Responding to the language needs of adult refugees in Ireland: an alternative approach to teaching and assessment

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Abstract

Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) is funded by the Irish government to provide intensive English language courses for adult immigrants with refugee status. This paper describes IILT's approach to teaching and assessment. It begins by explaining how IILT's courses are organized and summarizes the pedagogical principles that shape their content and delivery. It then describes the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and explains how IILT has used different versions of the ELP to implement its pedagogical principles and support the development of its distinctive ethos. The views of four teachers are briefly cited, together with examples of learning procedures and outcomes. Finally, the paper explains how the self-assessment culture promoted by the ELP has been accommodated to the portfolio assessment procedures of Ireland's Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC). This accommodation allows IILT's learners to receive FETAC certificates: their language learning supports their integration into Irish society but also begins to integrate them into the Irish system of further education.

1. Organizational framework

The English language courses provided by Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) comprise twenty class hours per week and ten hours of self-access learning and homework. This structure is determined by three factors: full-time courses offered by private language schools typically comprise twenty class hours per week, and this was the model the Department of Education and Science wished IILT to follow; a total commitment of thirty hours is required in order to secure learners' social welfare benefits; and common sense suggests that a maximally intensive time commitment is in the learners' best interests. This last consideration also explains why classes are continuous: the year is divided into three terms of seventeen weeks each, the school closing only for Christmas and New Year.
Most students admitted to IILT's courses have some proficiency in English. In terms of the common reference levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR),[1] their profile typically spans the upper end of A1 and the lower end of A2. A small number of students come to us with no proficiency in English (and sometimes no literacy skills in their mother tongue), and an equally small number come with good general proficiency in English but a need to develop specific skills in order to access further or higher education. Students' general educational background is infinitely variable. The majority attend classes for up to one year, after which they enter employment, mainstream education or vocational training. In 2007 a total of 906 students attended IILT's classes, 478 in Dublin and the rest in 9 other centres around Ireland. They came from 93 different countries in eastern Europe, Africa and Asia, so there was a rich mix of mother tongues, ethnic and religious backgrounds, and previous educational experience.[2]

2. Basic pedagogical principles

IILT's approach to the design and delivery of its courses is determined by three factors: the analysis of learners' communicative needs, a strong emphasis on language learning through language use, and the development of learner autonomy.

Given the great diversity of our learner population, needs analysis guides teaching and learning on a weekly if not daily basis. As individual needs are negotiated and clarified, group needs begin to emerge. Some of these can be addressed by the class as a whole – for example, all students seeking employment need to know how to interpret their pay slip; while others are more satisfactorily dealt with by dividing the class into sub-groups – for example, not all students need to focus on the same domain of employment. This approach means that there can be no pre-established learning goals, no single set of learning materials (certainly no textbooks), and no fixed pedagogical procedures. It also means that language learning is inseparable from the learners' induction into basic arrangements and practices of Irish culture and society.

The emphasis on language learning through language use coincides with the reality of the teaching/learning situation. On the one hand, IILT provides its students with an immersion environment: English is necessarily the medium of teaching and the principal means by which students communicate with one another. On the other hand, students' motivation is likely to remain positive so long as what they learn in the classroom has an immediate impact on the ease with which they can lead their lives in the English-speaking world outside.

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1 Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Available online at www.coe.int/lang.
2 IILT's activities reports for 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 are available online at www.iilt.ie

The emphasis on the development of learner autonomy arises from our belief that when learners of any age are involved in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning, they are more likely than otherwise to meet their learning targets. It is fundamental to our understanding of learner autonomy that the individuality of each student must be respected in all its complexity. But how such individuality is constructed reveals itself to teachers and other learners only gradually, through the interactive processes of analysing needs, planning a curriculum, negotiating learning activities, monitoring progress, and evaluating outcomes. Our teachers quickly discovered that to begin with, migrant language learners are no more adept at managing these reflective processes than language learners in any other domain. The processes must be mediated via a combination of examples (possible course content) and discourse modelling. One teacher working with learners at A1 level needed them to agree on thirteen topics to be covered in their 17-week course. She put on the classroom wall twenty pictures illustrating different communicative domains likely to be of relevance to her learners, gave them three pink stickers each, and asked them to put their stickers on the three domains of greatest importance to them. This inevitably prompted discussion and negotiation among the students, the different pictures and their relation to one another providing a non-linguistic scaffold. When all the students had made their choices, the thirteen pictures with the highest number of pink stickers determined the core curriculum for the term.

As IILT's student numbers increased and more teachers were employed, it made sense for teachers to share ideas, activities and materials. But it also made sense to devise a means of framing learning that could be used by all teachers and learners. We wanted to avoid unnecessary duplication of teacher effort, but also to make it easier for students to compile a detailed record of their learning: objectives and plans, vocabulary to be mastered, work in progress, work completed, reflection on the learning process, evaluation of learning outcomes. The Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio offered itself as an obvious way of meeting this requirement.

3. The European Language Portfolio: structure, functions and use

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) has three obligatory components: a language passport, a language biography, and a dossier. The language passport summarizes the owner's linguistic identity and his or her experience of learning and using languages other than the mother tongue; it also provides space for the owner periodically to record his or her self-assessment of overall second/foreign language proficiency. The language biography accompanies the ongoing processes of learning and using second/foreign languages and engaging with the cultures associated with them. It supports goal setting and self-assessment in relation to specific learning objectives, and encourages reflection on learning styles, strategies and intercultural experience. Sometimes this reflection is a matter of filling in a form or recording one's thoughts under a series of headings; sometimes it is entirely open. The dossier is where the owner collects evidence of his or her second/foreign language proficiency and intercultural experience; in some implementations it is also used to store work in progress.

There is no single version of the ELP. In 1997 the Council of Europe published a collection of preliminary studies that suggested forms the ELP might take in order to meet the needs of language learners in various categories and domains.[3] From 1997 to 2000 pilot projects were implemented in 15 Council of Europe member countries and by three international non-

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3 Council for Cultural Cooperation, *European Language Portfolio: proposals for development*, with contributions by I. Christ, F. Debyser, A. Dobson, R. Schärer, G. Schneider/B. North & J. Trim, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1997 (CC-LANG (97) 1).

governmental organizations.[4] In 2000 the ELP's common European core was defined as a set of Principles and Guidelines[5] and a Validation Committee was established and given the task of accrediting ELPs that conform to the Principles and Guidelines. Towards the end of the pilot projects a standard version of the language passport was developed for use by adults; it has been adopted by the great majority of ELPs designed for older adolescent and adult learners.

The Council of Europe developed the ELP in order to serve two complementary purposes. The first is pedagogical: the ELP is designed to make the language learning process clearer to learners and to foster the development of learner autonomy; that is why it assigns a central role to reflection and self-assessment. This function arises from the Council of Europe's long-established commitment to learner autonomy as an essential part of education for democratic citizenship and a prerequisite for lifelong learning. The second function is to provide concrete evidence of second/foreign language proficiency and intercultural experience. This reflects the Council of Europe's equally long-established interest in finding ways of reporting language learning achievement in an internationally transparent manner. The ELP's pedagogical and reporting functions both depend on the CEFR's common reference levels, which use "can do" statements to define second/foreign language proficiency at six levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) in relation to the skills of listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing. The common reference levels are summarized in the so-called self-assessment grid[6] and elaborated in 34 illustrative scales.

In the ELP the self-assessment grid provides the overall scale against which communicative proficiency is recorded in the language passport, while the illustrative scales yield checklists that support goal setting and self-assessment in the language biography. For example, in the self-assessment grid spoken interaction at A1 level is summarized like this:

- *I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.*

And in the Swiss ELP for adolescent and adult learners (accreditation number 1.2000) the A1 checklist for spoken interaction looks like this:

- *I can introduce somebody and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions.*
- *I can ask and answer simple questions, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.*
- *I can make myself understood in a simple way but I am dependent on my partner being prepared to repeat more slowly and rephrase what I say and to help me to say what I want.*
- *I can make simple purchases where pointing or other gestures can support what I say.*
- *I can handle numbers, quantities, cost and time.*
- *I can ask people for things and give people things.*
- *I can ask people questions about where they live, people they know, things they have, etc. and answer such questions addressed to me provided they are articulated slowly and clearly.*

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4   For a full report see R. Schärer, *European Language Portfolio: final report on the pilot project*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2000. Available online at www.coe.int/portfolio – section *Documentation*.

5   Council for Cultural Cooperation, 2000. A version with explanatory notes is included in *European Language Portfolio: key reference documents*, Council of Europe, 2006; available online at www.coe.int/portfolio, section *Procedures for validation.*

6   CEFR, pp.26–27.

- *I can indicate time by such phrases as "next week", "last Friday", "in November", "three o'clock".*

4. The ELP and IILT's pedagogical approach

In IILT's courses teachers involve their learners fully in all the activities of the classroom, giving them ownership of learning objectives and the learning process; they get them to reflect on the process and content of their learning; and they help them to use English for reflective as well as communicative purposes. Self-assessment plays a central role in this pedagogical approach, for unless learners can make reasonably accurate judgements about their knowledge and capacities against stated criteria, their planning, monitoring and evaluation are bound to be haphazard and uncertain. Reflection is made much easier, of course, when learners write things down – learning plans, lists of vocabulary, drafts of work in progress, reminders of things they need to look into; for in this way learners make their thoughts and learning available for inspection and analysis.

The ELP supports each aspect of this pedagogical approach. The checklists in the language biography provide learners with an inventory of learning tasks that they can use to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning week by week. The language biography is explicitly designed to associate goal setting and self-assessment with reflection on learning styles and strategies and the cultural dimension of learning and using English. When the ELP is presented in the learners' target language, it can support the use of the target language as medium of classroom communication, learning, and reflection. At the same time, the ELP is intended to be an "open" document; so if, for example, language biography pages that invite reflection on learning strategies seem to leave out things that are important to a particular learner, he or she can easily make good the omission. And a teacher who has previously used unstructured learning diaries can adapt the dossier section to serve the same purpose. In other words, the ELP helps learners to manage their learning and teachers to manage their teaching, but it is not a straitjacket.

5. First steps with the ELP in IILT

To begin with, IILT developed separate ELP models for learners working at three levels: Reception 1 (learners newly arrived in Ireland; A1→B1), Reception 2 (learners who had been living in Ireland for some time before beginning their course; A2→B1), and Pre-vocational/Fast track (learners moving towards work or mainstream vocational training; B1→B2). All three models had the same very simple language passport, which allowed learners to record their proficiency in English and other second/foreign languages and to briefly summarize important intercultural experiences; and the dossier sections in all three models included LEARNING DIARY and LEARNING TARGETS pages designed to support regular reflection and ensure that each learner's record of his/her learning had a precise chronological dimension. The three models differed from one another chiefly in the checklists. These were arranged by communicative context and reflected the different proficiency levels learners in the three categories were aiming at. The Reception 1 ELP had checklists for THE BEGINNING (such preliminary tasks as *read aloud the letters of the alphabet*, *write my name and address*, *find my name in a list*), PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION, LEARNING TO LEARN, EVERYDAY LIFE, DEALING WITH OFFICIALS, USING THE TELEPHONE; to these the Reception 2 ELP added checklists for THE MEDIA, CORRESPONDENCE, CONVERSATION; and the Pre-vocational/Fast track ELP had checklists for SETTING COURSE OBJECTIVES, PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION, LEARNING TO LEARN, THE WORKPLACE, CULTURAL AWARENESS, CAREER PLANNING, THE MEDIA, CV PREPARATION. From their first introduction as pilot versions in

2000 it was clear that these ELPs provided significant support for teachers as well as learners. Consequently they quickly became central to IILT's developing pedagogical culture and provided an obvious focus for the Milestone Project's exploration of common concerns in the teaching of host community languages to adult migrants.

6. The Milestone ELP

The Milestone Project (2000–04) was funded as part of the European Union's Socrates–Comenius 2.1 Programme. It had nine partners: institutes of teacher training in Dublin and Hamburg; a language school for adults with refugee status in Dublin (IILT); and vocational schools and colleges of adult education in Hamburg, Amsterdam, Helsinki and Örebro. The Milestone ELP was developed collaboratively as a means of exchanging ideas and experience and developing a common portfolio approach to language teaching. Its distinguishing features are as follows:

- The three components are arranged in the order: language biography, dossier, language passport.

- The language biography is divided into two parts. Part I focuses on the owner's previous language learning and intercultural experience, important life events, and his or her proficiency in the language of the host community at the beginning of the course. Part II is concerned with ongoing language learning, helping learners to become more aware of their attitudes, expectations and learning styles, requiring them to draw up a learning contract, and (via "can do" checklists) supporting the setting of personal learning goals and regular self-assessment of learning outcomes.

- The dossier contains details of the owner's language course and a page for recording attendance. It also accommodates work in progress and samples of finished work.

- The language passport is the so-called "standard adult passport", which helps to give the ELP a recognizable international profile.

The Milestone ELP exists in five language versions – Dutch, English, Finnish, German, Swedish. In addition the project produced a teacher's handbook in four languages (not Dutch) and a substantial resource of classroom activities and worksheets to support work with the different sections of the ELP.[7]

As soon as the Milestone ELP had been validated by the Council of Europe's ELP Validation Committee (2002), IILT began to use it instead of the three models that had stimulated its development. Previously IILT's students progressed from one ELP to the next; now they work with the Milestone ELP from beginning to end. As the above description indicates, the Milestone ELP is more substantial than the earlier models. What is more, it makes no concession to lower proficiency levels. This means that teachers have been obliged to find ways of mediating the Milestone ELP to learners whose English is still in the early stages of development. In doing so, they have drawn on their pedagogical experience and skills, but they have also sought the advice and ideas of their colleagues. In this way IILT has gradually developed an ELP culture which moves forward according to the principles outlined above, but with a flexibility that accommodates learners' different proficiency levels on the one hand and teachers' individual preferences on the other. Here are three examples:

A teacher working with learners at low Reception 1 level (A1) introduces the ELP via a picture story of a man who goes to a job centre and uses his ELP to show what he can do in

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English. The implications of the story are explored through a series of simple comprehension questions, and students' answers to these lead into an exploration of the ELP itself, its different sections and their functions. The teacher then uses the ELP as a springboard for negotiating course content.

Working with students at a somewhat higher level, another teacher begins each course by negotiating course content with her learners on the basis of their individual needs. They keep the agreed course outline in the dossier section of their ELP and use it gradually to explore other parts of the ELP. Weekly learning targets are drawn from the checklists in the language biography.

A newly appointed teacher, herself unfamiliar with the ELP, was assigned a class that mixed newly admitted students with students who had already spent at least one term in IILT. Colleagues readily provided her with ELP-related worksheets and activities, but she couldn't use these because they were already familiar to the "old" students. Her solution was to begin the course by dividing the class into two groups, students who had and students who had not already worked with the ELP. She gave students familiar with the ELP a questionnaire designed to help them pool their knowledge of the ELP for subsequent presentation to the other group; and she gave students unfamiliar with the ELP a questionnaire that focused on approaches to teaching and learning and was designed to prepare them for the other group's presentation. In this way the teacher enabled her students themselves to explore how they should use the ELP and created a situation in which she could both lead and learn from them.

7. Learning outcomes

In May 2004 a conversation was recorded with four of IILT's teachers. The first focus of the conversation was the impact that working with the ELP had had on IILT's students. Here are some of the things the teachers said:

Ruth: The ELP gives students a sense of the learning process and it gives their course a structure. The checklists help them to set targets at the beginning of the week and evaluate their learning at the end, and they get into this learning habit.

Stefan: Yes, the different sections of the ELP help them to organize their learning and they have the idea they are building their own book.

Helen: The ELP encourages a step-by-step approach to learning. Students can move gradually from level to level without becoming overwhelmed. Also, my students are very aware that new students joining the class don't have the same bank of learning to refer to.

Suzette: The ELP works even with beginners and gives them a sense of pride and achievement as they track their own progress. And the fact that the ELP recognizes their own language, culture and ethnicity – things that Irish people don't have – simply astounds them.

Ruth: Each student is responsible for his or her ELP, and each ELP is different, an expression of the student's individuality. If a student has a piece of work he is particularly proud of, it's very empowering to keep it in the dossier.

Stefan: By focussing on students' expectations of their course, their teacher and themselves, the ELP helps to pass responsibility from the teacher to the students.

The second focus of the conversation was the impact that the ELP had had on the teachers themselves:

Helen: For me as a new teacher the checklists outlined the syllabus and helped to keep me focussed. Also, the students' ELPs were a very effective way of making me aware of them as learners – especially the targets they set and the dates they put on their targets.

Suzette: Each of us is working at a different level, and each level is catered for in the ELP, so it helps to ensure continuity from class to class.

Ruth: Suzette and I use the ELP in different ways – she starts at the front and I start at the back. Yet we both achieve the same results. Because the ELP accommodates different teaching styles, it makes a school that uses it a varied but very integrated school.

Suzette: What I like is that responsibility for what happens is not completely on the teacher. The students are also involved. In this sense we and they are at the same level, working together. That's very new for teachers and learners from traditional backgrounds.

Ruth: When things don't go so well, the learners quickly understand that they are partly responsible because they chose the learning focus for the week. They learn to be very careful when selecting group and individual goals.

Stefan: The joy of teaching with the ELP – the payback – is when you help your students to achieve goals that give them confidence and improve their quality of life, like being able to talk to the doctor when one of the children is ill. The joy of education for teacher and for student is quite apparent.

From time to time IILT arranges for past students to come and talk to one of the classes about their language learning experience and the shape that their life has taken in Ireland since they completed their course in IILT. In January 2006 Kira, an ex-student from Kazahkstan, visited a Reception 2 class, who subsequently posted this report on IILT's web site:

On 31st January 2006, Kira, an ex-student, came to visit our R2Upper class in IILT. This is our report.

Kira is from Khazakstan. She came to Ireland in 1999 at age 17. She didn't study English at school and she didn't speak English at all.

She studied English for three months in IILT. At IILT she talked to her teacher about her future plans. Her long term plan was to work in the legal area, but first she needed to get a general education. With her teacher in IILT she decided to study for the Leaving Cert.[8] Kira found information about colleges and filled in an application form for Liberties College.

She studied for the Leaving Cert in Liberties College for two years. During that time she met a lot of obstacles, but she worked hard. She speaks English fluently now, because her classmates were native speakers and she learned a lot on her own. Kira studied seven subjects. She passed the Leaving Cert. successfully.

After the Leaving Cert she got some information about Rathmines College in FÁS.[9] Then she did a Legal Studies course in Rathmines College. She was very happy with that.

Kira is now working in a solicitor's office in Dublin. She applied for this job through her tutor and passed an interview. She is also studying criminology by distance learning.

Kira has big plans for future. She has always wanted to work in the legal area and now she is on her way.

Her advice for us is:
1. Study English without a bilingual dictionary.
2. Do what you want to do and don't give up.
3. Follow your dreams.

8. IILT's approach to assessment

As explained above, IILT's English language courses for adult immigrants with refugee status are funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES). Neither the DES nor IILT has ever specified a maximum training entitlement. IILT's goal is to bring learners to the point where they feel comfortable in using English to meet their particular daily needs. In practice most of them attend classes for between six and twelve months. From time to time DES officials have asked informally whether IILT's learners should take a standardized Eng-

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8 Ireland's school-leaving examination.

9 The national vocational training agency.

lish language test as a way of demonstrating the effectiveness of our courses and confirming that the state is receiving value for money. We have always replied in the negative for two reasons. First, we are unconvinced that tests designed for more or less homogeneous populations of learners following internationally similar programmes of English language instruction are appropriate for an infinitely diverse population of adult immigrants. Secondly, the need to prepare learners to take a test tends to narrow the focus of teaching and learning towards the tasks and linguistic content of the test in question. Such teaching is diametrically opposed to the pedagogical culture we have nurtured.

For several years we were satisfied that the ELP provided all the assessment and certification we needed. Its use, after all, depends on goal setting and self-assessment that are closely related to the common reference levels of the CEFR; and in IILT self-assessment is a matter not only of saying but also of showing what one can do. Furthermore, students gradually gather in their dossier examples of their work that demonstrate the range of language skills they have developed. We have always encouraged students to take their ELP with them to interviews for educational placement or jobs; and informal feedback from placement officers and prospective employers suggests that a well-developed ELP helps to persuade them that our learners are more proficient in English than they might otherwise be inclined to believe. But more recently we began to ask ourselves whether we were doing the best for our students by sending them on their way with nothing more than an informal validation of their sustained learning effort. This led us to explore the possibility of having our courses accredited by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC).

9. FETAC accreditation and IILT

Established as a statutory body in 2001, FETAC is the national awarding body for the further education and training sector in Ireland. It accredits a vast range of programmes across the first six levels of the ten-level National Framework of Qualifications (Figure 1). FETAC accreditation entails the application of three separate but interacting functions: (i) providers must demonstrate that they have a capacity to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of their programmes and services; (ii) before they are delivered, programmes must be evaluated by FETAC in order to establish that they are appropriate to the level in question; and (iii) once accreditation is granted, FETAC monitors and evaluates programmes on an ongoing basis.

FETAC credits are awarded for modules of learning, eight credits at a particular level earning a certificate. Some modules are concerned with the identification, development and use of transferable life skills and thus highly appropriate for immigrant learners intent on integration. Credits may be gained over shorter or longer periods, in one or more further education and training contexts. Assessment is based on student portfolios, which FETAC monitors regularly to ensure that stated standards are achieved. This system of assessment commended itself to IILT for three reasons. First, our courses were already underpinned by notions of portfolio learning and assessment, so that it was a relatively straightforward matter to accommodate FETAC modules within our existing framework. In other words, FETAC assessment was unlikely to impose inappropriate constraints on teaching and learning. Secondly, with the exception of the modules in English as a Second Language, our students were taking the same FETAC modules as Irish learners: English was the medium of their learning but not the primary focus of their assessment. And thirdly, our learners could leave us with their ELPs but also with FETAC certificates which have a value within the national system of further education and training. This would add significantly to the integration value of our programmes.
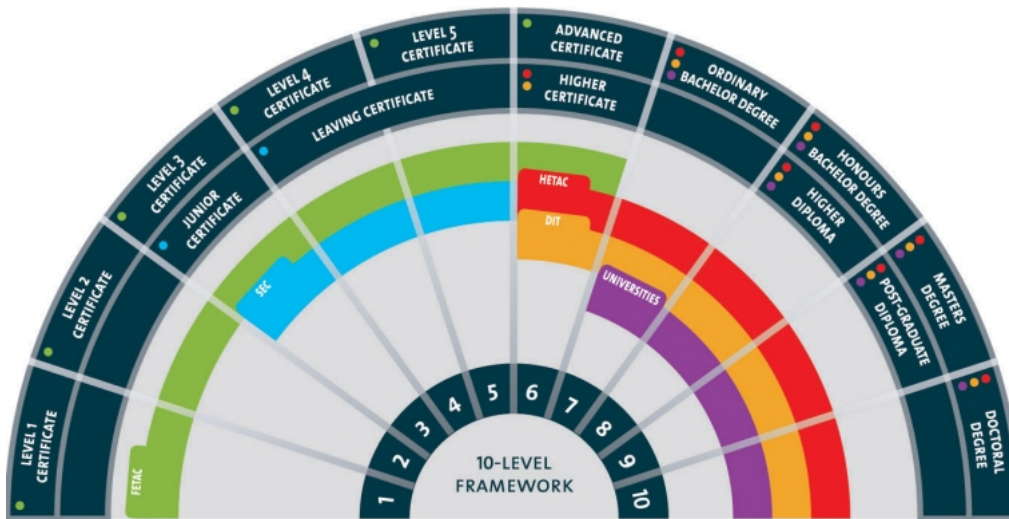
Figure 1
National Framework of Qualifications (Ireland)

10. The FETAC process: pedagogy and assessment working together

IILT became an accredited FETAC provider in the autumn of 2005. It currently offers the following modules to its students:

- Preparation for Work (Level 3)
- Computer Literacy (Level 3)
- English as a Second Language (Levels 3, 4 and 5)

Note that Level 3 is equivalent to the Junior Certificate (the examination taken at the end of the first three years of post-primary education at age 15+), while Level 4 is equivalent to the first year of the two-year Leaving Certificate (school-leaving examination) programme and level 5 is equivalent to Leaving Certificate. An example will show how pedagogy and assessment work together.

FETAC modules are broken down into Specific Learning Outcomes, for example:

5 I can determine my own strengths and weaknesses relevant to working life		
I can outline my own talents, interests, personal qualities, values and any work-related experience		

In order to help learners work towards this outcome (Preparation for Work, Level 3), the teacher devises a classroom task. Content is supplemented with ideas provided by the learners from their reflections on life skills, personal experiences, and future targets:

1 Skills experience:
Answer the following questions using *Yes, I have / No, I haven't*
1. Have you ever typed a letter? …………………………………………………………………….
2. Have you ever nursed a sick person? ……………………………………………………………
3. Have you ever organized a house move? ……………………………………………………..

| 4. Have you ever decorated a house? …………………………………………………………… |
| 5. Have you ever looked after someone's children? ……………………………………………… |
| 6. Have you ever helped to build or repair a house? ……………………………………….. |
| 7. Have you ever done any gardening? …………………………………………………………… |
| 8. Have you ever used machinery? ………………………………………………………………... |
| 9. Have you ever made or altered clothes? …………………………………………………….. |

Discussion promotes wide-ranging language development, but the language needed for key responses is limited.

Occupations and activities are categorized in terms of their characteristic skills. This learning activity leads to discussion, exchange, enquiry, dictionary use, etc. As an assessment activity it confirms that learners fully understand the Specific Learning Outcome and can achieve it at a number of levels. Note the requirement for the PPS (social security) number, which FETAC uses to identify individual learners:

Student's name: ………………………………….

PPS number: ………………………………………

Match these skills with the experiences in 1:

SKILLS   EXPERIENCES

Organization

Negotiation

Communication

Caring

Creative

Manual

Research

As learners examine and discuss the transferability of their own skills to different occupations, the definitions and concepts gradually become clearer:

Careers that would suit my own skills, qualities and interests

Which of these jobs, or any other job, could you transfer your skills to?

Tick (✓) any of the jobs below that you could transfer your skills to:

farm worker	model	psychiatrist
bricklayer	musician	time and motion person
bus driver	librarian	social worker
grocer	nurse	fireman/woman
cook	printer	dustman/woman
policeman/woman	house painter	business owner

Pick three (3) of the jobs you have ticked above and write why you could do these job, e.g.,
I could work as a salesman/woman because I have good communication and interpersonal skills

1. _____
_____
_____

This is the key part of the task because it requires learners to show that they have understood the task and can express their understanding in appropriate language.

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3. Now identify your skills from your positive answers in 1:

e.g.   I have some / good / excellent caring skills.

       I am good at caring.

       I have an aptitude for caring.

3A. Now write a detailed summary of all your skills:

_____

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_____

All of the preceding activity sheets are included in the student's portfolio as proofs for this Specific Learning Outcome.

Work on FETAC modules is integrated with language learning based on the Milestone ELP by explicitly correlating items in the Milestone ELP checklists to descriptors for FETAC Specific Learning Outcomes, for example:

FETAC Module	Activity	Milestone ELP		FETAC Specific Learning Outcome
Work	Types of work	p.31 (5) – I can read specialist material relating to my occupation or an area of personal interest, using a dictionary if necessary. p.32 (2) – I can discuss and analyse information about courses, jobs or other occupations.		1.1 – I can identify the features of five different ways of working. 1.2 – I can note the differences between these ways of working.

In IILT's ELP-based pedagogy learners use scaled checklists of "I can" descriptors to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning; self-assessment and reflection are two sides of the same coin. Personal learning plans develop and are pursued within the framework of the class curriculum negotiated between teacher and learners, and learners are themselves responsible for building up a personal dossier that illustrates their developing language skills. FETAC assessment is entirely harmonious with this approach: targets must be recorded; self-assessment is part of the assessment process; checklists are kept with proofs for each module; a personal learning plan is required; reflections, plans and decisions must be recorded in

a diary; and the learner is responsible for ensuring that all proofs are kept for assessment (in IILT's case in the ELP dossier). The target language is the medium through which learners engage with learning and assessment tasks, express their life skills and previous knowledge, and present evidence. However, the linguistic demands made of learners are always limited to the particular requirements of a Specific Learning Outcome.

In this version of portfolio assessment the stakes are high, but there is no cut-off point. The students themselves have a high level of control, and self-assessment is fundamental to their success. Assessment procedures are rooted in the reality of day-to-day language learning, and assessment demands are consistent because they are highly specific. Language knowledge is not a discriminatory factor, and providing proofs is a positive activity. In this system adult migrant learners can be active participants in learning and assessment in an environment in which failure does not exist; they can gain nationally recognized certificates as a by-product of learning the language of the host community; and the fact that they have access to the same qualifications as native speakers confirms that they have access to the same opportunities and thus promotes their integration.