education second language teaching is discussed throughout the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. One important question regarding CF is whether or not the student is able to assimilate the feedback. For example, the CEFR suggests that the process of providing CF to students in higher education only works if the student

> … is in a position (a) to notice, i.e. is attentive, motivated and familiar with the form in which the information is coming, (b) to receive, i.e. is not swamped with information, has a way of recording, organising and personalising it; (c) to interpret, i.e. has sufficient pre-knowledge and awareness to understand the point at issue, and not to take counterproductive action and (d) to integrate the information, i.e. has the time, orientation and relevant resources to reflect on, integrate and so remember the new information (Council of Europe 2001: 186).

This passage suggests that language teachers seek to create educational settings where the students' self-governed learning is encouraged and where the students are conscious of their own learning. The CEFR encourages language teachers to give ample support to their students in order to "reduce the possible difficulty of texts", and students should be able to obtain "feedback on their understanding from one another" (Council of Europe 2001: 164–165).

The CEFR also suggests that "grids consisting of descriptors defining different aspects of competence at different levels" can be useful "to give formative feedback" from an assessment (Council of Europe 2001: 186). For language teachers, it might become necessary to use a description or a guide as a basis for their assessments of the students' competencies. Using detailed criteria strengthens the feedback process since such criteria can be used analytically, to assess a number of discrete aspects of the students' language performance. The benefit, from the teachers' point of view, is that such criteria "encourage the assessor to observe closely" and that the criteria "provide a meta-language for negotiation between assessors and for feedback to learners" (Council of Europe 2001: 190).

Séror's results (2009) show that the quality of the feedback provided depends on the resources available to instructors and students. There is a "complex interplay of resource allocation decisions" that affects "feedback opportunities by hindering and/or discouraging instructors from investing in feedback" (Séror 2009: 217). This includes, for example, the type and number of instructors and teacher assistants hired, or factors such as available time and size of classes. Séror's results show that the participating teachers find it difficult to provide CF in larger study groups: "The greater the number of students, the harder it was for instructors to imagine they would have the time required to provide the kind of feedback most likely to foster literacy development" (Séror 2009: 217). Are students aware of these types of constraints? The students in Séror's study were, a result that hints at a broader awareness of these constraints, and thus about how these resource allocation factors affect students. Séror notes that respondents in his study "were definitely conscious of their instructors' heavy schedules" (Séror 2009: 217).

A factor that probably is harder for the students to detect is the universities' reward systems for teachers. Research shows that the system affects the extension of CF to students in a negative direction, especially at institutions where doing research is an important merit for aspiring teachers. Séror's study evinces that teachers might perceive the process of providing extensive CF "as risky and/or a poor investment of time in a research-intensive institution whose reward system, as described by the instructors, did not assign much weight to such teaching activities"

(Séror 2009: 218). In short, there is a risk that the teachers may feel little or no incentive to provide extensive feedback to the students beyond that of the assessment scores, grades and short notes. Symbaluka and Howell (2010) have compared student ratings of teaching-award recipients and research-award recipients, and have concluded that students prefer the former. The authors argue that teaching and doing research are, to a certain degree, incompatible and that "instructors who win teaching awards will receive higher ratings and more positive comments" (Symbaluka and Howell 2010: 77).

9.2 Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)

Providing written corrective feedback (WCF) to students is an effective way to enhance their learning. In a study on the contribution of WCF to language development, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) compared different types of WCF and their effects on students' performance in post-tests. Their results show that in all post-tests, the groups "that received WCF outperformed" the control group, which received only feedback about marks (Bitchener and Knoch 2010: 206).

Over the years, different student perspectives on WCF have emerged. Séror (2009) conducted a study of students' responses to this type of feedback in second language teaching. The result of this study, where students and teachers in writing development courses were interviewed, is a critique of the teachers' habits of scribbling down abbreviations and short comments and underlining sections of sentences. According to the students, it is hard to interpret the WCF when "the most common feedback practices involved short, condensed, and handwritten notes in the margins of assignments that students often had problems deciphering" (Séror 2009: 214). The students also stated that although WCF helps them identify problems, "specific solutions to address these problems" are rare (Séror 2009: 214). Séror's results show that teachers tend to focus on grammar rather than on the students' arguments. Students want extended WCF about their thoughts, ideas, and arguments, but the WCF they receive is focused mostly on grammar. Students state that teachers all too often "just look at grammar mistakes, not content" (Séror 2009: 215). In a similar study, Bailey (2009) interviewed students about their likes and dislikes regarding WCF. Bailey's results echo those of Séror and show that students dislike brief WCF, such as exclamation marks in the margin; they prefer much more extensive help. The students state that they need WCF that supports an enhanced learning experience – for example, more elaborate written advice on ways to improve their essay-writing skills.

The results from Bailey's 2009 study further show that students are disappointed not only about sparse WCF, but also about the lack of precision in the teachers' comments. The students do not like general comments such as, for example, 'You should have created a better flow in your manuscript', or 'You should have de veloped the argument in this section a bit more', because these are too vague. Another criticism

from the students concerns the ambiguity of the terms used by teachers. The students – especially beginner students – find it frustrating that these important terms have different meanings in different contexts, for example in different departments and in different courses and study programs, sometimes even within the same department. Two teachers may use the same term – for example, "to analyze" – but with different meanings, and this makes it even harder for the students to understand the teacher's advice. Bailey concludes that students find "the language of feedback comment inconsistent and vague" and that students generally are "confused about the meanings of assessment criteria" (Bailey 2009: 11). Bailey puts part of the blame for the confusion on poorly written guidelines and criteria for courses at the institutional and departmental levels and concludes that there is a risk of students having problems with academic discourse, even a couple of years into their academic studies.

Given the harsh criticisms from the students about abrupt and vague WCF, how can language teachers promote clarity and contribute to openness and transparency? Ellis (2009) advocates the use of structured feedback forms, based on his studies of teachers' feedback routines on written essays at 20 English departments in the UK. The use of such forms is nothing new in higher education; it means that the teachers tick boxes on a piece of paper or on a computer screen to indicate their assessment of different criteria. These criteria can be, for example "structure" or "use of literature as evidence", each of which is assessed and marked by the teacher on a scale ranging, for example, from 'Excellent' to 'Poor'. This assessment (the form) is presented to the student after the assignment to provide feedback. Ellis' argument is that WCF via such a tick-box form provides the student with a summarized discursive commentary that is relevant to the assignment and that it provides a visual "point of reference for self-improvement" (Ellis 2009: 34).

The use of structured feedback forms has been criticized. Even if a tick-box form helps teachers "achieve a greater clarity on what defines our subject both for our students and for ourselves" (Ellis 2009: 35), this system can be a burden for the teachers, at least according to Bailey (2009). Though he admits that structured feedback forms "are increasingly used in the delivery of written feedback," especially in large classes (Bailey 2009: 2), he argues that structured feedback forms are less useful for experienced students who have "attained a performance level that renders the form superfluous" (Bailey 2009: 9). Bailey also argues that structured feedback forms "have deleterious effects on the teaching and learning interface" because "standardisation…reduces teacher comments on forms to a minimum" and "words such as 'structure' or 'argument'…are likely to be contextually…specific" (Bailey 2009: 11). Nevertheless, Bailey (2009) admits that it might be hard to prevent departments from using forms. His explanation for this is that there is a growing "concern with greater transparency and equity in assessing students", a concern with "greater consistency" and increasing evaluation requirements which emphasize "formal articulation of criteria and learning outcomes" (Bailey 2009: 2). This in turn, according to Bailey, leads to a continued and perhaps increased use of such forms in higher education second language teaching.

9.3 Oral Corrective Feedback (OCF)

The practice of providing oral corrective feedback (OCF) to students is common in higher education, and there are varying opinions about this form of feedback in language teaching as well. In a study on OCF in classroom interaction, Zhang et al. (2010) collected and analyzed questionnaire data from students and teachers at a Chinese higher education institution. The results show that there are disparities between the students' and the teachers' opinions regarding, for example, how often the teachers should correct the students. The students want the teachers to correct most of the errors that they make in their oral interactions, whereas the teachers argue that not all oral errors can and should be corrected. When asked what types of errors they prefer to be corrected, the students indicate that they favor the correction of lexical errors rather than grammatical and phonological ones.

In a meta-analysis, Lyster and Saito (2010) investigated results from 15 primary studies on OCF and the effectiveness of such feedback in second language teaching. The authors sought to investigate if and to what degree OCF was effective and whether this effect varied according to the three different types of OCF: recasts, recasts with corrections, and prompts. The results confirm that OCF affects second language development and that these effects are more significant for prompts as compared to recasts. The results also show that the effects are strong in teaching and learning situations where the students are encouraged to independently construct different types of responses to the teachers' OCF.

This last finding regarding the importance of creating learning situations where autonomous and reflective self-correction is encouraged is validated in a study by Havranek and Cesnik (2001). In this study, the authors found that the quality of OCF feedback is affected by the form it takes, as well as by the type of error corrected. Building on a definition of successful OCF as predicating high individual scores in subsequent tests after a period of teaching with different forms of OCF, the authors were able to show that successful OCF is characterized by feedback that encourages a student's reflective thinking and self-correction. Using the same research design, they show that simple recasts without further comments from the teachers or repetition by the corrected student constitutes a less successful form of OCF (Havranek and Cesnik 2001).

In a study with 30 students on the effectiveness of repetition as OCF, Büyükbay and Dabaghi (2010) compared the performance of a control group with that of an experimental group. The focus was on the effectiveness of repetition as a benefit in learning grammar without reference to its benefits for other aspects of second language learning, such as vocabulary or pronunciation. The experimental group was allotted a longer time to contemplate their errors than the control group. In the experimental group, the students were exposed to repetition as OCF whenever they erred, they were encouraged to correct their own errors whenever possible, and they were given the time required to do so. Later, students from the control and the experimental groups were asked to participate in a grammar test whose content was determined by the grammatical data that had been the focus during the OCF in the previous

classroom situations. The results showed that "the students in the experimental class … did better on their grammar test than the students in the control class, who received the teacher's usual responses to errors" (Büyükbay and Dabaghi 2010: 187). The 15 students in the experimental group provided a higher number of correct answers in the test compared to the 15 students in the control group. Being aware that the relationship between repetition and learning is complex and that the study was performed on a rather small scale, the authors conclude that when compared with other types of OCF, "repetition contributes more to acquisition" (Büyükbay and Dabaghi 2010: 187). Even though it was a small-scale study and although the conclusions were based on a small number of feedback episodes compared to earlier studies in the area, the results still show that the experimental class achieved higher scores. According to the authors themselves, one explanation for this is that when repetition is used as OCF, students are given a chance to stop for a moment to think, to notice errors, and to contemplate possible ways to correct the errors. In the experimental group, both the students that erred and the other participating students in the group benefited from repetition as OCF. Given this interesting study from Büyükbay and Dabaghi (2010), it seems that time allotted for error correction, or the pace of the teaching, is of importance in language teaching.

9.4 The Student's Ability to Provide Feedback Is a Competence in Itself

So far we have discussed teacher-introduced feedback, but it is important to remember that student-introduced feedback is equally important in the teaching-learning processes. It is therefore important for the second language teacher in higher education to be observant of the feedback that originates from the students themselves. The capacity to provide such feedback, which constitutes an important language skill in its own right, is also discussed in the CEFR.

It can be difficult for the teacher to assess the feedback that originates from students because, as Yoshida points out, there can be differences "between the learners' perceptions of CF and the teachers' understanding of the learners' perceptions of the CF" (Yoshida 2010: 308). However, despite these possible difficulties, the CEFR is clear regarding the importance of feedback that originates from the students. For example, in the criteria for the six CEFR levels, alongside elaborate discussions about the functions, grammar and vocabulary necessary to perform communicative tasks, it is stipulated that a student who is functioning at a certain performance level should be able to provide adequate feedback. A student who is at the level that represents a Strong Vantage performance, for example, should be able to "give feedback" on what other speakers say in a constructive way (Council of Europe 2001: 35). The CEFR also stipulates that this feedback should be of such quality that it helps the development of the discussion and the learning experience of others in the classroom. To pass the exams and fulfill the criteria for this level, it is necessary for the student to provide evidence that s/he has language awareness, can use social

discourse in conversational management, and is able to provide feedback on the content of the course and on his or her own learning process. For students who are at the Strong Vantage performance level, it is important to be able to cooperate and to "give feedback on and follow up statements and inferences and so help the development of the … discussion" (Council of Europe 2001: 86).

9.5 Final Remarks

Corrective feedback is a necessity in education, and it captures the attention – and hopefully the interest – of students, in turn enabling them to sense the differences between their performance in the languages being acquired and some sort of norm for the appropriate way to talk or write in those languages.

The CEFR, which contains a number of descriptor scales describing the linguistic skills needed by language learners to become competent speakers of another language, clearly stipulates that student-introduced feedback is a valuable part of the teaching and learning process. This is understandable, given that students learn more, and faster, if they are given the chance to reflect on and take an active part in their own learning.

The recent reforms in European higher education, which include, for example, the Bologna Process and the creation of the European Area for Higher Education (EUA 2010), have created a more student-centered learning environment in higher education; and as a consequence "assessment is generally formative and feedback continuous" in the European Area for Higher Education (EUA 2010: 32). The focus has also shifted from the teacher and what is taught, to the learner and what is learned; the students are seen as individuals; and their particular experiences, perceptual frameworks, learning styles, and needs are taken into consideration. This leads to a learning environment where the concept of CF has become increasingly important and where implicit CF which, according to Li (2010: 344), "might be more beneficial than explicit feedback to the development of implicit knowledge", is of equal (if not greater) importance to explicit CF. As Li (2010) concludes, after a meta-analysis of 33 primary studies on the effectiveness of corrective feedback in second language acquisition, the long-term results of implicit CF are "slightly more effective than explicit feedback" (Li 2010: 344). With this in mind, it is evident that there is a need for further research on corrective feedback to keep increasing the amount of valuable data and analysis to assess the effects of such feedback.

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Chapter 10
Assessing Transferable Generic Skills in Language Degrees

María José Terrón-López and María José García-García

10.1 Introduction

The growing complexities characterizing diverse aspects of daily life prompt the necessity to develop certain qualities and skills which are demanded of higher education graduates. In other words, professionals have to be able to work in a team, with the capacity to communicate effectively, for example, with the constant renewal of knowledge and competencies.

On the other hand, the academic world presents a new vision according to the aforementioned needs, because the Bologna Process (the official Bologna Process website 2010–2012, 2010) aims to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 (Bergen 2005). The three priorities of the Bologna process are: introduction of the three-cycle system, quality assurance, and recognition of qualifications of periods of study. The first consequence of the Bologna Declaration is the evaluation of each course through the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (European Commission 2012), which is based on the student workload required to achieve the objectives of a programme, in terms of the learning outcomes and competencies to be acquired. This important repercussion from Bologna involves a great challenge: the necessity to tie the key skills developed to the professional demands made on graduates.

Universities must emphasize the need to train the highly qualified employees that society requires for its development. Therefore, innovation in higher education must clearly develop key skills in the classroom. Reflection on, and changes in, the teaching-learning process must be made accordingly. To fulfil this task, we intend to provide guidance on the issues relating to the introduction of key professional skills in language degrees in the university or college curriculum.

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In this chapter, we will set forth assessment criteria, grade descriptors and marking schemes for competencies and will explain a way to integrate guidance and feedback for the students. We will examine through some self-explanatory templates several possible educational activities and the assessment of the learning progress of these professional skills, using self-assessment and peer-assessment tests (or questionnaires), among other useful tools.

10.2 Selection of Transferable Generic Skills Names

Recent surveys of employers (ANECA 2007; CHEERS 2003; Accenture y Universia 2007) suggest that they are looking for applicants who can communicate effectively, who can work in teams, and who have adequate interpersonal skills in order to solve problems with a flexible approach. Although there are numerous studies and reports on the necessity of training the students not only in knowledge, but also in competencies (Ellis et al. 2004; Fallows and Steven 2000; Spencer and Spencer 1993; Harvey et al. 1997), it is well known that traditional university education has focused on knowledge acquisition (Zabalza 2009), even though teachers have usually asked their students to engage in some activities that develop key skills, such as oral and written communication, teamwork, planning and problem solving, etc. The problem is that there was not previously a normative planning process nor an integrated curriculum approach, and by no means was there agreed formal assessment and marking criteria, making it tedious work. Since 2010 (The official Bologna Process website 2010–2012) and in response to employer expectations, universities are now focusing on the development of transferable skills in their curricula. Educational institutions, taking into account that graduates will enter into a competitive and fast-moving job market, have the duty of transferring not only knowledge but also the skills demanded by employers. This chapter will try to identify the transferable generic skills adapted to higher education language studies that employers desire from new graduates and to propose effective and easy tools to assess these.

Many universities have in fact already done this work and are proposing skills in every degree to be implemented in the context of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) (Bath et al. 2004; Barrie 2005, 2006; Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) Innovations Fund 2001; Ellis et al. 2004). The first difficulty found by teachers is the lack of single, universally accepted names for each transferable skill to be developed. Therefore, several sources have been consulted. First, the skills included in the Tuning Educational Structures in Europe Project (González and Wagenaar 2004) and in the DeSeCo project (OECD 2005; Rychen and Salganik 2001, 2003; Salganik et al. 1999) were consulted. Secondly, a review of the collegiate skills that appear at the Universidad Europea de Madrid Delphi project report (Universidad Europea de Madrid 2001) was carried out. Finally, official resources from the Spanish Education and Science Ministry (BOE 2007; Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 2007) were consulted, as well as resources from the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), as well as studies conducted by other universities. For example, the Nelson Report (2002),

Employability Skills for the Future, and the University of Sydney Reports (University of Sydney: Institute for Teaching and Learning 2011) in Australia, the Bennett, Dunne & Carré report (2000) in the UK, and many UK university studies, such as the report *An Institutional Approach to Developing Students' Transferable Skills* (Atlay and Harris 2000) and the *Embedding Key Skills within a Traditional University* project, funded by the DfEE (Chapple and Tolley 2000). Taking into account all these references, we looked for a unique denomination of each skill, in order to avoid misunderstandings between the academic staff and the students.

Table 10.1 shows the consensus skill names adopted in our research group. In this table, it should be noted that the second column refers to other names found in the bibliographies of the sources consulted. Sometimes this "other name" refers to a developed competency level of the consensual one, even if it could be considered as a skill in itself.

10.3 Teaching and Learning Resources to Develop Transferable Generic Skills: The Skill Template

Bearing in mind the skills we want our students to develop, teachers need to have a clearer definition of each skill from their own disciplinary perspective. Consequently, they must think about specific descriptors, expectations and implementation. To help them, a general template for all generic skills is proposed (Table 10.2). This template is intended to be a useful tool for academic staff and students on skills development, assessment and marking. The first version of these templates can be found in García et al. (2007) and Terrón et al. (2007). The general organization of each template is like the example shown in Table 10.2, where we can see it is divided in five main sections: name, definition, development, assessment and references.

To fill in these templates, teachers must think about three main questions: how to implement the key skills and when, which activities can be done to promote them, and how to establish assessment and marking criteria. For every skill, we think that it is helpful to propose learning resources such as hand-outs, worksheets, checklists and assessments guides, which staff could use or adapt, as well as material about the skills and their development.

Below we explore how these templates are fulfilled:

(A) *NAME OF KEY SKILL*

The first row shows the consensual name adopted among researchers, while the next one includes its other possible names, as shown in Table 10.1 in Sect. 10.2. In this way, all teachers and students can use the same nomenclature for a given skill, avoiding misunderstandings.

(B) *DEFINITION OF THE KEY SKILL*

This section covers what is necessary to understand the key skill; that is, the definition, the description, the required skills, and the other key skills developed from this one. These definitions have been taken from the academic literature or from the dictionary.

Table 10.1 List of adopted transferable generic skills denominations

Consensus generic skill names	Other names found in the references consulted
Ability to adapt to new situations	Versatility to adapt to new situations.
	Resistance and adaptation to the environment.
	Flexibility.
Awareness of ethical values	Ethical sense (ethic and ethical commitment).
	Ethical commitment.
	Ethics and values.
	Ability to understand ethical responsibility and professional deontology.
	Ethics and professional responsibility.
	Ethical principle/respect.
	Incorporation of ethical and legal values.
	To understand ethical implications.
	Ethical Sense.
Independent learning	Ability to learn.
	Ability to quickly acquire new knowledge.
	Ability to work autonomously.
	To have skills for self-directed and autonomous lifelong learning.
	Ability to improve and update knowledge and acquired abilities.
	Self-learning of new skills and techniques. Orientation to learning.
	High degree of autonomy.
Planning and time management	Capacity of organization and planning.
	Ability to use time effectively.
	Capacity of planning, management and control.
Problem-solving	Ability to find new ideas and solutions.
Information management (search, selection and integration)	Abilities of information management (ability to find and analyse information from various sources).
	Gather and interpret relevant data.
	Collection and analysis of information.
	Information management ability (ability to find and analyse information from several sources).
Critical thinking	Critical capacity and self-criticism.
	Arguments conceiving and defending.
	To deliver judgments including reflections on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.
	Willingness to enquire about own ideas and others'.
	Critical point of view.
	Critical and reflexive thinking.
Team working	Learning and collaborative work.
	Ability to work in teams.
	To work in uni-, multi- and inter-disciplinary teams.
	Ability to work in an interdisciplinary team.
	Ability to work in an international context.
Self-confidence	Confidence in one's own judgement.
Ability to apply knowledge to practice	To apply knowledge to work.

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

Consensus generic skill names	Other names found in the references consulted
Oral communication/written communication	Oral and written communication in one's mother tongue.
	Ability to transmit information, ideas, problems and solutions.
	Ability to explain results, ideas or reports.
	Ability to write reports or documents.
	Ability to make oneself understood.
	Oral and written communication in the native tongue.
	Ability to know how to communicate (orally and in writing).
	Ability to write.
	Ability to communicate in writing and orally, knowledge, procedures, results and ideas.
	To communicate effectively and clearly both orally and in writing.
	Written and verbal communication.
	Interpersonal Communication.
Decision-making	Decision-making (judgement capacity).
	Ability to make decisions.
Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit	Initiative.
	Ability to identify new opportunities.
	Entrepreneurial spirit.
Use of information and communication technology (ICT)	Basic skills in computer use.
	Ability to use information technology tools.
	Integrate information technology in the field of study.
	ICT use.
Skills in interpersonal relations	Interpersonal understanding.
	Interpersonal skills.
	Social interaction (human relations capacity, interpersonal relations and relationship capacity).
	Interpersonal communication.
	Social skills.
Innovation and creativity	Ability to find new ideas and solutions.
	Creative thinking.
	Creative point of view.
	Ability to generate new ideas (creativity).

The description, for us, is the most important part of the template, as it provides all the information the teacher and the student need to understand the competency. Looking at this list, they will know what they need to do to develop this skill and, therefore, what should be assessed. By providing an adequate description of the skill, the academic staff and the students know which capacities they will develop during the course.

It could be very helpful to indicate the relationship between the skills due to their cross-curricular nature. For this reason, we include in this section

Table 10.2 Template to develop critical thinking

Name of key skill	
Adopted denomination	*Critical thinking*
Other denominations	Critical capacity and self-criticism.
	Arguments conceiving and defending.
	To deliver judgments including reflections on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues.
	Willingness to enquire about one's own ideas and others'.
	Critical point of view.
	Critical and reflective thinking.
Definition of the key skill	
Definition:	Skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observations, communications, information, and argumentation.
Description	Ability to make informed judgments about their worth, as well as the value and relevance of information.
	Ability to make informed judgments or evaluations about the worth, validity and reliability of opinions, ideas and knowledge, independently of one's own opinions.
	Ability to examine processes, systems, objects, artefacts, issues and ideas in terms of their component parts, being able to detect what is beside them.
	Ability to maintain an attitude of doubt and questioning that contributes to continuous evaluation of the subjects and ideas.
	Ability to create a particular idea or perspective for an issue or question, and to establish criteria to make an informed decision.
Required key skills	Decision-making.
Other skills developed from this one	Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit.
	Self-confidence.
key skill development	
Learning activities to develop the skill	Lecture about the skill, its development and assessment.
	Problems, exercises and written evaluations done by peers/colleagues.
	Debate about the different solutions to a given technical or mathematical problem.
	Reflection exercises about practical cases exposed by the lecturer.
	Student's evaluation of each section in a proposed exercise, test or exam.
	Role-playing.
	Explanation of the reasoning used in the assignments.
	Detection and analysis of the mistakes made by peers.
Assessment:	
Skill development level indicators	Being able to analyse phenomena from different points of view.
	Ability to make inferences.
	Ability to contrast different approaches.
	Ability to distinguish intuitions and opinions from rigorous information.
	Ability to recognize ideas and implicit principles.
	Ability to study an idea in depth and find different meanings.

(continued)

Table 10.2 (continued)

	Ability to discern the effects and the consequences of the facts with a wide perspective.
	Ability to build arguments based on rigorous information.
	Ability to generate reasoned value judgement.
	Ability to incorporate new points of view into an approach.
	Ability to evolve reasoning integrating new approaches.
	Ability to gather sufficient, credible, relevant information: observations, statements, logic, data, facts, questions, graphs, themes, assertions, descriptions, etc.
	Ability to follow where evidence and reason lead in order to obtain defensible, thoughtful, logical conclusions or solutions.
	Ability to identify the most significant implications and consequences of reasoning (positive and/or negative).
	Ability to detect and analyse mistakes made by the teacher and/or peers.
Assessment procedures	Instructor's evaluation of the solutions given to exercises, problems, demonstrations, etc.
	Instructor supervision of the learning process with feedback.
	Instructor's evaluation of the argument presented to defend a position in a debate, an exercise, a demonstration, etc.
Assessment instruments	Resolution of exercises, problems, papers, templates, etc.
	Skill self-assessment templates.
	Continuous assessment templates for readers.
	Activity scales or rubrics for co-evaluation, self-assessment or reader assessment.

References

Blanco Fernández (2009), Brown and Glasner (1999), Fallows and Steven (2000), Fisher and Scriven (1997), Katzenbach and Smith (2003), Nelson (2002), García Olalla and Poblete Ruiz (2007), and Poblete Ruiz and Villa Sánchez (2007)

which key skills are needed to develop them ("required key skill") and what competencies will be developed from them.

(C) *KEY SKILL DEVELOPMENT*

Once the skill is defined, the next step is to decide which teaching and learning resources can be used to develop each skill. The first activity proposed was considered important in our research group as it is designed to be helpful for the student. It is a briefing about the skill in which the lecturer explains the meaning of the generic skill, which activities can be done to develop it, and how it will be assessed. The objective of this first activity is to help the student understand what constitutes a "key skill activity".

Next, a wide range of learning activities is proposed to develop that generic key competency. Teachers will choose from this list those they consider more suitable for their subject. But the question remains how to describe clearly these activities to the teachers and to the students. This will be shown in the next section, where we will describe what we call the "activity template".

(D) *ASSESSMENT*

This section of the template provides essential information about assessment: indicators, procedures and tools. In this way, we can measure the acquisition of the key skill.

We must first provide the indicators that will help to reckon the level of acquisition of the skill. These must be adapted to each subject (according to the program into which they are integrated as well as its characteristics). These indicators establish what is assessed for each key skill. They will be given as a list of specific items more focused on the assessment than those mentioned in the description. The indicators must be SMART; that is, "Specific", "Measurable", "Achievable", "Relevant" and "Temporally appropriate", and they can be both quantitative and qualitative. They might include, for instance, 'rate of activities completed', 'rate of attendance at team work sessions' or 'obtained results in peer-assessment' as indicators.

After deciding what to assess, we must think about what the students need to learn from the assessment. Thus, the task becomes how to measure with validity the skill level acquired by the student. For this, a series of procedures (observational techniques, peer appraisal and self-report procedures) are given. From this list, the teacher will be able to use a combination of assessment procedures (always estimating their validity, reliability and fairness for each activity).

Additionally, several assessment tools are proposed in order to help the teacher mark those activities they found difficult to do, due to the subjectivity of the general skills.

(E) *REFERENCES*

Finally, it is important to include in each template a cell containing the references used to fulfil it. In the proposed example, the references correspond to Blanco (2009); Brown and Glasner (1999); Fallows and Steven (2000); Fisher and Scriven (1997); Katzenbach and Smith (2003); Nelson (2002); Poblete & Villa (2007); and García & Poblete (2007). Most of these sources are used in other skills templates.

It is recommended that each teacher completes the templates from his or her own perspective.

10.4 Teaching Resources to Develop Transferable Generic Skills: The Activity Template

In the skill template shown, a wide range of learning activities is proposed to develop a key skill. Teachers will choose from this list those they consider more suitable for their subject or they will take ideas to propose new ones. But the main question from this point onwards is to describe these activities clearly to both teachers and students.

As a result, a general template is shown in order to describe each of these possible activities. The idea is to establish a common format that can help teachers to develop a learning activity in a way that could be reproducible in other subjects and by other teachers. This template is initially based on the key skills repository of the *Universitat*

de les Illes Balears (http://rcg.uib.es/). The aim is to offer the academic staff a helpful instrument that formalizes the experiences in the classroom. In filling the template in, the teacher should consider the requirement that the activities be transferable to other student groups. Thus, it is important to stress the aspects relating to the development of transferable skills.

The general organization of each template is like the example shown in Table 10.3, where the main skill developed is team work, though other competencies are also worked on.

Below we discuss the elements that make up this template, and the context-specific additions required.

(A) *ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION*

The first row shows the name we have given to the activity in order to identify it clearly. Then, a list of possible subjects or courses where it could be implemented must be provided. Although some activities are quite specific and depend on the subject, there are many of them than can be used in different courses, degrees, etc., so it is recommended to identify these contexts.

Next comes a section of the template where the objective and the description of the activity would be given. This row provides essential information about the activity and the main goals that are pursued through it. It consists in describing a procedure in detail in order to know the steps that must be followed to make this activity easily reproducible.

Looking at the desired aims, the teacher will be able to fill in the following cell, that is, the main skill developed, and, taking into account their cross-curricular nature, to indicate the relationship between this and other skills. That is why we include in this section which key skill it aims to develop (main key skill) and what competencies will be developed from it. In so doing, we aim to highlight the key or transferable skills that the student will develop, instead of the specific ones.

The first difficulty found was the lack of single, universally accepted names for each key skill to be developed. Therefore we referred to several sources. To complete this row in the activity template, a list of adopted key skills denominators was used (see Table 10.1).

(B) *TEMPORAL ESTIMATION*

Student and teacher time is a limited resource, so it must also be considered; using this tool, it will be easy to measure the effort devoted to each activity in order to optimize course schedules.

This part of the template allows the teacher to know how long the activity will take, not only in terms of the student, but also in terms of him/herself. It therefore includes the time the teacher needs to prepare the activity, the time s/he will invest in doing the activity with the students, and the time required to assess and evaluate the activity. It is important to note in each case if this time is needed in each instance, or just the first time the activity is undertaken (that is, if the activity can be reused without substantial changes in the same subject or even in other courses or with other groups of students).

Table 10.3 Example of learning activity: exam practice test

Activity denomination:	Exam practice test
Courses-subjects-etc. where it is adequate/important/ applicable	ALL. Especially adequate for subjects where the exam includes a resolution of some kind of complex problem.
Activity description	
Aim and description	This activity will take place during the last class before the exam. 1. The class will be divided into groups and different problems will be assigned to each one. 2. Each group will solve the assigned problem taking into account that all the members have to understand the process and agree with the given solution. 3. The groups exchange their solutions. 4. Each group will correct (using a different pen colour) the solutions given by the other groups. They will mark the problem following the guide provided by the teacher. 5. Each student (individually) will assess him/herself about the teamwork and will assess his/her peers.
Main skill developed	Teamwork.
Other skills developed	Oral Communication, Written Communication. Critical Thinking. Problem-Solving.
Temporal estimation	
Teacher working time	First time: Creation of assessment guides for each problem. Subsequent times: The duration of the activity in the classroom.
Student working time in class	The necessary time to solve the problems.
Student working time outside the classroom	10 min (self-assessment and peer-assessment).
Materials needed	
Documentation for the student	Problem wordings (several must be given in order to make the students see different ones and to correct a problem they have not done). Assessment guides of the problems given.
Documentation for the teacher	Completed key skills templates. Student list.
Other requirements needed for the activity:	– (E.g. kinds of materials, technical requirements, lecture room, number of students, etc.)
Assessment	
Key skill level indicator (what is going to be assessed?)	The attachment of the problem provided by the teacher. The attachment of the solution obtained. The attachment of the solution proposed by their peers. The attachment of the analysis and assessment of the solution.
Assessment procedures	The final mark would be obtained following these guidelines:

(continued)

Table 10.3 (continued)

Activity denomination:	Exam practice test
How to assess it?	Each student's group will assess the solution proposed by other groups following the provided guidelines.
	Each student will assess him/herself.
	Each student will assess the members of his/her team.
	The teacher will attach a specific weight to each of these assessments.
Assessment tools	Assessment guide for each problem.
	Self-assessment template for the activity.
	Peer- assessment template for the team members.
Additional remarks	By automating the data collection of the assessments (of problems, self and peer), the time invested by the teacher will be reduced.

We must also differentiate between the time invested by the teacher and the time invested by the student, as well as inform the student how long it will take him/her, not only in the classroom but also beyond its confines.

(C) *NECESSARY MATERIAL*

Every activity needs some material to be carried out. Materials such as the documentation needed by the student or the teacher must be prepared. We also have to think about other requirements: technical requirements, kinds of material, type of lecture room, number of students, etc.

Of course, as this work was done with the purpose of developing key skills in our students, the academic staff must rely on the key skill templates (Table 10.2). These templates should have a description providing all the information the teacher and the student need to understand each competency. Looking at them, they will know what they need to do to develop each skill and, therefore, what should be assessed. By providing an adequate description of the skill, the academic staff and the students will know which capacities they are going to develop during the course.

(D) *TEACHING RESOURCES TO ASSESS KEY SKILLS*

A list of consensual names for the transferable skill sets and a self-explanatory table that should be completed for each one of the skills has been explained in the previous sections. Those tables should be used as instruments and guides to implement key skills in the subjects taught, and to become familiar with several procedures and tools to assess and mark the skill level acquired by the students.

As Goodrich Andrade said in *Understanding Rubrics* (1997), a rubric is a scoring tool that lists the assessment criteria for a piece of work, or "what counts" (for example, purpose, organization, details, voice, and mechanics are often what count in a piece of writing); it also articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor.

Looking to the description given of each skill in these tables, and with the help of the relevant literature (4Teachers.org 2000), we can develop templates to help to assess students, creating when possible rubrics such as the one shown in Table 10.4.

Table 10.4 Example of a rubric to assess responsibility and team work

	Indicators	4	3	2	1
Responsibility	Work execution	The work has been done and it is exactly what was demanded.	The work has been done and I have verified that it is adequate to what was demanded.	The work has been done and I haven't revised it.	The work has not been done.
	Pride	The work reflects this student's best efforts.	The work reflects a strong effort from this student.	The work reflects some effort from this student but not enough to complete it.	The work has not been done or it does not reflect any effort from this student.
	Work organization	Routinely uses time well throughout the project to ensure things get done on time.	Usually uses time well throughout the project, but may have procrastinated on one thing.	Tends to procrastinate, but always gets things done by the deadlines.	Rarely gets things done by the deadlines.
	Preparedness	Brings needed materials to class and is always ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials to class and is ready to work.	Almost always brings needed materials but sometimes needs to settle down and get to work.	Often forgets needed materials or is rarely ready to get to work.
Teamwork	Task achievement	Focuses on the task and anticipates the delivery to encourage the discussion between the members of the group.	Focuses on the task and what needs to be done some of the time. Other group members must sometimes nag, prod, and remind to keep this person on-task.	Focuses sometimes on the task and what needs to be done. Other members of the group must remind this person to keep on-task.	Lets others do the work.

Time management	Routinely uses time well throughout the project to ensure things get done on time giving new and good ideas to the work group. Group does not have to adjust deadlines or work responsibilities because of this person's procrastination.	Usually uses time well but may have procrastinated on one or two things. Sometimes the group has to adjust deadlines or work due to this person's procrastination.	Tends to procrastinate, sometimes things are not done by the deadlines.	Rarely gets things done by the deadlines.
Involvement	Always has a positive attitude of collaboration and support between the members of the team. Integrates everyone in the group to have full participation.	Usually has a positive attitude of collaboration and support between the members of the team. Usually listens and supports the efforts of others and participates in the discussions.	Rarely has a positive attitude. Rarely listens and supports the efforts of others. May refuse to participate.	S/he doesn't do his/her tasks. Refuses to participate.
Work climate	The team member actively listens to others. (S)he is never publicly critical of the project or the work of others. Actively looks to create a good atmosphere. Tries to keep people working well together.	The team member listens to others. (S)he sometimes is publicly critical of the project or the work of others. (S)he tries to create a good atmosphere.	Often (s)he doesn't listen to other members. (S)he is sometimes publicly critical of the project. Sometimes (s)he is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to each other. Often is not a good team player. Does not try to solve the problems to create a good climate for work.

It must be emphasized that these rubrics are to be used as flexible templates for the teacher to assess the skill. An example of some indicators for two skills is given in Table 10.4, but broader templates with a long list of items for each competency should be developed, in order to cover a wider range of possibilities, situations and subjects. In this way, for each activity proposed by a teacher in a particular subject, (s)he will choose the indicators (s)he considers suitable to assess the skills that are going to be developed. In addition, in the rubrics designed, we propose a classification of levels (initial, intermediate and advanced) in order to allow the academic staff to decide which indicators must be used in his/her subjects.

When the elaboration of a rubric for a specific skill is too difficult, it is possible to make a simpler template where the score could be selected from 1 (never/nothing) to 4 (always). An example of one of those templates is shown in Table 10.5. It is even possible to use a checklist. In any case, the final mark for the skill will be the average obtained between all the items assessed.

(E) *PROCEDURES TO ASSESS KEY SKILLS*

The templates used to evaluate the skills can be completed by the student individually (self-assessment) for each activity, or they can be completed by his/her peers (peer assessement). The staff can review those assessments, including their own evaluation. Another possible modality is that the teacher evaluates directly, without peer- or self-assessment.

In the case of teamwork assessment, the procedure will be a little different. We propose completing each evaluation template after each session by having the student carry out a self-assessment and an assessment of the other team members in an anonymous way (peer-assessment). Then, in the next team session, the group will determine an assessment for the team as a whole and for each member of the group. In this way, each student will obtain four marks (two individual marks, self and peers, a team mark and the team self-assessment), and the staff will be responsible for assigning the weight of each one in the overall evaluation.

The most important part of skill assessment evaluation will be not the mark obtained, but the feedback given relative to it. In this way, the teacher should ask his/her students to detect difficulties and areas of improvement, to enumerate positive aspects of the work done and to propose improvements for subsequent sessions. The goal is that the students think about their own learning process.

10.5 Conclusion

Having studied the existing resources for key skills assessment, it is clear that there remains much work to be done. We show here a guide to the implementation of generic skills, particularly giving assessment criteria to readers, as well as grade descriptors and marking schemes of transferable skills, besides providing orientation to integrate guidance and feedback to the students.

Table 10.5 Example of teamwork assessment

0-never
1-sometimes
2-almost always
3-always
Team work
Shows respect for others.
The team member actively listens to others.
There is a full participation in the elaboration of a work plan.
The team member avoids working separately or competitively.
The team member understands and values the opinion of the others.
Integrates everyone in the group to have full participation.
Informs the group of all necessary information.
The discussion moves forward with succeeding points building on previous ones.
Shares information from research or experience.
Works in a cooperative way.
Understands and agrees on goals and objectives.
Asks for ideas and opinions for problem-solving and decision-making.
Member resources are fully recognized and utilized.
Avoids dominant attitudes.
The team experiments with different ways of doing things and is creative in its approach.
Acts with tolerance.
Communication between members is open and participative.
Encourages group interaction.
Maintains a positive atmosphere.
There are effective procedures to guide team functioning.
(S)he supports the procedures to teamwork.
Public recognition of the others' hard work.
(S)he realizes that the job could not be done without the cooperation and contribution of everyone else.
(S)he gives preference to the group objectives before personal ones.
There is full participation in leadership: leadership roles are shared by the members.
Structures and organizes ideas well and communicates them effectively to the others.
Explains his/her individual job to the others.
There is a high degree of trust among members, and conflict is dealt with openly and worked through.
Oral and written communication is correct.
(S)he is involved and committed to the accomplishment of tasks.
Disagreements do not lead to defensive reactions.
Takes responsibility for the job done (well or badly).
Participates actively in the fair distribution of jobs not completed in the session and follows up as needed.
The group often evaluates its functioning and processes.

With the key skills that should be developed in mind, each teacher must think about the actual development of those skill sets, and possible proposals for improvement from his/her own disciplinary perspective. To assist in this process, a general template for classroom activities has been given. This template will help academic staff to think

about ways of developing key skills within their own academic disciplines. Having several templates will make achieving EHEA aims easier and more feasible.

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Chapter 11
Technologies for Performance-Based Assessment

Marta González-Lloret

11.1 Introduction

There is a clear need for the use of innovative technologies in the competence-based model for language learning. Communicating in another language, together with a basic competence in technology and digital competence, are three of the eight key competencies identified by the European Parliament in 2006 as Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in the European Framework. In 2004, the ANECA conducted a survey with 4,786 university students of languages, linguistics and literature programs about the importance of several competencies and the extent to which those competencies had been developed in their courses. The results show that a competence such as "basic computer skills" (*habilidades básicas de manejo del ordenador*) was chosen as the least developed of all 30 competencies, although the students considered it the 17th most important skill. This chapter proposes that the foreign/second language classroom is an optimal environment to remediate this disparity, not only in the activities that can be integrated in the classroom, but also through the use of technology for language assessment in a competence-based language curriculum.

11.2 Technology and Digital Competence in the FL/SL Classroom

The inclusion of technology in the language classroom is becoming increasingly invisible to the students and the curriculum. As Warschauer (1999) predicted more than a decade ago, "The truly powerful technologies are so integrated as to be invisible.

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We have no 'BALL' (book-assisted language learning), and no 'LALL' (library-assisted language learning). When we have no 'CALL', computers will have taken their place as a natural and powerful part of the language learning process". The new generations of students are "digital natives" (Prensky 2001). Most grew up surrounded by technology, and tools such as blogs, wikis, and iPods. These are cultural practices that students already engage in regularly outside of class (Kern 2006). However, this may not be the case for all students in all countries, and even when students are computer literate (or even experts), they may lack other important 'electronic literacies' (Warschauer 2003).

According to Warschauer (2003) and Shetzer and Warschauer (2000) there are four different types of literacies involved in knowing how to effectively use technology: computer literacy, information literacy, multimedia literacy, and computer-mediated communication (CMC) literacy. Computer literacy refers to the skills necessary to effectively use a computer, in the sense of the machine itself as well as the applications in it (be able to turn on the computer, open programs, use navigation tools effectively in a browser, use the tools in word-processing software, upload and download files, etc.). Information literacy refers to the ability to "locate, evaluate, and use information" (Warschauer 2003: 113). This is an essential skill in a world of information powered by the internet, which is constantly and rapidly growing, and where there are few filters for information.[1] The third type of literacy is multimedia literacy. Multimedia literacy is the ability to incorporate different types of media, such as pictures, audio, and movies as part of a text. As Warschauer (2003) points out, the importance of acquiring multimedia literacy goes beyond the mere acquisition of the skill. It is an important "force for social equality" (or inequality). Those that possess this literacy will be "the producers of tomorrow's multimedia content" while the rest will be "passive recipients" (2003: 116). Lastly, the fourth literacy is CMC literacy, which allows users to write and understand effectively online communication, including the knowledge of "netiquette" and rules of politeness of this type of engagement. Although not included by Warschauer, the competence to communicate via mobile devices could also be included here. As responsible educators, it is important that we facilitate our students' acquisition of these literacies. As foreign/second language practitioners, we can do this by incorporating technologies that promote them in the language curriculum, especially in a competence-based language curriculum, and, as I advocate here, as part of language assessment.

11.3 Performance-Based Assessment in the Foreign/Second Language Classroom

In a competence-based model for language learning, performance-based assessment is the logical choice in a well-developed, integrated, and pedagogically sound curriculum. The term "competence-based" derives from the American counterpart

[1] According to the Miniwatts Marketing Group (2010), the Internet has grown 393% in the last 9 years, to more than 206 million sites –just those indexed by the major servers (Netcraft 2010).

"performance-based" assessment, which was popular in the 1970s in alternative educational circles before becoming standardized through government policy in the UK 10 years later (Wolf 1995).[2] Performance-based assessment evaluates whether a person demonstrates achievement of specified outcomes. These outcomes may refer to abilities, skills, or expertise required to complete a certain job or task. According to Elliot Eisner (1999), "performance assessment is the most important development in evaluation since the invention of the short answer test". Although 'performance' may have different meanings, in this chapter it is taken to mean "a relevant performance in a (relatively) authentic and often work or study-related situation" (Council of Europe 2001: 187). According to Brown and Hudson (1998), performance assessment has three main requirements: first, examinees need to perform a task; second, the task must be as authentic and as like real life as possible; and third, the performance is scored by qualified, trained raters. According to the authors, performance assessment "measures productive language use as well as the interaction of receptive and productive skills" and it can be used to observe the interaction between several skills (1998: 661). A final point to be considered is that L2 performance tests can take many forms, including quite traditional tasks such as essay writing, interviews, or problem-solving tasks (Brown and Hudson 1998). In this chapter, several technology-mediated performance assessment tests are suggested.

Recently, performance-based assessment has received a lot of attention in the language learning community, especially in association with Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), a methodological approach to language learning based on a curriculum in which learning objectives are structured around 'tasks', that is, things that students learn to *do* with language (Long and Norris 2000; Norris 2002). TBLT emphasizes assessment that evaluates students' performance of the tasks in the L2, rather than their knowledge about the language (Norris 2002). In this sense, performance assessment is a valuable tool to measure students' ability to respond to real-life language tasks, it is more valid in estimating students' language abilities than traditional standardized multiple-choice tests, and can predict students' future performance in real life when encountering the same language situation (Brown and Hudson 1998). However, there are still basic questions to be answered about performance-based assessment such as: How do the task, the scoring method, the context, and the assessment used affect the performance? (Norris 2002); Can we make predictions about future language use outside of the test?; and How does the manner in which students interact with the task modify the assessment outcomes? (Bachman 2002). Is this form of assessment valid and reliable? Research suggests that the assessment task in itself (the task complexity, difficulty, purpose, and rating criteria) largely affects performance (Elder et al. 2002), as does the actual use of the test (Norris et al. 2002). In addition, task characteristics seem to be difficult to predict and control

[2] In this chapter, performance-based and competence-based will be used interchangeably with the same meaning.

(Brindley and Slatyer 2002; Elder et al. 2002), and the context and conditions under which the assessment is performed may have an effect on the results as well as on students' perception of the task (Elder et al. 2002; Wolf 2001). Based on some of these findings, researchers in this field are calling for a more integrated approach to performance-based testing that pays attention to both tasks and constructs, so as to evaluate both the task (what the students can or cannot do) and their "capacity for language use" (Bachman 2002: 471), as well as to form a more complex model of evaluation that incorporates not only the task but also the students, the context, and other evidence needed to construct a valid and reliable assessment (Mislevy et al. 2002).

One of the major challenges of performance-based assessment is the creation of performance criteria and rating scales that allow the description of what the students can actually do and to what degree they can do it. As has been pointed out by Wolf (2001), the variability of the contexts where assessment happens means that this context needs to be taken into account when evaluating the students, and choosing from a fixed set of descriptors is not as straightforward as it is meant to be. A more sophisticated set of scoring criteria may be needed depending on varying inferential demands (Brown et al. 2002). Some of these challenges of complex performance assessment are not, according to Mislevy et al. (2002), exclusive to the language-learning field but apply to the field of educational assessment in general (e.g., Wiggins 1993; Wolf et al. 1991). In an effort to solve the practical problems of incorporating performance-based assessment into the language curriculum, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) (Council of Europe 2001) provides guidelines for the elaboration of assessment such as the use of communicative activities, which should include different types of discourses, contexts, registers, etc., to ensure the "generalisable competencies evidenced by that performance" (2001: 180). As for the evaluation criteria, it is recommended to use descriptors (in a scale, checklist, or as a grid) that target not only what learners can do, but also how well they can do it. In addition, the assessment should elicit evidence not only of the relevant linguistic command, but also of the sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies necessary to perform the task.[3] Parallel to this push for integrating performance-based assessment as part of the foreign language curriculum, an interest for technology-based assessment is developing. Although already in the mid-1980s an interest for technology and performance-based assessment existed (Hauptman et al. 1985; Stansfield 1986), research on the use of technologies for language testing has grown mainly from the computerization of more traditional methods of assessment, especially around computer adaptive testing (CAT). As Chalhoub-Deville (2001a: 95) states, "even today, CBT performance-based assessment continues to be a challenge".

[3] See also, the Dutch CEFR Construct Project (http:// www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/cefgrid) for a grid, which can be used to characterize tests of reading and listening in a way which is consistent with the CEFR. See also Brown et al. (2002) for an extended account of how to develop performance criteria and rating scales for a task-based language performance assessment.

11.4 Performance-Based Assessment Through Technology[4]

Technology must be incorporated into the curriculum with a clear pedagogic purpose. In the L2 classroom, students can learn to use new tools in an active and experiential manner by engaging with and through technologies while engaged in language learning. As Vanmontfort (1999, cited in van den Branden et al. 2002) points out, even learners with few computer skills can learn a language as well as acquire basic computer literacy through computer-based, task-based tasks, as long as the interface is user-friendly. The potential of new technologies for language learning is well documented and outside the scope of this chapter. The reader can refer to major publications dedicated to this topic such as *CALICO Journal* (https://calico.org), *Language Learning & Technology* (http://msu.llt.edu), *ReCALL Journal* (http://www.eurocall-languages.org/recall/), and *System* (http://www.sciencedirect.com).

There are a small number of published examples of technology used for language performance-based assessment. One such example is by van den Branden and colleagues (2002), who present the development of a task-based test to assess the minimal Dutch language proficiency required to enter vocational training in the industry sector (catering, electricity, welding, construction, etc.). The authors explain that a computerized assessment was chosen because it offered an alternative to costly teacher training on assessment development and rating; it could be administered independently from language course and language teacher in a uniform way for all students; and it offered the opportunity to virtually simulate the training environment that the students would encounter. The test includes audio, video and written instructions. Students are presented with one situation (via a short video) and then asked several questions by audio which they need to answer by clicking on items on the screen (no written answers are demanded, since writing was not a skill that was showed as required during the needs analysis they conducted before the development of the test). For example, students watch a video of an instructor providing them with the tasks that they need to do during a day in training, at the same time as being able to see a written schedule on the screen. Afterwards, the students need to listen to questions about their schedule (what do you have to do from 8 to 10?) and answer them by clicking on a picture. The authors faced three challenges in developing the test: (1) the need for a software able to deliver a task-based test; (2) the fact that their examinees were not technologically trained and the potential problems that testing complex abilities and language through a computer may present; and (3) the tension between the intended uses for test outcomes and how to best interpret the test. The piloting and subsequent analysis of the test brought them to the conclusion

[4] This chapter does not cover computerized based testing (CBT), which is used as a replacement of pen and paper tests, usually focusing on writing, reading and grammar, since this type of assessment is generally not performance-based. See Chapelle (2009) and Chalhoub-Deville (2001a, b) for a review of research and Goodwin-Jones (2001) for tools and applications for the creation of web-tests.

that performance-based assessment has great potential (especially because of the multimedia possibilities), as long as it is based on needs analysis, the interface is as simple as possible, and the predictive validity of the test is checked by comparing students' scores with their level of real-world performance. The authors also point out the limitations of their test in measuring speaking proficiency, and warn against using this type of test as a gate-keeping mechanism. They suggest combining the test with other evaluation procedures (interviews, motivation assessment, etc.), as well as its use as a "stepping stone in the learning process of teachers as much as of learners" (2002: 451).

Another example of a large-scale test that appears to be moving towards performance-based assessment is DIALANG. Although DIALANG is not performance-based in nature, some of the new testing items that are being incorporated are moving towards performance-based assessment (mainly for the assessment of listening skills). Developed as a diagnostic test by a European Union Project, DIALANG provides free access to self-testing, which provides the test taker with rich results about their level on the Council of Europe scale, as well as very detailed feedback. It provides suggestions of what the achieved level means for most skills; what the test implies about the extent of the person's word knowledge; feedback on the self-assessment portion of the test; and detailed feedback on correct and incorrect answers.[5] Two examples of new items in development are (1) the 'Interactive Picture with Text' assessment, which evaluates students' listening skills by asking them to find a friend following audio-directions; and (2) a hospital map, and the 'Indirect Speaking with Audio Clips' assessment, which requires that students listen to a recorded phone message from a cable TV company and then select a message to leave from four audio possibilities. Although these tests are limited in their ability to test different skills and are still far from being authentic tasks, their inclusion in DIALANG seems to evince the increasing interest in performance-based assessment.

Although the integration of technology is still a challenge for commercially developed performance-based tests, large testing corporations offer computer-based and internet-based versions of their tests, which include testing of L2 productive skills. The computerized TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), first offered on-line in 2005, includes a written component, which, according to Weigle (2002), offers increased authenticity for test takers who nowadays produce most of their writing, especially academic writing, on a computer. It is true that test takers' computer abilities may be a potentially mediating factor influencing the assessment outcome (Myers 2002), and so more research is needed in this area. However, as the use of computers progresses in everyday aspects of test takers' lives, the authenticity of the computer environment should play a diminishing role in test-taking, naturally replacing pen-and-paper tests, in the same way that they are replacing pen-and-pencil classroom activities. Since we are not at that point in time yet, it is important to

[5] See Alderson (2005) for more information on the test development and its validity, reliability and calibration.

remember that if assessments are going to be delivered through innovative technology, neither the structures of traditional tests, nor comparing scores with paper-based ones, can be valid protocols, but rather that new constructs need to be devised so that we can make inferences about students' skills to handle electronic information (Chapelle 2009).

The rest of this chapter proposes a few tools that could be used to integrate technology in performance-based assessment. These tests need to be investigated for validity, reliability, and washback (as done for pen-and-pencil forms of assessment), taking into account that validity and reliability are not considered static qualities of the test instruments and procedures, but rather "associated with the particular use of tests, and as such, they are qualities that are constantly in flux" (Brown et al. 2002: 14).

11.5 Tools and Technologies for Performance-Based Assessment[6]

In the individual language classroom, large-scale performance-based tests may be inaccessible, or inappropriate for the curriculum. In this case, there are alternatives that language teachers can use as performance-based language tests. The ones proposed here are just a few examples. Performance assessment includes the evaluation of receptive and productive language abilities, since more than one skill is usually required to complete a task in an authentic situation. These would include language and computer/informational skills.

11.5.1 Internet Searches and WebQuests

Searching on the internet for information requires a set of reading skills different from those used when reading on paper. Reading on the internet is not linear, but rather dictated by hyperlinks and the interests of the reader. It involves being able to effectively navigate the internet by clicking on hyperlinked text (computer literacy); find information, understand it and judge its value (information literacy); and make sense of other semiotic multimodal discourses (multimedia literacy). Reading on the internet in search of information is without a doubt an activity on the rise (220% growth between 1999 and 2004, according to Rich 2008) and an authentic task that our L2 students perform daily. Searches on the internet can oscillate from closely guided to completely free, where students follow the search through multiple texts until the desired information is obtained. Webquests, consisting of a closely guided search activity, take students through a set of websites chosen previously by the teacher in order to answer a set of questions designed to promote collaborative work, higher thinking skills, and information management (see http://webquest.sdsu.edu for

[6] See Appendix 1 for a list of the tools with links to more information.

more information). On the other hand, a completely free search would involve the use of search engines in the target language such as Google, Yahoo, Bing, or Altavista to find relevant information.

A performance-based assessment of this type would evaluate several skills, depending on how the assessment is developed and what type of task is being assessed. An example of performance-based assessment involving L2 reading and writing skills could ask the students to find a book for a person based on a given profile (age, gender, characteristic, likes and dislikes, etc.) using the Amazon website in the target language (or any other searchable bookseller site). In order to do this, students would need to demonstrate basic internet reading skills as well as computer skills (typing, clicking, and navigating) and information literacy skills (judging the value of the information presented to them), all while performing a real-world task. This assessment can be paired up with the evaluation of L2 writing skills by asking the students to write a birthday card for the person for whom they have "bought" the book that includes the reasons why the book was selected. See Appendix 2 for a possible grading criterion for this test.

11.5.2 Interactive Maps

Being able to read a paper map in the target language is commonly used for performance-based assessment. Although paper maps are without doubt still useful and widely used, travelers in this day and age use interactive maps, such as Google maps, Yahoo maps or a GPS navigator to find directions and their way around a foreign city. A real-world performance assessment would ask students to find directions and their way from point A to point B in one of these interactive maps, a particularly challenging task for languages with non-roman alphabets. Several skills would be included in such performance-based tests, since students would have to demonstrate L2 reading skills as well as computer and multimodal skills (being able to enter the correct information, move around the map, increase and decrease its size, change views, etc.). Alternatively, readings skills can be combined with written or spoken skills by asking the students to use the interactive map to prepare a guide (written) or give advice to a friend (spoken) including interesting places to sightsee and visit in the city between point A and B. An alternative task for L2 listening assessment would consist of following directions in oral form to travel from point A to point B while navigating the 'street view' in Google Earth, which provides the students with three-dimensional, realistic views of the place where the simulated task is taking place.

11.5.3 Computer-Mediated Communication

Computer-mediated forms of communication, especially text-based CMC and blogs, are one of the most suitable tools for L2 writing performance assessment.

Email writing can be used as performance-based assessment at all language levels: from writing simple messages to family or friends to more complicated messages to teachers, or even sophisticated, high-stakes email interactions that require different registers, as suggested for assessment by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Synchronous text messaging as a form of L2 assessment involves reading and writing skills, as well as knowledge of the rules and regulations proper to the medium (CMC literacy), and knowledge about the pragmatic and cultural practices of the target language. Participation in an internet forum (such as Google groups or Yahoo groups) may easily demonstrate students' competence in the L2, as may the completion of a project on which students are working from remote locations with exert speakers of the target language and culture (see Appel 1999; Belz and Thorne 2006; Furstenberg et al. 2001; O'Dowd and Ware 2009; O'Rourke 2008 for ideas on telecollaborative projects).

Finally, blogging has become one of the most popular forms of internet writing. According to Sifry's (2007) *State of the Blogosphere* report, 70 million weblogs existed in 2007, and about 120,000 new weblogs are created worldwide each day. Sites such as Fanfiction.net attract writers of all ages to author pieces about multiple topics or reinvent the characters and plots of popular TV shows. These sites provide opportunities for performance-based L2 writing assessment in which students are required to collaborate, persuade, contend and develop ideas as individuals and as part of a group in a public arena. Rather than asking students to write another meaningless piece on "your last vacation" for the assessment of their L2 writing, teachers can encourage them to write, revise, edit, and post writing pieces in these real-world writing spaces, and assess them on their success as real L2 writers.

11.5.4 Audio and Video Conferencing

Audio and video web conferencing tools (i.e. Skype, AIM for Windows, MSN, Yahoo Messenger, Google Talk, etc.) can be used to assess L2 listening and speaking skills in an authentic, task-based manner. An L2 performance-based assessment would ask students to conduct a job interview in the L2 via one of these tools, a realistic scenario which frequently occurs in academic settings with a tight budget. Such an assessment would evaluate students' L2 listening and speaking abilities in an interview setting, their computer skills (be able to open the program, connect with the other parties, set your camera and microphone for proper functioning, etc.), as well as the sociopragmatic and cultural competences associated with the medium and the context.

Several web-conferencing applications (i.e. Adobe Acrobat Connect, Elluminate, Didmdim) integrate file sharing (graphics, text, PowerPoint) with remote audiences. These tools can be used for the assessment of L2 presentation skills, an important and realistic task that more and more academics choose to perform when they register to virtually attend and present at conferences via web.

11.5.5 Virtual Environments

Lastly, another innovative possibility for performance-based assessment is the use of virtual environments. Virtual or synthetic worlds are three-dimensional spaces where people interact (by writing, speaking or both) through avatars (a user's representation of himself/herself). Virtual environments and simulations can offer a setting where students are able to perform real-world tasks to demonstrate their language skills as well as their pragmatic and cultural knowledge. An example of a synthetic environment with a pedagogic purpose, and which also includes an assessment component, is Croquetlandia (Sykes 2008). In this environment, created for the teaching and assessment of Spanish L2 pragmatics, students navigate a virtual university in a virtual land, where they need to perform speech acts such as requests, rejections, apologies, etc. The environment gathers data from the students' interactions with the program avatars to assess their language performance as well as their digital skills. The task of navigating in a virtual environment to perform a task in the L2 assesses students' oral or written ability (depending whether the task calls for voice or text interaction), computer and multimedia skills (navigation of the environment) and sociocultural and pragmatic skills (according to the context, interlocutors, and environment).

11.6 Conclusion and Future Directions for Performance-Based FL/SL Assessment

This chapter has illustrated how skills that are considered essential in a competence-based model of education, such as electronic literacies (computer, information, multimedia and CMC) and second language ability, can be combined into the assessment of a language learning curriculum. The educational move towards competence-based models of teaching, such as TBLT, requires forms of assessment in agreement with such curricula, performance assessment being one of the most popular. Although the testing literature has suggested potential disadvantages of performance assessment (see for example Eisner 1999; Jacoby and McNamara 1999), several advantages have also been identified: it can be designed to simulate authentic, contextualized language use accurately, it may compensate for negative effects associated with traditional standardized tests, and it may have a positive washback effect on pedagogy and curriculum design (Brown et al. 2002).

Although not many commercially-available performance-based tests that include technology exist yet, there are several innovative technologies that can be used creatively for the development of realistic and authentic technology-mediated performance assessment. This chapter has presented a few of these technologies and several examples of how they can be employed.

Since technology-mediated performance assessment is a new and largely unexplored field, it still requires much research. We need more investigation of models

for the creation and delivery of performance-based assessment (Mislevy et al. 2002), as well as studies in the area of computer-assisted language testing (CALT) that look at how different types of multimedia affect the input, response types, and contextualization of the test, plus the inferences that we can make from the results. Another important line of research needs to investigate suitable assessment criteria for technology-facilitated assessment (Kol and Schcolnik 2008). These criteria would allow test raters to evaluate not only language competence, but also electronic literacies and sociocultural competence.

A final point is that as technology evolves, new possibilities and challenges will arise. The improvement of voice recognition software will open new horizons for L2 speaking assessment and the use (or not) of human raters (Chapelle 2009). New technologies will offer new possibilities, such as helping make performance assessment more realistic, virtually interacting with intelligent avatars and immersing the examinee in a 3D virtual environment to perform a task. By the time this chapter sees the light, some of these tools will have evolved and new technologies will offer new possibilities for technology-mediated L2 performance assessment.

Appendix 1: Tools and Technologies for FL/SL Performance-Based Assessment

Amazon online book store http://www.amazon.com

Blogging Tools

Blogger http://www.blogger.com/
WordPress http://wordpress.com/
Moveable Type http://www.movabletype.org/
Blogs2Teach http://www.blogs2teach.net/
weblogs4schools http://www.ict4schools.info/
The modern languages blog http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/cs/blogs/mfle/
Eslblogs http://eslblogs.org/
Blog-EFL http://blog-efl.blogspot.com/

Map Tools

Google Earth map http://earth.google.com/
Google maps http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&tab=wl
Yahoo maps http://maps.yahoo.com/

Public Forums

Google groups http://groups.google.com
Yahoo groups http://groups.yahoo.com/
Funfiction.net http://www.fanfiction.net/

Synchronous CMC

Wimba http://www.wimba.com/
Yahoo Messenger http://messenger.yahoo.com
Skype http://www.skype.com
AIM http://dashboard.aim.com/aim/
MSN http://www.msn.com
Google Talk http://www.google.com/talk/
Web-conferencing applications
Elluminate http://www.elluminate.com
Dimdim http://www.dimdim.com
Adobe Connect Pro http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/
WebQuests http://webquest.sdsu.edu

Appendix 2 Example of Performance Criteria and Rating Scale for: "Finding the Right Book in Amazon"

	Inadequate		Able		Adept
Decriptors	Examinee does not find an appropriate book OR Examinee selects a book that is not appropriate for the given profile.	Examinee performance contains elements from *inadequate* descriptors and some from *able* descriptors.	Examinee selects a book that is somehow appropriate for the given profile (although some characteristics may not be totally appropriate).	Examinee performance contains elements from *able* descriptors and some from *adept* descriptors.	Examinee selects a book that is totally appropriate for the given profile.
Rating	1	2	3	4	5
Decriptors	Examinee writes a birthday card without enough information about the selection of the book OR The card contains many language mistakes that impede comprehension.	Examinee performance contains elements from *inadequate* descriptors and some from *able* descriptors	Examinee writes a birthday card defending his/her reasons to chose the book as the present, WITH acceptable language use BUT The card is missing essential sociopragmatic components.	Examinee performance contains elements from *able* descriptors and some from *adept* descriptors.	Examinee writes a sociopragmatic appropriate birthday card, indicating clearly the reasons for the selection of the book as a present and no language mistakes.
Rating	1	2	3	4	5

Table structure adapted from Brown et al. (2002)

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Chapter 12
Teaching and Learning Languages in the Era of Globalisation

Karen M. Lauridsen

12.1 The Young Europeans of the Twenty-First Century

One of my former students is Estonian, but he had decided that he wanted to complete his first degree in Denmark, studying his preferred subject through the medium of English in an internationally oriented programme. Before even entering this programme, he had to document his advanced language skills in English, learned in his home country, by achieving a certain level in one of the appropriate internationally recognised language tests (IELTS, TOEFL, etc.). And he did. When he came to Denmark, he embarked on a language course, learning Danish to a level which allowed him to live and study in Denmark for 3 years, and in his third year of study, when he spent an exchange semester in Greece, he learnt 'survival' Greek. Why do I tell this story? Because young Europeans learn languages with a purpose; for most of them, learning languages is a means to an end. This Estonian student chose to apply for an internationally oriented first-cycle (Bachelor) degree programme taught in English in order to enhance his opportunities on the European, or indeed international, labour market when he graduated. In order to do so, he had to learn English: all five skills in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to an advanced C1 level before he even enrolled at university (Council of Europe 2001). His learning of a certain, less advanced level of Danish and Greek was prompted by his wish to communicate within the local community while abroad, thus at one and the same time benefitting from the local as well as the international community and the cross-cultural and intercultural exchanges they afford. When he graduated, he had not only prepared himself for a professional career using the subject-specific competencies learned in his degree programme, but certainly also acquired a set of linguistic and intercultural competences that, by all accounts, will serve him well in the labour market.

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It seems fair to assume that no one reading as far as the last chapter of this book will contest the basic tenet that learning foreign languages is a valuable asset for a young European entering the labour market after graduating from a higher education (HE) programme. But let us look a little further into the learner's perspective: Why does it make sense for the individual to learn foreign languages? And when it comes to teaching languages, what can we learn from the contents of the book, and what is still to come?

12.2 Why Climb a Mountain?

The celebrated mountaineer Sir George Mallory is said to have set his sights on climbing Mount Everest simply because it was 'there'. In the same vein, some students learn languages simply because it is an option. But just like the fact that most people who learn to ski do so with the intention of going skiing, most students who choose to learn foreign languages will do so for a reason. They may have become interested in foreign languages and choose to study languages to become language professionals (translators, interpreters, cultural mediators, foreign language communicators, etc.), language teachers or even linguists, making the study of languages their professional goals. Other students, however, study languages in addition to another subject, as part of a programme within another subject area or even in addition to a full academic programme in order to prepare for living and/or working in a multilingual context whether in their home country or abroad.

As Guy Haug points out in his preface to this book, some students study through the language of their host country, but an increasing number of students choose to study through the medium of English (Wächter and Maiworm 2008). This, as the story of the Estonian student above indicates, does not necessarily mean that they do not learn foreign languages other than English; however, when they choose to do so, more often than not it serves a specific purpose in a lifelong learning perspective. For instance, if the Estonian student had chosen to stay and apply for a job in Denmark after he graduated, he would have had to learn Danish to a higher degree of proficiency.

In this day and age, whether students aim to become language professionals or to learn languages to survive in a foreign country for a while, they are entitled to a concrete description of the competences they can expect to be able to achieve when they embark on a language course. This is where the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and the national qualifications frameworks deriving from it, as well as the CEFR and its 'Can Do' statements, serve us well. We are able to conceptualize and thus to describe the expected learning outcomes to potential students. The Bologna Process, and all that it has set in motion in order to move European education towards a joint European Higher Education Area, serves the purpose of making it absolutely clear to all students what competencies they can expect to develop if and when they embark on a given programme. So, the Tuning project (Tuning Educational Structures in Europe), the ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), and the

EQF, as well as the CEFR, all serve the purpose of creating a transparent framework for the individual student's learning that will allow him or her to demonstrate to others what learning outcomes s/he has been able to achieve. Because of the transparency that these joint European systems provide, documenting your competences across borders is a much more straightforward task than was previously the case. For many Europeans, mobility and migration across linguistic and cultural borders have become the order of the day, and the assessment frameworks that have been put in place at a European level allow them to provide such documentation if and when needed.

12.3 Societal Needs and Individual Competencies

When we conceptualise an educational programme, it is both a question of what we teach and how we teach it. In this respect, languages are no different from other subject areas, and the fact that we are in the process of moving from teaching a given content to facilitating student learning of specific competences has obvious implications for both content and form. Traditionally speaking, language programmes and language teaching at tertiary level have had the ultimate goal of making language graduates employable language professionals (cf. also Lauridsen and Toudic 2008), but as indicated above, there may be any number of reasons why young people choose to learn a language, and each individually determined purpose also has implications for the level this person aims to achieve, and whether s/he is aiming for the same level of proficiency in all five skills (cf. CEFR).

What we have said above focuses specifically on the learning outcomes to be achieved in a given course or full programme. What we have still not really started to discuss is how we take into account the fact that students enter tertiary education with very diverse levels of competence; this also – perhaps even particularly – applies to languages. Why is this so? With all the mobility and migration across Europe, or indeed internationally, many children and young people may have parents with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and many of them have been brought up in bilingual – or even trilingual – families and may have spent a considerable part of their pre-school, primary or secondary school years abroad, sometimes in different countries and taught through the medium of different languages. When they enter tertiary education, more often than not, they have a completely different set of competences than the students who have grown up and gone through a single national educational system. At one end of the spectrum, then, we have young people whose linguistic and intercultural competences far surpass what is expected as the entrance level to a given programme, but may (or may not) be behind their fellow students in other subject areas. At the other end of the spectrum we have those belonging to the large group of young people who, often also due to migration, are not fully literate in any language (European Commission 2010). As a modern society, we must help the latter group improve their situation, which in turn raises the question of whether this is a challenge best tackled, not in higher education, but earlier in their educational careers.

The former group, whose linguistic and intercultural competences exceed what is expected as the entrance level to a given programme, would typically be the ones applying to higher education, and the question here is how we make sure that these young people are able to benefit from already having developed some of the competences that may be the expected learning outcomes of a given programme. Take the example of the Danish student who has spent the better part of his childhood with his parents abroad and attended international schools, often taught through the medium of English. His English language and intercultural communication competencies will probably be very high and his language skills like those of a native speaker, but his Danish language competencies are not necessarily so. If he is to undertake upper-secondary education in Denmark, or if he wants to study a given university programme in Denmark (in Danish), he may need to improve his Danish competences, but he would probably not belong in a special education class. However, there do not seem to be programmes offered to this type of student. This student ought to be exempted from some classes and not have to sit some of the otherwise mandatory exams, but at the same time he may need remedial instruction in some other subjects. For instance, if he has spent all these years in Asia and has learnt English and Mandarin Chinese, an asset in many respects, he will not have any German, generally the second foreign language in Denmark and required for entrance to some HE programmes as well as in the labour market, as Germany is a major import/export partner for Denmark. The fact that students need remedial instruction in a given subject is not uncommon, of course, but we should not forget that languages and language competences differ from other subject areas because we cannot learn, we cannot generate knowledge, unless we have a language through which we are able to do so. This obviously sets language competences apart from all other subject areas.

12.4 Revitalising Language Education

In her introductory chapter to this book, Pérez Cañado talks about the need to revitalise HE language education. I could not agree more. However, this is not only a question of conceptualising the programme, defining the competences and learning outcomes to be achieved, and how to evaluate these. It also entails that we should have measures in place that enable us to recognise competences that are a result of formal as well as informal learning, and that we are able to cater for a greater diversity among students as far as their entrance levels are concerned, much more so than has previously been the case when students typically came to higher education from the same primary and secondary school systems. In the era of globalisation, in which students may learn foreign languages in many different contexts, we must be able to offer programmes that take into consideration both those who are beyond, and those who are behind, what would traditionally be expected as an entrance level; or we should adjust the expected learning outcomes depending on the entrance levels of individual students. Much more often than was previously the case, we are reminded that the one-size-fits-all' approach does not work.

The previous chapters of this book offer concrete examples of how to define and evaluate the competences in a language programme. This in itself is a major step on from the traditional focus on the teacher's teaching to the student's learning process. With the heterogeneous groups of students that we may see today and expect to see in the future, it is vital that we not only be concerned with what should be taught, but certainly also with how we teach it. The point has been made that neither the communicative language competences nor the general competences will be learned unless they are explicitly taught. This in itself requires a fresh look at both the content and form of a language programme. Furthermore, we are dealing with the so-called millennium generation, the first generation that has been brought up with information technologies and for whom Web 2.0 applications such as social media and countless others are just taken for granted. As language teachers, we therefore also need to consider students' technological literacy when we consider the way we teach languages (or anything else under the sun). This is no doubt a major challenge for many teachers who are struggling to come to grips with all the opportunities that the no-longer-quite-so-new media have to offer. Some of the chapters in this volume also address the issue of how we may exploit these new technologies in language teaching. So while the definition of competences and the implementation of competence-based programmes may be a valuable step, we cannot rest on our laurels, but need to go online so that we can meet our very diverse student audiences on their technological platforms now and in the future. This may not only help students learn better; it may also help us make language learning more attractive to young people – also those who do not necessarily see the purpose of learning languages while they are at school, and those who do not necessarily always see why languages are important. Improving language teaching so that students are able to improve their competences in a meaningful way is a never-ending challenge that we simply have to keep meeting.

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