Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe

Transparency and coherence
in language learning in Europe

Objectives, evaluation, certification

Report on the Rüschlikon Symposium

COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

"Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe:
objectives, assessment and certification

Symposium held in Rüschlikon, Switzerland
10 - 16 November 1991.

Organised by the Federal Swiss authorities in collaboration with the
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK), the
Eurocentres Foundation, the Migros Club Schools and the
Interuniversity Commission for Applied Linguistics (CILA).

R E P O R T

General Rapporteur: Dr John Trim

Report edited by Brian North

CONTENTS

A.   INTRODUCTION

THE BACKGROUND TO THE SYMPOSIUM

GENERAL ORIENTATION NOTE

1. Organisers

The Federal Swiss authorities in collaboration with the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK), the Eurocentres Foundation, the Migros Club Schools and the Interuniversity Commission for Applied Linguistics (CILA).

2. Date

10-16 November 1991.

3. Place

Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute, Rüschlikon, and Hotel Panorama, Feusisberg (Zurich), Switzerland.

4. Background

Following the Intergovernmental Symposium "Linguistic content, means of evaluation and their interaction in the teaching and learning of modern languages in adult education" held at Rüschlikon, Switzerland in 1971, the Committee of Out-of-School Education and Cultural Development set up a small Working Group to investigate the feasibility of a European unit-credit scheme for adult language learning. By 1973 the group was able to present to a Symposium at St. Wolfgang (Austria) the theoretical framework on which subsequent work in the Council of Europe has been based. By 1977, the Report on **"Possible lines of development of an overall structure for a European unit/credit scheme for foreign language learning by adults"** was able to present a range of options for a unit/credit system and to discuss the theoretical and practical issues in some depth from the linguistic, educational and administrative points of view. The Report concluded that: "as a result of the work of the Expert Group to date (i.e. 1977), it appears that there are no insuperable problems of an academic or pedagogic nature in the way of the introduction of a unit/credit scheme. It is rather a question, then, of choice, will and organisation".

The Report was considered by an intergovernmental symposium **"A European unit/credit system for modern language learning by adults"** held at Ludwigshafen (Germany, 7-14 September 1977). The aims of the Symposium were:

- to present to representatives of governments and of the adult education teaching community in Europe the theoretical and practical work undertaken up to 1977;

- to sound out opinion as to how the unit/credit system could be further developed, used and introduced at the European level.

3

The deliberations of the Symposium were intended to aim at establishing the actual framework for a new phase of development for the Modern Languages Project involving:

a. generalisation of pilot experimentation and consolidation of feedback;

b. coordination with developments in the various educational sectors;

c. negotiations with the various national and international interests concerned, in order to arrive at acceptable and workable proposals for forms of organisations and gradual implementation of the proposed system.

Having examined the proposal in working groups, the participants in the Symposium considered that the conditions were satisfied "for the setting up of a European structure of information, consultation and action with a view to promoting the study and implementation of a systematic approach to language learning by adults and, eventually, a European unit/credit system in this field". They then set out detailed proposals for a many-sided research and development programme, and recommended the establishment of an appropriate organisational and administrative structure. Accordingly Project No. 4 "Modern Languages" was instituted. The recommendation for an appropriate organisational structure was not, however, accepted by the Council of Europe. The newly formed Project Group concluded that further work on a unit/credit scheme should be deferred until such time as the political and administrative conditions were more propitious. Meanwhile, action moved to a series of pilot projects in which the principles upon which the proposed unit/credit scheme had been founded were applied to a wide range of educational situations. These were reported in **"Modern Languages 1971-81"**.

Upon this successful completion, a further Modern Languages Project was carried out in 1982-1988 (Project No. 12), to support the general application of the approach in member countries. The learning and teaching of languages for communication was promoted through the operation of a Schools Interaction Network and by holding a series of 37 international workshops for teacher trainers. During these years many member countries undertook the revision of curricular guidelines and examination syllabi as well as course construction and textbook production in accordance with Recommendation R (82) 18 of the Committee of Ministers.

At the same time, the specification of objectives was carried forward in two main ways:

- "threshold level" specifications were produced for an increasing range of languages. In almost all cases, valuable innovations were produced, which fed into the apparatus available to those concerned with syllabus development;

- a series of studies was undertaken with a view to an enriched model for objective specification. This work was followed up in Project No. 12 by Dr. J. van Ek's work **"Objectives for foreign language learning"** (Van Ek J. 1986 & 87) The model presented there provided the basis for a revised and extended version of the Threshold Level and Waystage specifications (Van Ek J.& Trim J.L.M. 1991a & 1991b).

The work of Project No. 12 was presented in a Final Report, which was considered by an intergovernmental conference in Strasbourg in 1988. Following its recommendations, the CDCC, noting the progress made, but also the need to continue the process of reform, decided to pursue its work in the field of modern language teaching and learning in a new medium term project **"Language learning for European citizenship"**, in which the methods successfully employed in previous projects would be applied mutatis mutandis to a number of new educational sectors to which priority was assigned. These were:

- early language learning (before the start of secondary education about the age of 11);

- upper secondary education (from 15/16 - 17/19 : in most cases after the completion of compulsory schooling);

- advanced adult education (i.e. going beyond the objectives of compulsory school education);

- vocationally oriented education and training (combining preparation for work with a continuing general education).

In each of these priority sectors, a number of priority themes were identified. These were:

- the specification of appropriate (i.e. relevant and feasible) objectives for different learners and groups of learners;

- the use of mass media and new technologies;

- bilingual education (i.e. the use of more than one language as the medium of instruction in the curriculum);

- the integration of visits and exchanges (including distance exchanges) into the curriculum ("pédagogie des échanges");

- "learning to learn", the preparation of pupils and students for independent learning (attitudes, awareness, study skills);

- appropriate and effective methods of assessing and evaluating both the proficiency of learners and the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process.

It was agreed that the dimension of teacher training (initial and in-service) should be regarded as central to innovation in respect of all priority themes in all sectors.

The principal working method in the new Project, following the recommendations of an intergovernmental Symposium held in Sintra (Portugal, 7-11 November 1989), is a series of action programmes of research and development. Each programme, of some two years' duration, is planned and initiated at a workshop hosted by a member government. Its results will then be received and evaluated by a second workshop, normally hosted by another government, which will also consider ways of disseminating products and findings as well as making recommendations for further work. A series of action programmes has been established and has already begun to operate. Workshop 1A (October 1990) hosted by the Benelux countries, concerns curriculum development for modern

languages in upper secondary education (15/16-18/19, general, technical and vocational), with special reference to criteria and descriptors for the formulation of diversified objectives, parameters for a curricular framework and the forms and functions of evaluation.

Among the expected results and products of the new Project are "developments in the field of evaluation, testing and certification". Evaluation and assessment (including self-assessment) have always had an important role in the approach adopted by the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Projects, and work in Projects 4 and 12 has dealt with principles, methods and procedures. Following the decision in 1977 to defer indefinitely the introduction of a European unit/credit scheme, no attempt has been made to construct a unified overall common framework within which the certificates and qualifications in modern languages offered by different authorities and institutions in member countries could be situated. The situation has now matured in a number of ways:

- European mobility has increased, and is set to increase further at an accelerated rate, leading to a need for educational authorities, employers and others to be able to assess the value of qualifications gained in other systems by applicants for jobs, admission to courses of study, etc.;

- employees and indeed all learners need to know the value of qualifications they acquire, not only in the country in which they were required, but also in other countries in which they may wish to study or work;

- syllabi have undergone a considerable convergent development, to a large extent as a result of the progressive application of the principles and models produced in Council of Europe Modern Languages Projects. They have become more explicit and a much richer apparatus of descriptors of content and performance levels is now available;

- experience has been gained in certain countries [e.g. the ESU (English Speaking Union) scheme in the United Kingdom] of setting up a descriptive framework for the comparison of qualifications.

The time therefore now seems ripe to reexamine the issues left in abeyance in 1977. Accordingly, the newly-established Project Group accepted with pleasure and enthusiasm the offer of the Swiss government to host an intergovernmental Symposium to be held (appropriately) at Rüschlikon, at which the desirability and feasibility of a common European frame of reference for the certification of proficiency in modern languages could be assessed.

5. Aims and Objectives of the Symposium

The aim of the Symposium is to support European mobility, co-operation and mutual understanding by providing a more satisfactory **framework for continuing language learning** by young people and adults in all member countries. This does not imply a single examination or series of examinations, but rather a **coherent and transparent system** which will enable learners to find their place and assess their progress in relation to certain well-defined reference points. For this to be

possible, it is necessary for the same (or at least compatible) principles to be followed in:

- the definition of objectives;

- procedures for the assessment of language proficiency;

- systems of certification and qualification.

The Symposium will therefore attempt to reach **a consensus on the principles to be followed and to assess the feasibility of establishing such a framework.** If the answer is positive, proposals will be made as to the steps to be taken for producing one. Within the framework of the CDCC Project, but taking into account the many specifications and certificates which already exist, the Symposium will study the adequacy of the models employed in the 'threshold level' specifications so far (incorporating the additional features introduced in **Threshold Level 1990**) when applied to more advanced levels. It may then consider what modifications or alternatives may be necessary or desirable.

The Symposium will also examine the possibility of issuing a **"language pass"** or **"language portfolio"**, i.e. a document in which an individual learner can have his language learning achievements attested within the common framework adumbrated above. Such a document might be issued in a distinctive format under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Its function would be:

- to enhance and sustain motivation through longer term continuing education;

- to enhance the recognition of the language learning achievement of learners by employers and others by a single record with European currency;

- to enhance coherence in educational systems and efficient interfaces between educational sectors.

6. Working Methods

The Symposium will have four successive phases of work:

Phase One: establishment of general principles underlying the construction of a common descriptive framework, and the consideration in the light of those principles of examples of recent innovations in the field of:

- the definition of objectives;
- assessment;
- certification.

Phase Two: the application of those principles to the definition of a modular instrument which will serve as a common point of reference with regard to the range of levels above 'threshold level', in particular concerning upper secondary general and vocational qualifications, and their adult education equivalents. (Here the experience of Workshop 1 [Benelux] should be drawn on).

7

Phase Three: investigation of the proposed "language pass/portfolio" including the issues which would be raised by such a reporting instrument from the point of view of different approaches to certification; consideration of ways in which such issues raised could be addressed.

Phase Four: the establishment of interaction networks to facilitate developments in the definition of levels and objectives, in assessment procedures and in profiling and certification; the formulation of proposals and recommendations concerning cooperation between institutions at national and European levels.

Some issues to be addressed:

- What are the parameters constituting an adequate descriptive framework? Is the "four skills" analysis an adequate basis for the definition of general and "partial" qualifications? Should sub-skills and multi- skill activities be made explicit?

- How many levels should be distinguished? How can lower levels be defined so as to represent positive achievement rather than degrees of incompetence (what the learner cannot do)?

- How closely can, and should, achievement be described in the interest of "transparency"?

- To what extent is "coherence" necessary or desirable? What is implied by the term "coherence"?

- Is there a danger that a well-defined system may prejudice learner-centred diversification and decentralised decision-making and constrain flexibility and innovation unduly? If so, how is that danger to be overcome?

- What roles may be appropriately ascribed to a) external assessment b) teacher assessment c) self-assessment d) mutual assessment in relation to diagnostic, formative and summative assessment?

- Can the modular principle implied by the unit/credit system be utilised? How should this be implemented?

- How can the credibility of a "language pass/portfolio" be assured? What dangers are there of misuse and how are they to be avoided?

- What contribution can the "language pass/portfolio" make to educational and vocational mobility in Europe? By what practical steps is this to be achieved?

- How is a consensus to be reached among authorities and institutions with different ideas, practices and interests?

- What (if any) form of recognition should be given to the overall framework and to certificates, etc., situated within it? What is implied by recognition? If desirable, how is such recognition to be administered?

- What further research and development is required to produce concrete proposals? How is it to be organised? How long will it take?

7. Working Languages

The working languages of the Symposium will be English and French, the two official languages of the Council of Europe. Simultaneous interpretation between these two languages will be provided for plenary sessions and in some working groups.

REFERENCES

Van Ek J. 1986: "Objectives for foreign language learning: Scope." Council of Europe.
Van Ek J. 1987: "Objectives for foreign language learning: Levels." Council of Europe.
Van Ek J.& Trim J.L.M. 1991a: "Threshold Level 1990" Council of Europe.
Van Ek J.& Trim J.L.M. 1991b: "Waystage 1990" Council of Europe.

AN OUTLINE OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The Symposium, which was chaired by Mr Pierre LUISONI, Chairman of the Education Committee of the Council of Europe, was attended by 108 participants from 26 countries, including representatives of examining bodies and cultural institutions. A full list of participants is given as Appendix 1. [A list of current developments, projects and reforms relevant to the work of the Symposium is included as Appendix 4.]

The Symposium was opened on the evening of Sunday 10th November by Jean CAVADINI, President, Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (CDIP/EDK) and Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe. Mr Cavadini stressed the relevance of the work of the Symposium to Switzerland, with it's multicultural, multilingual composition, while Mr Stobart concentrated on the wider context of the Symposium, the opening up of Central and Eastern Europe, and the relevance of education, and particularly language learning, to encourage young Europeans to see themselves "not only as citizens of their own regions and countries, but also as citizens of Europe and of the wider world." The process of orientation was continued by the General Rapporteur and Project Adviser, Dr TRIM, at the beginning of the day on Monday 11th, when he placed the Symposium within the context of the work of the Modern Languages Projects of the Council of Europe. Dr Trim traced the development of the Projects from the first Rüschlikon Symposium exactly 20 years earlier, and outlined why the climate was now more propitious for investigating the feasibility of a European framework of reference than it had been at the time of the Ludwigshafen Symposium in 1977. He outlined some of the steps institutions were currently taking under the pressure of circumstances towards frameworks of reference, concluding that it seemed less a question of whether a common framework was desirable, but rather of what it should be like and how it should be brought about.

The full texts of these three addresses setting the context for the Symposium are presented hereafter (pages 13-24).

The work of the Symposium was divided into four main phases:

- Phase 1 giving a "state of the art" overview;
- Phase 2 on objectives and evaluation beyond Threshold Level;
- Phase 3 on the reporting of achievement;
- Phases 4 & 5 on ways forward.

Each phase had a balance of plenary sessions and group discussion, and both Phases 2 and 3 had presentations from panels approaching the topic of discussion from different perspectives. The Symposium programme is given as Appendix 2, and the speakers' papers plus the texts of the contributions from the panels are provided in Section D.

Phase 1: "Transparency and Coherence in the Design of Objectives, Assessment and Certification Procedures" was a theoretical and practical survey aiming to establish what the principles of transparency and coherence meant both in theory and in practice, and what they might imply for features of a possible common European Language Framework. An overview from René RICHTERICH and Günther SCHNEIDER was followed by two pairs of examples of significant innovations in this field: Annie MONNERIE (DELF/DALF) and Brendan CARROLL (ESU Framework); Beat VONARBURG (Treffpunkte) & Brian PAGE (Graded Objectives).

Tuesday morning brought theoretical inputs on the learning side (Viljo KOHONEN) and on assessment (Brendan CARROLL). There were opportunities for group discussion after the overview, after each pair of examples, and again at the end of the phase.

Phase 2: "Beyond Threshold Level: Specifying Objectives for Diverse Needs: Continuity or Change?", lead by Daniel COSTE, investigated what characterises learning and the context of learning beyond Threshold Level, and what the implications of these characteristics might be for the principles used in defining objectives and the design of modules. A panel presenting examples of different kinds of project concerned with the definition of objectives beyond Threshold was followed by group discussion.

Phase 3: "Towards a Learner-centred European Framework for Reporting Achievement in Language Learning" focused on the calibration aspects of a framework, and the form a reporting instrument might take. Brian PAGE defined some criteria a framework would have to meet and Rolf SCHÄRER then outlined a possible learner- oriented approach under the title "European Language Portfolio" (or Passport). The presentations were followed by a round table debate chaired by Louis PORCHER, who in his introduction raised some of the issues at stake in evaluation, calibration and certification. One of the main decisions about a framework is whether to have a scale of proficiency, and if so, what type. Brian NORTH presented a preliminary investigation of options for scales.

"Show and Tell" sessions on innovations in the definition of objectives, and in examination and certification were offered by participants on the evening of Monday 11th, and an information fair on examinations and certification systems took place on the evening of Wednesday 13th. A list of participants and organisations taking part is given as Appendix 3.

Despite all this work, the social side was not entirely neglected. There was a Gala Dinner on the Tuesday evening, with a memorable performance by the clown "Bello", and on Thursday afternoon there was an excursion to the Solothurn Festival of Languages, where participants were able to join in a celebration of language diversity with Swiss secondary school children.

Phase 4 on Friday 15th, in the Hotel Panorama at Feusisberg, provided an opportunity for intensive and informal discussion in small groups. After formulating conclusions and recommendations for Phase 5, participants defined their own areas of interest, with the suggestions for action programmes and networks which arose being presented at a "network fair" at the end of the afternoon. The list of projects suggested is given as Appendix 5.

After the presentation, discussion and adoption of the conclusions and recommendations of theSymposium on Saturday 16th, there were closing addresses by Pierre Luisoni, the Symposium Chairman, by Maitland Stobart, by Denis Girard, the Chairman of the Modern Languages Project Group, and by Tony Shaw of the LINGUA Bureau. Summaries of these addresses are given Section E.

OPENING ADDRESSES

Jean Cavadini, President, Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (CDIP/EDK)

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, it is with a particular pleasure that we welcome you in the name of the Swiss authorities as participants in this intergovernmental Symposium organised under the auspices of the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe. Please feel welcome in this country which has a great interest in the work of this great institution.

As I am sure you all know, Switzerland is a full member here in the Council of Europe, - although we should also remember that it didn't wish to become a member of the United Nations and that it is currently joining Hamlet in his existential question whether to be or not to be a member of the European Community - the question we will have to ask ourselves in a few years time. There is one thing we **are** sure of: we are in Europe, and luckily geography is stubborn.

I should emphasise that we appreciate the Council of Europe, its philosophy and its methods of cooperation, which suit our political structure and ethical concepts.

Your work will be followed from the Swiss side with great interest. The subject of your work certainly does not lack ambition since you have to consider the central issue of what the spirit of language learning itself consists of: transparency and coherence in relation to language learning in Europe: which objectives, what kind of evaluation, how to provide certification? Because in this country we understand the political importance of language, we therefore appreciate the significance of the area of your work this week. We have also been working together with the Council of Europe in the area of teaching and learning modern languages for more than thirty years now. We are happy to confirm that we have profited greatly thereby, and if it is not too presumptuous, would also add that we have equally been able to contribute to developments from our own experience in the area of modern languages.

I would like to outline a few characteristics of the country which is acting as your host. Geographically we are a small country of 41,000 square kilometres, sharing our frontiers and languages with Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy and France. We have 6,700,000 inhabitants and an active population of 48.5%; foreigners integrated in the Swiss population account for 15.5% overall and 21% of the active population. I am giving these details to emphasise the importance we give to language policy.

As you may know, Switzerland has been celebrating its 700th anniversary. We like saying that, even if one should add that Switzerland 700 years ago consisted of three little cantons with a total population of about 8,000. Nevertheless, it is true to say that modern Switzerland has its roots in those three little cantons. The current federation goes back to 1848, bringing together 26 cantons or half-cantons. The principles of direct democracy are firmly entrenched in the cantons and communes and at a federal level, which leads to our fame throughout the world for going to vote at least once every three months to decide whether one should be

13

allowed to bet more than 5 francs at the casino, or whether one should have
a referendum on the subject of speed limits on motorways. But direct
democracy is one of the difficulties on our path towards European
integration.

Switzerland enjoys a cultural diversity which is the natural result of
multilingualism. Our country is divided into four linguistic regions in
which the inhabitants speak German, French, Italian and Raeto-Romansch.
German, French and Italian constitute the official languages in the
following proportions: 65% of the population speak German; 18.4% French;
9.8% Italian; 0.8% Romansch, and 6% speak another language - this 6%
consisting mainly of the foreign population.

For the third part of this address, I shall attempt the impossible task of
describing the Swiss education system - or to be more precise, the
educational system in Switzerland. Swiss schools are directly affected by
the striking political and cultural fact that the cantons have complete
control over their school systems. Bearing that in mind, one could say that
in Switzerland there are in fact 26 educational systems, sometimes very
similar to one another, sometimes quite different.

In Switzerland, as in all federal systems, there is a certain tension
between political and legal authority in relation to education. Here one
needs to define what one understands by the term federalism. The principle
behind the Swiss concept is to leave the widest authority possible to all
partners involved, whilst federalism in the Canadian sense, for example,
consists of giving power to the central state. The two approaches are
totally different although they are often covered by the same term:
federalism. In all federal systems, the division of authority between the
central federal authority and the constituent regional units poses a
delicate problem, but the Swiss concept is based on the following
principle: the cantons exert all rights which have not been delegated to
the federal government. The direction is always from the bottom to the top,
and schools have remained essentially within the authority of the cantons.

Neither the cantons nor the confederation possess an administration
structure which manages the school system as a whole: professional
education may come under either the education department or the economic
department; schools concerned with, for example, the social aspects of
life, can come under the department concerned with health or with social
services. There is a great diversity in the structure of everything
connected with teaching in our federation and in our cantons.

Naturally this decentralisation causes some inconvenience - a certain
dissipation of effort, a certain difficulty in achieving joint action - but
we believe that there are considerable advantages to the approach because
the cantons regard their sovereignty in educational matters as one of the
elements which helps define their political and cultural identity.

This brings me to the question of languages in Switzerland, which is far
from being an simple issue. Our country owes its existence to the fact that
it has been capable of finding ways to bind together sometimes very
different individual parts. A linguistic encounter such as the one in
Switzerland between German, which as I mentioned is spoken by two thirds of
the population, and various offspring of the Romance family of languages, -
French, Italian Romansch - does not logically have to lead to the
emergence of a country with a secure future.

On the political front, the linguistic situation has important
consequences: the Swiss have to accept a delicate political situation and
should ideally speak four different languages. It is, however, rare to meet
someone who actually does speak all four languages, which has given rise to
the colloquialism "The Swiss get on well because they don't understand each
other". This is not always wrong. Certain people have advocated the idea of
the creation of homogeneous language regions, but this is to miss the
impact of history. The mastery of a language is difficult, and today, the
linguistic situation in Switzerland is a problem of some concern. Ticino,
the Italian speaking part of the country, has already stated a certain
disquiet; in the Grisons, which is the area where Romansch is spoken by
part of the population, the weakness of certain forms of expression has
been confirmed. Our federal constitution refers to "German", but today, the
majority of the German-speaking population in the country do not speak
"German", they speak Swiss German, a dialect which one cannot always
instantly relate to High German, a fact which makes the question of our
policy with regard to foreign language learning very difficult. The
difficulty French and German speakers have in understanding each other is
increasing, a fact that is embarrassing to admit, but which must be
recognised all the same. There is today an increasing use of Swiss German
in the German-speaking part of the country, and it is evident that one of
the main consequences affects the teaching of foreign languages, which is
for us a necessity.

In principle, French-speaking schoolchildren learn German from their fourth
school year, that is to say from the age of 10 or 11. In principle, German-
speaking children learn French from their fourth or fifth school year, but
with the extra handicap that in learning French they are learning not a
second, but a third language: first Swiss German, then German, then French.
This is a difficult issue which exists, which we have to recognise, and
which poses the very public problem that when we wish to train French-
speaking teachers of German, we send them to Germany. We can't locate in a
systematic fashion the necessary German-speaking families, or even
universities, in Switzerland. I don't want to develop any further this
subject, which is naturally one of considerable importance to us, since we
should concentrate on issues at a European level. Nevertheless, it's worth
remembering that in Switzerland, when we speak (theoretically) German,
French and Italian, we are speaking to 150 million people in Europe,
whereas when we speak Swiss German we are speaking to 4 million people.
That makes a difference.

To conclude, I would like to add that the question which you are tackling
in your symposium is a fundamental question for us, and we greatly
appreciate the work you are about to undertake. The evolution of Europe
requires all of us to reflect very seriously and concretely upon everything
concerned with the comparability and permeability of systems. We have often
said, and I will repeat it once more, that the new Europe is based upon
movement, mobility; this forces us to envisage comparability of training
and certification. This fact strikes us particularly in connection with
modern languages. We don't want, and I am sure that none of you want, a
unification of educational systems, or a strict harmonisation into a sort
of "European pudding", which would be a reduction to one single model. But
we are, on the other hand, very responsive to the idea of the definition of
instruments which would allow comparison. Such instruments are desirable
and necessary. It's up to you to show us, first of all, how they could
exist and what they might be like. If you are careful to take account of
the diversity of national systems, you will then allow the member states to
decide the use to which the instruments can be put.

Finally, we couldn't conclude without expressing our recognition to all those who have been involved in ensuring that this symposium will be a success. "The Commissariat will follow", a general and president of a neighbouring republic once said. Here, the organisation has come first, and will accompany you, we are sure, to a great success in your work. One can't take it for granted that everything will function harmoniously when a number of separate institutions have to work together. The Swiss Organising Committee and the Project Team of the Council of Europe have managed a remarkable achievement. When one succeeds in Switzerland in bringing together the federal authorities, the cantons, the universities and the private sector, one tends to cry "It's a miracle". The extent of this miracle bears testimony to the importance of your presence, and of your work.

Thank you.

Maitland Stobart, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me to represent the Council of Europe at the opening of this Symposium and to bring you the greetings of our Secretary General Mme. Catherine Lalumière. She asked me to thank the Swiss authorities and our Swiss partners very warmly for contributing the Symposium to the Council of Europe's education programme and for investing so much time in the preparatory work.

On behalf of the Council of Europe, I would like to welcome you, the participants, to the Symposium. We are delighted that there has been such a strong response to our invitation. It shows that the subject of our discussions here in Rüschlikon is both topical and important. I would like to extend a special word of welcome:

- to the delegates from our new member states in Central and Eastern Europe;
- to the observer from the USA;
- and to the representatives of the Commission of the European Communities and the LINGUA Bureau.

In my few remarks this evening, I would like to highlight the recent important political developments within the Council of Europe and the repercussions on our education programme. I will, therefore, concentrate on the wider context of the Symposium. It's place in the Council of Europe's work on modern languages will be described to you tomorrow by our General Rapporteur, Dr. Trim.

As a result of the dramatic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, our organisation has become the widest intergovernmental and interparliamentary forum in Europe. 30 states, including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Soviet Union - take part in our education programme. And we

are developing co-operation with five others: Albania, the three Baltic republics, and Rumania. Our geographical area, therefore, stretches from North Cape to Cyprus and Malta, and from Reykjavik to Vienna to Vladivostok. This means that, within the next 12 months, countries in Central and Eastern Europe could account for almost one third of the States involved in our work in education (11 out of 35).

As was stressed in "The Charter of Paris for a New Europe", "ours is a time for fulfilling the hopes and expectations that our peoples have cherished for decades: steadfast commitment to democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms; prosperity through economic liberty and social justice; and equal security for all countries". This charter was adopted in Paris last November by the Heads of State or Government of the 34 countries involved in the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (the CSCE).

The transition to parliamentary democracy and a market economy in Central and Eastern Europe is, of course, fraught with difficulty. Furthermore, as we have seen recently, ethnic and national feelings are strong, if not explosive. You will notice that Yugoslavia is not represented at the Symposium. Last month, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers decided to suspend/freeze our co-operation with the Yugoslav authorities because of the seizure of the Presidency, the abuses of power, the violence and violations of human rights.

In the 1990s, the Council of Europe's work on education will respond to the following three overarching questions:

1. How can education and education systems help to promote human rights, fundamental freedoms, pluralist democracy and the rule of law?

2. How can education and education systems help to bring the peoples of our continent closer together and create a sense of being at home in Europe?

3. How can education and culture help the governments and citizens of Europe to meet the big challenges facing our societies?

Last month, our Standing Conference of the European Ministers of Education met in Vienna to discuss the consequences, for the education of all young Europeans, of the momentous changes underway in Europe. The Conference was attended by Ministers and senior officials from 34 European States, and they recognised that:

(i)   study, training, work and leisure in Europe are increasingly characterised by communication, mobility and interaction;

(ii)   the daily lives of Europeans are taking on "a living European dimension".

The Ministers resolutions have been distributed to you.

At grassroots level, there has been a radical change of scale in the interest shown in this European dimension by educators throughout Europe. There has been a veritable explosion in the number of international, national and local conferences and workshops on the subject of the European dimensions of education, and the Council of Europe and the other European institutions are flooded with requests from educators who are looking for basic information, teaching resources, training, contacts and partners.

Another sign of this grassroots interest is the growing number of European educational associations and networks like the European Association of Teachers, the Association for Teacher Education in Europe, the European Association for Special Education, the European Curriculum Network, the European Standing Conference of Geography Teachers' Associations, the European Secondary Heads Association, the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, the European Bureau of Adult Education, the European Rectors' Conference, the European Parents' Association, the Organising Bureau of European Student Unions, and the European Educational Publishers' Group. My colleagues and I are in contact with some 60 of these organisations and new networks are being set up every month.

In response to these developments, the Council of Europe is strengthening its work on the European dimension of education. In addition to the Project on "Language Learning for European Citizenship" which has brought us together here in Rüschlikon, we have started an ambitious project on the European dimension of secondary education. Its aim is to provide policy-makers and educators with practical advice on how secondary schools should prepare young people for life in a democratic and multicultural Europe. On Wednesday and Thursday I will have to leave this Symposium briefly to attend the opening, in the United Kingdom, of the meeting of our network on school links, twinnings and exchanges. This network is part of the new project.

Finally we are preparing a project on the study of Europe in higher education. It will start next year and will focus on such subject areas as: history; geography; languages and literatures; human rights; economics, and the social structures of Europe.

I would like to stress very strongly that the term "the European dimension of education" does not imply the imposition of uniformity on education systems in our continent. There must be respect both for diversity and for local, regional, and national specificities. Furthermore, programmes to promote an awareness of Europe must not, in turn, create Eurocentric or selfish attitudes. Education systems should encourage all young Europeans to see themselves "not only as citizens of their own regions and countries, but also as citizens of Europe and of the wider world."

In many respects, this Symposium is one of the most important meetings in the Council of Europe's education programme for 1991. If we can make progress on a common European frame of reference for the certification of proficiency in modern languages, we will make a significant contribution to educational and vocational mobility in Europe. We might also be able to adapt some of the concepts and procedures to other subjects or areas of study.

This ambitious task cannot be carried out by the Council of Europe alone, and it will necessitate co-operation with a wide variety of partners, in particular the Commission of the European Communities. A few months ago, an inter-secretariat meeting between our department and the Task Force of the Commission agreed that modern languages should be one of the priority areas for co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Communities. We are now studying how to create genuine links and interaction between our Projects on "Language Learning for European Citizenship" and the very exciting LINGUA Programme of the European Communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my colleagues - Jean-François Allain, Marlène von den Steinen and Lisa Calveley - and I look forward to working with you. we would like to wish you a very stimulating and successful meeting.

Thank you.

THE SYMPOSIUM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MODERN LANGUAGES PROJECTS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Dr. J.L.M. Trim, General Rapporteur and Project Adviser

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure, to be once again in Rüschlikon to take part in an intergovernmental Symposium of the Council of Europe on modern languages hosted by the Swiss Federal Authorities. This Symposium, which has been prepared with great care by our Swiss colleagues, the team of international animators and the Council of Europe Secretariat, presents us all with a considerable challenge. If we can meet that challenge, I believe that we have the opportunity to make it a meeting of considerable, even historic importance in the development of modern language learning and teaching in our continent and, perhaps, beyond. A measure of this importance is the interest shown by representatives of major institutions, large and small, to take part in our meeting. Twenty-six member states are represented. This number reflects also the recent dramatic growth in the number of states which have joined the Council of Europe or signed the European Cultural Convention. There are now 30, and the process is continuing. It is likely that within the next year we shall be joined by the 5 remaining European countries, including the newly-independent Baltic republics and - who knows - perhaps other republics of Eastern Europe. We are particularly pleased to welcome a number of colleagues from the LINGUA Programme of the European Community, who share many of our concerns, particularly in so far as they regard the preparation of young people and adults to take part in the economic life of the states concerned. It is clearly of importance that we should work as far as possible in harmony and cooperation. We have also many observers. They include representatives of many of the major European language teaching and examining institutions, where decisions affect millions of learners, as well as those of teachers' associations at a European level. We have observers from other international and European bodies, and also from other continents, Canada and North America. We have everything to gain from the pooling of experience and ideas with leaders of our profession in all countries. We are now globally interdependent and all stand to benefit from the clarification of ideas and the development of a transparent, coherent and yet open framework to which we can all contribute on a continuing basis. There are many, many colleagues who would dearly have liked to be present, but for whom we couldn't alas find room. We who are here have all the greater responsibility for producing concrete results which will be of value to them.

This then is the challenge which as brought us together: what should a common European framework for language learning be like? How should life-long language learning be recognised and reported? We have, of course, to consider whether we want these things - though I hardly imagine that so many distinguished people with pressing claims on their time would have made the journey and dedicated a full working week to this Symposium unless they expected that it would reach positive and practical conclusions. But when we consider why we want a common framework within which language learning can be guided, assessed, evaluated, recognised and reported, we shall already begin to consider concretely the means for doing so, particularly if we agree that the framework should indeed be transparent, coherent and open.

21

As I said, much thought has been given to these issues and careful preparation made by the Swiss organisers and the international coordinating team. Furthermore, this Symposium, and the programme of practical work which it will set in train, builds upon the cumulative results of the successive Council of Europe Modern Languages Projects since the mid-1960's. In particular, it can be seen to take up, in a situation which has matured in many ways, the work on a European unit-credit scheme for language learning by adults, initiated here in Rüschlikon, almost exactly twenty years ago, when we attended the first Intergovernmental Symposium to deal with adult education within the Major Programme in Modern Languages of the Council for Cultural Cooperation. The Symposium was concerned largely with the implications for adult education, with special reference to language learning of the approach to éducation permanente developed by Bertrand Schwarz. If we were to consider the life-long development of individuals and their attempts to improve their ability to cope with the successive challenges with which life presented them, it would clearly be necessary to rethink our educational policy and its theoritical basis. National educational systems had a strong tendency to be monolithic, with children organised into large classes and all pursuing the same curricular objective, preparing for the same examinations, equipped (at least in principle - never perhaps in practice) with the same knowledge and skills, to a greater or lesser extent according to their abilities and industry, as a basis for the coherence of the life of the nation, progressing along a common path from the elementary through intermediate to the advanced stages of learning - with educational casualties strewn along the route! Yet the lives of adults are almost infinitely diverse. How could an educational system for adults be devised to cater for diversity? From answers to this question arose the major principles upon which our later work has been based: the acceptance that it was necessary to base educational provision on the identification of the needs and motivations, characteristics and resources of learners rather than simply on the universal content structure of areas of knowledge; the progressive development of the learners' ability to organise their own learning both in respect of content and method; the priority of a careful specification of aims and objectives over methods, materials and evaluation. The methods and materials used were seen to be contingent on the nature of the learning situations, whilst evaluation can only test the achievement of the objectives pursued.

Of course, whilst learning is an individual process, teaching is of necessity of social process. How are the two to be reconciled? On the classroom level, by changing the role of the teacher from a purveyor of knowledge to a facilitator of learning ; from the dominant figure in a unitary process to the organiser of the diverse activities of groups of varying size. On the level of the educational system, it was proposed to move from a system in which all learners moved in parallel along a common logico-developmental path to one in which global subjects were articulated into modules, allowing learners to select those which would provide a learning pathway appropriate to their needs, motivations and characteristics. It was envisaged that a European unit-credit scheme might be devised, defining some set of modules the acquisition of which might be accredited to the individual on a cumulative basis. Following the Rüschlikon Symposium in 1971, a small group of experts was asked to investigate the feasibility of devising such a European unit-credit system for modern language learning by adults. Accepting the learner-centred, needs and motivation-oriented approach, we looked for a principled basis on which a modular system could be erected. We agreed that we could not follow the model that had been proposed for a particular area of knowledge, namely ecology, by dividing a language into a number of relatively independent

22

areas to be tackled one by one in various combinations and in virtually any order. We therefore set out to elaborate a model whereby modules could be constructed which would give particular learners, or groups of learners, the communicative potential that would enable them to act effectively through language to achieve the satisfaction of their needs. In principle, the number of modules that could be devised is limitless. In practice, only self-directed learning can be so flexible. Teaching situations necessarily impose constraints. We have to ask ourselves such questions as

- what do the members of this teaching group have in common?

- what are the aims and objectives of the teaching institution and the authorities or funding agencies which provide its resources?

- what are, in fact, its resources, human and material?
  e.g.

  - what knowledge and skills do the teachers possess?

  - what knowledge and skills do the learners themselves bring?

  - what access to the target language and its products is provided by the institution or is available in the environment?

  - to what other material resources do the learners themselves have access?

What time (class and homework) and effort is available to learners and teachers? And so on. All these factors and others constrain the objectives which can sensibly be adopted for the group and its members. And of course the processes by which decisions on content and method are arrived at vary according to the political, economic and social structures within which learning and teaching are organised and the corresponding relations and attitudes. Some will favour consultation and negotiation more than others which are more authoritarian.

Accordingly, in the years between 1971 and 1977, the expert group concentrated on formulating the principles on which the planning of learning units might be based (Trim 1978, Chapter 3) and developing a model for the specification of objectives (Bung 1973 a). This model was exemplified, first in a study by Bung on the foreign language needs of hotel waiters and staff (Bung 1973 b) and then in the celebrated **Threshold Level** of Dr. J. van Ek. At the same time, attention was given to the possible framework and organisation of a European unit-credit scheme and to the associated problems of accreditation and the calibration of proficiency. A report was presented to an intergovernmental Symposium at Ludwigshafen in 1977 (Trim 1978). It concluded that there were "no insuperable problems of an academic or pedagogical nature in the way of the introduction of a unit-credit scheme. It is rather a question of choice, will and organisation". After noting that the descriptors used in the Threshold Level publications (including **Un Niveau-seuil** and **Kontaktschwelle**) could form the basis for a developing "articulated set of descriptors of different levels and directions of language proficiency", the report recognised that: "An effective unit-credit scheme on a European scale demands a vast cooperative effort on the part of large numbers of administrators, organisers, producers, writers, teachers and students in different places, under different circumstances and with different forms of organisation".

"The success of such a scheme depends then on a form of organisation being developed which is capable of promoting that unity in diversity the situation of our continent demands. The organisation must be strong enough to provide effective guidance and incentives to decisions-makers. It must be flexible enough to release energies and relate together different initiatives at all educational levels, on a large and on a small scale. It must be dynamic enough to recognise and respond to theoretical and practical advance, changing its own concepts, pratices and structures accordingly".

The report went on to outline options for the concrete implementation of a unit-credit scheme and the author finished with the claim that "a sound basis for further progress in developing an overall system of reference now exists; he is confident that further concrete results will emerge from cooperative action and field development, in consultation with the administrators, planners, course developers, teachers and learners - in short the parties immediately involved in language learning and teaching".

In the event, no further progress was made following Ludwigshafen on the implementation of a unit-credit scheme based on a common descriptive framework. Some felt it to be premature. Some others wished to head off any development that might encourage European centralism. Instead, the decision was taken to pilot the application of its basic principles in a wide range of educational contexts (particularly lower secondary, adult and migrant education), following a strategy set out in the report (Trim 1978, p.58). When these were successful, a further Project aimed at their generalisation in lower secondary education in member states. As a result of the successive Projects and in tune with the general development of the field, it is no exaggeration to say that a major paradigm shift has occurred over the period under review. It is now almost universally recognised that the primary aim of language teaching is to enable learners to use the language concerned for communicative purposes, both by face-to-face interaction and by gaining access to the information contained in texts, written and spoken, relevant to their needs and interests. Knowledge of the language and skill in its use are necesary prerequisites for communication, not ends in themselves. The classroom is seen as a "crucible of communciation", with the consequences drawn for its organisation and the roles, relations and activities of learners and teachers alike. National curricular guidelines, examination syllabuses, procedures and evaluation criteria, textbook and multi-media course design, initial and in-service teacher training, have all been recast in most if not all member countries. These convergent developments in member countries entail a much higher degree of consensus across the continent on teaching aims, objectives, methods and materials, as well as the content, procedures and criteria for evaluation and certification. What may have seemed, fifteen years ago, to carry the dangers of imposing a modernistic approach on a reluctant profession, now requires little more than the recognition of an existing state of affairs.

This development is not simply an autonomous evolution of educational systems. At the same time we have been witnessing a sharp acceleration in the internationalisation of European (and indeed global) living. Satellite networks make events anywhere on earth observable anywhere else within a fraction of a second. It is a commonplace that all aspects of social organisation are profoundly affected by the transformation of society in terms of personal mobility and electronic communication. Education changes interact with social usage in a complex way. Acting in harmony they facilitate and accelerate change. In disaccord they produce inefficiency and conflict. The same may of course be said of political measures and

organisation. Over the past two or three years we have seen the ultimate collapse of an attempt to isolate one part of the world from the mainstream development of the remainder. Yet while internationalisation proceeds apace we are experiencing at the same time the fundamental need of human beings to express their cultural identity on a human scale and the refusal of individuals and of small communities to submerge themselves in huge impersonal entities.

The fundamental aims of the Council of Europe are thus of increasing and urgent importance. It is important to equip individuals throughout the populations to be internationally mobile and to cope with the consequences of mobility. It is important to be well-informed, so as to be able to arrive at mutual understanding and good working relations across language boundaries. It is important to respect and be receptive to other cultures, other ways of experiencing and expressing reality. It is important to see the task of exploring the multicultural and multilingual reality of Europe as part of ongoing life - and for teachers to see it as part of their responsibility to equip young people with the means of exploration and to inspire in them the joy of discovery and the will to explore.

It seems then to me that this Symposium has the opportunity - perhaps the duty - to make up, in the changed circumstances of 1991, the challenge that was not taken up in 1977. Whilst the framework we propose may well be very different from the options considered at that time, the attempt to set up a common framework can surely no longer be considered premature. In the last decade the Council of Europe has substantially developed its models of description - in practice by the successive threshold descriptions, which in building on the pioneering descriptions of learning objectives for English and French, have each responded to the somewhat varying needs of target audiences for the language concerned and in doing so have added something of value to the pool of experience; we owe a debt of this kind to the teams which have produced threshold level specifications for German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Portuguese, Catalan and Basque. Their work is available to us. Meanwhile a series of studies towards an enriched model of description was undertaken, to be followed by Dr. van Ek's theoretical exposé of such a model in his **Objectives for Foreign Language Learning**, with volumes on **Scope** and **Levels** (Van Ek J. 1986 & 87). This model, with some further extension, is now exemplified in Threshold Level 1990 and Waystage 1990 which you have all received (Van Ek J, & Trim J.L.M. 1991a & 1991b). Whilst keeping closely to the functional/notional coverage of the original, it adopts, as you will have seen, a more open approach to the lexicon bound to personal experience and introduces intonation as an integral aspect of expression. New chapters deal with strategies of communication, both productive and receptive, as well as with socio-cultural aspects of communication, including politeness conventions, and learning to learn as a conscious objective rather than as a mere spin-off or bonus. It will be for you to judge whether this enriched model is also adequate for the specification of objectives beyong Threshold Level.

The general question of whether a common framework is desirable or feasible in principle is now, perhaps, already overtaken by events. Under the pressure of practical considerations, a number of institutions have already moved far in this direction and their work will be presented to you. On a purely national level, the many autonomous teacher-based "grade objectives" schemes in the United Kingdom found it necessary to adopt a common framework of coherent and transparent objectives to facilitate pupil mobility in a society in which up to 30% of pupils may have to change

schools at least once as a result of family movement. The English-Speaking Union and the British Council found that the plethora of EFL examinations offered by British examining bodies was bewildering and deterrent to foreign learners and invested much effort in placing them in a common framework. The International Certificate Conference found it necessary to develop a common framework to ensure the comparability of certificates offered in different languages and controlled by different teams of examiners coming, sometimes, from different traditions - as well as encouraging learners to move on from one language to another with greater facility awareness and confidence. Similar reasons have led to the formation, recently, of international associations and consortia of independent examining bodies. The French Government has elaborated a scheme whereby the teaching of French in different national contexts can be validated by its Embassies without unduly constraining local provisions for local needs. Such networks are a natural outcome of the actions taken by national governments and leading institutions within their territories in accordance with the dual responsibilities undertaken under the European Cultural Convention both to encourage the learning and teaching of languages of other member states on its own territory and to provide the learning and teaching of its own national language (and in some cases regional languages) in other member states. At the same time, in the area of vocational training which comes most straightforwardly into its present terms of reference, the European Community has seen the urgent need for measures to facilitate freedom of movement for work and study and has taken its own steps towards their implementation.

In fact, Mr Chairman, the keen interest that has been shown by a large number of bodies concerned with language qualifications in being informed of the results of this Symposium and if at all possible to participate directly in its work, seem to indicate that it is no longer a question of whether a common framework is desirable, but rather of what it should be like and how it can be brought about. How do we reconcile the need for common acceptance and mutual recognition with respect for diversity and freedom to innovate? How do we find a solution with which all the established and legitimate interests in the field can feel comfortable, which nevertheless leaves space for future growth? How far can we progress during this short week and what must we do to expedite the process of actually setting up a coherent and transparent framework with which an individual record of achievement can gain recognition as being meaningful, valid and credible?

The other major issue with which we shall be concerned is that of an individual record of language learning achievement, which might be promoted under the aegis of the Council of Europe. In this case there is not, perhaps, the same danger of being overtaken and marginalised by events. We may find little difficulty in welcoming such an imaginative proposal in principle. There are, however, a number of practical issues to be considered. What functions would such a record perform? Simply motivation or actual facilitation of professional and educational mobility? What kinds of information should it contain? How would entries be made, by whom and in what form? Can it remain an informal record under the control of the individual, for which no responsibility is taken by the Council, or should it be something more, in which case does responsibility entail some form of control? If so, how is it to be exercised? Are theres dangers of abuse or of stifling bureaucratisation? If so, how are they to be avoided or overcome? How would a record of achievement relate to the common descriptive framework already discussed? Again, how far can progress be made here and what practical steps should be planned?

To sum up, Mr Chairman, we are now presented with what may later be seen as an historic opportunity. I have spoken of taking up the tasks of 1977, and of the ways in which our present situation is more favourable. With the accumulated advances of the years between and following the intensive thought which has gone into the planning of the Symposium, we have here the necessary technical expertise and decision-making power to embark on a process of cooperation which will give our fellow-Europeans - above all our young people - structures of support and stimulation which will motivate and guide them as they learn to work and play more closely together, and will recognise their achievement in language learning efforts which require determination, dedication and perseverance.

Our Swiss hosts and our animating team have worked in a most dedicated and efficient way to prepare, intellectually as well as practically, the discussions and decisions awaiting us. Let us all do our best to mark out the path of cooperation, and see how far along it we can progress in the days ahead.

REFERENCES

Baldegger, M. Müller, M, Schneider, G., & Näf, A. 1980: "Kontaktschwelle" Council of Europe.
Bung K. 1973a: "The Specification of Objectives in a Language Learning System for Adults" Council of Europe.
Bung K. 1973b: "The Foreign Language Needs of Hotel Waiters and Staff" Council of Europe.
Coste, D., Courtillon, J., Ferenczi, V., Martins-Balatr, M., Papo, E., CREDIF & Roulet, E. 1978: "Un Niveau-Seuil" Council of Europe.
Trim, J.L.M. 1978: "Some Possible Lines of Development of an Overall Structure for a European Unit/Credit Scheme for Foreign Language Learning by Adults", Council of Europe.
Van Ek J. 1986: "Objectives for foreign language learning": Scope." Council of Europe.
Van Ek J. 1987: "Objectives for foreign language learning": Levels." Council of Europe.
Van Ek J.& Trim J.L.M. 1991a: "Threshold Level 1990" Council of Europe.
Van Ek J.& Trim J.L.M. 1991b: "Waystage 1990" Council of Europe.

B.   SUMMARIES OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

SUMMARIES OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Phase 1:   **Transparency and Coherence in the Design of Objectives, Assessment and Certification Procedures;**

The objective of Phase 1 was "The establishment of what the principles of transparency and coherence meant both in theory and in practice, and what they implied for features of a possible common European language framework".

The many questions raised by the speakers, the limited amount of time available, the heterogeneity of the working groups have prevented any in-depth discussion of the problem. However, the following points have emerged:

a) The idea of a common European framework is considered to be positive. The principles of coherence and transparency should be adhered to in its development, but the framework should not impose a single system. On the contrary, it should be open and flexible in order to be adaptable to particular situations.

b) The modularity of teaching and learning, based on the definition of differenciated or even partial objectives, and the modularity of assessment and certification guarantee the choice of learning routes, but it would take different forms according to the school or post-school context.

c) The learner's autonomy is an important educational objective which may be reached through various approaches.

d) It is both desirable and useful to develop descriptive scales of language performances; they can be used as reference tools but must remain open, adaptable and non-binding.

e) Assessment methods should take account of teaching and learning processes as well as products. As to the assessment formats, these should be manifold, from external assessment developed by certification institutions through assessment developed by groups of teachers to self-assessment. The examples of innovation which were presented offer interesting approaches but they cannot be directly transferred to other contexts.

f) The question of a central certification controlling body remains open and controversial.

René Richterich

31

Phase 2: Beyond Threshold Level: Specifying Objectives for Diverse Needs: Continuity or Change?

Objectives of Phase 2

In Phase 2 Daniel Coste investigated the characteristics of language learning and teaching beyond Threshold level and what the implications of these characteristics are for the principles used in defining objectives and the design of modules of language learning. A panel presented projects from the upper secondary, adult and university sectors concerned with the definition of objectives for both testing and teaching purposes beyond Threshold level.

The objectives of the extended phase of group discussion were

- to outline those features of this stage of language learning which differentiate it from preceding stages - to discuss the consequences of these features for the model(s) to be used for the specification of language learning objectives beyond Threshold level - to consider to what extent transparency and overall coherence can be ensured whilst at the same time respecting the high degree of pluralism and diversity in language learning and teaching in this area.

"Beyond Threshold Level"

Many participants had difficulty locating a level "beyond Threshold" within their own contexts. It is evident that whereas in many member states and in many language teaching institutions the principles of the "Threshold level approach" have been adopted, it has not been used as a clear indicator of any given level.

This lack of precision with regard to relating Threshold to levels in given teaching systems was, however, compensated for by very clear, precise notions on the features of language learning and teaching beyond Threshold.

Features of Language Learning and Teaching Beyond Threshold

There was consensus as to the features characterising language learning and teaching beyond Threshold. The groups confirmed and enlarged Daniel Coste's portrait of learners, objectives and context of language learning at this level. In short:

- learners are different in terms of:
  - the skill and knowledge they bring with them;
  - the context within which they will be using their language skills;
  - their motivation;
  - their previous language learning experience and resulting awareness;

- progress in both fluency and accuracy become closely linked;

- an awareness of sociocultural factors and their influence on the use of the target language becomes an important feature of language learning;

- learners often go through changes in learning environment at this stage as they move from one type of learning establishment to another;

- progression is qualitative rather than quantitative and therefore is less tangible at this stage of learning;

- "progress" is not likely to take place linearly in all areas of language learning, but rather in certain areas of skills and knowledge according to the learner's own needs and objectives. This gives rise to "imbalanced" or uneven profiles.

In terms of the learner, transparency and coherence should be ensured by providing continuity. In terms of those responsible for drawing up more open-ended specifications of language learning objectives it was felt that a high degree of flexibility is needed and attention to areas not focussed on at earlier stages is required in order to take account of the above features.

Models for the Specification of Objectives

There was general agreement that there is a clear need for diversification and flexibility in the way in which learning objectives and testing objectives are specified. This, however was not taken to mean a large extent of fragmentation of learning objectives.

There was consensus on the existence of a "common core" or large block of "transversal features" which would be relevant to and present in all language learning situations at this stage or, expressed differently, which could serve all language learning efforts at this stage.

Within this "common core" it was suggested that existing models for describing language proficiency could be used but with different emphases, covering in depth areas which become relevant at higher levels. It was emphasised, though, that such specifications should be open, not limiting the greater degree of learner autonomy which could be expected at this level.

The possibility of organising such specifications of language learning objectives in a modular fashion was considered worth investigating as a way of allowing for variation in possible learning paths. Emphasis was also given to the necessity to distinguish between "modularity" of assessable learning objectives and teaching programmes.

Variation in levels of attainment in relationship to the different language learning objectives within this "common core" should be possible.

At the same time, it was suggested that specific modules for particular vocational or other purposes could be envisaged outside this "common core". Such modules would relate directly to the "transversal features" of the "common core" complementing them in very specific subject areas.

A lack of transparency and coherence implied by the need for diversity, openness and flexibility at this level was not felt to be a risk. The Threshold 1990 model of formulating language learning objectives could well provide a suitable instrument allowing for transparency and coherence while providing sufficient flexibility. The need to establish a common European framework with a coherent set of language learning objectives beyond Threshold was implicit in the groups' conclusions.

Mike Makosch

Phase 3: Towards a Learner-centred European Framework for Reporting Achievement in Language Learning.

The groups reported on the general reaction to the idea of a European Language Portfolio; the advantages that could be derived from its development; the possible dangers, and the questions which would need to be addressed in further reflection on and development of the concept.

In general, the groups strongly supported the principle of a language portfolio, though one group felt that further concretisation of the idea was needed for proper judgment of its usefulness.

Potential advantages of the portfolio included its role as a stimulator and motivator of both multilingualism and successful language learning; its beneficial effect on the design and methodology of language teaching and assessment; the usefulness of a frame of reference and calibrator for transparency for users, and as a facilitator of mobility.

The doubts expressed wondered whether it would in fact have the motivating effect sought, and whether it might not lead to the kind of rigidity it tried to avoid. Groups stressed the need for simplicity and clarity, and some groups questioned the case for developing a portfolio in all three of the proposed parts.

Quite naturally, there were numerous suggestions of issues which would need to be addressed in further development of the portfolio. These included, amongst others:

- how would the portfolio be financed?
- how would the certification part of the passport be validated? by whom?
- could the same document serve both compulsory school systems and adult education?
- how could the need for simplicity and clarity be reconciled with the wish to include many kinds of language learning, including the cultural element of language learning?
- what kind of scale would best allow the recognition and certification of "partial language learning" where some skills are more fully acquired than others?

There were a number of recommendations about the nature of the portfolio and the scale. The groups which expressed views on the number of levels recommended a 9 level scale; some felt that the descriptors should be expressed in terms of skills, other in terms of activities; one group stressed that any entry in the portfolio should have an official stamp of approval; another recommended national, rather than international development initially, and that it should be voluntary.

The group reports give much richer accounts of their reasoning and more detailed suggestions. It is fair, however, to say that the overall result of the discussion was a "YES, but..... " with questions and reservations expressed as issues to be dealt with in a further study rather than as rejections of the concept.

Frank Heyworth

C.   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SYMPOSIUM

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The Symposium, noting

the progress made in member countries towards the implementation of Recommendation (82) 18 of the Committee of Ministers, especially in respect of the reform of curricular guidelines and syllabuses;

the accelerating pace of European social, economic and political cooperation;

the accession of new states in Central and Eastern Europe to the European Cultural Convention;

the resolutions adopted at the 17th Session of the Standing Conference of the European Ministers of Education (Vienna, October 1991) regarding the crucial role of modern language learning in the promotion of the European dimension; has adopted the following conclusions:

1. A further intensification of language learning and teaching in member countries is necessary in the interests of greater mobility, more effective international communication combined with respect for identity and cultural diversity, better access to information, more intensive personal interaction, improved working relations and a deeper mutual understanding.

2. To achieve these aims language learning is necessarily a life-long task to be promoted and facilitated throughout educational systems, from pre-school through to adult education.

3. It is desirable to develop a **Common European Framework** of reference for language learning at all levels, in order to:

   - promote and facilitate cooperation among educational institutions in different countries;

   - provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications;

   - assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and coordinate their efforts.

3.1. In order to fulfil its functions, such a **Common European Framework** must be comprehensive, transparent and coherent.

3.1.1. By "comprehensive" is meant that the **Common European Framework** should specify the full range of language knowledge, skills and use. It should differentiate the various dimensions in which language proficiency is described, and provide a series of reference points (levels or steps) by which progress in learning can be calibrated. It should be borne in mind that the development of communicative proficiency involves other dimensions than the strictly linguistic (e.g. socio-cultural awareness, imaginative experience, affective relations, learning to learn, etc.).

37

3.1.2. By "transparent" is meant that information must be clearly formulated and explicit, available and readily comprehensible to users.

3.1.3. By "coherent" is meant that the description is free from internal contradictions. In respect to educational systems, coherence requires that there is a harmonious relation among their components:

- the identification of needs;
- the determination of objectives;
- the definition of content;
- the selection or creation of material;
- the establishment of teaching/learning programmes;
- the teaching and learning methods employed;
- evaluation, testing and assessment.

3.2. The construction of a comprehensive, transparent and coherent Framework for language learning and teaching does not imply the imposition of one single uniform system. On the contrary, the Framework should be open and flexible, so that it can be applied, with such adaptations as prove necessary, to particular situations.

3.3. The uses of the Framework would include:

- the planning of language learning programmes in terms of:

  - their assumptions regarding prior knowledge, and their articulation with earlier learning, particularly at interfaces between primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and higher/further education;

  - their objectives;

  - their content;

- the planning of language certification in terms of:

  - the content syllabus of examinations;

  - assessment criteria, which can, even at lower levels, be stated in terms of positive achievement rather than negative deficiencies;

- the planning of self directed learning, including:

  - raising the learner's awareness of his or her present state of knowledge and skill;

  - self-setting of feasible and worthwhile objectives; selection of materials;

  - self assessment.

38

3.3.1. Learning programmes and certification can be

- global, bringing a learner forward in all dimensions of language proficiency and communicative competence;

- modular, improving the learner's proficiency in a restricted area for a particular purpose;

- weighted, emphasising learning in certain directions and producing a 'profile' in which a higher level is attained in some areas of knowledge and skill than in others.

3.4. The Common Framework should be constructed so as to accommodate these various forms.

3.5. In considering the role of a Common Framework at more advanced stages of language learning it is necessary to take into account changes in the nature of needs of learners and the context in which they live, study and work. There is a need for general qualifications at a level beyond Threshold, which may be situated with reference to the Common Framework, given that they are well defined, are adapted to national situations and embrace new areas, particularly cultural and more specialised domains. In addition, a considerable role is likely to be played by modules or clusters of modules geared to the specific needs, characteristics and resources of learners.

4. The Symposium also considers that once the Common Framework has been elaborated, there should be devised, at the European level, a common instrument allowing individuals who so desire to maintain a record of the different elements of their language learning achievement and experience, formal or informal. This document (the **"European Language Portfolio"**) would provide positive evidence of the various forms of learning experienced by a learner at given points in his/her career. The precise form of such a document needs further investigation, but it should serve to increase the motivation of learners and facilitate their mobility by reporting their language competence in a transnationally comprehensible way.

The Symposium RECOMMENDS

1. That the Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Cooperation (CDCC) should:

A. - establish, as soon as possible, a comprehensive, coherent and transparent framework for the description of language proficiency which will enable learners to find their place and assess their progress with reference to a set of defined reference points as adumbrated in the above conclusions;

- set up a working party to elaborate such a framework, taking into account the proposals of the Symposium working groups;

- support and facilitate liaison and cooperation between the Working Party and those engaged in related projects such as:

  - the networks set up by participants in the Symposium;

- the action programmes within the new style workshops of the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project;

- developments in other European institutions (e.g. LINGUA);

- other work in syllabus design and curriculum development;

- enable the working party to operate on a strict timetable by ensuring that the necessary additional human and material resources are made available to allow this work to proceed without delay and without disruption to the existing programme of the Modern Languages Section of the Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport;

- encourage member states, within the context of the framework, to give appropriate recognition for all official purposes to language qualifications obtained in other member states;

- encourage such recognition by other authorities and institutions;

- provide for the review of framework at regular intervals.

B. - set up a working party to consider possible forms and functions of a **"European Language Portfolio"** to be issued under its aegis and held by individuals, in which they may record their cumulative experience and qualifications in modern languages.

The Portfolio should contain a section in which formal qualifications are related to a common European scale, another in which the learner him or herself keeps a personal record of language learning experiences and possibly a third which contains examples of work done. Where appropriate entries should be situated within the Common Framework.

2. That the Council for Cultural Cooperation should invite member States to:

- facilitate the cooperation of relevant institutions and experts with their colleagues in other member countries to contribute to the work of the Working Parties referred to in the above recommendations;

- encourage the formulation of official curricular guidelines, examination syllabuses and other policy instruments with reference to the Framework once it is accepted;

- give appropriate recognition within the Common Framework for all official purposes to language qualifications obtained in other member states.

PHASE 1

TRANSPARENCY AND COHERENCE IN THE DESIGN OF OBJECTIVES, ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES

TRANSPARENCY AND COHERENCE: FOR WHOM AND TO WHAT PURPOSE?

René Richterich, University of Lausanne and Günther Schneider, University of Fribourg

1. Starting point

There have been major changes in the teaching and learning of modern languages caused by:

a) Changes in society - personal mobility, population movement and new job requirements - which will become even more marked in a united Europe;

b) Changes in modern-language teaching practice:

- learner-centred teaching based on negotiation which takes account of individual needs, objectives and resources;

- more language-learning facilities, both within and independently from educational institutions;

- diversification of teaching/learning activities, based on practical tasks related to real life;

- life-long learning and increasing learner autonomy.

These social and teaching changes have to some extent been responsible for innovations in assessment and certification, but in many cases they have also highlighted the discrepancy between, on the one hand, the new objectives and reforms in teaching/learning and, on the other, the form, content and criteria of assessment and certification, which are more resistant to change.

These developments have created the need for a European framework system of qualifications which is coherent in itself and intelligible to all concerned.

The different aspects of the framework system, its advantages and disadvantages, the difficulties and the proposed solutions are discussed in the various papers to the Symposium. For our part, we have focused on three rights which a framework system should afford to all individuals and institutions concerned:

- the right to information;
- the right to choice;
- the right to have a say.

2. Right to information

Assessment and certification are means of collecting and disseminating information on the individual's level of language-learning achievement. The people and institutions to whom this information is of concern are:

- learners;
- administrators/education authorities;
- syllabus developers;
- teachers/teaching institutions;
- assessors/assessment and certificate-awarding institutions;
- authors/publishers of teaching materials;
- specialists/research institutes;
- users/user institutions.

Because these people and institutions have different interests, the information collected and disseminated needs to be accessible and comprehensible to all while being as complete as possible. In other words, it must comply with the principle of **transparency**.

Assessment and certification have a social function - they are mainly designed to be of help to learners and users. It is for these two groups that specialists must develop coherent systems and formulate them in intelligible language which is also as explicit as possible. Learners need to know why they are assessed in a given way and what they can actually do with the language they are learning or have learnt. Users must be able to take decisions on the basis of the information provided by certificates.

What is at stake for the different partners is not the same, if one considers the social, economic and even political impact of assessment and certification. While the interest of planners, teachers and assessors is confined to the methodological implications, learners and users are concerned with success or failure, and teaching institutions, whether in the state or private sector, have their reputation and survival at stake.

To make the information more transparent we propose two parameters: **horizontality** and **verticality**. By the horizontal dimension we mean a description of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are generally known as "content". The vertical dimension refers to the quantity and quality of the content as defined by a grading system.

Traditionally, the horizontal dimension is expressed in terms of subjects such as composition or translation or skills like speaking. The vertical dimension is expressed in terms of a mark, such as eight out of ten or a comment such as "good", "advanced" or "poor". Clearly these assessment systems provide virtually no guidance, especially for people outside the system, and leave those who have decisions to take with only their knowledge of a given educational system or the reputation of a given diploma to go by. This is why it is vital to provide in the horizontal axis a description of the knowledge, skills and attitudes in areas of language use, and, in the vertical axis, a quantitative and qualitative appraisal.

This gives us the following definitions:

- horizontality = description and clarification of multi-dimensional content in terms of linguistic, social and cultural attainment, communication situations, or partial skills such as reading comprehension of texts of a certain type, etc;

- verticality = quantity and quality of these skills expressed solely in neutral or positive terms, that is what learners can do as

opposed to what they cannot. In order to develop a grading system, criteria such as type and breadth of content, ease and assurance of language performance, etc. should be taken into account. The number of levels must be determined, as must procedures for differentiating between them.

Obviously, there is no one single way of formulating these parameters and we must accept a degree of diversity in the approaches developed for different languages, cultures and institutions. This was one of the main themes of the Symposium. A number of examples are given in the papers in this volume. Our main concern is that all horizontal and vertical descriptions should be clear and meaningful for learners and users.

Descriptions and definitions of competence are not the only ways of conveying information about objectives or attainment. They need to be supplemented by examples of the types of task actually used in assessments. There are also other ways informing learners what is expected from them prior to assessment, for example by providing them with specimen tests, model answers, examples of performance on video or self-assessment instruments.

3. Right to choice

The teaching and learning of a modern language forms one system comprising:

- the identification of needs;
- the definition of objectives;
- the selection of course content;
- the design of a syllabus;
- assessment.

The function of our second principle of **coherence** is to ensure that these components are in harmony with one another, that there are no conflicts between them. Coherence should naturally be a quality of the system itself, but it also needs to be clearly apparent, particularly to the learner, who is affected by all the system's components.

The identification of needs yields information on an individual's or group's background and progress as language learners in relation to the demands of a social environment. This information serves as a basis for an accurate projection of their future performance needs which can be expressed in the form of objectives. The course content and teaching/learning syllabuses are then the means of achieving these objectives, and assessment indicates the extent to which they have been achieved.

Assessment is an essential, inherent part of the teaching and learning processes. Accordingly, its function should not be confined to providing information for certification purposes. A certificate merely provides a record of a certain type of assessment; it is no more than a useful document required by society. It is not essential to teaching and learning and should not be allowed to have an adverse effect on the choice of objectives.

45

But things are often different in practice. When the choice of
recognised diplomas is limited, learners who need a paper qualification
may find themselves obliged to learn content which does not actually
relate to their objectives. Moreover, the ways in which learners are
assessed oblige them to spend part of their learning time developing
skills required solely for examinations of a certain type as opposed to
developing their communication skills.

In the field of assessment the requirement for coherence appears as the
criterion of validity, which relates assessment to the pedagogic
objectives and to real life. In cases where assessment tasks clearly
reflect real communication situations, we talk of face validity. Some
specialists consider that this form of validity is weak and can be
disregarded. But the attitude of learners is completely different: when
they cannot see direct relevance to their objectives and to real life,
they perceive incoherence.

There is also another type of validity, which Keith Morrow terms
"washback validity"[1]. Obviously, forms of assessment have a
considerable impact on teaching. When an examination tests grammar, it
is grammar that is taught. When written comprehension is assessed by
multiple choice questions, it is multiple choice exercises that are
practised and not reading strategies. If the "washback validity"
criterion were consistently applied, many discrepancies between
objectives, teaching and assessment could be avoided, thus making the
learning process more coherent.

Learners of modern languages take various learning routes. These may be
compulsory or optional, depending on personal or professional needs.
One thing is certain: human beings do not learn a language in linear
fashion, starting from zero knowledge and proceeding in a straight line
to mastery. Time, which is an essential factor in all learning, plays
its three-dimensional role in past, present and future. In the learning
process the individual is performing momentary actions which constantly
refer back through memory to the past and forward through objectives to
the future. Likewise, a process can be interrupted and then resumed or
repeated subsequently, still with reference to some future objective.

There is a danger of incoherence when learners move to another level or
change institutions, especially in the case of higher-education
institutions, which adapt more slowly to changing needs, objectives,
methods and forms of assessment.

Both the psychology of learning and the circumstances of the learning
process make it advisable to limit the scope of objectives, content and
syllabus and to offer modules from which learners can choose according
to their requirements and resources. These requirements and resources
may vary over the period of time available for study, which may itself
be subject to modification. Compulsory education at school, optional or
compulsory training and optional non-vocational further education should
form one coherent system, which can be best brought about through
modular organisation. Individuals should have the right to choose what
they want to learn when. Obviously, they cannot exercise this right in
a vacuum, as they live in a given society which imposes all kinds of

---

[1]   Morrow, K: "The Evaluation of Tests of Communicative Performance" in
        Portal, M (ed.): "Innovations in Language Testing", Windsor,
        Berkshire, 1986, p. 1-13

constraints. Nevertheless, it is the duty of teaching institutions to provide learners with the opportunity to take the learning route which best matches their resources and needs so that they in turn can properly meet the needs and aspirations of the society in which they live.

The forms and content of teaching/learning modules may vary, with the result that forms of assessment may also differ, but there are universal categories which apply to all languages, such as level of proficiency, domain of use and skill.

Linguistics, particularly pragmatics and sociolinguistics, has enhanced our knowledge of the way in which language communication operates. The parameters chosen in the different versions of Threshold level have proved their value for setting communicative objectives and planning teaching/learning modules on the language used in everyday situations and certain professional contexts. New communication-based forms of assessment and certification have been developed to fit these objectives. Daniel Coste's paper examines whether the same parameters can be applied to levels above Threshold level.

The availability and choice of learning or assessment modules vary according to language and country. Most certificates are awarded for overall attainment; there are very few instances of the certification of partial skills. For example, there are materials and courses for learning how to read specialist texts, but we lack certificates in this particular skill. In Switzerland, for example, many communication situations, such as committee meetings, conferences and parliamentary debates, rely on participants speaking their mother tongue and being understood by the others. This presupposes very advanced receptive skills in two foreign languages. Despite this, there is as yet very little mention of these skills in definitions of objectives. There are very few courses in them and, above all, there is no provision for encouraging them by assessment and certification. All this is by no means confined to Switzerland and can be encountered virtually everywhere.

To ensure coherence in choice, one needs to add to the parameters of horizontality and verticality applied to information the principles **comparability** and **acceptability** in relation to modules. It is necessary to lay down criteria for:

a. enabling institutions to decide on the basis of the content description whether a particular type of module is comparable with other types or with module specifications described by a European framework;

b. showing whether the organisation, sequencing and assessment in one modular system are comparable with those in another system or with specifications in a common framework;

c. setting minimum standards so that a given module can be declared equivalent to another module;

d. enabling learners to compare modules of different types in horizontal and vertical terms in order to select those corresponding most closely to their requirements.

Comparability and acceptability must lead to greater flexibility in module-based teaching/learning systems. If this is to be achieved with due regard for particular regional or cultural features, decentralisation of assessment and certificate-awarding bodies is desirable. In addition, the self-taught, learning a language either by themselves, by immersion or by working in the foreign country, should be given the opportunity of proper assessment and the chance to obtain a recognised certificate without taking an official or private language course.

The main task ahead is to devise flexible, varied description and assessment procedures for the purposes of comparison and acceptance. This goes right to the heart of the problem of equivalence, which has political as well as pedagogical implications. It is to be hoped the proposed solutions outlined in the course of the Symposium will help us reach a consensus.

4. Right to have a say

In learner-centred teaching/learning systems one would expect learners to have a say in the method and content of assessment. And yet they rarely do. Although learners are in control of their own learning, assessment is out of their hands - their unavoidable moment of truth.

Modularity allows this moment of truth to be split up and spread over time, enabling assessment to perform one of its essential functions - namely, to take stock at a given point in the learning process and decide on the basis of the results whether to continue, pause or make changes.

If we accept that learners are entitled to information about the content and methods of assessment and to choose their course modules (and consequently also the ways in which they are assessed), they must also be entitled to express their opinions on the information given to them and the modules on offer.

Learners following a taught course at an institution are continuously observed and assessed by the other members of the group, including the teacher. Feedback takes the form of the teacher's comments and corrections and reactions from the other learners. In this type of continuous assessment, which is inherent in all group teaching/learning contexts, the individual can always intervene to agree or disagree. But once assessment has been formalised for certification the learner no longer has the right to say anything. There really should be a place for learners to express, in their own terms, what they feel able to do with the language they have learnt and how they view the methods and content of the formal assessment they have undergone.

In addition, they should be provided with self-assessment instruments so that they can chart their own progress on a regular basis. The results of this self-assessment should be incorporated into the external, institutionalised assessment.

It is certainly to be hoped that self-assessment material would be developed for all assessment modules - and perhaps by the assessment bodies themselves.

In contrast to summative assessment which is concerned with measuring results or **products**, the formative assessment which accompanies or should accompany all learning is usually primarily concerned with learning **processes**. Its function is to consolidate learners' skills and develop learner autonomy. This essential aspect of assessment centred on learning processes is discussed by Viljo Kohonen.

Thus the right to information and the right to choice go hand in hand with the right to have a say. But this is not an absolute right and involves negotiation and interaction between various partners:

- teaching and certificate-awarding institutions select means of teaching and assessment in accordance with their resources and with society's needs. When offering the learner these means, they should describe them in as much detail as possible. Institutions should be able to justify their choice of method at all times;

- being fully informed, and able to express their views, learners should be able to select the product which corresponds most closely to their personal needs.

- users should have the opportunity to say what language skills they expect of those they recruit or train and to give their opinion on what is recorded in any certificate.

We would therefore like to add two more parameters to the four already described: negotiability and interactiveness, which serve to ensure that the different components of the teaching/learning and assessment/certification systems function as harmoniously as possible.

5. Application

This brief account of the right to information, the right to choice and the right to have a say, together with the six parameters which characterise a framework system of qualifications for language teaching/learning may sound highly idealistic or even utopian. But the fact is that rights are always susceptible to different interpretations, and in a Europe developing rapidly and unpredictably, idealism is one of the main things that keep us going.

A number of instruments could help us put all these ideas into practice. We will limit ourselves to three:

1. A code of conduct for European assessment and certificate-awarding institutions could be drawn up, with details of testing standards, co-operation arrangements, information policy, type of information to be provided in certificates, etc.;

2. Research into testing is highly specialised. For example, extremely interesting comparative studies have been made. But consumers do not have ready access to all this information. For that reason it would be worth publishing quality tests classifying the various types of assessment and certification available on the language teaching/learning market so that learners and users could compare them and select the ones which suited them best;

3. A European language portfolio would be a promising development. Creating a portfolio would provide us with an opportunity to put transparency and coherence into practice:

    - the portfolio would accompany learners throughout their learning career, both at school and subsequently in adult education;

    - it would contain detailed skills descriptions in the form of reference scales comprehensible to everyone;

    - it would enable both institutions and learners to add any information they considered relevant.

    The portfolio could act as an important catalyst.

In ideas and theories as well as in practical applications, in the general as well as the particular, it is by constantly seeking compromises between centralisation and decentralisation, between rigidity and flexibility, between uniformity and diversity that we will find solutions which are acceptable to everyone and which are so designed that they can be adapted at any time to unforeseen changes.

We are convinced that we have a real chance of negotiating these compromises given that representatives both of teaching and assessment institutions and of user institutions are co-operating together on the Council of Europe project. What is more, we are all learners or have been in the past. This should enable us to keep learners and their rights at the very centre of our thoughts and discussions.

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIONS IN THE DESIGN OF OBJECTIVES, ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES:

TRANSPARENCY IN A DECENTRALISED CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

Annie Monnerie Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques, Sèvres, France

The DELF (Diplôme élémentaire de langue française) and the DALF (Diplôme approfondi de langue française) which were introduced by decree on 22 May 1985, are now on offer in over 40 countries, including Finland, Indonesia, Mexico, Algeria, Poland, Portugal, Austria, and now, Switzerland.

The DELF comprises six credit units, each corresponding to a specific degree of competence in French (see Appendix 1).

The four DALF credit units indicate that a foreign student is capable of satisfactorily taking his or her specialised subject at a French university.

The way the two diplomas are designed makes transparency a particularly important issue. The system is both centralised and decentralised. It is decentralised in so far as the examining boards, content and timetables are national, and centralised in so far as the membership of the boards, content and timetables are submitted for approval to the National Committee at the C.I.E.P. (Centre international d'études pédagogiques) in Sèvres.

In addition to the need to ensure that examiners apply standards consistently, the need for transparency for the candidates to make it clear what is expected of them, and the need for transparency for potential end-users (eg. employers) - issues not confined to these diplomas - in the case of DELF and DALF there is also the problem of ensuring firstly that **content** and **levels** correspond in different countries, and secondly of ensuring that there is a clear relationship to the type of assessment available in the other countries concerned.

1. Assessment Criteria: - consistency from one examiner to the next

Assessment criteria are obviously an overwhelmingly important component of any certification system. How can one ensure that the marks awarded are sufficiently consistent, particularly when it is performance in an oral exam that is being marked rather than a paper that is being corrected? Each centre has to draw up, on the basis of criteria suggested by the National Committee, assessment grids similar to this one:

ASSESSMENT GRID

<u>Ability to Deal with the Communication Situation</u>

Understanding the instructions	/ 3
Appropriateness of speech acts	/ 3
Ability to hold a conversation	/ 3

<u>Formal Accuracy</u>

Phonetic and prosodic accuracy	/ 3
Morpho-syntactical accuracy	/ 3
Vocabulary choice	/ 3

<u>Originality of Expression</u>   / 2

<u>Total Mark</u>   /20

Experience shows that these assessment grids, rather than being strictly binding, are more of a reference system and that it is sometimes difficult to make a detailed breakdown of the marks awarded to candidates for each aspect of their performance. The grids are nevertheless necessary, although it should be borne in mind that the final mark is a compromise between an overall assessment, which is based on an impression and is, at the same time, justified, and a detailed evaluation, which is more objective but is "dehumanised".

The grids are certainly an improvement on the previous systems of certification for French as a foreign language. This should not be overlooked simply because they are bound to have imperfections. It would be unfortunate if, by bringing to light issues which had so far been overlooked, efforts to improve clarity ended up by arousing suspicion.

2. **Transparency vis à vis the Candidate**

The assessment grids are not shown to the candidate, for reasons that are as varied as they are obvious :

- They may contain part of the answer, particularly in the case of written examinations;

- Even if they are drafted in the candidate's mother tongue, they use terminology which though probably necessary is incomprehensible without an explanation, which would be too expensive.

We recommend that candidates be given information that will enable them to concentrate on what is most important. For instance, "You will be judged as much on the relevance of the content as on formal correctness." The training provided by the bodies which prepare candidates for the DELF should, in addition to the syllabus, include information for candidates about the means of assessment.

Nevertheless, since the DELF and the DALF are diplomas which are not intended to be tied to a particular training course and which can be obtained by people not enrolled for a course, the information possessed by an external candidate on the day of the examination will not, of course, be as transparent as the candidate would like.

That is why the National Committee has published a series of booklets to ensure that candidates are informed not only of the knowledge expected of them but also of the skills they must be able to display and the ways in which those skills will be assessed (see Appendix 2).

The desire to ensure transparency vis à vis the candidate should not, however, be allowed to lead to a mechanical, artificial assessment of ability. The people devising the system are warned against the risk of over-formalising so-called communication activities and concentrating on mastery of an exercise to the detriment of real communication. They are warned against abusing a standardised communication "meta-language", which would inevitably lead simply to a knowledge of standard instructions and to over-simplification of more complex forms of communication. Then, transparency is only an illusion. The candidate would conform to a teaching approach rather than acquiring a real ability to communicate.

3. Transparency from Country to Country

It is the National Committee that is responsible for ensuring consistency for the new diploma awarded in the various countries. The committee :

- limits discrepancies between assessment grids;
- receives sample examination papers completed by candidates.

A more systematic approach is now being embarked on. Examination papers will be circulated to various boards, which will be asked to mark them. The range of marks obtained will be sent to the centres with a weighting applied by the National Committee. The same work is to be done with oral examinations.

4. Transparency of Grids from Experts in Different Languages and Legibility of the Systems

The DELF and DALF diplomas were initially described in terms of tasks to be performed, together with a number of hours' study. This gave a rough idea of the standard expected of the student (for instance, what could be expected of a student after 100 hours).

Number of hours		**Tasks**
100 h -------->	**Level**	<--------

Hence the question: what is the minimum standard required if the various tasks are to be satisfactorily completed?

We have seen that the candidate's performance is assessed with the help of an assessment grid. This assessment grid is not, however, comprehensible, unless it is matched by "expected content".

In Unit A.1, for example, the "correctness of syntax" component should, at the standard expected after 100 hours, be confined to a few items:

- determiners
- direct pronouns
- main tenses (present, perfect, with the different auxiliary verbs, immediate future)
- location in space, adverbs denoting time
- negation, interrogation.

No mistake or gap in knowledge relating to more sophisticated points should be taken into account.

On the other hand, a bonus should be awarded for any more sophisticated performance, obviously within the limits of the total marks that can be awarded.

Each credit unit comprises oral and written tests, which carry different coefficients (see Appendix 1). As no test or part of a test can eliminate a candidate, the fact that one credit has been obtained does not mean that all the tasks have been satisfactorily completed. It is, however, possible to refer to the marks for the oral and the written papers, which are recorded on the diploma, in order to obtain a more accurate idea of the candidate's oral or written standard.

Except in Unit A.2, the tasks are not designed to separate each of the four skills. They generally combine two skills, for example:

- understanding instructions
- making a statement corresponding to the instructions.

As we have seen, the assessment of comprehension is one component of the mark, but as the material used may consist either of instructions or of genuine texts of varying difficulty, the standard of comprehension will obviously vary from case to case.

If full marks are obtained for each of the units (A.1, A.2, A.3 and A.4), the diplomas could be said to correspond as follows to the European Certificate (Inter-university Certificate : London, Sienna, Grenada, etc., see Tosi in this volume) and, probably more roughly, the ESU (English-Speaking Union) Framework as follows:

DELF UNITS	SKILLS Write Read Speak Listen	ESU Framework	European Certificate
Unit A4		4-5	C (5)
Unit A3		3-4	
Unit A2		2-3	B (3)
Unit A1		1-2	A (1)

The fact that the diploma is easy to correlate with the European certificate, which, like the DELF, is based on a very specific description of content and tasks, seems to augur well for the possibility of co-operation. We hope that the experts will exchange views in a spirit of mutual tolerance. The idea is not to introduce a single model but to ensure transparency between the various systems.

CONCLUSION

The DELF and the DALF represent not only an assessment scale but also an assessment procedure. Any assessment scale can be put into practice by

means of a variety of assessment procedures. The purpose of this Symposium is not to harmonise procedures which would seem difficult, given the different systems (private, internal/external, etc) but to make sure that the scales adopted are clear.

The DELF and the DALF are also examination certificates. Examination certificates are certainly not indispensable to assessment, but they have the advantage of offering a potential employer a kind of guarantee. Who will underwrite such a guarantee for an assessment procedure not supported by a formal certificate?

Continuous internal assessment gives feedback to students during the learning process; a formal certification system confirms these judgements through an assessment based on a certain number of tests, which should provide a representative but not an exhaustive picture of the candidate's actual skills.

Because of the flexibility of its system of credit units, and because of its formulation of communicative learning objectives, the DELF has the advantage of being a diploma which can be very closely matched with an internal assessment scheme.

APPENDIX 1

Appendix to the decree of 22nd May 1985 governing the management and content of the DELF and DALF examinations.

REGLEMENT D'EXAMEN

I. DIPLOME ELEMENTAIRE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE, SERIE A

Nature des épreuves	Durée	Coef-ficient	Temps de préparation
A 1. EXPRESSION GÉNÉRALE			
Epreuves orales			
Exposé sur un sujet de vie quotidienne concernant le candidat, suivi d'un entretien avec le jury	0 h 15	2	0 h 30
Dialogue simulé sur un thème choisi par le jury	0 h 15	2	0 h 30
Epreuves écrites			
Rédaction d'un court récit (soixante à quatre-vingts mots) à partir d'images obligeant à situer le récit dans le temps et dans l'espace	0 h 30	1	
Rédaction d'une réponse à une invitation, à une proposition ou à une demande de rendez-vous, etc.	0 h 30	1	
A 2. EXPRESSION DES IDÉES ET SENTIMENTS			
Epreuves orales			
Présentation et défense d'un point de vue à partir d'un sujet simple et précis face à un interlocuteur	0 h 15	2	0 h 30
Présentation d'informations, d'un point de vue et apport de précisions à la demande du jury à partir de documents fournis au candidat	0 h 15	2	0 h 30
Epreuves écrites			
Identification des intentions et des points de vue exprimés dans un document	0 h 30	1	
Expression d'une attitude définie à partir d'un corpus de phrases fourni au candidat	0 h 30	1	

A 3. LECTURE ET EXPRESSION ÉCRITE

Epreuve orale

Analyse du contenu d'un document simple et lec-
ture à haute voix .... 0 h 15   1   0 h 30

Epreuves écrites

Expression écrite :

Analyse du contenu d'un texte .... 0 h 45   1

Demande d'informations sur un sujet simple de
la vie courante .... 0 h 45   2

A 4. PRATIQUE DU FONCTIONNEMENT DE LA LANGUE

Epreuve orale

Phonétique, rythme, intonation, structures de la
langue .... 0 h 15   1   0 h 30

Epreuve écrite

Pratique de la langue écrite (compréhension et
expression) .... 1 h 30   1

A 5. CULTURE ET CIVILISATION

Epreuves orales

Entretien sur thème choisi par le candidat .... 0 h 15   1   0 h 30
(Six thèmes possibles, portant sur la France ou
le monde francophone :
1. Travailler ;
2. Se déplacer ;
3. Etudier ;
4. Les institutions ;
5. Les pratiques culturelles ;
6. La civilisation et la culture contemporaines.)

Exposé sur thème dans une perspective compa-
ratiste, suivi d'un entretien avec le jury (thème
au choix du candidat parmi les six thèmes
énoncés ci-dessus) .... 0 h 15   1   0 h 30

Epreuve écrite

Résumé de cent cinquante à deux cents mots à
partir de documents remis au candidat et cor-
respondant au thème choisi par lui entre les
six thèmes possibles .... 1 h 30   2

A 6. EXPRESSION SPÉCIALISÉE

Epreuves orales

Résumé oral d'un texte authentique d'une page
choisie en fonction d'un domaine de spéciali-
sation défini par le candidat (quatre domaines :
sciences humaines et sociales ; sciences écono-
miques et juridiques ; mathématiques et
sciences de la matière ; sciences de la vie) .. 0 h 15   1   ⎫
                                                                  ⎬ 1 h 00
Entretien sur ce texte avec le jury .... 0 h 20   1   ⎭

(Temps de préparation pour les deux épreuves :
une heure.)

N'utilisez en aucun cas votre véritable nom: votre copie doit rester anonyme

Regardez bien les personnages s'il y en a sur les images. Le narrateur est-il parmi eux ? S'il y a plus d'une personne (couple, amis...) choisissez-en une, et n'en changez plus !

b)　ex. "Vous venez de vous marier. Racontez comment vous avez rencontré votre mari/votre femme".
Ici, vous devez choisir entre le personnage féminin ou masculin.
Attention ensuite aux accords !

c)　ex. "Voici la journée de Mr et Mme Ledoux. Vous êtes Mme Ledoux, racontez la journée de votre mari".
Ici, vous n'avez pas le choix. Je = Mme Ledoux

QUAND	se passe l'histoire ?

En général, les consignes prévoient :

PASSE	PRESENT	FUTUR ▷
au passé composé	Vous, le personnage qui écrit la carte, le récit <u>au présent</u>	au futur proche
"ce matin, nous sommes arrivés à ..."	.... je t'écris de la terrasse du célèbre café...	.... et ce soir, nous allons retrouver nos amis pour dîner ...

a)　<u>Regardez s'il y a dans la consigne des indications sur le moment du récit:</u>

"Nous sommes vendredi. Vous écrivez à un ami pour...", avec une page d'agenda, des photos.

Sur le document, séparez les trois moments de votre récit :

PASSE	AUJOURD'HUI	DEMAIN
du lundi au vendredi	vendredi	samedi

b)　<u>les indications de temps peuvent se retrouver dans le cadre réponse sous la forme de débuts de phrases à compléter:</u>

"La semaine dernière....
Maintenant....

[extrait du fascicule réalisé par Chantal Cali pour la Commission Nationale, Didier Hatier]

THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION (ESU) FRAMEWORK PROJECT

Brendan J Carroll, Educational Consultant

1. Introduction.

In any educational system, diversity and variety are, no doubt, valuable in themselves - it is hard to imagine healthy development in any educational system which is wholly unitary and rigidly controlled at all levels. Nevertheless, there are occasions when diversity and variety go hand in hand with confusion. It was to clear up the confusion caused by the multiplicity of English Language examinations in Britain that the "Framework" project was launched in 1985. At that time, there were at least twenty major language examining bodies in Britain, many of them handling four or five different examinations. How, we asked. would the users of these examinations know the value of the flood of certificates being released by these organisations? How could an employer or university compare one candidate who had an "Intermediate" Certificate from Board X with a candidate who had a "Proficiency"" Certificate from Board Y?

Let us look at some examples: we saw that the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate awarded general language qualifications at four levels, from Preliminary to Diploma level. At some of these levels, certificates were awarded as simple Pass/Fails; at others, Grades were awarded as A, B or C; at others as First Grade, and Upper and Lower Second Grade. At the same time, the Pitman Institute had five separate examinations and gave results as percentages - 60% for a Pass and 75% for a First Class Certificate. The English Language Testing Service of the British Council had a single examination format with results given on a 1 to 9-point Scale. The Associated Examining Board provided results on a 1 to 4 Scale.... and so on. How was a non-expert to see the trees amongst this academic forest? So, at the beginning of the "Framework" project, we asked ourselves if it would be possible to work out a clear descriptive framework within which the main British English Language Examinations could be described and with which we could interpret and compare their certificates. Such a tool would help the users - students, business, colleges, parents - to appreciate more fully what the examinations represented in real-life terms. We also hoped that, in working together, the examination boards would find where there was undue overlapping of their examinations, and where there were gaps in their provision.

In 1985, the English-Speaking Union (with financial assistance from Reed lnternational) asked me and two colleagues, Richard West and Christopher Yates, well-known names in the field of language examinations, to carry out a feasibility study to assess whether such a descriptive framework could be devised. We were able to get the cooperation of seven of the most important boards for the study. After 18 months of research and discussion, we concluded that there was, indeed, a very good possibility that such a common descriptive frame could be devised to encompass these varied examinations. Encouraged by this experience, we embarked on an expanded project, this time in cooperation with seventeen boards. We used statistical methods to verify the levels given to the various certificates and to establish the reliability of our conclusions. The product of this work was the book, "The ESU Framework - Performance Scales for English Language Examinations", published by Longman (1989)

and written by Richard West and myself under the auspices of the
English-Speaking Union and with the cooperation of the participating
boards. An important adjunct to the book is a multi-coloured chart
illustrating the nine levels of performance and slotting in the various
examinations so that their certificate standards could be appreciated at
a glance.

2. Description of the Project.

It may help those concerned with language examinations if we discuss the
various phases of the "Framework" Project from 1985 to 1989: how we
treated the assessment task difficulty and performance acceptability;
how the results of our researches were statistically verified, and what
publications resulted from the project activities.

2.1. Project Preparation.

In order to make a success of our project, we enlisted the
cooperation of the many English examination boards. We started
cautiously, with the sample of seven boards who had expressed a
willingness to work on the project. Our information was obtained
from existing examination papers, user handbooks, test
specifications, annual reports and face-to-face discussions with
examiners and administrators. In coordinating this information, we
were careful to make it clear that our task was a descriptive and
not a prescriptive one; that is, we did not sit in judgement on the
examinations or make direct comparisons between them. (The
categories of description are fully explained in the ESU Framework"
book mentioned above).

2.2. Tasks and Performances.

In studying the language scales used by the boards, we were struck
by a dichotomy which was common to their descriptors. On the one
hand, they had descriptions of typical **tasks**: on the other hand,
they described typical **performances**. For example, there were
performance descriptors like this: " Reads the editorial of a
newspaper such as "The Times" with complete understanding", and
"Understands the gist of a telephone message but misses some of the
details", and "Has a basic range of vocabulary (800-1000 items)
sufficient to understand short isolated texts such as public
notices". You can see that these statements describes relevant tasks
and the degree of adequacy of the performance. In our own published
scales, therefore, we made a systematic distinction between INPUTS
(the difficulty levels of the tasks) and OUTPUTS (the nature of the
learners' performance in these tasks).

A broad breakdown of levels was made using three degrees of task
difficulty: difficult, moderate, and easy - and three degrees of
performance: acceptable, well above acceptable, and below acceptable
levels. We thus arrived at a scale of nine bands or levels ranging
from very high performance in difficult tasks down to low
performance on simple tasks. A musical analogy would be to establish
levels of piano-playing skills from those of a brilliant performance
in a Rachmaninov Piano Concerto down to an untidy rendering of a
simple Bach Anna Magdalena piece.

2.3.   The Five Stage Model.

To define the kinds of language activity being examined, we set up a Five-Stage Model. In this model we show a hierarchy of successively more detailed stages of activity from the generality of "Linguistic / Communicative Performance", through the interactive Oral/Graphic stage, then the fourfold "Listen / Speak / Read / Write" stage, then through "Operational Activities" (such as "attending business meetings") to the final stage of "Enabling Skills": "Linguistic, Socio-Linguistic and Functionally-defined". The diagramm provided as an appendix gives an overview of the Five-Stage Model, but please refer to the "ESU Framework" for details and illustrations.

2.4.   Verification Study.

To determine how reliable our Input - Output model was and to see how effectively it could be applied, we undertook a thorough verification study. Working with members of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), we chose a range of essays and taped spoken interviews taken from actual board examinations. These written and spoken texts were rated by some 40 assessors. We then selected those assessors with the highest rating intercorrelations (with correlation indices in the region of 0.95) and those texts which had elicited the best assessment agreement (that is, with the lowest rating standard deviations) and produced a calibration for each of the text samples on a 9-point scale. We now had a corpus of spoken and written texts reliably calibrated on our scale.

These calibrated samples were then sent to the various examining boards whose examiners graded them according to their usual criteria. For example, one board would have Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced Certificates. Their examiners would decide that one of our sample essays or tapes (calibrated at the 3.6 level on the ESU scale) would earn a pass in their Elementary Certificate. Another essay (calibrated at 5.2) would be given a pass in their Intermediate Certificate and another (at 7.1) a pass in their Advanced Certificate. We could then, with some confidence, place these three certificates on our Framework Chart and confirm the earlier subjective judgements of the level of those certificates.

The results of our project were published in the "ESU Framework" book (1989) and summarised in the Framework Chart, copies of which have been circulated to this Symposium.

3. Relevance of the Framework Project.

It would be unwise in the field of human behaviour to attempt to apply the lessons drawn from a project in one context, without modification, in another context. It would, however, be quite reasonable to assume that a study of the procedures used in the "ESU Framework" Project and a consideration of the issues raised therein, if treated cautiously, could be of considerable anyone concerned with the harmonisation of language examinations.

3.1. Feasibility of a Common Language Examination Framework.

One objection to the project - raised mostly by academic figures -- was that it would be impossible to devise a credible common framework which could describe several different examinations each with its own history, purpose and rationale. It would be difficult, even dangerous, it was said, to make a rational comparison between such disparate examinations. Each examination was "sui generis". Our project was attempting to compare "chalk and cheese". Whilst recognising such objections, we felt that, somehow, there must be in the examinations many common elements which we could discover and define. Certainly we would, at the same time, probably discover certain differences between them. However, we tended to believe that the examinations might often be more similar in nature than their authors had imagined. For example, at the crudest level, a German doctor with a good English language competence, able to discuss medical symptoms with a patient and with English colleagues, would have little difficulty in reading a daily paper intelligently or discussing aspects of life in his or her own country with an English friend. For making the more critical decisions about language competence, fine tuning and focussing on the relevant skills would, of course, be needed.

3.2. Examinations and Educational Processes.

Whether they are proficiency or achievement tests, examinations usually stand at the crossroads of the curriculum. Looking backwards, they reflect the classroom learning that has taken place; looking forwards, they give us an idea about how the candidate will be able to use the language for the purposes for which he or she has learnt it. The ideal examination would, therefore, have both a positive relationship with classroom methods and a sensitivity to the future language needs of the candidates. In the older tradition, the examinations occupied a position of "splendid isolation". The examiners generally took no responsibility either for the end-use of their certificates or for the classroom practices adopted to enable candidates to obtain them. Our project brought into prominence the types of future performance needed by the candidates as part of the process of helping users to interpret the test results.

3.3. Transparency.

As has been implied above, examination boards varied widely in their approach to transparency - the clarity with which they described the aims of the examination, the logic behind the tasks given, the criteria for assessing examination performance, the guidance given about the meaning of the various grades, and the decisions which could sensibly be made on the basis of the certificate information. Unfortunately, examiners have tended to "play their cards close to their chests". One favourite cover-up device is the use of cryptic "marks", "percentages", "grades", "passes" and "fails". The candidates are often reluctant to question these raw indices of performance because "the referee's decision is final and it is unsporting to question it"! Probably our greatest problem rested on this lack of transparency in the examinations and in the reluctance of some boards to set up accepted measurement procedures which could establish the reliability, or stability, of the tests and provide statistical grounds for ensuring the maintenance of standards.

3.4. Cooperation.

At the beginning, the most commonly-raised objection to the Framework project was a practical one - "The boards", it was said, "will compete with each other and no-one will be able to get them to work together." In the event, this difficulty did not arise and, in the series of Round Table sessions, we found the greatest collaboration between boards. In fact, subsequently, a Language Examination Board Association (ABEEB) has been set up so that inter-board cooperation and liaison could be maintained and developed on a continuing basis. We are also planning a further phase of the project in the field of establishing minimum entry standards for various kinds of academic course.

This, then, is an outline of the ESU "Framework" Project and I will be very pleased to give further explanations to anyone interested in the topic.

FIVE-STAGE PERFORMANCE MODEL

	STAGE :-
LINGUISTIC-COMMUNICATIVE PERFORMANCE	I. Overall
ORAL — GRAPHIC	II. Interactive
LISTEN — SPEAK — READ — WRITE	III. Four skills
La Lb Lc — Sa Sb Sc — Ra Rb Rc — Wa Wb Wc	IV. Activities

LINGUISTIC	SOCIO-LINGUISTIC	FUNCTIONAL	EXAMINATION	
Lexical. Grammatical. Discourse.	Inter-personal skills and strategies.	Probability. Comparison. Consequence,etc.	Mastery of examination techniques.	V. Enabling Skills

"TREFFPUNKTE": POINTS OF ENCOUNTER AT THE TRANSITION FROM COMPULSORY TO POST-COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

Beat Vonarburg, Chairman of the Swiss Organising Committee

Since state education in Switzerland is under the control of 26 cantons, which act independently in this field, it is not surprising that there is a very wide variety of school education systems and curricula. Moreover, in addition to the divergence between cantons, there are regional characteristics, linguistic ties and the existence in German-speaking Switzerland of dialects as well as standard German. Switzerland therefore needed to devise an instrument for co-ordinating the learning of the national languages and foreign languages so that learners and future professionals, teachers and employers throughout the country had reference points that enabled them to plan and organise schooling and job recruitment so as to meet the needs of all those concerned. To this end, "Points of Encounter" ("Treffpunkte") were devised between compulsory schooling (ninth year at school or lower secondary) and post-compulsory schooling (upper secondary, vocational schooling and school-leaving certificate).

The "Points of Encounter" System

The document comprises three sections:

1. The main section describes the four skills and the abilities which the learner is supposed to have acquired by the end of compulsory schooling. As people usually learn a language not in order to know it but so as to be able to use it, the objectives take the form of tasks which learners should be able to perform by the end of their studies. Since the end of lower secondary school is also the beginning of upper secondary school, there is an interface which serves to provide vertical co-ordination between the two successive levels.

The other two sections provide information about teaching practice and are therefore on a horizontal plane:

2. In order to give teachers an idea of the type of teaching methods that make it possible to attain the suggested goals, a whole range of specific teaching procedures are set out. These suggestions for teaching methods and approaches should give teachers a better idea of the scope of the objectives and, at the same time, make it easier for them to understand the paths to be followed and the weightings suggested in the textbook.

3. Lastly, on the other side of the interface or bridge between lower and upper secondary, learners and teachers find practical proposals for improving, broadening and diversifying the skills already acquired, in accordance with the requirements of the chosen course of study.

An Additional Instrument

In order to explain the "Points of Encounter" and make them more concrete, assessment was introduced at the end of compulsory schooling in the two main languages used as L2 in Switzerland: French and German. Like the

"Points of Encounter " the final examination at the end of compulsory schooling is not compulsory; it is only an optional working tool. It would seem, however, that this instrument is not only useful for learners wanting to measure their ability but that it also helps teachers to gauge the objectives which they are supposed to achieve with their pupils.

It is interesting to note that the "Points of Encounter" have provided food for thought in post-compulsory schooling. In Vocational Education, which has special status in Switzerland, and particularly in apprenticeship courses, requirements have been redefined not only with a view to the needs of the trade or profession concerned but also in such a way as to ensure that the lower level of education exists in its own right and that there is therefore a degree of continuity. Previously, the upper levels always tended to put pressure on the lower levels, taking as their basis only the needs of society or universities. The "Points of Encounter" therefore serve a mediation purpose and ensure that the partisans of both levels have their specific responsibilities and consult one another on an equal footing.

What has occurred in the case of vocational education is in the process of occurring in schools preparing pupils for the school-leaving examination. In the course of this vertical consultation, all those involved rediscovered a basic truth, namely that the transition areas between superimposed or interlaced flats are of prime importance to the well-being of the inhabitants.

GRADED OBJECTIVES SCHEMES

Brian Page, Educational Consultant

Graded objectives schemes were considered relevant to our discussions this week because they are an example of an early attempt to define levels of attainment in foreign language performance - levels of attainment in an ascending series. Graded objectives schemes have had a considerable success in the UK but it is important for our work here to define what the elements of that success are because the most important of them are, in my view, in areas we can easily overlook and therefore neglect.

The graded objectives idea arose from a simple but pressing situation that arose in secondary schools in the UK in the seventies. (When I say UK I mean England and Wales only - Scotland and Northern Ireland have different educational systems). The situation arose from the gradual abolition of the selective system of education. Under that system children were selected at age 11 into the academically able who went to grammar school and the rest who went to technical or general purpose schools called secondary modern schools. That system was eventually seen to be inefficient and in the sixties and early seventies was gradually replaced by comprehensive schools - secondary schools taking children of all abilities from their locality without any selection test at age 11.

Foreign language teaching had been largely confined to the academically able - those in grammar schools and a few in secondary modern schools. For comprehensive schools this discrete population of language learners was not so easily identified and foreign language teaching gradually spread down the ability range. It happened by a sort of osmotic process - there was no planned development. So, in 1965 in the selective system we were offering the opportunity to learn a foreign language to probably about 40% of secondary school learners.

Ten years later, in the comprehensive system, we were offering foreign languages to over 90%. However, we didn't really know what to do with this enormous unplanned expansion of the population of language learners. The objectives of secondary school education had always been provided by national examinations (at that time we had no centralised curriculum) and they, the exams, were geared to the needs of an academic elite. Consequently, our new learners were following courses not suitable for them at all. The need for new sorts of objectives for the new sorts of language learners was not actually felt centrally. Hence the growth of graded objectives schemes. The decentralised, flexible structure of education in the UK allowed, at that time, small scale experiments by teachers in groups of schools and that's how the schemes started. The movement flourished through the eighties and became extremely influential in the change of direction in language teaching that occurred in that decade. Teachers in graded objectives schemes did pioneering work in proposing new sorts of content. They postulated a truly communicative approach for the first time since Berlitz and Gomin. Again for the first time they insisted on the use of authentic materials in teaching and testing. Up to then a sort of pseudo foreign language had been the norm, the foreign language of text books and examinations concocted by native English speakers for native English learners.

The movement was instrumental in changing national school leaving examinations which were radically reformed in 1988. Since then it has continued to influence the recommendations for the National Curriculum for Modern Languages for Secondary Schools in England and Wales (Scotland and Northern Ireland have different systems) which is currently being developed and which will be in place from 1993 onwards.

All these changes were, however. incidental to the main purpose. The main purpose of graded objectives schemes was to **improve the motivation of learners**, to get this great expanded population of learners to want to learn a foreign language instead of giving way with a sense of frustration and failure. The first thing was to define short term goals in an ascending series - goals which could be seen by the learners as valid in themselves and attainable in a realistic time, as opposed to the five years of the typical secondary school course. As learners reach each of these goals or levels they are rewarded with a certificate describing fairly precisely what the learner is capable of in terms of practical language use. Even the most modest level concerns language that can be used outside in the real world of real language users.

Each level builds upon and assumes a knowledge of the previous one so that a gradually accumulating competence in practical language communication is acquired. In this case the purpose of certification is not qualification for some other educational institution or for eventual employers, though the certificates can be used for both. The object is to provide motivation by defining an attainable goal, rewarding it in a public way and pointing the way forward to the next goal.

The principle here is that there is no point in setting up an objective for learning which is so far away it cannot engage the learner's enthusiasm. And there is no point in setting up an objective that is too hard for learners to reach. That just leads to frustration and a negative attitude.

It is important then that any set of levels of language attainment we arrive at here should respect these points. The first levels should be relatively easy and reachable in relatively short periods of time by the great majority of potential learners.

Later levels can be and indeed probably will have to be more difficult. But the main point is to get people on to the ladder and going up.

The graded objectives movement grew from one or two seminal journal articles that were taken up by self help groups formed mainly by teachers themselves. The first two started in 1976/77. Ten years later there were over ninety.

These teacher groups devised syllabuses and tests for their own pupils and satisfying their own needs. There was eventually a good deal of cooperation between groups so that many arrived at similar sorts of conclusions. But there always was and remains enough independence and autonomy in many of these groups for them to have produced different innovative ideas and tested them in the practical realities of their own classrooms.

Teachers found themselves asking fundamental questions like "If I'm going to teach these young people French what do I mean?" "If I say they are going to communicate in French" what does that mean? "What is the best way of finding out if they can do what I have been trying to get them to learn to do?" Simple questions but always dangerous - start with "What am I teaching French for?" and you end up with "What am I ?" Teachers had never had to ask themselves these sorts of questions before because public examinations had provided the objectives and text books were geared to them. Consequently, apart from anything else the movement has been a vast in-service training course and a huge research exercise in new methodologies, syllabus design and construction and in testing techniques. From this there arises another principle for us to keep in mind.

Graded objectives schemes raised teachers' awareness of what language learning is and allowed them to experiment with the content and assessment of what they did in classrooms. Any set of levels we arrive at should consciously attempt to do the same.

The movement had considerable success. As I said by proposing new contents for language teaching it had enormous influence on public examinations and therefore on the teaching of languages in secondary schools as a whole; in its later manifestations groups have experimented with continuous assessment and independent learning systems and are thereby contributing substantially to the experimental evidence available on those subjects. To pick up a point from René Richterich and Günther Schneider, much work is done on self and peer assessment, the learner having a role in his or her own evaluation. In providing short term realisable goals it has shown many learners for the first time (and the teachers too) that they are indeed capable of learning a foreign language whereas previous systems had merely confirmed them in their sense of failure. All these points, but particularly the last, are very relevant to the final part of our work this

week. 1 want to underline again this last point. One of our major reasons for devising European wide levels of language attainment must be to encourage more people to learn more languages more successfully. We are not engaged in the purely mechanical exercise of reconciling a number of disparate certification systems. We should be concerned to improve the climate for all language learners and that means particularly now enabling learners to be autonomous.

Graded objectives schemes enabled 3 liberations to take place:

- liberation of the language from mere grammar manipulation to the conveying of personal meaning;

- liberation of the teacher from the tyranny of the textbook to new approaches;

- liberation of the learner from imposed meanings and procedures to personal meanings and greater autonomy in learning.

Any scheme **we** produce must respect all that.

In the late eighties there arose another situation in my area of the United Kingdom, the north of England. For various reasons it became appropriate to try and arrive at some method of relating the various graded objectives schemes in the region to a common scale. We felt it was important to maintain the independence of the dozen or so groups involved and so there was no question of devising a uniform set of tests. What we aimed at was a calibration system which did not interfere with the diversity of the groups.

We constructed descriptions for levels of performance based on several criteria :

1. The number of topics: four at level 1, eight at level 3;

2. Predictability: the extent to which the language and situations with which the learner is expected to cope are predictable;

3. Independence, initiative and contribution: the extent to which the learner is expected to take the initiative in a given situation and to make his/her own contribution;

4. Refinement, precision and clarification: the degree of refinement, precision and clarification of language which the learner is expected either to initiate or to comprehend;

5. Social interaction: to what extent it is expected and whether it is at the level of making, developing or maintaining contact;

6. Extension - a wider range both of topics and of language within topics;

7. Progression - greater complexity in language and situations.

All these factors, though listed separately, inevitably overlap but are seen as a continuum along which a learner progresses.

This system, though by no means perfect, achieves enough transparency and coherence to satisfy its users. It benefits from a number of factors. The most important is the high degree of identity of view among the teachers using it on the objectives and methods of language teaching/learning. This means that when an intrinsically indefinable term like "topic" or "topic area" is used there is enough coherence of view arising from a shared experience over several years to make it meaningful and usable.

The second factor is that the system was arrived at after consultation with a range of potential users and extensive field-testing. The original users know that they have had a hand in the design. They are comfortable with it and feel there are no constraints on their present practice. It is true however that though the original users feel no pressure from the scheme there is an inevitable normative effect on users who come in at a later stage and on those setting up new schemes. These tend to be tailored to fit the calibration system.

To recapitulate then.

The elements of the graded objectives experience that seem to be pertinent to our work here are these: We must not think of a language framework purely in terms of convenience - of enabling existing certification systems to be translated into a common code so that employers, educational institutions and learners themselves can see where they are on a set of language behaviour descriptors. That is fine but it is not enough. We must also make sure that the descriptors themselves and the way they are arranged have a positive motivational force both for learners and teachers. For learners by providing attainable goals, a path forward and a degree of control over their own learning. For teachers by providing a flexible framework that encourages imagination, experiment and the growth of new approaches.

THE CERTIFICATE OF PROFICIENCY IN ITALIAN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE. AN OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

Wanda D'Addio Colosimo, Università di Roma, "La Sapienza"

1. Some preliminary information

The Project is sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It has been devised and is being implemented by the Department of Language Sciences of the University of Rome. It was set up as an answer to the ever growing demand for Italian as an L2 in European and extra-European countries. Its purpose is the assessment and certification of proficiency in Italian at an advanced or near-native level. It has undergone a phase of experimentation in different countries in Europe: Spain, France, Ireland, Austria, in order to see to what extent different native languages affect the results. The certificate system is now being evaluated in the light of these results and will reach its final stage, becoming then official by the end of the present year.

2. Characteristics

Since the test project is aimed at assessing "general" proficiency it is not based on particular syllabuses. As in all general proficiency tests, it implies that decisions be taken as to what is thought to constitute proficiency both from the point of view of relevant language features and the uses to which language is put. To this purpose, as far as language is concerned, a very large data base has been put together over the years by experts from the Department of Language Sciences of the University of Rome, on the basis of contrastive studies and various experiments in the teaching of Italian as a second language in different parts of the world. The data base also includes those typological characteristics of Italian which have proved to be **intrinsically** (non contrastively) difficult for learners with different mother tongues (i.e., the pronoun system; agreement of gender and number in nouns, adjectives, past participles; word order, etc.). The project adopts a **textual** perspective contemplating a certain range of socio-linguistically motivated text-types of present day Italian. Its behavioural objectives lie in the ability to understand and create texts in activities or tasks of a different kind where, in order to communicate efficiently, the properties of texts themselves have to be observed. (For example, a letter must be written as a form of interaction which has its own internal rules of use; a story must be told respecting given narrative conventions, etc.) It is our opinion that transparency and coherence in testing and evaluation lie primarily in the clearness of the theoretical and methodological assumptions on which they are based.

We believe that proficiency in a language is not to be considered **monolithic**. It must be related as much as possible to a wide sample of users and uses. Our project is addressed to a population which has been identified on the basis of a research conducted by the Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana in 1982 on the "motivations for learning Italian as a second language in different countries of the world". The widest demand came mostly from people who wanted to use the language mainly receptively in order to get better acquainted with Italian culture - especially as represented in the current scene. This population with a high demand is mainly composed of professionals, secondary school and university students and teachers. In the near future, the Certificate system will be expanded to include the needs of other populations and other levels of competence in language use.

The Certificate is composed of a package of four tests each relating to a particular activity and use of the language: **Listening comprehension; Reading; Composition; Forms and Uses of Italian.** The first two tests are based on authentic oral and written texts taken from radio, television, newspapers and magazines, etc. The composition test is based on socially motivated uses of language (for example, personal and official letters, reports, narratives, etc.) The fourth test, Uses and Forms of Italian, is not related to a macroskill such as listening or reading or writing but is more knowledge-based. It starts from morphological and syntactic aspects of Italian and gradually expands to include pragmatic and text-sensitive aspects of the language system (i.e. it tests not only specific morphological and syntactic features of the language but also aspects of "use" such as sociolinguistic "routines", appropriate responses, etc.).

Assessment techniques range from subjective to semi-subjective and objective. In the reading and listening tests comprehension is tested mostly through multiple choice and true-false questions. Semi-objective techniques are used in Uses and Forms of Italian where some of the answers are either "right or wrong", while others are only partly constrained - as in the restoration of missing parts in open dialogues. Subjective techniques are used to test composition. What is significant is what is put in the Assessment Tables, - i.e. the elements which have been considered to be salient in assessing the ability to deal successfully with given written tasks. Since, as was stated above, the Certificate adopts a textual perspective, the assessment criteria include discourse parameters like, for example cohesion and coherence, which have the same weight as the other parameters like orthography, grammar, etc..

The topic areas introduced in the Certificate, especially in reading and listening tests relate mostly to aspects of contemporary Italian culture, especially as reflected in mass media (TV and radio; newspapers, magazines, posters, etc.). The "cultural load", however, is limited in that at least it avoids transient and ephemeral subjects, even though they may seem important at the moment, or subjects that imply specific and detailed knowledge of the Italian scene, such as only people who have lived in our country for a long time can master.

3. Innovative aspects

a) The certificate is **modular**. A person may take the test in the modules in which she/he feels proficient, (i.e. **reading** or **listening comprehension**, or **composition**). This modularity reflects the fact that a person can be a better performer in some of these activities than in others. This is relevant also in classroom teaching and should be taken account of in assessing students' progress and proficiency.

b) The data base, which includes a scientific description of aspects of the language system and of language use, allows a **non random** selection of authentic texts and language aspects to be included in the test package.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AS LEARNER EDUCATION: FACILITATING SELF-DIRECTION IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Viljo Kohonen, University of Tampere, Finland

The paper suggests a vision of "competent language users for European cooperation" as a broad goal orientation for continuous language learning by young people and adults in Europe. The vision suggests an approach to second language learning that emphasizes self-directed learning and collaboration between the learners. It is proposed that language learning can be seen as learner education whereby the learner is facilitated to develop an awareness of his learning in terms of three types of knowledge: (1) self-concept and view of his role as a learner, (2) processes of learning, and (3) the learning task. Such an awareness can help the learner to plan, monitor and assess his own learning. The orientation entails a paradigmatic shift from the transmission model of teaching towards a process-oriented, experiential model seeing learners as active agents of their learning.

1. A Suggested Vision for Language Learning

A vision is a value-based view of the desirable course of action, a long-term purpose to work towards. It provides the direction for the efforts and guidance for the choices to be made. It can also be seen as a screening mechanism helping to sort out and integrate among competing priorities by focussing on what to do in order to proceed in the desired direction. Once we are clearer about what we are after, it is easier to plan possible routes to proceed and evaluate the results of the action.

The present CDCC project, "Language Learning For European Citizenship", is aimed to support European mobility, cooperation and mutual understanding. Such aims would seem to suggest the following vision for continuous language learning by young people and adults: "Competent language users for European cooperation." If this vision is acceptable, we have to ask what kinds of goals it might imply for language learning and teaching. An attempt is made in the paper to outline some possible goals by suggesting the notion of language learning as learner education.

2. Language Learning as Learner Education

Language learning can be seen as learner development in three inter-related areas of knowledge, skills and awareness:

(1) personal awareness: self-concept, self-esteem and self-direction
(2) awareness of the learning process: process management
(3) task awareness: knowledge of language and communication

These areas can be seen as the three angles of a triangle that constitutes the notion of language learning as learner education, as shown in Diagram 1.
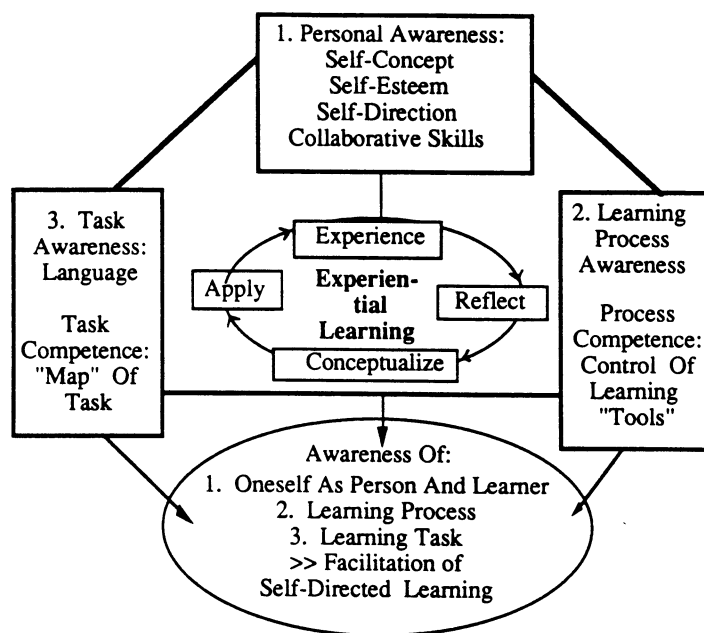
Diagram 1. Second Language Learning as Learner Education.

Developing the learner's awareness on all of these aspects is suggested as a way of facilitating the learner to be a more competent person and consequently a more competent language user. Learning according to the principles of experiential learning theory (cf. Kolb 1984; Kohonen 1987; 1991; Salmon 1988; Robertson 1988) is suggested as a possible mode of learning within the triangle, emphasizing the need to reconcile intuitive experiences of language and learning with various ways of conceptualizing them by reflective processes and explicit teaching of the rule component.

The model can increase coherence in language learning by providing a wide philosophical and theoretical orientation that can clarify the relationships between the goals, the pedagogical design of the learning tasks, and evaluation. Coherence thus entails an effort towards a consciously designed harmonious relationship between the learning experiences and the desired outcomes of learning. The notion of vision in this context suggests, in fact, an idea of goal-based foreign language pedagogy: instructional decisions can be "back-chained" from the vision so as to support the development of the learner's competence in the desirable direction by a conscious and systematic pedagogical design.

2.1. Personal Awareness and Growth

The process of development throughout life can be considered as a process of becoming increasingly aware of one's personal identity. Central to the development of individual identity are the notions of self-concept and self-esteem. Language learning can be designed so as to support the development of the learner's holistic growth as a person.

2.1.1. Self-concept.

The term self-concept can be defined as the sum total of an individual's mental and physical characteristics (Lawrence 1988:1). The development of self-concept begins in the family and continues on the basis of experiences gained is school and elsewhere outside the home. The young child learns that he is separate from the surrounding environment, having a unique identity, a body and a consciousness of his own. Such identity of oneself becomes more precise and accurate as a result of cognitive, affective and physical development.

As the school provides for the formal basic education extending over years, a great number of mental and physical characteristics are learned as a result of the learning experiences gained in school. Self-concept can be seen as a hierarchical, multi-faceted notion consisting of academic and non-academic components. The academic component can be further sub-divided into subject-specific areas (such as self-concept related to being a language learner), while the non-academic component consists of social, emotional and physical parts and their sub-areas (cf. Shavelson and Bolus 1982).

The individual's interpretation of life experience will determine how his feelings of himself develop in the long run. Thus it is not the events as such which determine the individual's emotions but his interpretation of them. This view of the individual as interpreting experiences and making choices based on how he perceives reality is discussed by George Kelly (1955) in terms of the theory of personal constructs. The notion of construct refers to the categories of thought by means of which the individual interprets his personal world of experience. Constructs are abstracted from experience and can be revised in the light of ongoing events in life. They are thus subjective, with each individual viewing reality through his personal constructs that are unique to him. Meanings of objective events are consequently open to alternative interpretations from a variety of perspectives. Reality is seen as a subjective interpretation of the events, on the basis of the individual's personal history of life. The individual responds to events in accordance with how he perceives and interprets them. Current behaviour is affected by the individual's anticipations of his future. This thinking entails what have been called "self-fulfilling prophecies" (cf. Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968; Rosenthal and Rubin 1978): anticipations of future events will affect the choices made by the individual, and may thereby lead to anticipated outcomes. Thus success-oriented anticipations may lead to success, while failure-oriented ones are more likely to breed failure. In order to break the negative chain of anticipations, the individual needs help

enabling him to enhance his construct of himself and thereby change his perceptions of the future.

2.1.2. Self-esteem.

The notion of self-esteem refers to the evaluation of self that a person makes and maintains: the degree to which he feels worthy, capable, significant and competent. It is a continuously evolving sum of his feelings about himself, including the sense of self-respect and self-worth. As defined by Reasoner and Dusa (1991, 3), self-esteem can be regarded as the degree of satisfaction one feels about oneself, the appreciation of personal worth or the value of one's endeavours, and confidence in one's potential. It can also be seen as the individual's feeling of his own worth and importance as a person: accepting himself, setting realistic expectations, taking risks, and being trustworthy and trusting in others. Developing individual accountability means assuming responsibility for one's decisions and actions and becoming a person with a consistent and integrated set of values. Self-esteem further entails the notion of social accountability: responsible behaviour toward other persons, appreciating their worth and importance. This aspect of self-esteem refers to respecting the dignity of being human, recognizing the balance between freedom and responsibility, accepting human diversity and learning to negotiate conflicts rather than being abusive (cf. Lawrence 1988; Toward a state of esteem 1990).

2.1.3. Self-direction and Autonomy.

It can be argued that a clearly differentiated personal awareness, self-concept and self-esteem are necessary for the development of self-directed, autonomous learning. Autonomy can be defined as a willingness and ability to make up one's mind about what is right or wrong, independent of external authority. It involves a capacity for reflective and critical thinking. Autonomy does not, however, mean individualism and a neglect of the social context. Personal decisions are necessarily made with respect to social and moral norms, traditions and expectations. Autonomy thus includes the notion of interdependence, that is, being responsible for one's conduct in the social context: being able to cooperate with others and solve conflicts in constructive ways. Its development can be seen as an open-ended dimension involving both personal, social and moral education.

Self-direction describes an attitude to learning, where the learner assumes increasing responsibility for the decisions concerning his learning but does not necessarily undertake the implementation of all of those decisions alone. There are various degrees of self-direction depending on the learner's attitude and ability to organize and manage his learning. There is thus a continuum between other-directed and self-directed learning involving a range of options between the extremes. To the extent that the learner is able to undertake learning tasks without direct teacher (or learning material) control he displays various degrees of autonomy.

A fully autonomous learner is totally responsible for making the decisions, implementing them and assessing the outcomes without any

74

teacher involvement. He is able to teach himself, thus taking over all of the instructional process without the direct intervention of the teacher. But the development of such independence is a question of facilitating the learner to manage his own learning. This means that the learner needs to be facilitated to develop his personal awareness of himself. He needs to gain an understanding of what it means to be a fully functioning person and an understanding of language and language learning. Such an awareness will make it possible for him to grow as a person and a learner, in order to develop his skills consciously. It gives him control over his own learning and helps him to organize his learning tasks (Dickinson 1987).

2.1.4. Learning Experiences and Personal Growth.

For a balanced personal growth in school, the quality of learning experiences deserves serious attention by educators. Emphasis on the learning process is not, of course, a novelty in education. Good teachers have probably always realized the importance of the process for the product. Experiential learning theory, however, invites conscious attention to the importance of the learner's subjective experiences, attitudes and feelings about his own learning. When learners confront learning tasks, they compare their task performance with the projected outcome. Such comparisons yield learning experiences, which may be positive or negative. The learning experiences gained in the process of learning will have a cumulative effect on the development of the learner's cognitive and affective characteristics, his view of himself as a person and a learner. If we can help the learner to improve his view of himself he may become a better learner, being able to utilize his learning potential more fully.

The learner's self-esteem and his view of himself as a language learner are important characteristics that correlate with successful foreign language learning. Language learning requires persistent efforts, an ability and courage to cope with the unknown, to tolerate ambiguity and, in a sense, to appear childish and make a fool of oneself when making mistakes. A person with a reasonably balanced self-esteem can cope with these demands better. This point is emphasized by Stern (1983, 380), who suggests that a person who is ready to accept with tolerance and patience the frustrations of ambiguity is in a better position to cope with them than a student who feels frustrated in ambiguous situations.

Such tolerance is particularly necessary in the early stage of second or foreign language learning, which is bound to involve unpredictability, novelty and insolubility because of the new linguistic system. New learnings and understandings are always potentially threatening. Learners with high self-esteem are less likely to feel threatened. Confident persons have the advantage of not fearing unfamiliar situations or rejection as much as those with high anxiety levels, and are therefore more likely to take risks and try new and unpredictable experiences. Cognitive factors are thus not the only ones that matter in second language learning. As Stern (1983, 386) points out, the affective component contributes at least as much as and often more to language learning than the cognitive skills represented by aptitude assessment.

In order to promote the learner's personal growth as an integral part of the pedagogical design for language learning, the teacher might consider the following kinds of questions to review his or her educational thinking and classroom practices:

- **responsibility**: to what extent do learners assume responsibility for their own learning? Are they willing to take action in order to learn?

- **ground rules**: are classroom rules established together and observed consistently?

- **learner support**: are learners encouraged to help and respect each other? Do they work together cooperatively?

- **focus on the positive**: is there a recognition of positive growth and strengths (rather than giving feedback on shortcomings and weaknesses)?

- **reflection on social learning**: to what extent are the collaborative skills of group participation discussed and taught explicitly?

- **"high expectations"**: are learners encouraged to stretch to higher levels of achievement? To what extent and in what ways are learner initiative and risk-taking encouraged?

- **teacher support**: to what extent do learners feel that they get support from the teacher? Do they feel that they are listened to seriously?

- **personal strengths and resources**: to what extent does the teacher promote a belief in the capacity of each learner to learn and progress? Do learners set goals for both personal growth and cognitive development?

- **recognition and feedback**: do learners get recognition for good work? Do they receive information on the development of their competence? Is the information descriptive of the progress (rather than evaluative)?

- **perseverance**: are learners willing to persevere in their learning efforts? Do they get encouragement for this? How secure do they feel in the classroom?

These questions invite attention to the importance of intrinsic motivation in language learning. Learners are encouraged to see themselves as increasingly competent and self-determined, assuming an increasing degree of responsibility for their own learning. Intrinsic motivational factors are generally connected with the following properties:

- they satisfy needs at higher levels of needs hierarchies, such as belonging, acceptance, satisfaction from work, self-actualization, power and self-control

- they manifest themselves primarily in the form of feelings, e.g.
   feelings of success and competence

- they are connected with work, involving feelings of relevance of
   work, satisfaction derived from work, feelings of progress and
   achievement, and feelings of growth as a person.

By designing learning experiences that can promote such feelings it
is possible, at least to some extent, to enhance the learner's
feelings of self-direction (cf. Kohonen 1991).

2.2.   Awareness of the Learning Process

2.2.1. Learner Strategies.

An independent learner is both willing and able to learn on his own,
without direct teacher (or material) control. But the development of
such independence is a question of facilitating the learner to
manage his own learning. This means that the learner needs to be
taught how to help himself; he needs to be facilitated to develop
his learning skills. He needs to gain an understanding of language
learning in order to be able to develop his skills consciously. Such
an awareness will make it possible for him to develop as a learner.
It gives him control over his own learning and helps him to organize
his learning tasks. Learners need not see themselves as consumers of
language courses; they can also become producers of their own
learning (Holec 1987).

Raising the awareness of one's own learning and gaining an
understanding of the processes involved is thus another important
key for the development of autonomous learning. A conscious
reflection of learning experiences and sharing such reflections with
other learners in small groups makes it possible to increase one's
awareness of learning. The teacher's task is to provide learners
with the necessary information and support at suitable points. Such
learner guidance involves knowledge about learning strategies and,
at a higher level of abstraction, metacognitive knowledge about
learning.

Learner strategies refer to language learning behaviours learners
actually engage in to learn and regulate the learning of a second
language. Strategies are problem-oriented, that is, learners utilize
them to respond to a learning need. They are techniques of memory
management used by learners in order to facilitate the acquisition,
storage, retrieval or use of information. Strategies develop over
time as a result of learning how to deal with problems. They can
become automatized and function without conscious control. But they
can also be brought to conscious observation and awareness and can
be modified as a result of conscious effort. (cf. Wenden 1987;
Chamot 1987).

The effect of using learning strategies in a conscious manner is
based on the increased memory organization and elaboration, in other
words, on the extra effort and deep processing carried out by the
learner at the stage of encoding information. It is important that
the mental associations, images and pictures are invented by the
learner himself and are not imposed by the teacher, as it is the

personal organization of memory, appealing to each individual's private ways of conjuring up suitable images and associations, that is beneficial for storage and recall. But it is helpful for learners to explain their strategies to peers in cooperative groups, as this helps them to become aware of their learning and to see new possibilities.

2.2.2. Metacognitive Knowledge.

Learners can develop a "strategic knowledge" about learning strategies and thereby enhance their memory management. Such a metacognitive knowledge of learning may help learners to improve the ways of planning and organizing their learning. While cognitive strategies are used to deal directly with incoming information, metacognitive strategies are used to regulate the process. Wenden (1987, 160) refers to this knowledge as general learning skills that can be used to "regulate learning, i.e. plan, monitor and evaluate the range of cognitive strategies used to learn. General learning skills also include awareness raising about the nature of learning."

In contrast to the cognitive strategies used to solve specific learning tasks, general learning skills have a wider application in terms of helping the learner to gain a control of the whole process of language learning by reflecting on the nature of learning. Understanding of the various ways of using memory in language learning will give learners options and help them to make informed choices, finding out ways that work for them. As noted by Michael O'Malley (1987,133; cf. also O'Malley and Chamot 1990), there is evidence to suggest that good language learners can use a variety of strategies to assist them in gaining command over the new language skills. This implies that less competent learners might benefit from the training on strategies evidenced among more successful language learners.

In terms of experiential learning theory, an essential point of such learner training is that it includes the cyclic process of having "hands-on" experiences of learning strategies and metacognitive knowledge, reflecting on such experience and conceptualizing it, thereby gaining a conscious understanding of the knowledge.

Heterogeneous cooperative teams would seem to provide a good environment for such discussions, enabling learners to compare and contrast each others' preferred or habitual ways of learning and gain a deeper understanding of the processes in so doing. Thus reflecting on and talking about learning is beneficial for learning. To complete the cycle, learners are given opportunities to experiment with different ways of using their memory, to gain new experiential data for reflection. For instance, to learn about vocabulary learning strategies, learners might be given various vocabulary lists in L2, which they learn using different types of mnemonic techniques. Explanations of the rationale behind the different techniques will help them to understand why they work and to make personal choices depending on what seems to work best for them.

Such learning will result in what Anita Wenden calls pedagogic autonomy, that is, acquisition of the skills and knowledge necessary

to learn to manage one's learning and learn on one's own. Learners can become competent as learners of the new language, learning to deal with the learning task in rational and informed ways. Learning about learning may, in fact, help to demystify the processes involved and thus increase the learners' feelings of confidence and competence. As Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot (1990) point out, learners without metacognitive knowledge are essentially learners without direction and ability to review their progress. Learners are not "blank slates" that absorb the new language; they can be facilitated to learn in purposeful ways.

2.3. Task Awareness: Language and Communication

The learner's awareness of the language learning task can be seen as a map of the task. To use a familiar analogy from orienteering, this knowledge can be compared with the topographic map of the terrain. To be able to use the map one has to possess a sufficient knowledge of the topographic symbols and be able to match the map with the surrounding terrain. Equipped with such a map, the necessary literacy and a compass, it is safe to explore and enjoy an unknown terrain and find one's way properly.

Similarly, it is helpful for the language learner to know the "terrain" of the second or foreign language: what elements there are, how they are interconnected and patterned, what combinations are possible and likely to occur, what are frequent, and what similarities and differences there are between his native language and the target language. Such information will create order out of the seemingly chaotic primary data that the learner has to confront when dealing with the new language. Order and structure, in turn, will create predictability and thereby facilitate the processing task as the learner can make heuristic guesses of the message form and content. An awareness of the task can function as a framework to which he can integrate new learnings and thus feel safer when confronting new language elements. He can feel that he masters, at least to some extent, the unknown terrain that he is entering.

It is beneficial for the learner to know how human communication can be understood, how the relevant properties of language can be analyzed consciously in the target language, and what elements the new language contains. This awareness, called metalinguistic knowledge, can exist at various levels of linguistic sophistication. It is also important for him to be aware of the notion of risk-taking in language use. A risk-taking situation may be defined as an occasion where an individual has to make decisions involving an uncertainty of the outcome and a possibility of failure (Beebe 1983, 39). This implies that risk-taking develops in situations in which learners are exposed to challenging tasks and the possibility of failure. Communicative thinking suggests taking risks in the spirit of the old saying: "Nothing ventured, nothing gained".

In actual language use, learners will obviously face situations and tasks where their linguistic skills are not adequate either for comprehending messages or producing their intended meanings at a desired level of sophistication. They will thus encounter mismatches between their communicative skills and intentions. To deal with problems due to an insufficient knowledge of language, learners will

adopt different kinds of communication strategies, which can be seen as "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal" (Færch and Kasper 1983, 36). A well-known distinction has been suggested between basically two kinds of communication strategies: reductive and achievement strategies (cf. Færch and Kasper (eds.) 1983; Riley 1985).

Involvement of the learner in the task at hand is necessary for effective learning. Learning materials and tasks do not as such guarantee anything; an equally important question is what the learner does with them. It is important that the learner does something to the input so that the output becomes his own and has a personal meaning for him, no matter how modest such modifications or productions are in the beginning. An input which is not worked on by the learner has not much subjective meaning for him. It does not turn into a real output. It could be rather described as "throughput" - an output which is nothing but the unmodified input and does not touch the learner inside. A meaningful output is thus based on an input which is digested and somehow modified by the learner and thereby becomes his own. This is a matter of the quality of internal processing.

It is thus necessary to pay conscious pedagogical attention to the quality of both the learning tasks and the learning activities. Learning tasks can be designed so as to promote learner development in accordance with the desirable goal orientation. A learning task can be defined as a "problem-posing activity involving learners and teachers in some joint selection from a range of varied cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective exploration and pursuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu" (Candlin 1987).

When designing the learning tasks, the teacher can pay attention to two things at the same time:

- **content**: what kinds of material the learner works with, and

- **process**: how he is guided to work on it

In doing so, he or she may find the following kinds of questions helpful:

- **aims and tasks**: who sets the aims, chooses the tasks and decides on the contents and modes of working on them? how relevant and interesting tasks do learners have?

- **monitoring**: to what extent can learners design their own tasks and suggest ways of evaluating their performance?

- **involvement**: how actively are learners engaged in the tasks? Do the tasks pose intellectual challenges? Do they involve risk-taking? Do tasks invite reframing of problems? Do they involve unanticipated, new solutions?

- **cooperation**: do learners work together to solve tasks, setting objectives and planning the work together?

- **reflection**: do they evaluate the outcomes and the process together?

- **awareness**: do tasks promote an awareness of language learning processes? Do they give opportunities for identifying strategic options and trying them out?

- **understanding**: to what extent do learning tasks promote a cumulative understanding of how language works?

- **continuity**: to what extent do the tasks promote continuity of learning experience? Do they make use of previous learning as a tool of new learnings?

3. Pedagogical Considerations: a Paradigmatic Shift

When the total context of education changes substantially, as a result of developments in society and educational theory, it may become necessary for the educator to examine his assumptions and review his educational practices in the light of the new developments. Such a critical examination may now be motivated, as theoretical thinking in learning psychology has clearly shifted away from the behaviouristic model of teaching as transmission of knowledge towards an experiential model whereby teaching is seen as transformation of knowledge, based on constructivist views of learning. What is involved is nothing less than a major paradigmatic shift in educational theory.

The paradigmatic shift can be analyzed by juxtaposing the polar ends of some pedagogically relevant dimensions (cf. Brandes and Ginnis 1986; Miller 1988; Kohonen 1991). However, doing so does not imply any criticism of either of the paradigms compared: it is not justifiable to criticize one paradigm on the basis of the premises of another paradigm. Any pedagogical decisions have to be evaluated within the relevant theoretical framework and the current socio-cultural end educational context. In many settings deciding on the broad goals of instruction is obviously a matter of educational policy-making at the level of national curriculum guidelines and syllabuses which teachers are expected to implement.

The comparison can suggest options for the educator which may help him to clarify his own stance and examine the extent to which his choices are consistent within the broad paradigmatic position that he has adopted. If the teacher makes a conscious decision to move towards the experiential model, this means shifting more emphasis towards the right-hand end on the following dimensions:

Dimension	Conservative model: behaviorism; transmission of knowledge	Experiential model constructivism; transformation of knowledge
1. Power relation	Emphasis on teacher's authority	Shared partnership, teacher as a"learner"

Dimension	Conservative model: behaviorism; transmission of knowledge	Experiential model constructivism; transformation of knowledge
2. Teacher's role	Imparting knowledge (mainly frontal instruction); professionalism as individual autonomy	Facilitating learning (largely in small groups); collaborative, interactive professionalism
3. Learner's role	Relatively passive recipient of information; individual work	Active participation, largely in cooperative teams; responsibility for own learning
4. View of knowledge	Knowledge presented as "certain"; application, problem-solving	Construction of personal knowledge in process; identification of problems
5. View of curriculum	Static; hierarchical grading of subject matter, predefined contents	Dynamic; looser organization of subject matter, including open parts and integration
6. Learning experiences	Knowledge of facts, concepts and skills; focus on content and product	Emphasis on process: learning skills, self-inquiry, social and communication skills
7. Control of process	Teacher in charge; structured learning	Learner in charge: self-directed learning
8. Motivation	Mainly extrinsic	Mainly intrinsic
9. Evaluation	Product-oriented: achievement testing; criterion-referencing (and norm-referencing)	Process-oriented: reflection of process, self-assessment; criterion-referencing

The emerging experiential model would seem to offer potential for a learning atmosphere of shared partnership and a joint management of learning. Class behaviour is owned by the whole group of which the teacher is one member. As the rules of conduct are agreed upon jointly, all share the responsibility for decisions and discipline. Such rules are called ground rules. An essential feature of ground rules is that they are based on mutual trust and respect, they are agreed upon jointly, and they apply to all. The rules are there to remind the participants of their joint responsibilities. Knowledge is seen as open to negotiation and redefining by challenging existing constructions of meaning. Learning can become a discovery of new understandings (cf. Brandes and Ginnis 1986; Salmon 1988).

The degree of self-directed (as against other-directed) learning can be clarified by examining the degree of learner involvement at the

different stages of the instructional process. This can be done by asking the following questions (Riley 1984, 127-30)

- who analyses the needs?
- who defines the objectives?
- who decides where and how often learning takes place?
- who chooses the materials?
- who chooses the work techniques?
- who decides on levels and criteria of acceptable outcomes?
- who monitors the learning program and process?
- who evaluates the results of learning?

The more the decisions are made by the teacher the more the system is teacher-centred. The more the learners are responsible for taking these decisions, the greater is their degree of self-direction. The extent to which the decisions are taken together reflects a shared management of learning, with the teacher functioning as a guide and expert consultant of learning. Various combinations of sharing the decisions are possible at different stages of learning, reflecting various degrees of learner autonomy.

At a deeper level, learner-centred approach involves a basic trust in the learner's willingness and ability to cope with the various learning tasks, and a respect for his person and his choices. On the basis of such a relationship, the learner can be given increasing amounts of initiative in undertaking the task, choosing the contents and assessing his work. In this way he will develop a feeling of ownership of and responsibility for his own learning. If the teacher is "in charge" most of the time, the learner's responsibility cannot develop. Aiming towards autonomous learning thus means shifting emphasis onto the learner and allowing more and more room for the development of his responsibility.

4. Implications for Evaluation: Towards Portfolio Assessment

Evaluation can be defined as a systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum, and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as participants' attitudes within the context of the particular institution involved (Brown 1989). For these purposes we need both process-oriented and product-oriented means of evaluation. Process evaluation is an integral part of the learning process, providing information to

- **the teacher** about the progress of individual learners (in terms of communicative proficiency, personal growth, learning skills and collaborative skills),helping him to plan instructional interventions

- **the learner** about how he is progressing (in terms of both content and process), helping him to take charge of his own learning.

Product evaluation, on the other hand, refers to the summative performance testing, aimed at gauging the learner's skills in communicatively relevant tasks in terms of criterion-referenced descriptions of levels of attainment (cf. Carroll and West 1989). The tests can be administered by the teacher as classroom tests, by educational authorities for purposes of evaluating the curriculum, or for placement or selection purposes. Obviously, both kinds of evaluation

are needed for different purposes in the total educational setting. However, it seems that more professional thinking needs to be devoted to process evaluation since it can have a powerful shaping effect on the ongoing learning process (cf. Kohonen 1989).

It is well-known that anticipation of evaluation procedures has a backwash effect on learning, both in terms of contents (what to learn) and processes of learning (how to organize knowledge in memory; how to guide student learning). Evaluation can thus affect both the quality and quantity of learning outcomes. Evaluation can be seen as a mirror of the learning goals and objectives, measuring the degree to which they were achieved. It is therefore advisable to keep asking what we are aiming at in language learning because this also indicates what needs to be evaluated. If we regard self-directed learning as an integral part of language learning, our evaluation procedures might help the learner to focus on the following aspects of learning that promote such a goal orientation:

- **self-awareness**: how does the learner feel about himself as a person? To what extent does he feel self-reliant and competent?

- **role**: how does he see his role as a language learner? To what extent does he feel in charge of his own learning?

- **monitoring**: to what extent can he monitor his learning, both alone and in small learning teams?

- **self-organization**: to what extent can he organize his knowledge of language and learning?

- **self-assessment**: to what extent can he assess his own learning?

These questions suggest the importance of a reflective process evaluation by the learner himself. Such process evaluation can be carried out well in cooperative learning groups in which learners are asked to reflect on what they have learned, how they have learned, how they have worked together, and how they might improve their work. By learning to capture salient aspects of their own learning, learners can become more informed and thoughtful learners. Reflective self-assessment is thus seen as way to continue improving as a learner and a group member.

The learner can organise his achievements, plans, reflections, observations and work samples in what is called a portfolio. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of learner work that exhibits his efforts, progress and achievements (cf. Wolf 1989; Paulson et al. 1991). In the course of learning the portfolio becomes a kind of autobiography of the learner containing the following kinds of documentation:

- work samples: what the learner has done
- learner reflections on his learning processes
- self-assessments of the results of his efforts
- learner achievements in terms of criterion-based descriptions.

The advantages of portfolio assessment go far beyond evaluating learner performance by product-oriented tests. Portfolio assessment can help learners to:

- diagnose their own learning strengths and weaknesses
- internalize criteria of correct language
- become more independent language users
- see their present level of proficiency in relation to the level they wish to attain
- analyze needs, set aims, define objectives, plan work, find materials, monitor the process
- acquire social and communication skills: negotiating with peers, solving conflicts
- increase their awareness of learning: talking about learning, comparing own understandings and strategies with those of peers, and seeing new perspectives and possibilities to develop as a learner.

Portfolio assessment can also improve the learning atmosphere by introducing a shared management of learning and increasing mutual trust and partnership among learners and teachers. It will increase the learner's involvement, his responsibility of and ownership for his learning. In an important sense, learning remains imperfect until the learner is capable of assessing both what he has learned and how he has done it. Such an awareness is a key for the development of self-directed learning. It can also open an important avenue for enhancing the learner's self-concept, his view of himself as a language learner, and his self-esteem as a growing person.

5. Discussion

Experiential learning theory provides a basic philosophical orientation to learning as learner growth emphasizing self-direction as a major educational goal. It offers a holistic view of fostering the development of the learner both as a person and as a language user and learner, paying conscious attention to his personal growth and to his social and cognitive development. The goal is to facilitate the learner to become increasingly self-directed and responsible for his own learning. This process means a gradual shift of the initiative to the learner, encouraging him to bring in his own contributions and experiences. Instead of the teacher setting the tasks and standards of acceptable performance alone, the learner is increasingly in charge of his own learning.

It is worth considering how far the goals self-directed learning can be reached in school alone. Obviously school is only one setting for learning relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, and a large portion of significant learning and learner growth will take place outside school, in families and extracurricular activities and as part of natural cognitive and personality growth and maturation. But the big questions for the school are, nevertheless:

- How far can the goals of self-directed, autonomous learning be reached in such educational settings in which the teacher assumes the main responsibility of defining the objectives, and planning, monitoring and evaluating student learning?
- How can school learning be organized so as to facilitate and promote self-directed learning by a conscious pedagogical design?
- What might be a suitable balance between the teacher's limiting control and learner initiative?
- What could be a balanced combination of the different ways of organizing student learning?

-   How might it develop over years as a result of learner (and teacher) growth?

Cooperative learning can provide important pedagogical ways to work towards such goals, with a significant part of learning taking place in small, mixed-ability teams consisting of 2-4 learners. The work in the teams is structured so that there is positive interdependence and individual accountability among the learners, with each participant contributing to the team product and the team being in charge of helping its team-mates to learn. In addition to academic achievement, learners will also learn important collaborative skills, and these are taught explicitly when necessary. To the extent that the teams learn to function independently, valuable teacher time is released in the class for observing learning in action and functioning as a consultant of the teams and individuals, intervening only when needed. In the spirit of learner-centred thinking, careful pedagogical thinking needs to be attached to the learner's role in the whole process of learning (cf. Slavin 1987; Johnson et al. 1988; 1990; Johnson and Johnson 1989; Kagan 1989; Kohonen 1991).

REFERENCES

Beebe, Leslie M., 1983. Risk-taking and the language learner. In Seliger and Long (eds.) 1983, 39 - 66.
Brandes, Donna and Paul Ginnis,1986. A guide to student-centred learning. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Brown, James D., 1989. Language programme evaluation: a synthesis of existing possibilities. In Johnson (ed.) 1989, 222 - 241.
Candlin, Christopher, 1987. Towards task-based language learning. In Candlin and Murphy (eds.) 1987, 5 - 22.
Candlin, Christopher and Dermot Murphy (eds.), 1987. Language learning tasks. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Carroll, Brendan and Richard West, 1989. ESU Framework. Performance scales for English language examinations. London: Longman.
Chamot, Anna, 1987. The learning strategies of ESL students. In Wenden and Rubin (eds.) 1987, 71 - 83.
Dickinson, Leslie, 1987. Self-instruction in language learning. Cambridge: CUP.
Færch, Claus and Gabriele Kasper, 1983. Plans and strategies in foreign language communication. In Færch and Kasper (eds.) 1983, 20 - 60.
Færch, C. and G. Kasper (eds.), 1983. Strategies in interlanguage communication. London: Longman.
Holec, Henri, 1987. The learner as manager: managing learning or managing to learn? In Wenden and Rubin (eds.) 1987, 145 - 57.
Johnson, David W. et al., 1988. Cooperation in the classroom. Edina, MN: Interaction Book company.
Johnson, David W. et al., 1990. Circles of learning. Cooperation in the classroom. Third edition. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
Johnson, David W. and Roger T. Johnson, 1989. Cooperation and competition. Theory and research. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.
Johnson, Robert Keith (ed.), 1989. The second language curriculum. Cambridge: CUP.
Kagan, Spencer, 1989. Cooperative learning. Resources for teachers. Riverside, CA: University of California, Riverside.
Kelly, George A., 1955. A theory of personality. The psychology of personal constructs. New York: Norton and Company.

Kohonen, Viljo, 1987. Towards experiential learning of elementary English. A theoretical outline of an English and Finnish teaching experiment in elementary learning. University of Tampere, Finland: Reports from the Department of Teacher Training in Tampere A 8.

Kohonen, Viljo, 1989. Evaluation in relation to learning and teaching of languages for communication. Paper read at the Council of Europe Symposium in Sintra, Portugal.

Kohonen, Viljo, 1991. Experiential language learning: second language learning as learner education. To appear in Nunan (ed.) (in press).

Kolb, David, 1984. Experiential learning. Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Lawrence, Denis, 1988. Enhancing self-esteem in the classroom. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

Miller, John, 1988. The holistic curriculum. Toronto: OISE Press.

Nunan, David (ed.), (in press). Collaborative foreign language learning and teaching. Cambridge: CUP.

O'Malley, Michael, 1987. The effects of training in the use of learning strategies on acquiring English as a second language. In Wenden and Rubin (eds.) 1987, 133 - 44.

O'Malley, Michael and Anna Uhl Chamot, 1990. Learning strategies in second language acquisition. Cambridge: CUP.

Paulson, F. Leon et al., 1991. What makes a portfolio a portfolio? Educational Leadership 48:5, 60 - 63.

Reasoner, Robert W. and Gail S. Dusa, 1991. Building self-esteem in the secondary schools. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc.

Riley, Philip, 1984. Coming to terms: negotiation and intercultural communication. Mélanges Pedagogiques. CRAPEL, Université de Nancy II 1984, 117 - 40.

Riley, Philip, 1985. Strategy: conflictor collaboration?. Mélanges Pedagogiques. CRAPEL, Université de Nancy II 1985, 91 - 116.

Robertson, Douglas L., 1988. Self-directed Growth. Muncie, Indiana: Accelerated Development, Inc.

Rosenthal, R. and L. Jacobson, 1968. Pygmalion in the classroom. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Rosenthal, R. and D.B. Rubin, 1978. Interpersonal expectancy effects: the first 345 studies. The Behavioral and Brain Sciences 3, 377 - 415.

Salmon, Phillida, 1988. Psychology for teachers. London: Hutchinson.

Seliger, H. and M. Long (eds.), 1983. Classroom oriented research in second language acquisition. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers.

Shavelson, R.J. and R. Bolus, 1982. Self-concept: the interplay oftheory andmethods. Journal of Educational Psychology 74:1, 3 - 17.

Slavin, Robert, 1987. Cooperative learning and the cooperative school. Educational Leadership 45:3, 7 - 13.

Stern, H.H., 1983. Fundamental concepts of language teaching. Oxford: OUP.

Toward a state of esteem, 1990. The final report of the California task force to promote self-esteem and personal and socialresponsibility. Sacramento: California State Department of Education.

Wenden, Anita, 1987. Incorporating learner training in the classroom. In Wenden and Rubin (eds.) 1987, 159 - 68.

Wenden, Anita and Joan Rubin (eds.), 1987. Learner strategies in language learning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

Wolf, Dennie Palmer, 1989. Portfolio assessment: sampling student work. Educational Leadership 46:7, 35 - 39.

MODES OF LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT: OPTIONS IN TEST CONSTRUCTION

Brendan J. Carroll, Educational Consultant

1. Introduction

In this Symposium, one of our purposes is to explore ways of
harmonising, on a European basis, the many examinations used for
assessing language proficiency. In my presentation today, I would like
to look at this process of harmonisation from two angles: the first, to
identify a number of options which language testers must take into
account when constructing their tests; the second, to describe a simple
and transparent system for displaying the results of their assessments.
I would like to illustrate and discuss these two angles of approach in
my talk today.

2. Options in Test Construction

As we all know, language tests and examinations come in many different
shapes and sizes. Some tests may consist wholly of multiple-choice
items, devised by statisticians and marked automatically by computers.
Others may rely on the oral 'viva' method, the candidate being cross-
examined by the examiners who then give their verdict as a personal
assessment. Yet other tests use a mixture of multiple-choice and
personal ratings on which to base decisions. What, I ask, is the best
method of testing? And what features should we look for in a good
language test? These are questions I have to ask many times as I go to
different countries to help the local examination authorities to up-date
their language tests. When there are arguments - sometimes bitter ones -
about proposed changes, it is my experience that there is fundamental
disagreement about these basic matters. In my first illustration, I list
several of these essential options.

3. Two Contrasting Examinations

To illustrate how the selection of different options crucially
influences the type of test eventually produced, here are descriptions
of two very different language tests which I will call Test X and Test
Y. They are not descriptions of actual tests in use, but I am sure you
will recognise the types of test being described.

3.1. Different Test Focuses

Test X has been made to examine 20,000 applicants in one day in
locations all over the world. The testees had very mixed backgrounds
and a variety of job aspirations. The test has of necessity to be a
product-oriented, summative one, unrelated to any particular
teaching programme. It is probable that it will focus on language
patterns as this sort of item is usually easier to administer. Test
Y, on the other hand, has been made to examine a group of students
on a College course as a guide to their present level and to their
future progress. In this case, the test is of the formative and
achievement type, related to the teaching programme. Some report of
the nature and success of the learning processes is also possible
and there is the time and the opportunity to introduce active
performances into the testing procedure.

ILLUSTRATION ONE
Major options in Test Construction

TEST FOCUS	
(1) SUMMATIVE - final decisions (2) PRODUCT - learning results (3) PROFICIENCY - broad mastery (4) LANGUAGE - linguistic patterns	FORMATIVE - future guidance PROCESS - learning activities ACHIEVEMENT - programme related PERFORMANCE - active tasks

DATA HANDLING	
(1) OBJECTIVE - Yes/No, A B C D (2) DISCRETE - independent items (3) NORM - based on groups REFERENCE (4) RELIABLE - stable measure	SUBJECTIVE - personal rating HOLISTIC - integrated tasks CRITERION - based on agreed REFERENCE criteria VALID - measures trait

PRESENTATION AND CONTROL	

(1)   OPAQUE   - little
                information
(2)   UNITARY   - overall index
(3)   QUANTITATIVE - presented in
                numbers
(4)   CENTRAL   - by Examination
                Board
(5)   CHEAP   - minimal
                resources
	TRANSPARENT - full information
	
	PROFILED - by sub-skills
	QUALITATIVE - presented with
	             words
	LOCAL - by school / teacher
	             / student
	COSTLY - maximum resources

       TEST "X"   TEST "Y"

3.2.   Different Approaches to Data-Handling

For the administrators of Test X, speed and convenience are of paramount importance so the test items are likely to be objective and mechanically marked. Test construction is also speeded up if items can be taken from a convenient item bank of discrete tasks. With large numbers, the results can be interpreted in terms of norms. In cases where there is a risk of charges of bias by minority groups, defensive marking with no subjective elements is the prudent choice. There is pressure to eliminate productive tasks of writing and speaking.

The administrators of Test Y, on the other hand, are much more concerned with holistic, integrated tasks which will almost certainly demand elements of subjective assessment. They will have time to measure performance against the yardsticks of clearly spelt-out performance criteria. Aware of the nature of the behaviours

being tested, they are much more likely to be able to make a direct, content validation of the tests, although they will still want to be assured of their reliability as stable measuring instruments.

3.3. Presentation and Control Aspects

Most educational activities, being labour-intensive, are expensive and time-consuming. The administrators of Test X may well cut down on expense by providing only essential information to the test users in advance of the test and minimal information about its results - possibly giving just a Fail-Pass-Distinction result or perhaps a single percentage mark. As local involvement by schools, teachers and students requires both time and money, most of the input will come from the central board with minimal input from local sources. The test will be an off-the-peg, mass-produced instrument with little consideration for local conditions or special needs.

The architects of Test Y, however, will accept the fact that special needs and educational imperatives will require a more personal approach, with more flexibility and will there require a greater investment of resources in the testing process. Detailed information about the nature, content and format of the test will be circulated and there will be close involvement with teachers and students. The testing process is likely to be longer. It will involve active tasks and a good deal of personal assessment by well-trained examiners. The results will be presented as a profile, with detailed explanations of what the profile elements imply. Probably, a sizeable proportion of the assessment will be provided from school records, on-course assignments and even from student self-assessment. Clearly, this type of operation is likely to be the more expensive one.

4. Deciding on the Options

The two examples of Tests, Y and Y, which we have just described represent very different test instruments which have to meet very different sets of circumstances. In my experience, examination authorities are not usually faced with such stark choices, although I believe that the more up-to-date tests tend towards the nature of Test Y, giving more priority to human and educational factors. I am sure you will be acquainted with the Test X type - super efficient and impersonal. But, even with authorities making such tests, more attention is now being given to assessing written and spoken interactions, the test tasks are becoming more holistic and less mechanical, more efforts are being made to achieve transparency and local inputs are being given more importance.

I would conclude this section, however, by stressing that the choices on test focus, data-handling and presentation/control must be made in the light of the contexts for which the tests are designed. As an educationist, one may be a Test Y type person. As a businessman, one could lean towards the Test X type. All I would suggest is, that in creating and administering tests, one should explore options such as I have described - and then decide accordingly on the nature of the test.

5. The Language Portfolio

When we have decided on our options and produced our assessment instrument, how can we present the results so as to help the users to make the best decisions about the candidates? An outline to a possible answer can be seen in the chart on the next page showing a draft summary sheet from the proposed European Language Portfolio which is presented more fully in Rolf Schärer's paper. In preparatory work in connection with the concept of the Portfolio it was felt that three major types of assessment, embracing both qualitative (soft) and quantitative (hard) data, could usefully contribute to our insights into a learner's performance:

- **The Passport**: Accreditation: listing the certificates or diplomas the learner has acquired over the years, with entries calibrated formally to a scale of levels by being placed statistically on 'Yardsticks' containing descriptors of performances appropriate to each of the levels.

- **The Map**: Experience: describing the language learning experiences the learners have undergone, whether or not they have earned a formal qualification. Typical language learning experiences may be related to levels on a descriptive basis, and personal comments and self assessments of performances in relation to the scale of levels could be included.

- **The Dossier**: Work samples: presenting a compendium of samples of the learner's achievements, chosen by the learner, with a guideline for interpreting the work provided.

The question of the levels that might be used for these types of achievement needs further discussion. For the moment, I believe there is a good deal of merit in a 9-point scale such as that already used in the ESU Framework, and now well-established for several important English Language Examinations. A summary sheet, such as presented on the next page, would also need to be supported by copies of certif-icates awarded, details of language experiences and samples of work.

I am looking forward to the discussion of the practical details of such a Portfolio instrument which might provide more transparency and coherence to our language assessment systems.

ILLUSTRATION TWO.   LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO - SUMMARY SHEET.   (Draft by B J Carroll)

Name of Person ......*Miss Susan*... Contact Address ......*34 Roselline Lynne*....... Nationality (L1) ...*French*.. Learned Language (L2).....*English*....

Level	PASSPORT	MAP	DOSSIER	
Fully competent 9				9
8	English Language Testing Service (1989)			8
7			'Animal Farm' Characters Re-visited (1990)	7
6	Cambridge Proficiency 'B' (1988)	3-month College Exchange visit to Bristol (1986)		6
5				5
4		Basic, 2-month language course, LTS, Bath (1985) One-month exchange visit Yorkshire, 1981	Summary of Sean Connery "007" film (1985)	4
3	Royal Society of Arts 'Elementary' (1982)			3
2				2
1 Rudimentary				1

Certificates, Diplomas in folder attached.
E.S.U. Framework equivalents enclosed.

College and Language School reports
in accompanying folder.

Examples of work, self-assessment
profiles and personal comments attached.

92

PHASE 2

BEYOND THRESHOLD LEVEL: SPECIFYING OBJECTIVES FOR DIVERSE NEEDS: CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?

OBSERVATIONS ON THE DEFINITION OF OBJECTIVES AND MODES OF EVALUATION BEYOND THE THRESHOLD LEVEL

Daniel Coste University of Geneva

1. Introduction and Aim

The model for the establishment of so-called "Threshold-level" objectives, devised in accordance with the approach underlying the Modern Languages Project, which was defined nearly twenty years ago and has evolved since, appears to be an enduring one that reflects continuity. Admittedly, the overall approach and detailed specifications have varied somewhat with time and according to the language and the team of authors concerned. There has been cumulative enrichment and revision, there have been additions, and the new Threshold Level is doubtless an end-product that answers many of the criticisms of the initial achievements, levelled by the very people who were responsible for them. Despite these many readjustments and some more substantial changes, however, the basic options remain the same.

In all cases, the idea is to establish more or less precisely, in terms of communicative competence, a level of active mastery of the foreign language in question. When the language is being learned for communication purposes, the objective is described in terms of the possession of practical linguistic knowledge and skills and the ability to use them in social circumstances that are themselves clearly characterised. Speech acts or language functions, general and specific notions, means of using speech and, in some cases, phonetic or intonation indications are selected in the light of the needs and plans of target publics, many of them broad publics but defined on the basis of what they will be called on to do with the language they are learning.

Clearly, the question is whether the overall model for the establishment of learning objectives is the same beyond the Threshold level or whether, once the threshold has been crossed, the rules of the game are somewhat different. That is what we want to consider here, with the aim of making the following points:

a. There should be scope, beyond the Threshold level, for several models for defining and constructing objectives and hence for several means of deciding what should be assessed;

b. It is perhaps less important to define carefully graded general or partial ability levels than to consider types of knowledge and skills in relation to which, and within which, it is necessary to identify various degrees of mastery;

c. It is therefore a question of defining the numerous Post-threshold-level objectives as modules or variable combinations of modules belonging to a smaller number of series, with a view to a greater transparency and coherence;

d. Although the objectives pursued may be extremely varied beyond the threshold level, the fact remains that there is also a need for modes of assessment and certification that make it possible to evaluate, in a simple manner, both general multi-purpose ability and partial or specific skills. Accordingly, after drawing attention to some of the main options beyond the Threshold level and describing the types of learners and learning situations, we shall endeavour to define a modular approach of this kind.

2. Options

The prevailing option (which is fully in keeping with the original choices of the "Modern Languages" Project) is to think of the Post-threshold level not so much in terms of what precedes it but in terms of what it renders accessible, and in relation to learners and learning situations.

The initial premise is that, after the Threshold level, we enter an area in which objectives become increasingly specific - or at least, potentially so. The diversity of learning routes reflects not only the diversity of learners and of their competences but also the variety of the aims they are pursuing.

3. Characteristics of the Learners

Learners beyond the Threshold level have knowledge and abilities which enable them to "get by" on their own, but their knowledge and abilities are invariably patchy: there are strong points and gaps. This compounds the lack of uniformity of objectives, acquired skills and learning styles among learners.

Post-threshold-level learners generally know where they are heading and why they are learning the language. They also know that they need to improve in certain areas and that to do so requires an effort and personal investment. The knowledge and skills they need to develop are (usually rightly) seen as linguistically exacting, and ones which they cannot improvise without thorough practice. Thus, paradoxically, learners who can, by and large, "get by" and are partially independent, have to undertake the relatively demanding task of learning the workings of the language and subtle linguistic points which serve a specific purpose, and which:

- require more than the "approximate" approach of previous learning, functional and effective though that approach may have been, for communication purposes;

- alternatively, do not tally with the summary of the basic workings of grammar learnt at earlier stages.

4. Features of Learning Situations

The Post-threshold level often corresponds to a transition between education sectors or between school and work. It is thus affected by changes of location and by the lack of continuity between places of learning and learning establishments, which do not usually follow the same approaches.

96

At these transition points, teachers (but also learners) are inclined to think in terms of "bringing pupils up to standard" or "going over the basics". They are liable to underestimate or under-exploit the personal resources of the learners. There is also confusion over teaching methods, and teachers are troubled since, because of the emphasis on progress, they can be wary of differences in ability and mixed-ability groups.

In addition, there is the fact that differences of ability are particularly apparent beyond the Threshold level, since it is a time when people can, want or have to practise the foreign language in circumstances and/or by means which are not those prevalent at school. The non-mother tongue can, from then onwards:

-    be used to learn something other than the language itself (in the context of academic or vocational training);

-    be used for purposes other than learning (in the course of a job, for instance);

-    be directly present in the learner's surroundings or readily accessible through the media which form part of those surroundings.

5.   Features of the Objectives

5.1.   Fluency and Accuracy

At this stage it is only very rarely a question of acquiring highly ritual or codified knowledge or skills. On the other hand, two things are expected of the learners:

-    they are expected to be able to handle the written and spoken texts they have to use (actively and/or passively) more flexibly and with greater fluency;

-    they are expected to be more accurate or rigorous in their knowledge and in the handling of the linguistic tools used in these texts.

Fluency and accuracy, which might previously have been relatively separate, thus become closely linked, in the context of very diversified domains of communication. Previously, learners could get by with general-purpose knowledge, ready-made phrases, the clever use of non-language resources and a certain amount of common sense or specialised knowledge, often to the detriment of linguistic accuracy and socio-linguistic appropriateness. These short-cuts become insufficient, if not completely unworkable. Even though the strategies in question are still valuable, other strategies are also needed.

5.2.   Gradations within a Continuum?

This brings us back to the question of the model for the establishment of objectives beyond the Threshold level. In his contributions to the study of the subject, van Ek clearly showed how the components of a communicative competence, as identified, in particular, by Canale and

Swain (1), could also be important factors to be taken into consideration when the targets of learning for communication purposes were defined.

This approach assumes that, by means of a number of adjustments, objectives at the various levels beyond the Threshold level should be thought out in terms of categories and connections between categories that are broadly similar to those already used at the various versions of Threshold level. This means that there is continuity between the possible levels, which can be characterised in relation to one another in terms of the form of extension and in terms of increasing complexity.

A more analytical and more radical approach is to define skills in a number of steps corresponding to various abilities or overall levels of competence (whether there are five, seven, nine or some other number of levels in the scale which the advocates of this approach attempt to construct). The approach is more analytical because of the principle of breaking down and sub-dividing skills (in written comprehension, for instance, a distinction can be drawn between the standard achieved in reading a newspaper and the standards achieved in reading literature or understanding technical instructions). It is more radical in that, between Level 1 and Level n, it is assumed that the skill being assessed is the same, that the descriptors applied to it are also the same and that it is actually "the same thing" that is being monitored continuously, by means of successive reformulations that have features in common with, and features distinct from, Level n and, on the one hand, Level n - 1 and, on the other hand, Level n + 1.

In either case, however, the idea is to situate continuous general or partial progress on the part of the learners in relation to various scales, by assessing performance in relation to those scales.

5.3. Questions

It is of great help to learners, teachers, those in charge of training institutions and professionals in areas where particular language skills are important to have scales, grids or "maps" with which to compare an assessment of language knowledge, performance and experience. Moreover, for the sake of transparency and coherence, it is doubtless worthwhile devising standards and reference norms for calibrating, the better to compare them, the major recognised international certificates, which, in the case of several languages, are the existing yardsticks. Much progress has already been made in this direction, with promising results.

Care should be taken, however, to ensure that the laudable desire to compare, possibly harmonise and even change assessment practices in order to ensure that more account is taken of the ability to communicate does not lead to over-simplification or distortion.

---

(1). Canale M. and Swain M. 1980: "Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language teaching and Testing" in Applied Linguistics 1.

This raises a number of questions:

a.   Should language knowledge and language skills be considered to be of the same nature and to be measurable with the same analytical instruments at every level? Does the acquisition of this knowledge and these skills take the form of a continuum which can be characterised from one end to the other by the same categories and the same parameters?

b.   In so far as the increase in the number of levels identified for a given skill suggests continuity that can be graduated, should we consider that different skills (eg written expression and oral comprehension) can be divided into the same number of steps in the same way, in the same summary grid?

c.   Does increasing the number of degrees of mastery of a communication task (e.g., the management of an interaction) not lead to distinctions and refinements, especially at the more advanced levels, which cast doubts on the economy of the whole system (does the transition from Level 7 to Level 8 not demand much more of the learner than the transition from Level 2 to Level 3)?

d.   Is it possible, in the higher degrees of a scale, to specify what a learner can do in the foreign language without specifying the discourse content? Can the ability to argue a point be assessed without reference to a particular topic?

e.   Because of the increase in the number of levels identified and the fact that the same methods are used to describe objectives, the assessment systems are themselves uniform throughout the course of study. Again, is this the most economical and most effective approach, however transparent and coherent it may seem?

f.   Does division into levels, up to the most advanced levels – particularly if the aim is to obtain a summary grid – not mean that in practice preference is given to vertical rather than to horizontal progression? Is the emphasis not on progress with pre-identified skills rather than on the diversification of skills, the introduction of new skills and the recombination of initial skills?

g.   Does the fact of referring to assessment scales not, whether one likes it or not, favour continuous learning routes rather than reorientations, changes of direction and the pursuit of objectives which are, to some extent, unconnected with those initially in view? However laudable the desire for transparency and coherence among all those concerned, it should not mean that preference is given to standard, orthodox learning careers.

5.4. Partial Objectives and Partial Skills

Beyond the Threshold level, it is not uncommon for learners to set themselves partial objectives and aim for skills which are in themselves incomplete. If we take as our starting point the readily observed fact, referred to above, that the learners in question have characteristics that

differ widely – both within themselves and from one learner to another – it is easy to imagine that they will be pursuing complementary or even compensatory objectives. One will want to become more fluent in everyday conversation by working at pronunciation or rhythm or extending the range of different ways in which he or she can put together sentences. Another, wanting to speak more correctly or to be able to explain things formally, will feel the need for systematic grammatical revision. These are objectives which are designed to restore a balance, put things in place or add refinements without there being a real quest for a change in overall level of ability. Experience regularly shows that such revision is often considered necessary at some point along their path by learners who have already obtained a certificate recognising their mastery of a foreign language but who, before going any further or without any intention of going any further, want to perfect their existing knowledge.

As we are mainly concerned with the Post-theshold level, it is important to point out that the prevailing aim at this stage is as much to acquire an additional partial skill as to achieve a higher level of overall ability. The aim may be to develop the ability to read in a specialised scientific field, the ability to follow sports programmes and variety shows on television or the ability to carry out commercial negotiations in the learner's professional branch. It is not a question of learners confining themselves to that particular skill: it is simply considering that, as far as other skills are concerned, the Threshold level they have attained is adequate.

Clearly, if multilingualism, defined as active mastery of several foreign languages, is to be encouraged in Europe, it is also necessary to define and, more important, recognise the partial skills which make for differentiated multilingualism: one knows how to do in language X things that are somewhat different from what one is able to do in language Y or language Z. The challenge, for the future, will also be to ensure that partial skills – "uneven" skills, so to speak – are objectives that are just as valid, as well-recognised and as respected as general, overall objectives, defined in terms of a change of level in all skills.

5.5. A Modular Approach to Objectives

This brings us to the desirability of a modular approach to objectives. If partial objectives corresponding to complementary skills that build on a degree of mastery previously obtained are to be recognised, and if it is also to be possible to build on these partial objectives at a later date, as necessary, and to give them new status within systems for the recognition of more general ability, it seems desirable to devise modules which can be accumulated and combined, which allow for flexible courses of study and changes of direction, and which can be recognised separately at different times.

In institutional terms, these modules should not simply be designed as, for instance, separate components of a more complex objective leading to a particular certificate. It should be possible for each module, which is an objective in itself in this approach and should therefore also lend itself to specific recognition, to be a component of several more complex objectives, which may give rise to the award of different certificates. Just as it is

possible, when students move from one university to another, for units to be considered equivalent, partial dispensations from the curriculum to be granted and standards to be automatically recognised, it seems highly desirable that a modular approach to objectives in language learning should make it possible for prior study to be taken into account when people move from one training body to another.

6.   Areas of Diversification

The question is whether, when people are learning in order to be able to communicate, all their intermediate, enabling or complementary objectives should themselves be formulated in terms of communication, as is the case with threshold levels and with most of the descriptions attached to ability scales. In view of the foregoing, and also of the diversity of target groups and contexts taken into account at this stage of the Modern Languages Project, the answer is "no".

Two examples:

1.   Language awareness programmes catering, in particular, for very young school children, can have their own objectives, which cannot be described in terms of the categories used to construct "Threshold levels". Yet nobody would claim that such programmes do not or should not have a place when it comes to the more general aim of broadening communicative competence.

2.   It is not uncommon for certain learners to want, at some stage during their learning career, and often beyond the initial Threshold-level-type stages, to perfect their basic grammar or spoken language in a systematic fashion, or to learn about the civilisation or history of the country or group of countries whose language they are learning. These relay objectives and even these apparently divergent aims are certainly not detrimental to the general communication project. It would be a shame to ignore them or to consider them to be non-standard.

To keep to the Post-threshold level, there are four main areas in which the types of objectives can be "horizontally" diversified.

The first is obviously language knowledge and language skills in the sense in which the terms are used in the Threshold level model and in most ability scales. Suffice it to point out that, within the same model, this knowledge and these skills correspond to different levels of analysis: the skill does not only involve combining a linguistic form with a concept, or a formulation with speech; nor does it simply involve choosing from various possible forms or formulations; it also includes, for instance, assessing a communication situation in terms of its socio-linguistic components, constraints and latitude. We shall return to this area later.

The second area consists of knowledge about the language and its usage, acquired as such, independently of an immediate communication objective and not for immediate communication purposes. This "meta-linguistic"

knowledge can take various forms which can be correlated more or less explicitly with the actual use of the language in question. But what is important here is that the learners should have as their objective the acquisition of a particular area of knowledge of this kind and that it should be possible to assess the knowledge acquired in terms of "knowledge about" rather than "use of".

The third area comprises knowledge other than meta-linguistic knowledge, whether anthropological, geographical or other knowledge about the people who speak the language that is being learnt, or scientific or literary knowledge in established disciplines (the physics of solids or social literary criticism). These are, of course, areas of knowledge which seem unconnected with the learning of the language in the strict sense of the term but, given that the aim is to develop communication ability and that, as was pointed out above, objectives beyond the Threshold level are correlated with the actual use of the language, it is clear that progress in the language in a given direction may be very closely dependent on the acquisition of new, non-linguistic knowledge. (Moreover, this new knowledge is not always acquired solely in the foreign language.) The important thing is to accept the fact that the acquisition of non-linguistic knowledge may also give rise to relay objectives in relation to the acquisition of an ability to communicate that includes mastery of a foreign language. This should not be lost sight of in the language learner's course of study and in the recognised records that remain of it.

The fourth area can be summed up as what are generally known as "learning strategies" and "communication strategies". This area includes everything connected with "learning to learn". It will readily be agreed that:

a.   such strategies can hardly be practised "in a vacuum" independently of communication content or the specific learning tasks in which they are used;

b.   depending on the learning stage and objectives, these strategies may differ appreciably, just as they differ from one learner to another;

c.   nevertheless, such strategies, although not all-purpose, have strong transferability potential and are therefore important learning objectives which should be characterised as such;

d.   these strategies are not always direct language strategies: for instance, ways of putting oneself across in daily life or in particular formal circumstances (clothing, bearing, gestures and expression) entail, from time to time, specific training under the heading "Knowing how to communicate".

This outline of the four main areas into which Post-threshold level objectives fall has no claims to being original, and the intention is not to underestimate the dominant, central importance of the first area identified. Nor is the intention to deny that there is (fortunately!) a great deal of overlap between these areas. The idea is simply to point out that a model for defining relatively specific objectives or for constructing complex

objectives can be more realistic if we take the view that, however valid and valuable they may be, neither the Threshold-level categories nor the descriptions of levels of overall or partial ability are sufficient in themselves to describe the complex world of objectives pursued in the course of the often chequered careers of Post-threshold level learners. Even if it makes it more difficult to ensure transparency and coherence, it is essential not to curb this diversification or channel it too strictly.

7. Diversity and Cross-links

Just as it is necessary to stress the diversity of the modular objectives which may be pursued, beyond the Threshold level, by learners seeking to acquire particular abilities and build up partial skills, possibly in several second languages, it should also be pointed out that learning languages for communication purposes does not imply that all the partial objectives must be defined in terms of communication categories. Equally, it should not be forgotten that transverse factors must also be taken into account in the case of many objectives in this area.

Among the very common features, attention has already been drawn to the dual requirement of fluency combined with accuracy. It is, of course, necessary to add that the learners must also be aware of the workings of the grammar of the language they have learnt, and of the workings of the organisation of speech and enunciation. Beyond the Threshold level, learners must, as they progress, learn to pay attention to meta-linguistic matters, if they have not already done so. Whatever the views of Krashen (2), it will become more and more difficult to separate the subconscious acquisition of means of communication from the very conscious learning of the forms which communication takes. This affects objectives and, doubtless, assessment, for this attention to meta-linguistic matters is not simply a search for grammatical explanation.

Important cross-links can doubtless also be found in respect of purely linguistic skills - links that amply span the usual divide between written and oral, comprehension and expression or production, reception and interaction.

This applies to two broad categories of speech management ability. Beyond the threshold level, in the active and passive use of language, and in both written and oral work, learners often have occasion, despite an extremely wide variety of aims, to use speech for what can broadly be described as text- processing operations: reporting on what others have said, summarising, elaborating, taking notes, speaking from notes, re-wording. They also have to grasp or produce arguments that include views from different sources on which a speaker takes a stand while defending his own viewpoint. Moreover, this last set of operations encompasses the previous set: a guided method of processing other texts. Types of narrative or descriptive text sequences may also be used. In all these cases, it is important for the learners to develop, activate and adapt the pictures they may have of speech operations of this kind, which they master to some degree in their mother tongue. This obviously entails the acquisition of refined, complex linguistic resources that make for speech management of this kind.

---

(2) Krashen, S. 1982: "Principles and practice in Second Language Acquisition", Pergamon, Oxford

These various aspects of increased linguistic awareness also include, on a horizontal plane, the ability to recognise irony, quotations, antiphrasis or understatement - figures of speech which are used much more often than is sometimes thought, in a wide variety of contexts. In short, the linguistic cross-links found beyond the threshold level are also the cross-links of rhetoric in the broad sense of the term.

8.   Assessment of the Modules

When there is a set of objectives that are modular in nature or make-up and correspond not only to overall aims but also to the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are partial, complementary or highly specific, or that serve a transition purpose, we must not think of assessment solely in terms of simulated or authentic communication performance. Depending on the modules and areas concerned, other criteria and other means of assessment, used for the evaluation of academic knowledge or of the ability to solve non- language problems, come into play. Clearly, we are less well-equipped nowadays to tackle these other areas and means of assessment satisfactorily than we are in the case of matters connected with language ability, but it is precisely here that there is work to be done.

In short, even though, beyond the Threshold level, assessment of the ability to communicate still involves appraising actual performance in the foreign language as used for communication purposes, it is also important to explore other avenues, even if it means attacking certain taboos.

Thus:

a.   Although it is desirable that tests should have cosmetic validity, it is not necessarily a crime to discard this constraint, provided the content remains valid.

b.   Flexible multiple-purpose tests are a possibility: even in an area where, as has been said, accuracy and fluency are closely interlinked, there is no reason why they should not also be assessed separately.

c.   Highly contested integrative means of assessment, such as "cloze tests" or even dictations, should not be rejected out of hand. These tests, which are cheap to administer, can prove a valuable complement to other tests which are more "authentic" in terms of what the learner is required to do, but sometimes very complicated and not always as reliable as the recognition afforded to them would suggest.

d.   Simple assessment systems and means of providing genuine recognition for partial skills (in terms of things mastered and not in terms of relative incompleteness) should be devised; one should not simply rely, as the learners progress in their mastery of the foreign language, on numerous full-scale tests leading to certificates, necessary though the main diplomas and certificates are.

9. The Scale-based Approach and the Modular Approach

If the aim is, at the same time:

- to take account of the diversity of Post-threshold level objectives;

- not to neglect the approach and traditions peculiar to the numerous institutions awarding certificates, however willing they are to evolve;

- to ensure that existing, revised and new certificates are comparable, in particular, at international level;

- to prevent, in both training and assessment, the development of a vast number of schemes that are all specific and cut off from one another;

it is doubtless necessary to devise the whole system in terms of components that are, at least to some extent, modular. The idea behind this approach is that the objectives, means of assessment and recognised certificates can be made up (or broken down) into independent modules that can form part of finite series.

We must therefore move towards what could be described as the "breaking down" of objectives and start defining modules of various kinds that can be combined.

Under a highly modular approach, the modules are assumed to be relatively independent of one another, each is assumed to be organised in its own way and not in accordance with categories or criteria that are necessarily the same for all the modules. If we consider the four areas singled out above as pools of objectives that are either partial/transitional or more central, it is clear:

- that it is possible to distinguish sub-divisions within the degrees of mastery specific to these areas;

- that modular subsets can be defined for each of these areas;

- but that the degrees of mastery identified do not necessarily conform to the same criteria as regards level in different areas or even, in some cases, in different modules.

Scales of knowledge or ability should be established on an intra-modular basis before they are expressed in intermodular or even transmodular terms. Again, this means that the number of levels identified depends on the content in connection with which progress is made or the nature of the objectives.

Similarly, the modules cannot necessarily be considered to be of the same size. They should not be confused with units of a similar kind, which can be accumulated. Here again, the complexity and diversity of objectives must not be sacrificed for the sake of a conveniently clear edifice made from even building blocks. Much has still to be done, therefore, if this approach is to be pursued.

It would be paradoxical to say that, once the threshold has been crossed, we enter an area in which the concept of level is less and less meaningful. Our intention was, however, to warn against an approach based solely on scaling various summits calibrated according to the same set of level-setting curves.

The new ground to be broken has neither the one dimensional appearance of a rising line nor merely the two-dimensional appearance of a table or grid. It is necessary to have at least a relief map to represent it, showing some variation in the type of soil, the state of the communication networks and the type and quality of the means of transport. This does not, of course, mean that we must give up searching for constant features, the best routes, short-cuts, points through which it is compulsory to pass, economies of scale and, first and foremost, the information which the traveller needs. The only way to do this, however, is to accept the inherently uneven lie of the land and to take full account of the numerous motives of those who venture on to it.

PANEL PRESENTATIONS ON "BEYOND THRESHOLD LEVEL: SPECIFYING OBJECTIVES FOR DIVERSE NEEDS: CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?"

1. FRAMEWORK SYLLABUSES IN SWITZERLAND

A TEACHER-LED INITIATIVE DEFINING OBJECTIVES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Rolf W. Siegwart, Member of the Framework Syllabus Drafting Group

An extensive programme to reform the teaching of national and foreign languages is under way in Switzerland. In particular, it prescribes the compulsory learning of a second national language for all pupils from the age of 10 onwards. The "Points of Encounter" scheme presented by Mr Beat Vonarburg is one of the results of this reform.

For a long time, post-compulsory secondary education (at the lycée / gymnasium) remained untouched by this reform movement. It took the combined efforts of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK) and the Société suisse des professeurs de l'enseignement secondaire (SSPES: Swiss association of secondary school teachers) to launch a major undertaking under the title "Framework Secondary School Syllabuses in Switzerland" six years ago. Each SSPES branch association set up a study and drafting group which drew up a Framework Syllabus, on the basis of experience and ongoing dialogue with teachers at "grassroots level". Framework syllabuses for all subjects taught at upper secondary level were developed in this way. Work in the linguistic field covered all four national languages, plus English, Spanish and Russian.

The preparation of framework syllabuses began following the publication in 1985 by the joint upper secondary - university committee of "Ten Theses on the Current Article 7 of the Swiss Federal Decree on the Recognition of School-Leaving Certificates", which stated:

> "The school must encourage pupils to make accurate use of a wide vocabulary by providing them with every possible opportunity to express themselves in speech and writing. Learning a language implies learning to think; by knowing and mastering linguistic categories, pupils fulfil one of the conditions which are essential to any form of communication. Communication skills must be redefined in upper secondary education, not only for practical purposes but also with a view to opening and sustaining dialogue at a number of levels. It is also a matter of conferring cultural insight which helps develop a sense of history. The pupil must be capable of apprehending various forms of thought and expression and define his own thoughts in relation to them. These considerations are equally relevant to foreign language teaching, particularly where national languages are concerned."

The working parties set up by the associations began by reconsidering the teaching/learning process from the first school lesson up to the time of school-leaving examinations. They then examined and defined the problem from three points of view:

A. General objectives: the education policy to be adopted

Example: [1] "The teaching of French as a second and national language plays a vital role in transmitting the values and cultural aspects of the French-speaking world, which includes Switzerland."

B. Considerations and intentions: the learning process

Example: "The pupil acquires the four skills required in any verbal exchange: oral and written comprehension, and oral and written performance. He does so through the most varied communication situations, depending on his age, interests, linguistic and cultural development, which enable him to come to grips with the real French-speaking world. He also learns to handle French as a vehicular language in use in both Europe and the rest of the world. A process of discovery will be furthered by means of individual or class exchanges, intensive language study weeks or visits when pupils are subjected to total immersion.

C. Fundamental objectives: the objectives to be fulfilled by those taking the school-leaving examination

By formulating **general objectives** and **fundamental objectives**, framework syllabuses define an "upper secondary framework" of mainly pedagogical nature which lays emphasis on "skills" and "attitudes" rather than "knowledge". The fundamental objectives when it comes to languages are divided into four categories:

-   **language and communication** (the four skills, "socio-linguistic" ability);

-   **language and thought** (discursive and cognitive ability);

-   **language and culture** (the traditional educated but also, and above all, cultivated mind);

-   **language and self-expression** (ability on an "emotional" level).

Knowledge is perceived as follows:

"In the teaching of French as a second language the key notions of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, together with landmarks in the history, literature and culture of French-speaking countries, are built into the learning process so that they play a role in the development of basic skills and attitudes."

The list of objectives for the language and thought section is shown below by way of example:

Skills:

-   analysing a statement, sentence or text;
-   paraphrasing and simplifying;
-   putting points of view in order of priority;

---

[1] The examples quoted are taken from the framework syllabus for French as a second language

- building links between thoughts or information and placing them in a context;
- fully exploring a complex thought and providing a reasonable line of argument while asserting one's own point of view;
- passing on information, reporting facts.

Attitudes:

- expressing oneself adequately in relation to a given situation and correspondent;
- creating one's own comprehension and assimilation strategies, distinguishing between content and form.

Let us now draw some conclusions from this outline:

1) The framework is designed to encompass the diversity of Swiss education systems which stipulate that teaching bodies in cantons or districts shall themselves draw up the corresponding objectives in detail.

2) Framework syllabuses relate to a level which is "negotiated" between two partners at the time of the school-leaving examination: the secondary sector represented by a teacher who is an examiner and the post-secondary sector generally represented by a university teacher who provides an expert appraisal and validation.

3) Pupils in Swiss post-compulsory secondary education are customarily obliged to study a second or foreign language throughout their studies if they want to take the school-leaving examination. The framework syllabuses therefore make no provision for partial qualifications.

4) Assessment does not come within the scope of framework syllabuses.

It is the first time that objectives have been defined for the whole of Swiss post-compulsory general education in secondary schools. By conferring the task of formulating these objectives on teachers themselves, the authorities are hoping to encourage a vast educational process which will involve all committed members of the teaching profession.

2.   REVISING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES EXAMINATIONS OF UPPER SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

Theo J.M. van Els, University of Nijmegen

Introduction

The project in which I am engaged in The Netherlands may well have some insights to contribute that are relevant to the main theme of the conference, the creation of a European Framework for foreign language teaching objectives. In the Appendix some essential information is provided on the project and on the Dutch educational system.

The main aim of the project is to produce a new examination programme for the five foreign languages - English, French, German, Russian, and Spanish - which are taught in the two school-types in Upper General Secondary education, i.e. university-preparatory VWO and vocationally-/professionally- oriented HAVO respectively (see Appendix for a fuller explanation). The interest of the project lies in the attempt that we are making to specify the objectives for the five languages in some detail. For the purposes of the present discussion two points in connection with the specification of objectives have particular relevance, so in the rest of this paper I will restrict myself to those two points and to issues directly related to these.

1. Framework Structure

The first point that may have special relevance is that in our specifications we make an attempt to clearly define level distinctions both between the two school-types and between the five languages involved. In the present exam programme the objectives are formulated in terms that leave everything to be guessed at; the very general and vague terms state no level distinctions at all. In the revision that we are undertaking we have set out to produce a comprehensive system of examination objectives. The system is organised as a grid of a certain number of levels which should enable us to distinguish between the five languages in question in the context of the two school-types.

Constructing this system we have had to tackle a number of the issues that Daniel Coste raises in his question:

> "How can transparency and overall coherence be ensured and at the same time the pluralism and diversity of teaching and learning in the area beyond Threshold be taken into consideration and encouraged?"

What are the issues that we have had to tackle which are of relevance to the discussions of this conference?

First of all, we had to come up with objectives defined in such a way that they provided a much greater degree of guidance for teaching content than the present programme does, while leaving enough room for variations in implementation with different languages and/or different groups of learners. We have opted for the model of specification proposed by Van Ek in 1987, in which model there are the three well-known basic components of "tasks", "content" and "quality". As I argued in my paper at the previous new-style international workshop of the Council of Europe at Rolduc/Kerkrade (see Van Els 1990), a description of what people should be able to do in verbal communication ("tasks"), of what functions and notions they can handle linguistically and sociolinguistically ("content"), and of how well they can perform the communicative tasks of the objectives ("quality"), has every potential of achieving the right kind of compromise. It provides the required degree of guidance on the one hand, but leaves enough room for individual specifications on the other.

The objectives that we have defined for each of the four skills (see Fig.1) all specify the two components of "tasks" and "language material" (Van Ek's "content"). In addition, the objectives for the productive skills also specify the third component of "quality".

	READING	WRITING	LISTENING	SPEAKING
TASKS	derive essence from text, etc.	ask for and give info, etc.	derive essence from text, etc. etc.	ask for and give info,
CONTENT	(themes)	(themes)	(themes)	(themes)
	(ling. means) etc.	(ling. means) etc.	(ling. means) etc.	(ling. means) etc.
QUALITY	(---)	(correct- ness, fluency)	(---)	(correct- ness, fluency)

Figure 1: "Objectives for the new HAVO/VWO Examinations"

We have found that the objectives defined in this way can serve both all five languages and the two school-types. What differences may exist between languages at one and the same particular level is made explicit and exemplified in a supplementary comment. Specification of purely linguistic elements are confined to this supplementary comment.

A second point in this connection is that as Van Ek demonstrates, the three components of "tasks", "content" and "quality" leave a great deal of manoeuvre for quantitative and/or qualitative variation and, thus, for distinguishing any number of levels. For example, from one level to the other the number of tasks defined may be expanded, but variation may also be achieved by specifying different kinds of tasks. In a similar way, one can vary content - quantitatively and qualitatively - in terms of functions and notions. Or again, one can use combinations of task variation, content variation, and quality variation in order to distinguish between levels. We have used all three approaches in the project under discussion.

For each of the four skills we have formulated five distinct levels, thus creating a grid of objectives in which each of the five languages in either of the two school-types can be allocated the appropriate slots. Thus, for example, a distinction that everyone has always felt there to be between the requirements for English and French, but which is not specified in examination objectives, is now made explicit in our proposals for VWO in the following way: Whereas the objectives to be achieved for English are those of level four of the grid in all four skills, for French we propose level four for listening and reading, and level three for speaking and writing (see Fig.2). Different requirements for other languages are specified by other combinations of levels in the four skills.

	READING	WRITING	LISTENING	SPEAKING
Level 5	(---)	(---)	(---)	(---)
Level 4	E,F,G,S	E	E,F,G	E,G
Level 3		F,G,S	S	F
Level 2	R		R	R,S
Level 1		R		

Figure 2: Proposed VWO-Levels:

English (E), French (F), German (G), Russian (R), and Spanish (S)

An important feature of this way of distinguishing between languages, however, should be emphasised. If there is a difference in level between two languages, the distinction may take various shapes and is not necessarily restricted to a uniform lowering of level(s) for all four skills.

Another issue that we have had to resolve was what level of competence the top and the bottom levels of the grid were to represent. In any frame of reference, be it a national one - possibly constructed only for a particular sector of the educational system - or an international one, decisions as to the top and bottom limits of the system are vital. Both the lowest and the highest levels that we have decided upon for our objectives for Upper General Secondary are related to the Dutch educational context. The lowest level is that defined for Lower General Secondary Education, i.e. the school-type known as MAVO. The highest level is the level that one may postulate for specialist language studies in higher education ("near native"), which is probably also the highest level for which objectives may be formulated in Dutch education. Below the bottom level of the grid, at least two more levels may be distinguished in the Dutch system, viz. the level defined in the "core curriculum" of the system of "Basic Education for All" which we are on the point of introducing in our country, and the level achieved - for English only - in Primary Education. The whole system, thus, has a minimum of seven levels, six of which have a function in secondary education.

Another interesting and fairly important issue is how one decides upon the range for each of these levels, i.e. how much content there is to be mastered at each level, or - to put it another way - what distance pupils have to cover between the levels. There isn't space to discuss this issue fully here. One thing I can say is that I have changed my previous position (Van Els 1989) that each level should constitute the same learning load for the pupils. In our project we have tried to define levels in such a way that they each represent a perfectly

distinct chunk of language competence - distinct, that is, from both the preceding and the following level. The assumption is definitely not that each of the five levels distinguished in the grid represents the same portion of the total learning time required to master the full competence described in the objectives.

2. Differentiation in a Framework

The second main point that I think may be of relevance, is related to Coste's question: "What amount of differentiation has to be accounted for beyond Threshold level?" and in how far can such differentiation be accommodated in a new general frame of reference, i.e. in a European Framework? Let me briefly mention the features of our project that relate to these questions.

In the last few years it has regularly been suggested in our country that the foreign language requirements of higher education have been changing in at least one particular sense. The need for the traditional balanced programme - consisting of the four skills and literature - has been losing its general applicability, it is said. A need has been detected for so-called "partial qualifications", and therefore we were also asked to go into the ins and outs of introducing a set, or system, of partial examinations. We have come to the conclusion, as I indicated before (see Van Els 1991), that the need for differentiation that underlies the suggestion to create partial examinations is not the kind of need for differentiation that one finds in the sector "Languages for Specific Purposes" (LSP). In Upper General Secondary Education in our country the kind of differentiation that people want to be offered has to do with reductions from the full - but, still general and not specialised - programme, in the sense that one wants to take, for example, a language less its literature component, or just the reading comprehension component of it, or only the oral skills. Such reduced sets can easily be offered in the framework of objectives that we have developed in our project.

One or two further remarks may be called for with respect to the other aspect of the differentiation problem, i.e. in how far a system of objectives such as we propose can also accommodate the need for "Languages for Specific Purposes" (LSP). In our proposals we deal with the different demands of the university-preparatory VWO and the more or less vocationally-oriented HAVO in the way that I have indicated: the terms in which the objectives are formulated are general enough to cover both VWO and HAVO needs. The structure of the programme provides for specific comments in a separate supplementary section. Much wider and more essential differences than those between VWO and HAVO could, of course, be dealt with in a similar way. I think I would prefer such an approach, - in which the formulation of objectives in terms of "tasks", "content" and "quality" would cover both all school-types and languages served by the framework, and in which relevant differences are specified in supplementary comments - to an approach in which variations between LSP and non-LSP, and between different specific purposes, would be introduced into the main objectives section itself.

3. Conclusion

I hope I have been able to indicate some ways in which the findings of our project may be of help in constructing a European Framework. Does that mean that we have solved all the problems that lie ahead on the path to a European Framework, once we Europeans have decided that that is what we want to construct? No, of course not. An immense problem, for example, is how one is to set about getting started on the construction process. As I see it, there are basically two approaches to this. One is to get together with a number of people - experts, I presume - and draw up a well-balanced and consistent and transparent system of objectives, in a void more or less, unrelated to any of the systems already in existence. The other is first to make an inventory and an analysis of all the existing systems for which the European Framework is being developed, and then to construct a framework that fits all, or most, or a majority, of the existing systems. The latter approach may be more time-consuming and is definitely more cumbersome, but in the end it may well be more fruitful, because its outcome is likely to be much more realistic.

The final remarks that I would like to add have to do with the question of what consequences the creation of a European Framework might have for the work that we in the Netherlands have been doing. Would we have to discard, partly or fully, our own product and, also, would we be prepared to do that? The answer to these questions, naturally, very much would depend on which of the two approaches that I have just depicted lay at the basis of the Framework. And, of course, there will never be any question of forcing such a Framework onto any of the countries involved. Moreover, whichever way such a Framework is developed, its implementation can never be anything other than gradual, in small steps. For a long time, as I see it, a European Framework - once completed - will be there for national systems to be mirrored against and to be gradually adapted to. Also, it will take many years of adaptations and revisions before a more or less definite shape will have been achieved for the Framework. It is our conviction in our project that recursiveness is an essential characteristic of the developmental process towards a common framework of objectives for foreign languages, even if - or rather, particularly when - the objectives are formulated along the lines suggested by the Council of Europe principles.

REFERENCES

van Ek, Jan A., Objectives for Foreign Language Learning, Volume II: Levels, Strasbourg (Council of Europe), 1987

van Els, Theo J.M., "An Autonomous Structure of Foreign Language Teaching Objectives in the Netherlands", in: Reinhold Freudenstein (ed.), Multilingual Education through Compact Courses, Tübingen (Gunter Narr Verlag), 1989, 29-52

van Els, Theo, "Formulation of Objectives for Modern Language Learning in Upper Secondary Education", in: Gé Stoks (ed.), Report on Workshop 1A: "Curriculum Development for Modern Languages in Upper Secondary, General, Technical and Vocational Education 15/16-18/19", Enschede (SLO), 1991, 21-28

APPENDIX: SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In Upper Secondary General two school-types are distinguished, viz. HAVO
and VWO, the former taking five years (ages 12-17) and the latter six (12-
18). Most students from both types of school enrol in one type or another
of higher education after passing final examinations, VWO being basically
university-preparatory and HAVO vocationally- /professionally-oriented. In
the first phase of both types of secondary school, English, French and
German are obligatory subjects. In the second phase, all pupils continue
instruction in at least one foreign language, which is then one of their
final examination subjects. Nearly all pupils take English, about 50% takes
German, and about one third French.

The examinations are partly organized by the central educational
authorities, partly by the schools themselves. There is a central multiple-
choice reading comprehension test, and the other skills (plus literature)
are examined in the schools. The exam programme is the responsibility of
the central authorities. They formulate the objectives to be achieved and
decide upon the various regulations. However, the present programme and
regulations are not very extensive and they are phrased in very global,
vague and non-specific terms.

The present programme has been in operation since the early seventies.
Basically there are two kinds of reasons why the Minister of Education has
decided to commission a revision of the examinations. The first relates to
problems that have manifested themselves in the course of time, mainly
caused by the vagueness of the description of the programme. Thus, the text
of the programme does not specify level distinctions between languages nor,
for that matter, between HAVO and VWO, even if everybody knows that such
distinctions exist in practice. The second group of reasons has to do with
changing demands for foreign languages in Dutch society. For example, the
relative importance of the various skills is said to have changed and a
need has been expressed for so-called "partial qualifications.

The committee set up by the Minister of Education began its work in the
first half of 1990. In Spring 1992 it will publish specifications for a
revised examination programme. If everything goes well, the new
examinations may be operative as from the school-year 1995-1996.

3.   THE OPEN SYLLABUS AND PROBLEMS OF TESTING

Tony Fitzpatrick

I would like to look at the question of the definition of a "Stage 3" level
from the point of view of an organisation which has been concerned with the
definition of objectives and corresponding levels of attainment in the
field of foreign language teaching / learning to adults in continuing and
further education. In contrast to the work of the Council of Europe, which
dropped the concept of "credit" in a unit credit system at the time of the
CDCC symposium in 1977, it has been the endeavour of our organisation to
link the specification of objectives to clearly defined performance
criteria from the outset.

The unit-credit system of the International Certificate Conference was first established under the aegis of the German Adult Education Association in 1969 in order to attempt to define meaningful steps on the road towards a general overall communicative competence in foreign language mastery. Initially, the "Certificate" level, now known as Stage 2, was defined in 1969 and the overall objective was formulated as follows:

"The learner should acquire a degree of proficiency in oral and written skills in dealing with everyday language which will enable him to effectively master any important situations he might encounter during the course of a stay abroad. He should be in a position to understand and participate in conversation concerning topics from everyday life at normal speed. He should also be able to formulate simple facts (orally and in writing) <u>within the framework of the given language material</u> in such a way that communication is not impaired." (Underlining mine)

One of the essential elements of the early learning objectives - and this is equally true of the Stage 1 or "Grundbaustein" specifications, defined within the context of the multi-media course "Follow Me" as the **Threshold Level in English for German learners of English** - was that the amount of material to be mastered by learners should be limited and clearly defined. A clear definition of content, it was felt, would help learners to gain an overview of the amount of learning effort which needed to be invested to achieve the specified goal. In addition, the specifications could form the basis for the "contract" between teacher and learner and between examining board and candidate.

Between teacher and learner because content and level of competence were clearly defined, and discussion of the content could lead either to acceptance of the specifications as the basis for a learning programme, or to modifications tailored to the needs of a particular individual or group of individuals. A contract between examining board and candidate in that the board promises the candidate that only the specified language content would form part of the material to be tested.

The advantages of such an approach are evident: learning content is clearly defined and appears compact and attainable within a realistic time scale. There is no doubt that the establishment of the unit-credit system led to positive developments in the production of teaching / learning materials as well as to a consensus in terms of what elements should be given priority in teaching / learning programmes. However, critics pointed out that learners were often lulled into a false sense of security. They had few problems functioning linguistically within the tightly controlled framework of the fixed syllabus, but experienced difficulties when performing outside it.

It became clear to those responsible for syllabus design in the unit credit system that any further development in specifications for general language acquisition would have to take into account the need for learners to practise and acquire strategies which would help them to become more independent and effective in their use of the target language. And this was reflected in the definition of the global objective, which reads as follows:

"The overall objective of Stage 3 courses is that learners should be able to use the foreign language independently and effectively for their own purposes. This means that they should be able to effectively master any situations of some importance to them which they might encounter during the course of a short or an extended stay abroad as well as those which might require the use of the foreign language in their own country."

The ability to effectively master a situation implies the ability to use the foreign language with a degree of fluency and accuracy appropriate to that situation, to use it in accordance with the conventions governing the choice of language-forms in that situation, taking into account the various roles of the participants and their communicative goals, the degree of formality or informality involved, the external conditions of the situation such as locality, time, etc., and to use it with sufficient awareness of the cultural context in which the foreign language is used by native speakers of that language. The effective mastery of a situation may also require the development of social skills which are only partly or indirectly related to language-use but which may be developed in conjunction with language skills.

The ability to use the foreign language not only effectively but also independently and for their own purpose means that, in spite of limitations on their knowledge and skills, the learners are capable of dealing not only with the everyday situations and with the topics of general interest that general courses will usually focus upon, but also with those other situations and topics that may be of particular interest to themselves personally, **to the exclusion of those professional or otherwise specific situations and topics that require specialised training** even for a native speaker of the foreign language. The acquisition of this independence from a fixed syllabus presupposes the development of study skills (the use of dictionaries and other reference works, the use of models and informants, of sources of information generally, etc.), and of textual skills (knowing how to deal with texts - structuring, highlighting, implying; segmenting, inferring from context, distinguishing main information from secondary information, fact from comment etc.).

It can be seen that the catalogue of expectations is quite comprehensive, and it is clear that the objectives can only be partially achieved in the short time available in the field of adult and continuing education. Nevertheless, the objectives formulated in the specifications clearly indicate the main thrust of courses at this level, and the emphases are different to those of courses lower down the level of progression defined at Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Performance levels demonstrated by candidates at Certificate level examinations have proved adequate within the terms of reference of the Certificate specifications, but they have also served to illustrate the shortcomings of the system. On the road towards greater fluency and accuracy, learners need to be able to master the more complex interplay of language demanded in small group or public discussion. A better understanding of the structuring of texts - both written and spoken - is required if learners are to act more independently and effectively in the foreign language. And this is true of all learners at this level, no matter what their private or professional ambitions are with regard to the foreign language. That is why we feel that there is still an area of common ground to be covered in courses above Certificate and Threshold level which will

lead learners to the greater mastery required. This concerns the "vertical" axis referred to by Daniel Coste.

In those cases where professional or occupational aims can be more clearly defined with reference to the foreign language, we have attempted to define common cores of language use relevant to particular spheres of working life: e.g. **English for Business Purposes, English for Technical Purposes, English for the Hotel and Catering Industry, Le français à usage professionnel**. These specifications are based upon the Certificate or Stage 1 syllabus, and represent what Daniel Coste refers to as "horizontal developments".

In attempting to establish an instrument to test learners' competence at "Stage 3" level, we were faced with a rather difficult task. On the one hand, we had emphasised the importance of learner-led decisions with regard to content in courses, so it was virtually impossible to predict exactly what areas of vocabulary or which topic areas had been covered in detail beyond those defined at Certificate level. As was shown above, the specifications for Stage 3 refer more to strategies for language acquisition (word formation, reading strategies, use of resource materials, but also further refinement of knowledge of the formal system) than to finite lists of words and vocabulary based upon the inventories of topics and speech intentions given in the Certificate syllabus. On the other hand, with the Stage 3 specifications we hoped to give learners and teachers a useful instrument for the further planning of the learning process beyond Certificate / Threshold level. Experience had shown that this focussing on the essentials of language learning at lower levels had led to more effective and satisfying language learning for the vast majority of learners, and that the lack of guidance for courses beyond Certificate / Threshold level had led to a certain amount of confusion, disorientation and dissatisfaction. Thus, any tests or examination had to attempt to fulfil two objectives. First, to help to define the direction learning should be taking by providing exemplary materials which should be able to be mastered at this stage, and second, by leading to more open forms of evaluation, allowing individuals to demonstrate their competence in areas chosen by themselves.

The major problem with the second requirement was that it seems at first sight to break with the tradition of standardised test forms and items which have become the hallmark of the ICC examinations up to Certificate level. However, it proved possible in the pilot phase to incorporate elements into the oral examination which enabled the candidates to illustrate knowledge and competence in their chosen areas of specialisation. Here, topic and presentation form were chosen by candidates in advance and prepared outside the framework of the examination. The task of the examiners in this section consisted of engaging the candidate in an informed discussion about the chosen topic. The training of examiners in scoring candidates' performance in this more open form of test has proved to be essential. Even experienced examiners who are completely familiar with the scoring procedures of Stage 1 and Certificate examinations needed to be briefed carefully. By balancing this section with more conventional subtests provided from "Certificate"-type items, overall performance criteria were established which led to quite satisfactory cross-rater reliability.

The major piloting phase for the new Stage 3 examinations took place from October 1989 to February 1991, when potential ERASMUS candidates in France,

Germany, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom attempted a modified version of the examination in English, French or Spanish.

An evaluation of the pilot phase by candidates and teachers alike seems to indicate that, at least for this target group, the examination provides a useful tool for establishing whether or not the test group had reached a sufficient level of competence in the foreign language for them to be able to participate actively in and profit from an extended period of study in an institution of higher education in the country where the target language is used as the medium of instruction. For a more general public, a Stage 3 examination could prove another useful stepping stone towards increased mastery of the foreign language. A modified verion of the ERASMUS version of the Stage 3 examination has been piloted extensively in France and Germany at training centres of adult education.

For us, the question of "verticality" or "horizontality" does not pose itself. Both are needed. Beyond the Threshold level as we define it, there is a need for a more complete mastery of general language skills than is present in candidates presenting themselves for examination at that level. There is also quite clearly a need for extending "horizontally" learners' proficiency in specific subject areas linked to certain professions or occupations. In both cases there are areas of common ground in terms of linguistic knowledge and language learning strategies to be acquired as well as the marriage of content knowledge and linguistic skill. The more the learner progresses along the road of competence in the foreign language, the more difficult it is to distinguish between the purely language learning element and the acquisition of communication skills necessary to all learning and human interaction.

4. THE MULTILINGUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN CERTIFICATE PROJECT

Arturio Tosi, Coordinator of the Project

The European Certificate Project, was set up over two years ago by several University Departments that had in common the expertise of teaching and testing their national language as a foreign language. In this short paper, what I shall report is the joint achievements of several national teams.

It is important to realise the practical purpose of our multilingual initiative: it neither originated from a theoretical interest to explore the zone of the Post-threshold level (change or continuity?) nor was it an attempt to develop a multilingual framework for any particular learning programme or any specific educational context.

Rather, our Project aimed to devise a credit-system for the evaluation of foreign language performance that could be applied to all European languages: and this is why it was decided that the common framework could best be achieved through the joint efforts of several national teams briefed to reconcile different traditions rather than to introduce a totally new superstructure.

This aspiration of researching and developing a multilingual framework through the work of a multinational Project should be appreciated with its assets and constraints. Let me identify three dimensions of our experience: 1) the academic, 2) the collaborative, and 3) the political, and let me give you some examples.

A typical **academic challenge** for our Project was to identify the levels and to describe the content of the whole range of foreign language proficiency within a single modular structure. Thus, we were concerned not only with the zone immediately beyond the Threshold level, but with the whole spectrum from the lowest boundary of survival skills to the highest boundary of near-native performance.

Like many other programmes we felt that the bottom level could be located between the zero-beginner point and the survival experience. But what can be realistically achieved and measured at the top level? Certainly not native competence; what about bilingualism? But what is bilingualism in Europe? In our experience the area of top level of performance was far more controversial than the Post-threshold, but we found that some useful criteria could be drawn from the most recent debate about the reality and fallacy of bilingual competence.

A different challenge concerned the **collaborative nature** of our multilingual initiative, in particular the criteria upon which to establish the notion of equivalent performance across the different languages. The equivalence could be based neither on arbitrary comparisons between the national qualifications already operational in different countries, nor on the quantification of the size of vocabulary or mastery of structures across languages.

The equivalence needed to involve standards of language use, not knowledge of the language system; but how to agree a unified system to measure communication? And should this involve direct testing and authentic materials, or the indirect evaluation of specific properties underlying language competence? And what should be the test format and the nature of the questions? Or how should we resolve the "objective versus subjective" argument? Consensus was not achieved without much discussion. We all know that national traditions are hardly in agreement about the social function of educational assessment, let alone the methods and procedures of testing language as an individual and holistic experience.

A different challenge, of **political nature** this time, concerned the status of our tests and indeed the currency of our independent certifications in Europe as well as outside. This is not a new issue in Council of Europe language conferences and many of you must have already questioned who is going to determine the recognition of future qualifications of foreign language proficiency in Europe? National ministries, or a supranational agency that will attach value to certifications according to standards of professional quality? Perhaps the second is more desirable, as we know that the quality of tests is directly proportional to the facilities for comparison and the amount of competition available.

But is this a realistic and natural development in Europe? Or does it need to be politically promoted in the agenda of our supranational institutions, if Europe is really interested in unblocking the state monopoly, in some countries, and the monopolies of private and exclusive contracts in other countries?

To go back to the content of our multilingual framework, it can be visually represented by a box: the four skills listed vertically, with the different levels of competence horizontally , ranging from what I have already called "survival" up to the "bilingual", with, in between them, a low intermediate level, called "operational" and an upper intermediate called "autonomy".

These are the four levels that candidates will enter for when they have developed equal standards in all four skills. We call these Level 1, Level 3, Level 5, and Level 7. If, instead, candidates have achieved "uneven" standards of skills in the target language, they can choose one of four defined "uneven" combinations which are described as Level 2, Level 4 and Level 6. This modularisation permits the four fundamental skills (either spoken versus written language, or receptive versus productive abilities) to be tested in pairs at two different levels, provided that these levels are adjoining.

Our syllabus defines further the content of our multilingual framework and it provides the detailed specification of the learning objectives of our testing programme. The general objectives of the four skills - like the descriptors of content and performance in communicative tasks, functions and situations - vary from level to level, but are the same for all languages. In contrast, the extent of grammatical knowledge required, the range of vocabulary and the extralinguistic aspects affecting performance, are suggested rather than stipulated, as they vary from language to language.

There are other important parameters that clarify the philosophy behind our Project and the criteria behind the construction of this framework.

1) First, the multilingual credit-system we have devised is expected to be made available to three learner sectors: a) pupils at the end of upper-secondary schools, b) university students and c) adults.

2) Second, we emphasise that our programme tests foreign language proficiency: that is to say the proficiency in a non-native language of any learner whose competence in the mother tongue is not lower than that in their non-native language. In other words, we do not wish our tests to be used to assess native language competence, or to evaluate progress in unguided second language acquisition by immigrant populations.

3) Third, we acknowledge that the more sophisticated the ability to use a language, with high standards of literacy, the more this involves cognitive operations rather than basic communicative skills. Thus we expect a minimum standard of general education and literacy in the mother tongue from candidates attempting the so-called bilingual level of our tests in the foreign language.

   Indeed, we feel that it needs to be spelt out that the highest level of foreign language proficiency may not be appropriate to some native speakers, particularly those who have not had the opportunity to achieve an equivalent standard of literacy and general education in their native language. We do suggest that this bilingual level should be appropriate either to students who have been educated in two academic languages or to those adults who can function bilingually in their profession or occupation.

4) Four, the target language that we test is not for any specific academic or professional purpose even at the bilingual level; it is always the language of everyday use. Thus, between the top bilingual level and the bottom level of survival, the two intermediate levels have been identified as equidistantly as possible from the bottom and top level and from each other.

5) The last important parameter concerns the pertinence of our framework. We hope to provide a flexible multilingual programme equally relevant to the three sectors of learners I have mentioned (school leavers, university students and adults).

But our tests have not been devised with any specific learning programme in mind, nor do they attempt to stipulate standards required by any national system of education or any international or multinational agency.

This, of course, is quite a different approach from that adopted by any framework which is concerned with a teaching syllabus rather than a testing syllabus. In those programmes, the reference to a particular learning context can be as specific as to indicate the number of hours required from learners to achieve each level. We felt that this specification, if appropriate for a teaching syllabus, could be misleading in a testing programme available to learners experiencing diverse educational opportunities and, of course, coming from very different linguistic backgrounds.

A final point that is not often made is that a multilingual framework could be helpful to promote the less frequently taught foreign languages of Europe. At present the teaching of these languages is negatively affected by the limited currency of their qualifications. Their inclusion in a system of multilingual testing and certification could greatly promote the understanding and the use of their qualifications abroad.

We have completed the pre-testing on time for our schedule, and we now intend to pilot the first examination session next summer, and to implement the full multilingual service in 1993. It is the general opinion of everyone working in the Project that if it does not prove possible to keep to this schedule, the reasons are more likely to be political rather than academic. This is of some consolation to the research teams, because in that case, the academic experience will not be completely lost.

5.   CURRICULUM RENEWAL AT THE INSTITUTO CERVANTES

Ernesto Martin-Peris, Instituto Cervantes

Tony Fitzpatrick mentioned that the ICC was founded in 1969. Well, we were created in March 1991 so I don't have very much to tell you about concrete realisations, I'm going to talk more about projects, orientations, guidelines and intentions. I should perhaps add that I myself only took office last Monday, so I am not in a position to present many results!

I intend to reflect on what has been said in the previous presentations and try and relate that to these intentions of the team currently directing the development of the Instituto Cervantes.

In April 1989, the Spanish State launched two important actions to promote the learning of Spanish around the world. One of them was the creation of the Instituto Cervantes, and the other was the creation of the Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE). The Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera is a project of the Ministry of Education; the Ministry organise the examinations and the University of Salamanca is responsible for the content and procedures in them.

As an institution, the Instituto Cervantes is starting from zero, which has the advantage that we are not bound by any regulations or constraints arising from decisions made by previous directors; we are free to act as we think we have to act.

There are, in fact, about 40 schools around the world which up till now have belonged to different Spanish ministries and which have been entrusted to us. My main duties as Academic Director will be the curriculum renewal and the teacher recruitment and training for these schools, plus the LINGUA Bureau in Spain. By curriculum renewal, I am consciously using the term used by Clark in his article on curriculum development because I subscribe very much to what he stated there (Clark 1987).

We have not only inherited a number of schools around the world, but also the work of the interministerial commission, the joint working team of the ministries engaged in the project of the Instituto Cervantes, which have elaborated some documents as a basis for the future work of the institute. The two main documents are firstly the definition of the general aims of the Instituto Cervantes and the definition of four levels of proficiency in the curriculum of the institute.

The general objectives of the Instituto Cervantes were stated in terms of language use for communication purposes; language learning as a means of interprofessional and intercultural mutual understanding; sociocultural awareness; linguistic awareness, and learner development, autonomy and training. We are supposed to develop and implement our curriculum following those guidelines.

The other document concerns the definition of four levels of attainment within a common core. The first of those four levels was thought of as more or less equivalent to "Nivel Umbral", which is the Spanish version of Threshold Level, written by Peter Slater. The other three levels were stated in terms of general proficiency, especially in the abilities of the students in the four classic skills. The four levels were intended to be homogeneous across the system.

This was a document which we inherited and which we intend to start working with, and our first task is to make an adaptation of the common core curriculum to the different geographical, cultural areas. We think that this general curriculum needs an adaptation, involving the teachers in the process of establishing, grading and sequencing contents. In this task we hope to get inspiration from the work done in the Spanish Ministry of Education concerning the teaching of modern languages. They have developed

---

Clark, J.L. 1987: "Curriculum Renewal in School Foreign Language Learning" Oxford University Press, Oxford.

a new basic curriculum design, and if I may explain briefly to you how it is devised, you will get an idea of how we intend to develop and implement our curriculum in the Instituto Cervantes.

The Spanish Ministry of Education considers that there must be three "General levels of concretisation", as they call them:

- They have published the first "General level of concretisation", which is not defined in terms of sequence but which is rather defined in terms of three so-called "blocks". The first block contains what they call "Facts and concepts" including all the linguistic components of learning a language. The second block is called "Procedures" and relates to abilities and procedures in using a language; the third block is what they call "Attitudes, values and norms" which it is desirable to develop in students learning a language. This first level of concretisation should be the general common core.

- The schools operating the common core should make an adaptation of it to the second level of concretisation which establishes the programme of the school.

- Then, the learner group, the student and teachers all together, create the third level of concretisation, - making a personal curriculum, a more individualised curriculum.

This model implies, of course, a great deal of involvement on the part of the teaching force and the users - the students.

So, getting some inspiration from this kind of approach, we will try to develop and adapt our curriculum to the different situations around the world where Spanish is learnt by young and adult learners.

Within this scheme, differentiation is an important concept which should be taken into account through the negotiation of common content and individual content. By common content I mean the content which will be followed by schools and learners in a particular geographical, cultural area (the second level of concretisation); by individual content I mean the classroom practice where students and teacher can negotiate content (the third level of concretisation).

Learner autonomy is a central concept for differentiation in the curriculum and I see a possibility of organising content at upper levels around modules, as has been proposed by Daniel Coste. From the very beginning we were very concerned with this concept of differentiation and individualisation, as I explained when talking about the negotiation of common content and individual content above, and an implementation along these lines should lead to a curriculum where there should be enough room for the following concepts:

- the selection of thematic areas around which learning will take place;

- the choice of a range of personal learning paths;

- the choice and sequencing of learning tasks within the learning group;

- the decisions concerning organisational aspects of the learning experience as a response to the individual and social learning needs.

124

All of this within a common core curriculum and its implementation and supplementation.

Those characteristics of our intended curriculum arose from our conviction and belief in the fact that along with the communicative needs which can be pre-defined, each member of each learning group comes to their classes with a particular learning profile, a particular set of learning needs, and it is primarily those learning needs which we want to meet in order to give the right response to this differentiated demand.

I must admit that we have been more concerned with learning needs and learning paths than with the certification of proficiency. However, I think it is possible to relate both our projects to this European Framework that has been proposed, since we are ready to explore ways of co-operating. But I must insist that these projects were thought of in terms of objectives, content and methodology, and not so much in terms of certification. It is when we come to talk about certification that, for me, a question mark arises.

So to end my presentation, I would like to pose three questions, which I would stress arise from my enthusiasm and not from a desire to play devil's advocate, but I should also add that that enthusiasm has been threatened by the shadow of some doubts concerning its feasibility.

1. In how far is it possible to have the same diversity in certification as it is desirable to have it in objectives and content? Will it be feasible to reach such a horizontally diversified certification system?

    Wouldn't it be more practical to have a unified certification system for general language skills and knowledge, plus as many certificates for specific purposes as are necessary, each one with different levels of proficiency?

2. Where do we stop creating modules? How many areas of specific knowledge in the terms Daniel Coste has discussed can we foresee?

3. With what criteria do we guarantee coherence in the definition of modules across systems and institutions?

THE THRESHOLD LEVEL 1990

Jan A. van Ek

The Threshold Level was first published by the Council of Europe in 1975. It presented a model for the description of language learning objectives in terms of communicative ability and it exemplified the application of this model in the form of a basic objective for adult learners of English. Since then it has been followed by versions for some dozen other European languages as well as for different target groups. The various threshold levels have been influential in promoting a shift of emphasis from content-oriented language learning and teaching to more directly communicatively oriented practice. This was because they provided a basis for the development of communicative language learning programmes that was more concrete, more consistent and more comprehensive than what had previously been available. At the same time, the original Threshold Level was no more than a first attempt; it was meant to be subjected to pilot experimentation and case studies designed with a view to - as John Trim put it in the Foreword - "testing the appropriateness and feasibility of the proposed objective in a variety of educational settings and under a variety of conditions". "Following this", he points out, "the specification will be revised" and "pending that finalisation, the specification is provisional in character".

Since then, tens of thousands of copies have found their way across the world, and this "provisional" document has been widely used and sometimes misused. Mostly, however, it has been used as it was meant to be, as a model and an example to be freely adapted to the diverse needs and circumstances of individual target groups, whilst preserving its essential features. These features are those that characterize it as a specification of what was supposed to constitute the ability to communicate in a foreign language at a certain level. This ability was conceived as skill in functioning appropriately in a range of situations in which the learner was likely to need to use the foreign language. The Threshold Level, accordingly, set out to list these situations, to indicate what learners might be expected to be able to do in them, and to analyse the skill involved in terms of the ability to fulfil certain language functions and to handle certain notions. Additionally, in order to give maximum guidance, each functional or notional item listed was provided with so-called exponents, i.e. actual language forms (words, structures, idioms) that would enable the learners to meet their requirements both effectively and economically. These exponents were never meant, however, as anything like a prescribed grammar plus vocabulary. They had the status of recommendations only and how the learner was to fulfil the various functions and to handle the various notions was, in principle, left entirely open. Yet, they did provide useful guidance with regard to such matters as the degree of formality/informality envisaged and they could be used as checklists. There, however, their role ended.

Publication of The Threshold Level inevitably invited much criticism, often, however, of a constructive nature. Particularly, it sparked off a lot of original and creative thinking about the nature of communicative ability and implications of this for educational practice. Thus, it soon became clear that although The Threshold Level might be said to represent the 'hard core' of communicative ability, several other, no less essential, components of this ability still remained to be specified.

Gradually, through numerous publications, related or unrelated to the Threshold Level, a better insight has been gained into the nature of communicative ability and ways have been found to usefully specify various components that had at first been neglected. Among the relevant publications I would like to mention particularly the Threshold Level specifications for other European languages that have been developed since the original description for English came out. In most of them their authors have sought to widen the scope of the specifications in a variety of ways. Also within the framework of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Programme was a study with contributions by several authors that was published in 1984 and bears the significant title of **"Towards a more comprehensive framework for the definition of language learning objectives.** " On the basis of these preliminary studies I myself was commissioned to organise the various elements into an overall model for the specification of language learning objectives, and to consider the nature and educational implications of each of its components. This resulted, in 1986, in the publication by the Council of Europe of a volume called **"Scope"** (Van Ek 1986), in which a wider range of components of communicative ability was distinguished than had explicitly been taken into account in the original Threshold Level.

The model of communicative ability presented in **"Scope"** distinguished six components of communicative ability:

1. **linguistic competence** or the ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances formed in accordance with the rules of the language;

2. **sociolinguistic competence** or awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms - the manner of expression - is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention etc., etc.;

3. **discourse competence** or the ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts. This includes the use of strategies in dealing with written texts and with texts produced orally through media, in taking part in dialogues, in letter-writing, etc.;

4. **strategic competence** or - as I prefer to call it now - compensatory competence. This is the ability to use strategies for dealing with communication problems caused by gaps in the language user's command of the language concerned;

5. **sociocultural competence** or awareness of the sociocultural context in which the language concerned is used by native speakers and of ways in which this context affects the choice and the communicative effect of particular language forms;

6. **social competence** or the ability to use social strategies appropriately to the achievement of one's communicative goals.

After the publication of **"Scope"**, the next step would, of course, have to be the application of the expanded model in new objectives. The opportunity for this came when, following the completion of Project 12 in 1987, the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe launched a further Project called **"Language Learning for European Citizenship"**. Among its priority themes was "revising the original Threshold level specification as applied to English to take account of developments in the

15 years since it was conceived as a first pioneering experiment". A number of institutions concerned with the promotion of English as a foreign language - the British Council, the University of Cambridge Examination Syndicate, and BBC English - expressed their readiness to actively support the work of revising and extending both The Threshold Level and the lower-level objective called Waystage, and John Trim and I were commissioned by the Council of Europe to undertake it. It was carried out in 1989 and 1990, and the result is now available to you in the form of two documents: The Threshold Level 1990 and Waystage 1990.

In what follows I shall focus on The Threshold Level, but most of what I say will be relevant to the new version of Waystage as well.

The Threshold Level 1990 is based on the model for the specification of communicative ability presented in "**Scope**" (Van Ek 1986), which means that all the components distinguished in it are taken into account. This does not mean, however, that each component is dealt with explicitly in separate chapters. In designing the new specification we wished to ensure the greatest possible relevance to the planning of learning and teaching processes and this led to some measure of reintegration of the components and, here and there, a different organisation in the various divisions of the specifications. What this comes down to is that, among other possible uses, we particularly consider the eventual use of our specifications as a basis for the design of course materials and other learning materials as well as for the effective use of such materials. One of the consequences of this regard for relevance is, for instance, the inclusion of a separate chapter called "dealing with texts: reading and listening". Strictly speaking, all the relevant information with regard to this ability could have been provided under the various components of the analytical model, with discourse competence as a particularly important one. However, it seemed to us to be more relevant to those who would have to design or to select texts and to plan the learning experiences enabling their exploitation, if we brought the most essential information together in a separate chapter and presented it in such a way as to provide some guidance concerning possibilities for interrelating the various components of our model with regard to the practice of the ability concerned.

In essence, the main elements of the original Threshold Level have been preserved in this new version. This means that here, as well, are to be found systematically arranged lists of situations, topics, language functions and general and specific notions. At the same time, these lists have been subjected to a thorough revision and - as we believe - considerably improved. The description of situations has been expanded and, apart from greater detail in the specifications, it now includes various sections recommended for particular sub-groups of the target population, for instance those who will take up temporary residence in a foreign country for professional purposes or as students, who have to send their children to school in that country, who have to cope with communication needs in work situations, etc., etc. The lists of language functions have been partly rearranged so as to increase their relevance and accessibility and new categories have been added, notably those of "structuring discourse" and of "communication repair". The lists of topics and topic related specific notions have been revised so as to take into account differences in estimated communication needs in the 1990's and in the 70's, and the inclusion of numerous open-ended items has reduced the arbitrariness of the selection of particular notions from a semantic field. A particularly striking innovation in this new version is the consistent incorporation of communicatively significant intonation patterns as a

result of which a more complete picture is presented of the linguistic competence needed by the learners. As further aids to the users surveys are added as appendices, one in the form of a systematic overview of the grammatical apparatus involved at Threshold Level - replacing the alphabetic index of the earlier edition and another one in the form of a similar overview of intonation patterns and pronunciation features.

The widened scope of The Threshold Level 1990 as compared to its predecessor is particularly apparent from the addition of a number of new chapters, notably those on "sociocultural competence", on "compensation strategies" and on "learning to learn". These chapters are not merely further additions to the earlier specification, they also introduce variations in the method of specifying the objective. So far the specifications had been entirely, or almost entirely, operational ones, i.e. specifications in terms of "what the learners can do in the foreign language". This approach may be carried over to a certain extent into the new areas of our description, but we soon come up against its limitations and then we have to choose between either a misleadingly incomplete description or a more satisfactory one but then along different lines. We found the latter approach necessary particularly in dealing with those areas where personal differences among individual learners or individual groups of learners made generally valid behavioural statements unrealistic or undesirable. One such area is that of "sociocultural competence" Unless one wants to get bogged down in endless and fruitless discussions of what exactly the learner should know of the history of a foreign country, of its geography, of manners and customs, of values and attitudes, and to what extent the learner should be able to ape native speakers of the foreign language, one has to choose formulations that on the one hand ensure attention being paid to relevant aspects and on the other hand leave the learner full scope for developing the competence that best suits him or her individually. This means that, in this part of our objective, we primarily try to ensure that in the course of their learning process the learners will be exposed to certain learning experiences and that we refrain from stipulating what a learner should do with these experiences and how they are supposed to affect his or her own attitudes and behaviour. It is only in this way, we feel, that the fullest scope may be provided for the accommodation of the large variety of emphases that will be required for different courses, for different types of learners, and even for individual learners. The adoption of such a liberal approach does not preclude the provision of concrete guidance to those responsible for the planning and organisation of learning and teaching. In our specification we have tried to identify and to list those aspects of foreign culture which might be considered the most relevant ones for the learners envisaged, and that in some detail. Our requirements, however, do not go beyond the expectation that "the learners should have some familiarity with" these aspects or that he or she "should be aware" of possible differences between their own culture and that of a foreign country.

It is somewhat similar with those components where the ability to use certain types of strategies is predominant. For instance, how to compensate in particular communication situations for lack of linguistic or other skills or, simply, for failure to recall what one had once mastered? Here we can go further in giving concrete guidance than in the area of sociocultural competence. In fact, it proved possible to draw up quite a comprehensive list of strategies and techniques that, we expect, will be generally recognised as both desirable and manageable for the large majority of threshold level learners. It is part of our objective, therefore, that learners should be capable of using a number of them and

these have been specified. At the same time there are likely to make different choices in accordance with their own personality. A further part of our objective is, therefore, that learners should have had ample exposure to communication situations that require them to cope in spite of inadequate resources so as to enable them to acquire their own sets of privileged devices.

The experience of learning for Threshold Level will affect the learners' personal development in various ways beyond the acquisition of a certain learning content. One of the ways in which it may substantially benefit them is in stimulating their awareness of the learning process itself and increasing their learning potential. We have thought this benefit sufficiently valuable to justify the inclusion of a separate "learning to learn" division into our objective. In the first place, it has now long been accepted by learning psychologists that insightful learning is likely to be more effective - and to produce more lasting effects - than learning without insight This greater effectiveness is partly due to the motivating power of knowing what one is doing and why one is doing it. Secondly, "learning to learn" is an invaluable aspect of preparing the learners for whatever further learning may be required by them. Like any general objective, The Threshold Level is no more than an assessment of what the average member of a particular target group is most likely to need at a given stage of his or her development. The actual needs of individual members of the target group are certain to differ to a greater or a lesser extent from those of the fictitious "average member". This means that in order to be adequately equipped for independent functioning in and with the foreign language, learners should have the insights and know-how for bridging the gap between their individual needs and those provided for in the specifications of the general objective.

Like the sociocultural component and, to a lesser extent, the compensation strategies, the aspect of learning-to-learn is specified at a fairly high level of generality in our new version, thus leaving scope for a range of concrete realisations by individual learners with possibly different learning styles.

As a result of the inclusion of these new components in the objective learners will find themselves better prepared for functioning independently and with self-confidence in the foreign language. The overall learning load will not be affected by the inclusion of these new components. What they will affect is the manner of presentation and the practice of the learning content.

So far, The Threshold Level 1990 is available only for English. The specifications of what I have referred to as 'the new components' are, however, to a large extent non-language specific. This means that most of them can be transferred to objectives for other languages as well with no more than only minimal adaptations.

Waystage 1990 has been derived from The Threshold Level by means of a process of selection. Its basis is the same model as that used for The Threshold Level, which means that this objective, too, covers the full range of components of communicative ability. It thus expresses our view that the acquisition of a wide range of communication strategies and the development of sensitivity to socioculturally determined features of language use, are not matters to be reserved for higher or advanced levels but that they should be integrated into language learning programmes from, in fact, the first lesson onwards.

131

What we have tried to describe and specify in The Threshold Level 1990 and in Waystage 1990 is communicative ability in the fullest sense in which our present insights allow us to do so. We hope that, like their predecessors, these two volumes may help to make language learning an even more rewarding undertaking than it has been before.

REFERENCES

Council of Europe: "Towards a more comprehensive framework for the definition of language learning objectives. " Council of Europe. 1984

Van Ek, J.A. "The Threshold Level", Council of Europe. 1975

Van Ek J.A. "Objectives for foreign language learning": Scope." Council of Europe. 1986

Van Ek J.A. "Objectives for foreign language learning": Levels." Council of Europe. 1987

Van Ek J.A. & Alexamnder L.G. "Waystage", Council of Europe. 1977

Van Ek J.A. & Trim J.L.M. "Threshold Level 1990" Council of Europe. 1991

Van Ek J.A. & Trim J.L.M. "Waystage 1990" Council of Europe. 1991

PHASE 3.

TOWARDS A LEARNER-CENTRED EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING
ACHIEVEMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSPARENCY AND COHERENCE IN APPROACHES TO CERTIFICATION

Brian Page, Educational Consultant

In this paper I will return to some of the points made in earlier ones and relate them to the next task. That task is to look at possible ways of comparing existing language qualifications and certificates in Europe so that they can be meaningful to institutions, employers, teachers and learners both within and between member states. We shall be making suggestions for the member states of the Council of Europe of course but we should remember that we may in fact create something that has eventual worldwide significance in the way that the work on threshold levels did. That gives us an added responsibility.

So far transparency and coherence have been dealt with in two contexts. First the context of language learning systems - that is, within the network of learner, teacher and institution in a member state. Second, in the context of international examinations - the sets of examinations like the Cambridge Certificate or the International Baccalaureat which have earned international renown and are worked towards in many different countries all over the world. The next task is to extend transparency and coherence to national examinations within an international framework.

In fact the two terms are closely interdependent.

Transparency means that everyone knows what is going on, coherence means they know why it is going on, that is, that there is a clear relationship between the parts. There are explicit objectives that arise from an agreed definition of needs. The activities in the classroom, or whatever the learning environment is, are clearly presented and have a rational connexion with the objectives. Teachers and learners therefore know what they are doing. Examiners and setters of tests know what they are doing. The examinations, tests or other evaluation instruments, clearly aim to assess what has been learnt and not something else. And the procedures - precisely how a learner's achievement is to be measured - are also equally explicit. The teachers and learners know how the performance is to be marked. The qualifications then arrived at, in certificates, reports or other forms, clearly show what has been done. Employers, educational establishments and others relying on them for information can see what the learner was capable of at the time of the assessment. No one can guarantee what a learner is capable of after having been assessed of course. So everything has to be clear and everything has to hang together. The clearer things are the more the inconsistencies become apparent and can be dealt with. Greater transparency leads to greater coherence.

All this seems common sense but is remarkably absent in most education systems or at least has been until recent times. Starting with needs, arriving at objectives, devising contents and methods appropriate to the objectives and eventually setting up evaluation systems which both appropriately assess the objectives and encourage suitable methodologies, that sort of system is recent and still by no means universal. That is why, in the old days, and in some places still now, it was examinations that provided both objectives and methodology since they were the only things that were explicit set down for teachers and learners to aim at. The rationale of the examinations was rarely apparent and even more rarely understood.

We have had examples from several quarters of how things have changed. Two major principles emerge. The Swiss "Points de Rencontre" were set up in order to allow institutions of higher education to know what they could build on. In a situation where 26 cantons produce 26 variations in language learning, one can see that the problem mentioned by Beat Vonarburg can easily arise. Receiving institutions cannot cope with the differentiated attainment of their incoming students; they therefore treat them virtually as "faux débutants" and give them some sort of accelerated elementary course to homogenize them. The students' previous learning is consequently undervalued and indeed often regarded as a hindrance rather than a help. Coherence and transparency therefore were needed for the benefit of receiving institutions.

The DELF and DALF system is similar but transnational - the aim is to produce qualifications that can be traded like a common currency across national frontiers. In such a situation transparency and coherence have to be consciously aimed at for the examinations to have any real validity.

The graded objectives schemes in the United Kingdom had, however, a different aim. It is one which in a European wide system of language objectives/descriptions would also be important. Graded objectives schemes were set up principally to encourage learners to go on learning. The tests were merely to provide certificates which would themselves be an encouragement to learners by showing them they had reached an objective, that they had learnt something useful. That is why we encouraged the growth of individual schemes. Groups of teachers and learners here and there devised their own syllabuses and tests for their own purpose and target populations. It was only later when the need was felt for some equivalence of these graded objectives between one group and another in the northern area that we began to try to set up a calibration system that would allow different schemes to be compared.

In a European set of levels then we must keep in sight both of these objectives: as well as devising a calibration system by which qualifications in member states can be related to each other we must also make sure the levels are of a sort that will provide encouragement for learners to start and to go on learning.

The difficulties in providing a common scale for existing qualifications are considerable. We shall be attempting to relate qualifications which often have no "Points de Rencontre". In some cases indeed they derive from examinations that we would consider hopelessly out of date and inappropriate. Brendan Carrol has detailed the characteristics of tests which lead to qualifications. At the risk of being repetitive I shall look at some of those again in the light of the task we have set ourselves.

The main differences lie in the degree to which objectives are defined and to what extent assessment is global or profiled.

At one extreme is the old school leaving examination awarded on a performance of a series of discrepant usually written tasks. The raw marks from each were added together and a global total arrived at on which the certificate - often in grades - was awarded. This system gave no information about the linguistic competence of the holder of the certificate. In the great majority of cases it was used as an indication of general ability. Your grade A or class 1 or mark 5 in French counted in just the same way as your similar mark in mathematics or history to show that you could be assumed to be a person of above average general ability.

At the other extreme are some modern examinations where objectives are closely defined by topic, skill, task, role, setting and even vocabulary list. Assessment in different skill areas is kept separate so that even if a final overall grade is given the series of marks from which it is derived is also recorded so that a profile of the holder's linguistic competence is provided. In this case your grade C in French is shown to be made up of quite widely different marks in the four skills. Indeed different people with the same overall grade C can have considerably differentiated language competencies revealed by their profile.

Most current examinations exist on a continuum between these two extremes. Their varying characteristics include:

Objectives:

- oral / written / multi-skill;
- vocational / general;
- syllabus defined by topics / skills / roles /settings / vocabulary;
- syllabus not or only partially defined.

Assessment:

- written / aural / oral / mixture;
- end of course / continuous /mixture;
- formal / informal / mixture;
- criterion referenced / norm referenced / mixture;
- centrally organised / teacher based/mixture;
- standardised / moderated / unmoderated;
- degree of concern with reliability and validity.

Certification:

- global arising from agglomeration of marks / judgments on different tests;
- profile arising from marks / judgments on groups of similar tasks;
- expressive or non expressive in other ways.

Problems that arise in comparing existing certification systems concern then differences in objectives and assessment. Even where objectives are similar there are differences in:

- vocabulary size and delicacy;
- grammatical complexity;
- appropriacy;
- cultural sensitivity.

There is another principle implicit in all this which should not be forgotten - the tendency of the evaluation of language learning to become itself an objective of that learning. We cannot get away from this. There has always been the argument that an examination should not dominate teaching but should arise from it. Of course, in an ideal world that is true, but in the pragmatic world we live in that is not what happens. At various points in their lives learners are at least if not more concerned with achieving a qualification as with learning a language for its own sake. Moreover, the expertise of teachers is frequently judged by their success in getting students through examinations. I do not know of anyone who is regarded as a good teacher if his or her learners regularly fail examinations.

The calibration system then will not only be the outcome of a variety of evaluations but will also have a backwash effect, an influence that reaches right back through the methodologies and contents to the objectives and eventually start to affect the needs themselves. This is not necessarily a bad thing provided the evaluation system at the end really does reflect the legitimate needs of learners and has a beneficial backwash effect on methodology. Indeed, in many instances, and recent events in the United Kingdom are a good example, changes for the better in examinations have been the only way forward for the wide dissemination of more enlightened teaching methods in the schools. Therefore we must be aware that any calibration system that is devised for Europe will not only allow qualifications to be mutually recognised; it will also have an effect eventually on the needs of the learner and through them on the whole business of language learning in the member states. It is a serious responsibility which we must recognise.

Another positive effect is the discouraging of qualifications derived from inappropriate examinations. Our examples could lead to considerable reform of some national examinations. Through a European set of levels we could have as much influence for good as the concept of Threshold level has had.

As far as transparency and coherence are concerned there is a final difficulty which we shall not be able to resolve. If the descriptions are too complicated they will not be transparent. But on the other hand, if the descriptions are not complicated enough they will not be coherent because they will be so general as to be susceptible of almost any interpretation.

I want to make two more points. This normative influence is unavoidable because the levels we create will carry the prestige of the Modern Languages Projects of the Council of Europe. But any normative influence is conservative, it tends to be static rather than dynamic, it tends to hinder further development. It is unfortunately frequently forgotten that the first duty of any syllabus writer or framer of a curriculum is to define the ways in which the syllabus or curriculum can be changed. All syllabuses and curricula should have a defined shelf life, a "sell by" date, they should be auto-destructive after a certain period. They should contain ways in which statements of principle can be revised and new ideas incorporated. Threshold level has just been revised. Any system we set up should have compulsory revision dates included in it. We must not deliver a set of tablets of stone which will at best obstruct and at worst crush further development.

My second final point is that we should deliberately set out to do something few qualifications systems do at the moment, that is to encourage the acquisition of the partial mastery of a language. What I mean is that we should encourage learners to acquire a reading knowledge and/or a listening comprehension skill even in the absence of production skills in speech and writing. We should work towards a time when a meeting like this will have less need of interpreters not because we can all speak three or four languages but because we can all understand them, and understand them well. It seems to me that this is probably the only way we can get our future citizens of Europe acquainted with several languages. All our European citizens should have an all round competence in at least one and preferably two of our languages. But they should then have a comprehension skill (either reading or listening or both) in two or three more.

In order to get that we have to reward partial competence and make it socially and academically respectable. I have for several years attempted

to interest educational authorities in the United Kingdom in the idea of teaching school learners to be able to operate two-language conversations. That is that a German and a Briton would converse by each speaking their mother tongue and understanding the other. I have had no success so far. There is it seems a convention that conversations should take place in only one language at a time. Here at this conference, I feel obliged to respond in French if I am addressed in French and similarly in English. It is time we started breaking that convention. I would encourage you here during these few days to try it. Practise two language conversations and start a revolution. There are then an enormous number of elements to be taken into consideration in our attempt to set up descriptions of language performance through which the many qualifications in the member states can find some equivalences.

A EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO: A POSSIBLE FORMAT

Rolf Schärer, Eurocentres Foundation, Zurich

The idea of systematically recording learning progress and achievement is neither new nor revolutionary. The know-how and the skills to do this exist to a large degree in the teaching profession and in learning institutions. The concepts and tools developed in the context of the Modern Languages Programme of the Council of Europe are now widely known and are having their impact in the language teaching world. Increased world wide interdependence and the vision of a common European House ask for a multilingual Europe and make effective communicative language skills for everyone more and more indispensable.

The time may have come for the actors in the language teaching field to pool their know-how, their skills and resources to create a tool for the individual learner enabling him or her to appreciate the value and benefits of life-long language learning and fully to participate in the process.

It is proposed that the development of a European Language Portfolio could significantly help to motivate learners, to increase the coherence and transparency of the language learning process and to value and reward achievement.

The European Language Portfolio, or Passport as it was then called, was presented by Eurocentres to the 2nd meeting of the Modern Languages Project Group in April 1990, with an example of how we then thought it might look (Doc. CC-LANG. (90) 6). The Project Group found the concept an ambitious and interesting one and asked us to develop the idea for consideration at this Symposium.

While the idea of a Portfolio seems to appeal strongly to people's imagination, many issues need to be resolved before even the feasibility of a European Language Portfolio is firmly established. As a first step in this process, a small working group met in London in November 90 to scrutinise the concept.

What follows are thoughts and suggestions, taking account of the work and insight of the group which met in London and of many suggestions received in the meantime. These suggestions might either be developed, amended or rejected - they are offered as a basis for discussion on the feasibility of a European Language Portfolio and, should a common will develop, to help establish what further steps need to be taken.

1. An Outline of a Proposed European Language Portfolio

The working group in London felt that a European Language Portfolio would probably need to have three distinct sections:

P O R T F O L I O

PASSPORT	M A P	DOSSIER

The names given might still need discussion and revision, yet they will be used as provisional labels in this document.

The Passport would record formal qualifications attained, hurdles passed on a specific date in a formal summative examination - or other achievements of similar status which allow students to enter higher education or a profession.

A high degree of objectivity of the tools used and in reporting results would be expected.

This section could form the basis for formal recognition of achievements across school systems and national borders provided agreement on a common framework of reference can be reached.

Key questions:

a) Credibility: Who would be authorised to make entries? What kind of entries?

b) Upon what basis can a common framework be established, within which examinations and diplomas can be compared? Are there "natural" levels which could be agreed to form the basis for a such a framework?

c) What information should be given (beyond pass/fail)?

The M a p (the maps) would enable learners and teachers to pin-point a position reached in the learning process at a given time, to reflect on the efforts made, to select future goals and to trace paths leading there.

The Map(s) in the language portfolio would serve similar functions to those served by geographical maps: it would provide an overview at all times; it would allow reference points to be established; it would help to keep records of past "adventures"; it would help plan new ones, and it would allow decisions to be made on further efforts needed to reach yet higher goals.

Depending on their purpose and their audience, geographical maps come in all shapes and sizes, scales, colours, graphic conventions - and yet they always seem to be based on an underlying agreement which makes them understandable and useful to a wide range of users.

Diversity in the language learning field, in evaluation procedures, in conventions for recording results, is a fact of life and probably even a source of enrichment on which we would be wise to build. What we might need to develop, however, is a convention for "True North" and a commonly shared system of "Grid Lines" with reference to which everybody could place statements in the language map.

As with geographical maps, experts could deduce a wealth of information, yet the non-specialist user, the learner, could also get valuable information and above all a sense of direction.

Using a grid-line framework covering different types of descriptions would make it possible to adjust language learning goals to reality,

taking account of limited resources, and to recognise the validity of partial achievements.

Key questions:

a) Simplicity? How can a map be made simple, yet comprehensive enough to be relevant, valid and reliable?

b) What language needs to be used to make statements understandable to the different user groups?

c) Are there key elements which should always be included in map statements?

The Dossier is the place for the learner to keep samples of his or her work (e.g. corrected papers), overviews and records from programmes followed (e.g. general outline of goals, content and levels of school curricula), and descriptions of evaluation procedures and assessment criteria.

This section would provide background material for further planning, and hence its content would change dramatically over time as what was once relevant was superceded by new samples, records and achievements.

Key questions:

a) User-friendliness? What should be collected? What for? For how long?

b) Selection of samples? representativeness? validity?

c) Could teachers, schools be asked to provide corrected work together with assessment criteria?

To summarise then, the Language Portfolio should serve to stimulate the learning of languages throughout life by giving value to language skills in all (European) languages and by demonstrating the pay-off of all language learning, in both formal and informal learning environments. Since it highlights achievements and involves learners in building new learning on old learning, it should help make the overall process of learning appear more relevant, coherent and economical, and thus motivate further effort. Since the results would be related to a shared framework of reference, the Portfolio would help harmonize the recognition and reporting of achievement in a multilingual Europe.

Key questions:

a) User-friendliness? What effort and training would a learner need to use his or her Portfolio effectively?

b) Cost-effectiveness? Will there be sufficient positive impact on learning of languages and/or other educational goals in relation to efforts and resources needed to make a Portfolio work?

c) Is there a shared will to embark on such a venture involving very differing professional partners in the field and millions of learners?

d) What is the minimum of elements to be ready for a start? What more should be developed, over what time?

e) Is the vision of a European Language Portfolio worthwhile even though the realisation will most likely never be perfect?

f) Who is the owner of the Portfolio? The learner only?

g) How could a European Portfolio effectively help coordination between differing school systems?

h) How could a European Portfolio help to solve problems created by higher mobility throughout language areas, teaching institutions and professions by allowing recognition and transferability of results and achievements?

i) How could a Portfolio help learners to realise their language learning potential better?

2. Target Groups

As a European Language Portfolio could play an important role in coordinating efforts among a set of different actors, it might be useful to consider what interest the following groups might share in such a development

The learner: his or her development and achievement is at the centre of all considerations - the goal is for him or her to be involved in the design and running of the process, to have a clear view of where he or she stands and what he or she is aiming at, to have achievements highlighted and valued.

The teacher: could find it desirable to have end of course objectives clearly stated at the outset, to be aware of students' previous experience, programmes and achievements. All this could help to conceive and run programmes better.

Explicit information and stated objectives could on the other hand bring complications and create pressure in running classes; collecting information and helping students to understand it could cause an undue additional workload.

The teaching institution: could find it desirable to state the services on offer, the goals strived for and the contributions made. They could find it helpful to be able to link programmes offered to the students' previous experience; a way of communicating students' achievement could help in planning relevant objectives and activities and in using resources effectively;

On the other hand, the communication of achievement could lead to added pressure on teachers and teaching institutions to be accountable to learners and society, to make information openly available and to justify the use of scarce resources. This might lay the teaching institutions and teachers more open to criticism, both justified and unjustified;

The testing institutions: summative evaluation could take up an even more important role in relation to a commonly accepted and shared overall framework. Formative evaluation should however occupy the central place during a particular language learning programme and the relationship between the two types of evaluation would need to be looked at more closely.

The employers and other "buyers" of language skills: an agreed framework could help to put a value onto knowledge and skills acquired. Employers and other buyers of language skills might be encouraged to declare their requirements and the value attached to achievements in relation to this agreed framework.

Society (often represented by ministries of education): a European Language Portfolio could help to make clear the value of language skills to a community and as a consequence of a possible greater accountability for resources, help make available the resources necessary to achieve success in this area. The sharing of responsibility and of services among different teaching institutions could be helped and economy of scale more easily achieved. Last but not least, the accreditation of foreign study courses and diplomas could be eased and facilitated.

Key questions:

a) Is it feasible to find forms of expression which can be understood by all those who share an interest in the Portfolio, yet require information for varying purposes?

b) Is it feasible to chart progress reliably through a series of successive entries made at different points in the learning process by different people?

c) How much and what information would be needed, when and by whom?

3. A Family of Tools

The working group in London felt that shared tools would need to be developed:

A Series of Levels:

There seem to be good reasons for quite different level systems.

The notion of broad "natural" levels - points in learning and level of competence which are clearly discernible and where generally wide agreement between professionals exist - seems to hold the hope that broad agreement of a general calibration framework could be achieved.

Narrower teaching or "pedagogic" levels on the other hand seem to relate to institutions and to many different settings and therefore seem to have to differ widely.

Global competence levels and levels for discrete skills, especially for non-linguistic skills are related but need not be identical.

There seems to be some hope that all those different systems might be calibrated in some way to a common system of broad "natural" levels.

Descriptors

The working group in London felt that the Passport and the Map should use related **Descriptors** for each relevant domain of each level. Brian North's paper presents and invites you to examine some considerations related to the development of descriptors in "European Language Portfolio: Some Options for a Working Approach to Design Scales of Proficiency".

Reference Manual

The Learner Portfolio could be supported by a Reference Manual which could be organised in a way which mirrored the organisation of the Portfolio itself (Passport, Map and Dossier).

- **A Passport Catalogue** could offer charts showing how different qualifications are placed in the Portfolio framework, and giving brief details on them. This would be of interest to employers as well as teaching institutions.

- **A Reference Map** could contain the Portfolio Map itself plus an analysis of objectives and content specifications related to the scale descriptors, which teachers and teaching institutions could use to chart the objectives and specifications of their programmes.

  This analysis could be undertaken in an independent, decentralised way, using a method of analysis appropriate to the learning institution concerned. The reference map for a particular teaching institution would normally become more comprehensive over time as a source for future planning and coordination.

  In Eurocentres, for example, we are currently experimenting with a task-based analysis:

DESCRIPTOR

```
┌─────────────────┐
│ T A S K S       │
│          ┌──────┴──────────┐
└──────────┤ FUNCTIONS       │
           │         ┌───────┴───────────┐
           └─────────┤ EXPONENTS         │
                     └───────────────────┘
```
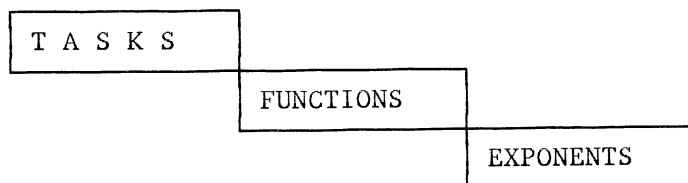
For ease of access to such an elaborate system the use of computers would be advantageous, not only to help institutions with syllabus and programme planning, but also as a way of opening up the whole system to the learner.

- **A Reference Dossier** could contain samples of performance for the different portfolio levels.

145

Evaluation Tools and Instruments

A wide range of evaluation tools and instruments are already available, yet further development is necessary.

The field of learner self-evaluation will without any doubt need specific attention.

4. To summarise:

There is the practical question of whether all or at least a major part of such a system of interlinked descriptors would have to be in place before a European Language Portfolio could be launched into the field.

On the other hand could a Portfolio divided into Passport / Map / Dossier offer the potential for an early start with gradual development and perfection of the system? Taking into account the state of art, the know-how and skills in the teaching profession such an early start might well be possible. Some tentative understanding on who would make what entries, what goes where, and a broad agreement on possible descriptors might however be needed.

In the following Round Table discussion, representatives of different groups in the language field will state as a first reaction how they see themselves relating to such a European Language Portfolio.

The idea of a European Language Portfolio contains the dream that the language teaching world will pool its resources and its know-how and will be willing and able to excel in the interest of the language learners throughout Europe, young and old, so that learning a language will be a truly rewarding experience for each individual.

As with every dream it needs action for it to become true and a realisation, that however well the dream is realised, the result will never be perfect.

The baseline question is: should we try?

EVALUATION, CALIBRATION, CERTIFICATION

Louis Porcher, University "Sorbonne Nouvelle", Paris.

An institutionally recognised assessment system (with certificates either issued or recognised by an institution) must have certain minimal functional features connected with four basic parameters:

- the skills which it is responsible for guaranteeing;
- the use that can be made of the certificates in society;
- the conditions under which the certificates are awarded;
- the person whose skills are being assessed.

It is on the basis of these four parameters that we can usefully (operationally) consider how to define an assessment/certification system for foreign languages, ie identify its constituent features. We are dealing neither purely and simply with assessment nor purely and simply with certification, but with a social and personal identification instrument which should, as a rule, enable people to know what stage they have reached with their language skills and should also enable an outside individual or institution to know what stage the person in question has reached (subject to the ethical prerequisite that the latter is prepared to allow someone other than himself to know). In our view, it is under these conditions that a language portfolio is possible. It is probably worth explaining what they imply.

1. Reliability

1.1. Are the skills guaranteed by the instrument actually those which it claims to guarantee? In particular, are they clearly distinguished, defined and identified?

1.2. Reliability of the measuring instrument, which is an absolutely imperative technical prerequisite, does not necessarily guarantee that the skills thus recognised are socially useful. This may be the case, but it is also possible that some of the skills guaranteed may be academic ones. The certification system will be all the more valid if it is reliable for the purposes of society; there will be greater confidence in it in professional circles (eg in recruitment procedures).

1.3. The conditions under which a certificate is obtained contribute to its reliability in two ways: firstly, by the fact of being publicised - ie. through the provision of full, publicly available information about the critera use - and, secondly, through the official status of those who, in practice, award the certificates (individuals and institutions).

1.4. Lastly, all the components of certification (as listed above) must have the users' confidence. This will, of course, be much more likely if the certification system is clear, ie. if the users can easily understand what will be expected of them, and if it is stable, ie. if the concrete conditions under which the certificate is obtained are not changing constantly, without notice.

2. A Portfolio Assessment must be a Living Assessment

2.1. Language skills, like all skills, are constantly changing: they improve with practice and deteriorate when they are not used. The certification guaranteeing those skills must itself evolve:

- its validity must be limited in time;

- it must be possible to bring it up to date at the user's request - but not at the request of any external body; technically, the procedures involved in certification must themselves evolve, just as society's assessment procedures evolve: the priority which society gives to important skills changes, with the result that unchanging assessment systems are no longer appropriate. This is one of the reasons for the difficulties constantly encountered in school education systems.

2.2. Assessment methods themselves change. At present, for instance, there is, among adult and school-age learners, a much greater demand for assessment, and for assessment that takes place as early as possible and as often as possible in the learning process. This is a trend which no one had foreseen and which is undoubtedly due to the very rapid change in recent years in attitudes towards languages and the way in which people want to learn them - particularly in terms of pace:

- people now want to learn more quickly - they want much less time to elapse between the time when they start learning and the time when they achieve visible practical results: it is as if learners want to test immediately what they can do with the language they have learnt;

- people want to learn only what is useful in everyday life - naturally, this means what they consider useful; they want to be able to understand and make themselves understood in a given context.

3. Assessment should be Separate from Teaching

Language users are not interested in teaching but in learning - or, if they are interested in teaching, it is only in terms of the efficiency of learning. In a similar vein, teaching is no longer seen as the only possible way of learning a language. The spread of self-directed learning strategies has done a great deal to make autodidactic learning a legitimate approach and, in particular, to reassure those who want to embark on it by making them confident that the undertaking is feasible. In the circumstances, those responsible for assessment/certification systems are faced with a new situation, to which they must adapt by changing the systems:

- there is a large demand, among people who are self-taught or partly so - it certainly seems that, for the time being, a common approach is to alternate between autodidactic learning and learning within an institution - for assessment and certification precisely because they need bench marks in order to take charge of their own learning;

- users are, in any case, more concerned with the results of the learning process - what they are capable of doing - than with the means of achieving them. It is not that the latter are considered unimportant, but they are interpreted basically in terms of the speed and usefulness of the results that can be expected;

- virtually all the existing certificates concentrate much more on teaching that on learning, and have done so for a long time: they measure not so much the useful things that have been learnt as what has been retained from the teaching. The poor image of language teaching is now undermining users' confidence in this type of certification - which is considered to be too reminiscent of school.

All these points argue in favour of an assessment / certification system that is not linked to a particular form of teaching but is completely independent, and hence, in the long term, in favour of completely independent assessment institutions - which are separate from the educational institutions. Transparency implies the concept of accessibility: that the document can be _easily_ interpreted by the users, that it has an external transparency - independent of any of any particular system. As an instrument for identification and communication, it is obviously important that it's meaning is evident.

4. A Place for Non-linguistic Skills

A portfolio that records and guarantees skills in the use of a foreign language must include the corresponding "skills in foreign culture". This is easier said than done. Why?

4.1. These skills are now universally acknowledged to be essential to an ability to communicate. As the decline in the importance of linguistics becomes more marked in language learning (but not in language teaching ...), the need to take account of these skills will be increasingly vital, precisely because they help with the actual use of the language.

4.2. They do not have to be acquired in the foreign language. Many of these skills can be acquired in the mother tongue. This is true, in particular, of everything connected with ways of living in a society, which people need to know about in order to be able to communicate with that society in the language in question, but which do not involve the language itself.

4.3. There should be scope for mastery of "universal/individual" features, ie. all the aspects of social communication which are present in all societies but in a specific way in each one of them. Lastly, more store is now being set, in connection with the ability to communicate, on such factors as hospitality, courtesy and kindness; the details vary according to context, and they therefore have to be learnt and assessed.

149

TOWARDS A LEARNER-CENTRED EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING ACHIEVEMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING:

Summary of Round Table Discussion on the European Language Portfolio

Participants:

Sibylle Bolton	(Goethe Institute);
Peter Hargreaves,	(Cambridge Syndicate);
Frank Heyworth,	(Eurocentres);
Brian Page,	(Educational Consultant);
Martin Schatzmann,	(Credit Suisse);
Arnold Wyrsch,	(Central Swiss CDIP).

Questions put to the panel:

1. What is in your opinion the principle advantage that could be hoped for from a Portfolio?

2. What is the principal risk which in your opinion it is absolutely necessary to avoid?

3. What has to be present in a Portfolio: what are the minimum essential elements?

Sibylle Bolton:

The Goethe Institute offers courses from basic to very advanced in German as a Foreign Language in about 160 institutes. As well as being involved with international cooperation in the cultural field, the Institute prepares a total of 8 German examinations, which also cover the range of proficiency from basic to advanced.

The main advantage we see is motivation for the learner, clarity of language courses, impetus for new pedagogic developments. Another advantage we see is mobility for the learner, in a context in which every employer will know what his or her qualifications mean.

The major risk, from the point of view of an examination centre, is concerned with the Passport section registering formal qualifications: everybody is to be trusted - fine, but we know from experience that some people are more to be trusted than others. There is a need for what Brian Page described as a Code of Professional Standards, or a body which validates the examinations being accepted in the Passport, validates where their examinations should be placed on the common scale, and validates the actual entries. This validation cannot be done once and for all, it's an on-going process because examinations change, so I think it is necessary to create some kind of body which would guarantee that some code of professional standards is adhered to.

The essential component of the Portfolio is the framework, the scales of performance, which will give course designers, materials writers and examination developers new impetus - for us the possibility to renew our examinations, to shorten their shelf-life as Brian Page put it.

150

The problems connected with entries in the Passport side of the Portfolio could perhaps be postponed, and a start could be made on designing the scales of performance. It might block progress if we get too involved with this question of accreditation at the beginning; we could start on the question of the scale and then later move on to the question of what we are going to do with the existing examinations.

Peter Hargreaves

I shall try to illustrate some of the points related to the three questions which Sibylle Bolton has already made from the point of view of an examination centre.

In making the distinction between the Passport side of the Portfolio on the one hand, and the informal Map/Dossier side on the other, the concepts of **"Broad Description"** and **"Narrow Description"** used in phonology may be helpful. Examinations provide a broad description of a candidate in terms of level, general competence, skills; the complementary Map/Dossier could provide you the narrow description, with the wrap around, with additional information about particular skills. Let's take as an example the provisional set of 5 examination levels from ALTE, the Association of Language Testers in Europe, a group of examining institutions who have got together to establish a set of common levels across Europe:

EXAMINATION RESULTS   **MAP/DOSSIER - LANGUAGE DIARY**

LEVEL 5

LEVEL 4

LEVEL 3
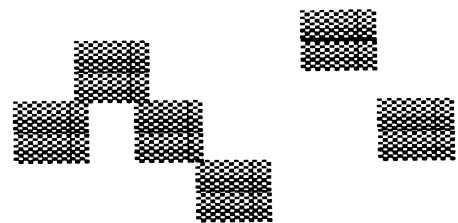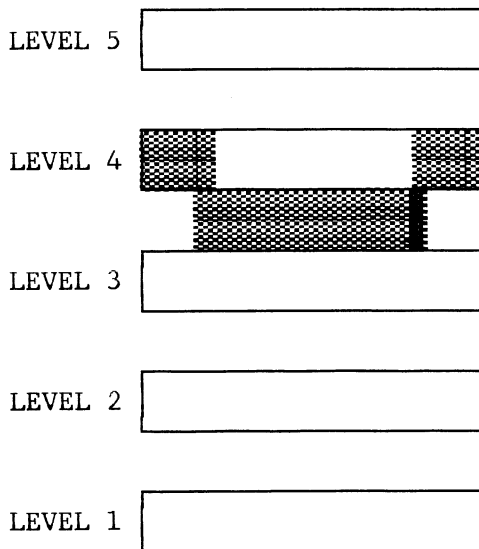
LEVEL 2

LEVEL 1

The student indicated by the shaded area has been placed at Level 4 by an examination, in this case an exam like the Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English, which will also state that the student has good skills in Reading and in Speaking. However, if you want additional information related to, for example, "Speaking in public", or "Reading for literary appreciation", or if you want to know about recent experience beyond this, from an extra course like, for example "Scientific writing", then you have to complement the Passport information with more detailed information from the Map/Dossier:

The main advantage of the portfolio can be summarised very briefly: it can provide a fuller picture of student abilities, including the past history and future intentions.

The main disadvantages, or problems, have been mentioned by Sibylle Bolton: the need to set standards or codes of practice so that the Portfolio can be used with confidence by the user, so that the Portfolio will command acceptance.

Extra information which could be included in the Map, or Language Diary, to complement and fill out the information provided by examinations:

- additional points about skills, language activities (eg. Speaking in public);
- an update on abilities since the last exam was taken;
- specialisms not covered by certificates, eg. The Language of Computing;
- courses attended of special significance.

Frank Heyworth

Advantage: Eurocentres welcomes students of all ages, of all nationalities and of all educational backgrounds; a common framework would give a common language between the learners and the institution in which each side could recognise itself.

The greatest disadvantage/danger would be if the Portfolio became a rigid, exclusive strait-jacket

The most important thing it must have is a way of recording and recognising all kinds of achievement.

Brian Page

Conditions in the U.K. have never been more favourable for language learning. Government initiatives proliferate, but this has lead to three or four different systems being developed without reference to each other, each of them involving levels of language competence, which has produced complete confusion and no one knows how it is going to be solved. I hope that a European calibration system will arrive in time to save us from the mess we have created.

The main advantage would be that such a system would produce some sort of European-wide coherence for the reporting of achievement in language learning.

The main danger: my view is the same as Frank Heyworth's, that this might become an inflexible system which inhibited current and future development.

Essential components: The calibration system, but secondly a place where the learner themselves can put what they think they are, their self-evaluation, a record of their learning experience, and their evaluation of that experience - for example in the front (Passport) you could have a formal qualification, and in the back (Dossier) they might say, "Well I've got this qualification, but quite frankly it wasn't up to much."

152

Martin Schatzmann

I represent here the point of view of the end-users, the employers, I am responsible for language training in one of the large Swiss banks with about 18,000 employees of whom about 10% are at any one time engaged in language training.

The advantage: There are only advantages for us. This is evidenced by a document "Ausbildungspass" which we introduced in 1980 at the same time as a system of language tests. In this document we have, after a fashion, the "Passport" and the "Map" of Rolf Schärer. At the back of the booklet one can enter details of courses attended, certificates obtained, perhaps note the level reached in a simple fashion. We have only had very positive experience with this instrument. With this system we have been able to stipulate the necessity of language learning in our organisation, we have been able to motivate our employees, and what is more, the interest in learning languages has measurably increased.

The danger from the point of view of employers and employees is oversimplification. Who is it inside companies who judges language competence? Generally it is the head of department who usually has very little idea of what language competence is, who tends to simplify, to concentrate on a global number, and not to look at what lies behind this number, this global grade.

The priority for me the Passport, the Portfolio should report information on communicative competence, on language use and not on language knowledge. What is very important, also for personnel managers, is that there must be a facility to be able to compare clearly the different language certificates.

Arnold Wyrsch

I represent here the point of view of mainstream education, compulsory schooling. I agree with Rolf Schärer that the efforts of the main school system must be taken into account in a European Portfolio; these efforts must be recognised, particularly the efforts of immigrant children.

The advantage: I believe that mainstream education can make a substantial contribution to the development of the Portfolio, and that a major advantage would be that with more coherence between systems, one should be able to hope that there would be less criticism from the schools which take up students education where compulsory education stops, because such criticism often lacks an appreciation of what kind of coherent system could be feasible in mainstream education.

The dangers: There is a danger that the education sectors which follow compulsory schooling don't take account of the methods used in that schooling. These methods are above all based on a communicative approach, that is to say, they are learner-centred.

The priority for me is to take account of communicative, that is to say learner-centred, methodology. That implies that self-evaluation should play a significant role in a future Portfolio.

DISCUSSION

The Risk of Inflexibility, Rigidity

Frank Heyworth: There is perhaps a possible conflict of views with people who are responsible for respectable examining institutions of high prestige who would tend to say "We want a document which is relatively exclusive, we want to be able to be exclusive about whose names we want to be on the document with." It seems to me that the danger of misuse is a possible danger, but that the danger of rigidity is even greater. If we have the confidence to provide a document which provides enough information, if we have a document which is flexible enough to include the kind of details which people can read and judge, the dangers of misuse are those which can be judged by the users. By having confidence, by investing sufficient effort in developing an adequate descriptive system of levels and categories, we can create something flexible. In my opinion, the dangers of exclusivity are greater than the dangers of misuse.

Peter Hargreaves: Before one has the presumption to decide what this document should look like, it seems to me that one really should consult the users, and we have heard from Mr Schatzmann a view from the people who deal with candidates who come with their language qualifications. It seems to me that we have got at least three user groups:

- the student, whose motivation and self-esteem one wants to increase;
- the teacher, to whom the student may come after a course, who wants to see what sort of record, background, the student has;
- the end-user, who is relatively unsophisticated in terms of linguistic awareness, but who is nevertheless perhaps the most important user, for whom this Passport, this Portfolio serves a quite different function to the function it serves for the student and the teacher.

Is it in fact possible to have the same document serving all these purposes? I think we are in danger of ending up not with a Map but with an atlas!

Arnold Wyrsch: I think we have to adopt a more creative approach in relation to assessment. We need contextualised tests, both assessment instruments and complementary self-assessment instruments, which can elicit a dialogue between student and teacher. We can't develop a rigid system because the Council of Europe would not be in the position to implement it, and because we have in any case recognised the problems associated with such an approach.

Brian Page: The danger of rigidity seems to me to lie in two places, firstly in the definition of the levels themselves, which need to be described in such a way as to lead to flexibility, and secondly in the question of revision, where I think we have to say right from the start "At the end of the first year of use we will have another look at the instrument, and thereafter we shall review it every five years." This should be a regular revision which takes account of users views, learners views, and a general feeling on how the thing works.

An Instrument to Promote Motivation - but in what sense?

Sibylle Bolton: Motivation in the sense that the learners continue learning the language. We have students who start with the Goethe Institute basic level and continue learning German until they reach an advanced level. If the learning objectives were made clear to the learner, in terms of what he or she will be able to do, then this would motivate him or her to continue. In the Goethe Institute we have a system which is fairly transparent in that we have syllabuses, and we have descriptions of the examinations which people can look at, which explain the objectives, what is tested, and - although there is of course room for improvement - going in this direction of transparency has already had a very positive effect on the learning.

Frank Heyworth: Very many of the students who come to Eurocentres come to use because their previous language learning experiences have been a failure. In a Map, an instrument which records achievement, success, especially small pieces of achievement, you would have one of the major ways of adding motivation to language learning. I think that by being able to record in a very flexible way what has been learnt and what has been achieved in all sorts of ways, rather than seeing language learning in terms of a rocky road which is fraught with danger, learners might be able to perceive it rather as an easier and well-lit path. A Map could give a clearer line and motivation to language learning.

Brian Page: One should never underestimate the simple pleasures of human-kind. Leeds is twinned with Dortmund, and I can see a situation in which an evening class of very ordinary people who have never had the chance to learn much of a language before go and learn enough German to be able to go to Dortmund and have some sort of exchange with the people in Dortmund - with the people in Dortmund doing the same thing. At the end of their course they will get their particular certificate and in the corner of the certificate it will have the twelve stars of the Council of Europe and "Level 1", and the people in Dortmund will have Level 1 for their English. The fact that these two groups of people are getting the same sort of certificate and are working towards a common end as well as having some sort of interaction with each other is of inestimable value in encouraging the ordinary person in the street - and I'm concerned about the ordinary person in the street - to learn languages.

Peter Hargreaves: Can I ask the people who represent learning institutions if they see any need to have certificates in the Portfolio at all? When you apply for a job, you send your certificates on various subjects and then the people there take up references and find out more information about you. It's an open question with no hidden agenda: Do you see any real need from the point of view of learners and teachers to have certificates in the portfolio?

In England we have a "British Standards Institute" sign which appears on an electric plug when you buy it so you know that it's not going to electrocute you. It's rather important in various fields of life to have some kind of guarantee that what you are dealing with has some stamp of accreditation or authority - while in other areas it does not matter whether you have that at all. It's a matter of choice, option, or judgement.

Does it really matter whether you have certificates in the Portfolio or not? Not for the user, not for the bank, the employer - but for the learning institution. I can see all the benefits for learning institutions in terms of motivation, learning paths, records for teachers and so on which argue for a Portfolio with a Dossier and a Map, but do you need certificates, because they are already **there**, do they need to be in the Passport?

Frank Heyworth: Preparing for examinations, taking them and passing them is quite a large part of what people do in language learning institutions and it would be illogical not to put the success in the various certificates into the Portfolio. Examinations are a target for learning, it seems illogical not to include the success in them in it.

Peter Hargreaves: But the down side is rigidity, inflexibility, isn't it? If you want certificates, you get constraints; at the same time if you don't want constraints, you don't buy certificates. It's a trade off. You can't have both total flexibility and at the same time certificates which carry some sort of **decision making**.

Brian Page: I think you've misunderstood what I was saying - or I haven't made myself clear. When I said that the certificate would have in the corner the twelve stars of the Council of Europe and "Level 1", I didn't mean that the Council of Europe would be setting that test or issuing that certificate, it's the local institution that sets the test and issues the certificate, but with the calibration system made available by the council of Europe, they can slot in, and say "Our examination, our test, is equivalent to Level 3", and they can put a stamp on the corner saying "Council of Europe Level 3".

Peter Hargreaves: What if it in fact turns out to be Level 1?

Brian Page: That is the task of the validation system, the calibration system.

Peter Hargreaves: But validation is a limitation on flexibility.

Brian Page: The setting up of a calibration system has inevitably within it the elements of an inflexible system because once it's there it's there. That's why it has to be revised regularly. But, we can reduce that inflexibility to a minimum in the ways which we have discussed before, and thereafter people fit in it as they wish.

Peter Hargreaves: I have no problems with the calibration system, that's fine. It's the question of where you put the different certificates in that calibration system. As Brian Page says, you would need a Validating Body, and a validating body implies constraints on flexibility. You can't have your cake and eat it.

Brian Page: Why not?

Peter Hargreaves: Well, because you get indigestion.

Arnold Wyrsch: I don't agree at all with what Peter has just said, there are ways of qualitatively assessing language competence which don't lead to such rigid circumstances, as research has shown. It's a question of identifying suitable methods, which could be a task for a follow-up network. It's not a question confined to our discipline, but one we have

156

in common with other social sciences. It comes back to the question "How is the Portfolio produced?", which is bound up with the question of motivation - the Portfolio is above all about motivation. Here I'd like to emphasis again that for me self-evaluation is very important in order to arrive at effective feedback and fruitful dialogue between the teacher and test on the one hand and the learner on the other, a dialogue which will lead to something - learning.

Sibylle Bolton: A Validating Body does not necessarily mean that you make the whole system rigid. One could also see a validating body as a challenge to examining bodies to keep up with current development and to constantly revise its tests - which is the opposite of rigidity.

Peter Hargreaves: I don't want to get bogged down in terminology, I agree with what Sibylle Bolton says, but basically if you have some kind of standards or code of practice for certificates, then you are going to have some people excluded. In the British Council in London there is a department which deals every day with enquiries about whether a particular certificate is valid or not, whether it is equivalent to another certificate and so on, because people are making **decisions**, life decisions, on the basis of qualifications. All I am saying is "Yes, go into it," but you have to accept that when you go into it that eventually you'll be excluding some people, some institutions, in relation to certificates.

Sibylle Bolton: No.

Frank Heyworth: I think that when one speaks in three sentences, as directed by the Chairman, there is a tendency to deal in absolutes rather than nuances. I don't think any of us are talking about a system either of total flexibility or of total exclusion, but I would like strongly to make the point that we should rather err on the side of letting people in rather than excluding things, that it shouldn't become an exclusive club. We shouldn't select as if for the Gymnasium in Switzerland so that only 10% of the people will be able to achieve what is on the Language Passport, it has to be more open than that, but on the other hand if there is a Validating Body, this does mean that there will be some exclusion. But I think that if we are looking at the two extremes, we ought to look at the extreme of flexibility and openness.

Arnold Wyrsch: It's not a question of exclusion. It's a question of finding methods of assessment which elicit a dialogue between the teacher and the student. It is necessary to express well the result of this dialogue, this dynamic, in the Portfolio. There are two positions: the teacher/examination, and the student, it's necessary to clarify them and include both in the Portfolio.

EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO:
SOME OPTIONS FOR A WORKING APPROACH TO DESIGN SCALES OF PROFICIENCY:

Brian North, Eurocentre Foundation, Zürich

In outlining the kind of framework the Council of Europe might be aiming at in the General Note of Orientation, John Trim used the crucial phrase:

> "a coherent and transparent system which will enable learners to find their place and assess their progress in relation to certain well-defined reference points."

If learners are to be able to find their place in the system this implies that they will be able to understand the description of the system given to them, which means that this description will need to be relatively simple. If they are going to assess their progress, there is a need for enough levels for them to be able to see change over time. Finally, if there are going to be certain defined reference points, two questions present themselves: the number of such points, and whether a series of defined reference points implies a scale.

In talking about the Portfolio as a means of charting learner achievement inside a common framework, Rolf Schärer used the metaphor of a geographic map, and mentioned the possible need for a common set of grid lines. In a language learning context, the two axes making up such a map grid would be level (vertical) and skills or domains (horizontal). Whereas the vertical axis, level, could be represented just by a thermometer scale of scores (eg 1-1,000), the horizontal axis implies describing different aspects of competence, a network of sub-scales of descriptions of what people can do in different areas at different levels.

Whether or not to develop or adopt such a scale (or network of sub-scales) is a fundamental decision. The advantage of a scale would be that test scores, exam grades, school-leaving statements and self assessments could be reported in terms of the same definitions, summarising learner performance in the area of the level concerned. The descriptions on the scale could be used as reference points firstly to clarify the relationships between qualifications (as with ESU) and secondly to provide learners and institutions with a set of defined milestones to chart learning routes, - to find their place and assess progress.

Since the question of whether to have a scale is fundamental, it seemed sensible to undertake a preliminary investigation of what kind of scale the application of the principles we have been talking about might lead to in practice. This paper seeks to provide such a review as input to the discussion.

In preparation for the Symposium, a number of points have been made concerning the basic design criteria for a possible Scale of Levels. That it should:

- be developed through wide cooperation between partners in the field if it is to gain acceptability. In many respects the networks established in the process of the development are as important as the final product;

- be a simple, straightforward, rugged, reasonably reliable calibration system of minimum complexity; a workable tool, not a theoretical construct;

- be flexible, supportive, learner-centred, decentralised; a means to stimulate innovation rather than act as a brake upon it;

- have enough levels for learners to be able to see progress to stimulate motivation, and for low level attainment to be credited;

- be able to provide a profile across at least the four skills;

- be user-friendly: readable and written in terms of what learners can do (outcomes-based);

- provide some direct relation to specifications for objectives.

This is a collation of comment that has been made and contains some contradictions but nevertheless it is a useful starting point. From the point of view of the design of the scale of proficiency itself, these concerns seem to me to come down to three key issues:

- the number of levels, (more to see progress, fewer to calibrate simply and reliably);

- the skills/domains (more to profile diversity: fewer to keep it usable);

- the definition style (complex enough to describe different aspects, simple enough for learners to understand).

It is these three issues I have been looking at. Mock ups for two alternative versions of a possible scale have been prepared as part of the process, and are attached as an appendix. I should stress that these mock ups were produced purely as an illustration to provide a concrete starting point for discussion. They inevitably reflect the Eurocentres house style and are in no way intended to be definitive drafts for an actual system.

1. Levels:

Over the years people have produced scales going from zero to native speaker proficiency with 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 levels in addition to partial scales which cover less ground with more levels to show progress. The original scale of proficiency, the US Foreign Service Institute (FSI) scale developed in the 1950s and now called the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale, has 5 levels originally designed to establish whether or not a candidate had a sufficient language level for a diplomatic or CIA mission. The system is product-orientated, interested in results, with a bias to high levels of proficiency. An attempt to produce a framework for modern languages in the UK recently proposed 6 levels; Wilkins in 1978 provided detailed definitions for the 7 levels that he said could be readily identified; the ELTDU Stages of Attainment Scale (late 1970s) has 8 clearly defined levels from A to H, and finally the ESU Framework Scale, starting from Wilkin's 7 levels settled for 9 levels, like the British Council/University of Cambridge IELTS scale. A rough, preliminary, subjective calibration of these scales, plus two partial scales from the UK National Curriculum and from Eurocentres, is given on the next page.

APPROXIMATE EQUIVALENCES OF SCALES OF PROFICIENCY: A Preliminary, Subjective Calibration. 20.6.91

	ESU 9 Level	ELTDU 8 Level	Wilkins 7 Level	FSI/ILP 5 Level	Euro-centres	National Curric.
	9	H	7 Ambi-lingual	5		
	8	G	6 Compr. Mastery	4		
Upper Secondary Achievement ?	7	F	5 Effective Profic.	3	(10)	
	6	E		2+	9	
NIVEAU 3 ?			4 Adequate Response		8	10
	5	D		2	7	9
					6	8
Threshold Level	4	C	3 Threshold	1+	5	7
					4	6
						5
	3	B		1	3	4
			2 Waystage			
Waystage	2	A		0+	2	3
						2
			1 Survival		1	1
	1	0	0	0	0	0

160

The argument for a 9-point scale for a "scale of scales" is strong. It has what can technically be called integrity: it is neutral, and unlike many scales it is not related to any particular population, or any particular purpose, and therefore flexible to new circumstances. Thus, if in 20 years time it was decided that 50% of the population should be able to speak Japanese up to point 2 on a 9-point scale, (roughly Waystage) there is a way of describing the objective, and a milestone on the way to it; whereas if one had adopted a 5-Point scale, one would have to say that 50% of the population should learn Japanese up to point 0+, which is not very transparent or motivating.

A 9-point scale, then, has a reasonable number of levels to show progress, and it has been demonstrated that it can be used both for assessment (IELTS) and for comparing examinations (ESU). One can also take the relevant section of an overall 9-point scale for a particular purpose, as the ALTE Group have shown with their comparison of qualifications from examining boards, They have taken the middle 5 levels (3-7) of a notional 9-point scale, because that's where the significant examinations are. A 9-point scale is a sensible compromise - but, as is the nature of compromises, it may not actually give people what they want. Alternatives exist and in discussing them we have come to use the phrases "natural levels" and "pedagogic levels".

"Natural" Levels: These are not connected with nature, they are the conventional, recognised, convenient levels found in books and exams. Threshold is a good example of a "natural level". There may be some difficulty in saying exactly where it is (since Threshold is a set of content specifications rather than performance criteria), but people have a pretty good idea. Waystage or "Survival" precede Threshold, something variously described as "competent use", "independence" or "autonomous use" (sometimes called "Niveau 3") appears to follow it, and the level at which one can attend a university course in the humanities, the level of exams like Cambridge Proficiency, Göethe KDS, DALF, seems to be a fourth level, with presumably an area approaching bilingualism beyond that.

The advantage of a set of 5 or so such broadly-based so-called "natural" levels is that with broader levels it is relatively easy to agree equivalences, one is not being too precise, one is not making too many decisions - and therefore the results of those relatively crude decisions are rugged and reliable.

The main disadvantage is that, as with the original 1950s 5-point FSI scale the emphasis is on the **products** of the success of the few (qualifications) rather than encouraging the **process** of successful learning by the many. It would seem to me to be odd for an organisation concerned with the promotion of learning and the development of European citizenship to set up a scheme in which a very large proportion of the people involved never get beyond Point 1.

Pedagogic Levels: What we have come to call pedagogic levels are narrower levels aiming to provide objectives and motivation for a particular population during the learning process itself. They only cover the relevant range of proficiency of that population. The UK Graded Objectives schemes and National Curriculum are classic examples, the Eurocentre Scale is another.

The advantage of using narrower levels in a Portfolio would be that the learner would make visible motivating progress. The UK Graded Objectives schemes have sets of little levels you can climb through quickly, collect, and feel good about.

The disadvantages of using them for a European framework for establishing equivalences between qualifications could be twofold:

Firstly, more detailed level systems seem to bunch in different ways reflecting the particular learning population concerned. People may find it difficult to relate standard rather narrow levels to their own rather narrow levels, and therefore it could be difficult for any one scheme to gain acceptance. Secondly the fact that the distinctions are finer makes it more difficult to develop adequate descriptors, unambiguous samples, and thus harder to achieve consistent interpretation in different contexts in 30 countries.

Options for Levels: This tension between wanting more levels to motivate, and fewer levels to establish equivalences to some extent determines the options available for levels. Central questions are whether it is advisable to have a single framework scale or whether one could have twin scales which measure in different but related units: fewer, more reliable "natural" levels for the product-orientated Passport; more, more motivating "pedagogic" levels for the process-orientated Map.

Having common "well-defined reference points" does not necessarily imply everybody using the same scale for all purposes. Provided that the common (Passport) reference points appear on all the scales, Map scales could have intermediate points as well, and different sectors, regions or organisations could even use different maps.

Option A: A classic neutral 9-point Scale like the ESU.

Option B: A compromise 9-point scale adding one or two extra lower levels and stopping below bilingualism.

Option C: Twin Scales: Passport: Common 5 or 9-point scale
                                   Map: 2 or 3 Map levels equal
                                             1 Passport level.

Diagrams 2 shows the kind of equivalences which can be provided by a 9-point scale, allowing the use of + levels as in the ESU Framework. (Option A)

Diagram 3 shows three contrasted 9-point scales (ESU, IELTS, Eurocentre), and a compromise 9-point scale derived from them. Notice the finer distinctions around Threshold Level.

Diagram 4 shows a possible 5-Point Passport Scale (actually, like ALTE, the 5 middle points of a 9-point scale) contrasted to a more detailed Map scale.

162

DIAGRAM 2:   OPTION A: Classic 9 point Scale

	ESU Levels	CAMBRIDGE UCLES	CAMBRIDGE CCSE	GOETHE INSTITUTE	ALLIANCE FRANCAISE	OPTION A	
	9					9	Ambilingual Use
	8	CERTIFICATE				8	Expert Use
Upper Secondary Achievement	7	OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH	CCSE LEVEL 4	KLEINES DEUTSCHES SPRACHDIP		7	Proficient Use
	6	FIRST	CCSE LEVEL 3	ZENTRALE MITTELST. PRUFUNG	DIPL. DE HAUTES ETUDES	6	Fluent Use
	5	CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH	CCSE LEVEL 2		DIPLOME SUPERIEUR / DIPLOME DE LANGUE	5	Competent Use
Threshold Level	4	PRELIM. ENGLISH TEST	CCSE LEVEL 1	ZERT.DaF (DEUTSCH ALS FREMDSPR)	CERTIFICAT	4	Routine Use
	3					3	Basic Use
Waystage	2					2	Survival Use
	1					1	Minimal Use

NIVEAU 3 ?

163

DIAGRAM 3:   OPTION B: Compromise 9 point Scale.

	ESU	IELTS	Euro-centres	CAMBRIDGE UCLES	CAMBRIDGE CCSE	GOETHE INSTITUTE	ALLIANCE FRANCAISE	OPTION B	
	9								
		9							
	8							9	Expert Use
		8							
				CERTIFICATE					
U				OF					
p	7	7		PROFICIENCY		KLEINES		8	Proficient Use
p				IN		DEUTSCHES			
e				ENGLISH	CCSE LEVEL 4	SPRACHDIP			
r			9			ZENTRALE	DIP. DE HAUTES ETUDES	7	Fluent Use
S e c o n d a r y	6	6	8		CCSE LEVEL 3	MITTELST.			
A c h i e v e m e n t			7	FIRST CERTIFICATE		PRUFUNG	DIPLOME SUPERIEUR	6	Competent Use
	5	5	6	IN ENGLISH	CCSE LEVEL 2		DIPLOME DE LANGUE		
			5			ZERT.DaF		5	Routine Use
	4	4				(DEUTSCH ALS			
			4	PRELIM. ENGLISH TEST	CCSE LEVEL 1	FREMDSPR)	CERTIF-ICAT	4	
	3	3						3	Basic Use
			3						
	2	2	2					2	
		1	1					1	Minimal Use
	1								
		0	0						

NIVEAU 3 ?

Upper Secondary Achievement

Threshold Level

Waystage

CAMBRIDGE UCLES	GÖETHE INSTITUTE	ALLIANCE FRANCAISE
CERTIFICATE OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH	KLEINES DEUTSCHES SPRACHDIP	
	ZENTRALE	DIPL. DE HAUTES ETUDES
FIRST	MITTELST. PRÜFUNG	DIPLOME SUPERIEUR
CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH		DIPLOME DE LANGUE
PRELIM. ENGLISH TEST	ZERT.DaF (DEUTSCH ALS FREMDSPR)	CERTIF- ICAT

PASSPORT (ALTE)	MAP (Eurocentre)
V	10
IV	9
	8
III	7
	6
II	5
	4
I	3
	2
	1

2. Skills & Domains

The familiarity and convenience of the division between global proficiency and the four skills listening, speaking, reading and writing make this a sensible starting point. Such a familiar division would be clear to learners, and the ESU Project has shown that examinations can be compared in this way. The Version A mock up uses this model.

But the ESU experience also suggests that defining the four skills for three domains (work, study, general) could give a rather cumbersome set of about 17 scales organised in a hierarchical pyramid with very repetitive wording which still doesn't directly relate to any real world tasks a learner may identify with.

An alternative model might be to omit the global scale and focus on what various writers have seen as three main aspects of language use: understanding (one-way, receptive) interacting (two-way, live), and prepared production (one-way, productive). These themselves could be subdivided pragmatically into main fields of activity learners might recognise that they engage in, whatever domain they are concerned with, as in Version B attached:

Comprehension			Oral Interaction			Production		
Viewing	Listening	Reading	Conversation	Telephoning	Meetings	Letters	Reports	Presentations

This is not to suggest that these 9 fields are a definitive set, but rather that taking "language activity" rather than skills as the organising principle of the domains could be an alternative corresponding more closely both to real use and could aid harmonisation between a system for General Language, and one for Language for Specific Purposes.

A split between three aspects of language use (Comprehension, Interaction and Production) could also encourage the development of limited objectives leading to what have been described as "partial qualifications". In the first foreign language, one might cover all three areas, in the second just comprehension and interaction, and in the third just comprehension, on the principle that in a multilingual Europe of the future, people might need to understand information and opinions expressed in what are called "lesser taught languages", as well as having an active command of a lingua franca, and that one might need to be able to interact socially in a couple of foreign languages while only needing to use one for formal expression (Production).

Enabling Skills: Scales for enabling skills might well need to be added to those for language use (whether organised by skill or activity). Three areas for scales which have been suggested are Strategic Competence, Knowledge of Language System and Knowledge of Target Culture, and it would of course be possible for these to be subdivided. Formulating such scales in a way that will mean something to a non specialist may, however, present a considerable challenge.

3. Definition Style:

Scales vary in their purpose and audience and in the degree of detail which they give. Alderson has identified three types according to function: constructor-orientated for syllabus, material and test writers; assessor-orientated for use in direct assessment, and user-orientated for reporting results to non-specialist clients (Alderson 1991). It is with user-orientated scales that we are concerned in connection with the Portfolio.

User-orientated or reporting scales can be simpler than the other two types, and sometimes combine qualitative labels like "competent", "effective", "adequate" with contextual generalisations like "most everyday situations" "routine professional contexts". As Trim has pointed out, such generalisations can command an apparent acceptance precisely because they are capable of an infinite number of often contradictory interpretations, and it is impossible to relate them to specifications for content (Trim 1978). To counter this problem, quantitative detail could be added from a constructor-orientated source in terms of tasks the learner should be able to do at the level concerned, and qualitative detail could be added from an assessor-orientated source in terms of criteria for an acceptable performance at that level.

There are problems, however, attached to either approach used to give more substance to the definitions, complicated by the interaction between the two sources of detail and the fundamental design decision in writing descriptors: to be systematic and comprehensive, or to be selective.

A "Systematic" Approach:

Van Ek in 1987 discusses the systematic inclusion of the same elements in the definition for each level of a scale. The problem with such an approach from the point of view of a learner-orientated system is that it can lead to repetition and to the forced definition of distinctions which cannot easily be captured in words, with the result that adjacent definitions can appear at first sight to be virtually identical to the non-specialist reader, and the whole scale can make your head spin. The ESU descriptors follow a systematic pattern compressing statements from a set of assessor-orientated criteria defined for each level into an overall level descriptor. The following first lines from adjacent descriptors for Speaking demonstrate the problem:

Handles moderate speech situations with good confidence and competence, but some problems with higher level situations.

Handles moderate speech situations with adequate confidence and competence.

Handles simple speech situations with good confidence and competence, but some problems with moderate level situations.

Handles simple speech situations with adequate confidence and competence, but some problems with moderate level situations.

An actual descriptor is made up of about 8 such sentences:

> Handles moderate speech situations with adequate confidence and competence. Message is broadly conveyed, but with little subtlety and some loss of detail. Some difficulties in initiating and sustaining conversation. Interaction needs repetition and clarification. Spoken text organisation is adequate but with fairly frequent stylistic lapses. Fairly frequent hesitations and lapses in fluency, but these do not interfere with basic communication. Uses a moderate language repertoire, but has to search for words and use circumlocutions. Fairly frequent errors in accuracy. Obvious L1 accent and speech features. Limitations impair communication at times.

The result may make sense to "insiders" concerned with assessment, but lacks a certain transparency. Another problem with descriptors at this amount of detail is that the detail may not apply to everybody one is reporting about. Further, it's difficult to link this kind of information to objectives.

A Selective Approach:

An alternative is the task approach pioneered by ELTDU, selecting "key tasks" - things that are strikingly new that the learner can now be said to be able to do at the level concerned. One problem with this approach, however, is that the decisions about which levels to place particular tasks could be due to convention rather than empirical evidence, that the descriptors could be clichés. Another problem is that, unless one is careful with the wording, statements in a reporting instrument that people at this level can "do" a particular task could set up the expectation that they were seen to do it, that is to say, that they were assessed on all the tasks mentioned.

On the other hand, task-based statements, following a pattern "can do this in those situations most of the time provided that ..." could offer the kind of transparency we are looking for, and can provide a link to specifications for objectives through an analysis of the tasks included and of the quality of performance implied.

A Compromise:

There is thus no simple answer to the development of level descriptors. We want to describe something complex in simple terms that learners will understand, but, thinking of tabloid journalism, how simplistically can one report complex issues before one has unjustifiably distorted the message? It is a problem that requires careful thought and, above all, cooperation. The approach taken in the mock ups has been to expand the simpler type of "situational" definition with selected qualitative and quantitative detail. They are early drafts, from a particular stable, but I hope they demonstrate that it is possible to write something that will be more meaningful to learners than a set of numbers.

168

CONCLUSION:

As Rolf Schärer explained, a learner-orientated Portfolio could be backed up by a Reference Manual with samples and by more detailed specifications for the derivation of course objectives, the latter perhaps for broadly-based "natural" levels like Threshold. With this back-up information available the descriptions in the scales could perhaps err on the side of brevity, so as to be more readable, and to be able to fit a scale on an A5 page.

None of these technical decisions about levels, domains or style need to be made now. The aim of this paper has been to try and give at least a provisional answer to the question: "What might a scale look like if we decided we wanted one?" so that a decision in principle can perhaps be taken on whether to develop one. I hope that it has also indicated some of the issues which will need to be addressed in the process of doing so.

REFERENCES

Alderson, J.C. Bands and Scores, in "Language Testing in the 1990s" ed. Alderson J.C & North B. Macmillan 1991

ALTE: Association of Language Testers in Europe.

ESU (English Speaking Union) Framework: ESU Framework, Carroll, B.J & West, R. Longman 1989

ELTDU (English Language Teaching Development Unit) Stages of Attainment Scale (developed late 1970s when ELTDU was part of OUP)

Eurocentres Scales of Proficiency: unpublished constructor scales and language specifications (1983), assessment scales (1987-8) and certification scales (1992).

Eurocentres Statement of Achievement, developed 1978

IELTS: International English Language Testing Service, UCLES, formerly ELTS, reviewed in Alderson, J.C., Krahnke, K.J. & Stansfield, C.W. (ed.s) Reviews of English Language Proficiency Tests, 1987, TESOL.

Interagency Language Roundtable Oral Proficiency Interview: Review in Alderson, J.C., Krahnke, K.J. & Stansfield, C.W.

Milan Levels for adult education classes: Elviri, Longhi, Quartapelle & Rizzardi, quoted in Van Ek 1987.

National Curriculum: Modern Foreign Languages in the National Curriculum: National Curriculum Council Consultation Report 1991.

Trim, J.L.M. Some Possible Lines of Development of an Overall Structure for a European Unit/Credit Scheme for Foreign Language Learning by Adults, Council of Europe 1978.

Van Ek, J.A. Objectives for Foreign Language Teaching, Volume I: Scope (1986), Volume II Levels (1987), Council of Europe.

Wilkins's Scale: Proposal for Levels Definition, in Trim 1978

APPENDIX 1

Scales of Proficiency - Styles

Definitions for the mid point of a notional 9-point scale.

A: Contextual generalisations

> **Speaking**: Can express himself accurately in everyday situations and conversations

Eurocentre "Statement of Achievement" 1978

B: Task-based

> **Meetings**: Can take part in meetings where the discussion is limited to the exchange of information, making arrangements of planning ahead PROVIDED the majority of participants are also non-native speakers BUT is slow and inaccurate and cannot talk for any length of time on a subject. His lack of polite speech formulae might create a bad impression on native speakers.

ELTDU "Stages of Attainment Scale" 1978?

C: Criteria-based

> **Speaking**: Handles moderate speech situations with adequate confidence and competence. Message is broadly conveyed, but with little subtlety and some loss of detail. Some difficulties in initiating and sustaining conversation. Interaction needs repetition and clarification. Spoken text organisation is adequate but with fairly frequent stylistic lapses. Fairly frequent hesitations and lapses in fluency, but these do not interfere with basic communication. Uses a moderate language repertoire, but has to search for words and use circumlocutions. Fairly frequent errors in accuracy. Obvious L1 accent and speech features. Limitations impair communication at times.

ESU Framework 1989

D: Compromise:

> **Speaking**: Can express herself on a range of topics of interest, able to take an active part in discussion and intervene to present a viewpoint. Can generally find ways of saying what she wants to, even though she may sometimes be less easy to follow in more complex specialised settings. She can check and report information reliably, give detailed descriptions and accounts of experiences and opinions, start, end and avoid conversation politely, and can express emotional responses.

Version A: adapted from Eurocentre draft certificate and task lists.

170

MOCK UP SCALES FOR EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO SCALE

These two sets of mock ups give definitions for the midpoint (Band 5) on a notional 9-point scale for language use. Scales for enabling skills - Knowledge of the target language; Knowledge of the target culture; Strategic competence - could be added.

Version A: 4 Skills Model

GLOBAL (Level 5):

Can understand unsimplified language on topics of interest to her and exchange information reliably. Can generally find ways of formulating what she wants to express. Can communicate competently and independently in many professional as well as personal contexts.

LISTENING (Level 5):

Can understand what is said to her and follow much of what is said in conversation and discussion around her. Can understand most talks and recorded or broadcast material like news programmes, documentaries, and training films delivered in clear standard input. Can follow dubbed films, and other films with a straightforward clear dialogue with little difficulty.

READING (Level 5):

Can understand the information content of various kinds of written input on a range of subjects, identifying the essential information and line of argument, and rereading, working out the meaning of particularly difficult sections with a dictionary.

SPEAKING (Level 5):

Can express herself on a range of topics of interest, able to take an active part in discussion and intervene to present a viewpoint. She can generally find ways of saying what she wants to, even though she may sometimes be less easy to follow in more complex specialised settings. She can check and report information reliably, give detailed descriptions and accounts of accounts of experiences and opinions, start, end and avoid conversation politely, and can express emotional responses.

WRITING (Level 5):

Can write clearly on a range of subjects following standard conventions so that despite occasional problems of formulation, the reader has little difficulty following. Can write detailed descriptions, narratives and short essays on a range of subjects. Can write simple formal letters giving factual information, and personal letters asking for, giving and responding to news.

MOCK UP SCALES FOR EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO SCALE

Version B: Alternative Model

Comprehension	Oral Interaction	Production
Viewing Listening Reading	Conversation Telephoning Meetings	Letters Reports Presentations

COMPREHENSION

COMPREHENSION (Level 5):

Can understand the general information content in a range of straightforward authentic input. Can identify the information and follow the line of argument in lengthy material on subjects of particular interest.

VIEWING (Level 5):

Can understand most news programmes, documentaries, and training films with a spoken commentary. Can follow dubbed films with little difficulty, and can follow the general outline of most other TV programmes, apart from realistic drama and very informal street interviews.

LISTENING (Level 5):

Can follow much of the discussion around her and understand the information content of most talks and recorded material delivered in clear standard input.

READING (Level 5):

Can understand the information content of various kinds of written input on a range of subjects, rereading to work out the meaning of particularly difficult sections with a dictionary.

MOCK UP SCALES FOR EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO SCALE

Version B: Alternative Model

INTERACTION

INTERACTION (Level 5):

Can understand what is said directly to her and follow much of what is said in conversation and discussion around her. Can express herself on a range of topics of interest, generally finding ways of saying what she wants to, though she may sometimes be less easy to follow in more complex specialised settings. Can interact competently over a meal.

CONVERSATION (Level 5):

Can keep up with a conversation on a topic of interest, and can initiate or avoid conversation politely in most contexts, She can check and pass on information reliably, give detailed descriptions of opinions, plans and experiences, and express emotional responses.

MEETINGS (Level 5):

Can take an active part in discussion on a range of topics of interest, keeping in touch with the main points and intervening to present a viewpoint, provided there is some tolerance towards lack of fluency and unconventional expression. Can report information reliably

---

TELEPHONING (Level 5):

Can use the telephone comfortably for routine purposes with familiar people or counterparts in the same organisation. Can cope with complications eg. when booking a hotel. Can understand, make notes on, and take detailed messages provided the caller makes allowances for comprehension difficulties, and it is possible to confirm the main points.

MOCK UP SCALES FOR EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO SCALE

Version B: Alternative Model

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION   (Level 5)

Can prepare clear text on a range of subjects, which uses standard conventions, and is relatively easy to follow

---

LETTERS   (Level 5):

Can write personal letters asking for, giving and responding to news. Can draft short, simple formal letters giving factual information related to her job, referring to enclosures.

REPORTS   (Level 5):

Can write detailed descriptions and narratives on a range of subjects. Can write a short essay or a short report supporting visual data.

PRESENTATIONS   (Level 5):

Can give a clear, rehearsed talk presenting a viewpoint, product or place, and answering more predictable questions related to the content.

E.   CLOSING ADDRESSES

John Trim, General Rapporteur

In introducing the Conclusions and Recommendations of the Symposium (see p. 37), Dr Trim congratulated all participants on the effective, genuine and good-humoured way that the discussions had been conducted by the many representatives of the diverse educational systems and institutions whose sincere cooperation would be necessary if a harmonious and meaningful common framework for language learning in Europe was to be achieved. In the course of their discussions they had moved together and covered a great distance, reaching a remarkable degree of consensus on the aims and objectives of a common framework. They had come to see much more clearly its advantages, possible dangers and essential features. They could not have reached that point if the ground had not been so carefully prepared by their Swiss hosts and the international animating team. Their work had certainly been greatly facilitated by the wonderful environment the hosts had provided.

Of course, what had been achieved was no more than a firm base for the concrete and detailed work still to be carried out by the Working Parties which the Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Cooperation was being asked to set up. It would nevertheless be a great stimulus and reassurance to those Working Parties to know that they had the goodwill of the national and institutional bodies represented there.

The Conclusions and Recommendations contained no "hidden agenda". They represented the genuine effort of the Drafting Group to synthesise the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Groups insofar as they presented a common view perhaps articulated more precisely in one respect, by another group in another respect. The Drafting Group's task had been made much easier by the close community of view that had emerged. In any case, the reports of the Working Groups would form part of the final Symposium Report and would be brought to the attention of the Working Parties when they were set up.

By its nature, the Council of Europe worked to achieve consensus among its member states on the best line of advance towards a Europe whose inhabitants would now understand and respect each other's identity, cooperating culturally, socially, economically and politically, with respect for human rights and democracy. Dr Trim recommended the Conclusions and Recommendations to national delegates as practical steps towards the achievement of that great aim.

Tony Shaw, LINGUA Bureau

Mr Shaw said that LINGUA wished to play an active role in the development of a European Framework, and referred participants to the LINGUA poster in the "Network Fair", explaining that LINGUA had conceived a project to develop a framework, particularly with reference to economic life. (see Appendix 5: "Critical Levels & Categories relevant to World of Work")

Mr Shaw emphasised that LINGUA were in a position to support projects which did not originate in a member state of the Community, saying that in relation to such projects, the thing LINGUA could not do was to fund directly the participation of non-members. He added that, contrary to what some people appeared to think, LINGUA were also interested in aspects of Culture, and that rather than assume a project related to Culture would be inadmissible, interested parties should discuss the question first with LINGUA.

He gave examples of some of the types of activities which might be supported by LINGUA:

- setting up a new association at European level, or a specific activity of an existing organisation at European level;

- a project relating to certification and curriculum, particularly a project with reference to economic life;

- visits to establish activities.

He said it was impossible for him to outline all the possibilities in the short time available, and suggested that participants bore in mind that there were possibly relevant sources of funding, and that the criteria were explained in the "Applicants Guide", available from the LINGUA Bureau itself and from national LINGUA agencies. He added that the application process took a certain amount of time and effort, but that it could be worthwhile.

Maitland Stobart, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe

On behalf of the Council of Europe, Mr Stobart again thanked the Swiss authorities, the Swiss partners and the participants themselves. He paid a special tribute to Brian North who had lived and dreamt about the Symposium for months. It had been, Mr Stobart said, a rich and exciting week, and the Council was very pleased with the results which were clear, practical and feasible. As on so many occasions, he added, the Council had a considerable debt to John Trim, for bringing about a consensus.

Mr Stobart welcomed the very helpful statement from Tony Shaw, of the LINGUA Bureau, adding that there was a need for a proper and full cooperation and interaction between the two projects, because the Council

of Europe was not in a position to develop the framework single-handed; he
hoped to see other bodies like LINGUA and the Nordic Council of Ministers
involved. We had to move forwards together to develop the very feasible,
practical ideas from the Symposium.

In conclusion, Mr Stobart asked participants to ensure that their
authorities who came to the Council of Europe Education Committee, to the
Council for Cultural Cooperation, knew what the Symposium had done, and why
it was important. He urged participants to disseminate information about
the Symposium in bulletins, newspapers etc. to ensure that the ideas were
shared with a wider public of educators, policy-makers, parents, students
and pupils.

Denis Girard, Chairman of the Modern Languages Project Group of the Council of Europe

Mr Girard said participants would have heard often during the week about
the first Rüschlikon Symposium in 1971, and he drew to their attention what
Bertrand Schwartz, who had developed many of the ideas connected with the
concept for a unit-credit scheme, had said on that occasion:

"Educational objectives must be defined clearly, expressed above all in
terms of skills. There must be an element of negotiation, in which the
teacher takes account of the objectives and points of view of the students.
Certificates and diplomas should report levels of competence in terms of a
profile."

He said that it appeared we haven't made much progress since then, but that
he felt great advances had been made this year at Rüschlikon, adding that
he personally felt optimistic about the future and the results of this
fairly long term project.

To justify this optimism, Mr Girard referred to an article in Le Monde of
14th November concerning college reform in France. The National Programme
Committee proposed replacing the existing examination with a form of
continuous assessment, supplemented at exit by a "Dossier" on a
professional sector of the student's choice, to be assessed by a teacher
plus a professional from the sector concerned. If France was contemplating
such a revolution, one could justify having optimism for the future!

Pierre Luisoni, Symposium Chairman

Mr Luisoni thanked the previous speakers, and referred to the Symposium as
having been in some ways rather like a cycling race, a "Tour": an ordeal in
stages or phases; some involving steep climbing through mountains; some
being tests against the stop-watch - the main difference from a cycling
race being that in the Symposium there hadn't been a recovery day. Now that
the finishing line had been crossed, it was clear that the victor was
Europe, European cooperation in the field of education.

To conclude, Mr Luisoni made three points related to his three functions
during the Symposium:

- As President of the Education Committee of the Council of Europe, Mr Luisoni said he was even more convinced of the value of the Modern Language Programme. He said he felt a "wind of change": a new wind to work together to develop a European Framework, and to work together to make concrete the instruments, the Passport, the Portfolio, which would illustrate it. He said he would work in the committee to ensure the best possible concrete follow up to the work of the Symposium.

- As President of the Symposium, Mr Luisoni said that, thanks to the participants, he had very much enjoyed his duties as chairman. He felt sure the participants would join him in thanking the Swiss Committee for all the work that had been done, saying it was not possible to mention everyone by name, but that there were three people in particular who should be remembered: Beat Vonarburg, who had led the group, Mike Makosch who was Vice-President, and Brian North, the Coordinator. Mr Luisoni thanked the Council of Europe Secretariat, and asked them to take back thanks to Antonietta De Vigili, who had participated very actively in all the preparatory work, and to their colleagues who had helped to prepare the documentation. Mr Luisoni thanked the group leaders and rapporteurs, Daniel Coste and Louis Porcher who had chaired the round tables in Phases 2 & 3, John Trim for his determined contribution as Rapporteur General, the interpreters (adding the rider that he hoped they wouldn't be needed so much in a few years time), and the participants themselves for having been so punctual, assiduous and communicative throughout the week.

- As a Language Learner (of English) among experts, Mr Luisoni said everybody knew how difficult it was to take up again the study of a language later in life; one often felt a kind of baby in a world of adults and experts. But this week, it had not been like that. He had been struck by the extent to which the learner had been central to the considerations and discussion during the week - a sign of the quality of the participants' work. He had been very happy to see the attention given to self-assessment, and to the notion of partial competence. He had found that during the week, despite being still below Threshold Level, he had sometimes been able to follow the sessions without interpretation, and had gained a lot from the written documentation. This experience of self assessment and partial competence was an excellent motivation to continue on his own language learning career.

Finally, Mr Luisoni thanked everyone again warmly for everything that had happened during the week, and wished participants a good journey home.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS

Swiss Organising Committee

M. Mortiz ARNET, Secrétaire Général de la Conférence suisse des Directeurs
cantonaux de l'Instruction Publique (CDIP) Sulgeneckstrasse 70,
CH - 3005 BERNE

Mr. Beat VONARBURG, Président du Comité suisse d'organisation, EDK,
Spendacher, CH - 6285 HITZKIRCH

M. Josef BAUMANN, CDIP, Sulgeneckstrasse 70, CH - 3005 BERNE

M. Ernst FLAMMER, Office Fédéral de l'Education et de la Science (OFES),
Départment Fédéral de l'Intérieur, Wildhainweg 9, CH - 3001 BERNE

M. Jean-Etienne BERSET, Office Fédéral de l'Industrie, des Arts et Métiers
et du Travail (OFIAMT), Bundesgasse 8, CH - 3003 BERNE

Mr. Rolf SCHÄRER, Director General, EUROCENTRES Foundation,
Seestrasse, 247, CH - 8038 ZURICH

M. Daniel WITZIG, Directeur des Ecoles Clubs MIGROS (MGB-KOST)
Koordinationsstelle, Hardturmstrasse 161, CH - 8005 ZURICH,

Professeur René RICHTERICH, Ecole de Français Moderne, Université de
Lausanne BFSH 2 Dorigny, CH - 1015 LAUSANNE

Dr. Günther SCHNEIDER, Directeur de l'"Institut für Deutsche Sprache",
Université de Fribourg, CH - 1700 FRIBOURG

Mr. Mike MAKOSCH, Vice President of the Swiss Committee, Migros Club
Schools (MGB-KOST) Koordinationsstelle, Hardturmstrasse 161,
CH - 8005 ZURICH,

Mr. Brian NORTH, Symposium Coordinator, EUROCENTRES Foundation,
Seestrasse, 247, CH - 8038 ZURICH

Chairman of the Symposium

M. Pierre LUISONI
Président du Comité de l'Education du Conseil de la Coopération Culturelle
du Conseil l'Europe,
Délégué pour les Relations Internationales de la Conférence suisse des
Directeurs cantonaux de l'Instruction Publique (CDIP/EDK) Sulgeneckstr. 70,
CH - 3005 BERN

General Rapporteur

Dr. John L.M. TRIM, 53, Barrow Road, GB - CAMBRIDGE CB2 2AR

National Delegates

Austria: Frau Oberrat Dr. Dagmar HEINDLER, Zentrum für Schulversuche und Schulentwicklung, Hans-Sachs-Gasse 14/IV, A - 8010 GRAZ

Herrn Mag. Thomas FRITZ, Verband Wiener Volksbildung, Hollergasse 22, A - 1150 WIEN

Belgium: M. Julien van HAESENDONCK, Inspecteur, Zilverbeeklaan 53, B - 2510 MORTSEL

M. Michel DUMONT, Inspecteur de langues modernes, avenue d'Azebois 57, B - 6041 GOSSELIES

Cyprus: Mr Alecos SHANTOS, Inspector of English, Secondary Education, Ministry of Education of Cyprus, CY - NICOSIA

Czechoslovakia: Dr. Danica BAKOSSOVA, Head of Language Section, Department of Foreign Relations, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Slovak Republic, Hlbokà 2, CS - 813 30 BRATISLAVA

Mr. Pavel CINK, Director of the Department of Foreign Languages, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, Karmelitska 7, CS - 118 12 PRAHA

Denmark: Ms Esther GLAHN, Associate Professor, Kobenhavns Universitet, Amager Njalsgade 74-108, D - 2300 COPENHAGEN S

Mme Ingrid ILSE, Conseiller de l'Enseignement du français aux adultes, UK - forvaltningen, Ribe Amtsråd, 35 Sorsigvej, DK - 6760 RIBE

Finland: Mr. Sakari KAILA, Senior Adviser, National Board of Education, Hakaniemenkatu 2, SF - 00530 HELSINKI

Mr. Sauli TAKALA, Director of Department, University of Jyväskylä, Institute for Educational Research, Yliopistonkatu 9, SF - 40100 JYVÄSKYLÄ

France: M. Alain FOHR, Chargé de Mission, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, 21 bis, rue La Pérouse, F - 75116 PARIS

M. Bruno HALF, Inspecteur Général de l'Education, Nationale -Doyen des Langues, Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de la Jeunese et des Sports, 110, rue de Grenelle, F - 75007 PARIS

Germany: Dr. Ulrich BLIESENER, Ministerialrat, Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, Am Schiffgraben, 12, D - 3000 HANNOVER 1

Mrs BRANDENBURG Oberschulrätin, Behörde für Schule, Jugend und Berufsbildung, Hamburger Strasse, 31, D - 2000 HAMBURG 76

Herrn Friedhelm DILK, Oberstudiendirektor, Leiter des Friedrich-Ebert-Gymnasium, Ollenhauerstrasse 5, D - 5300 BONN 1

Mr. Joachim RUSS, Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft, Referat II B 3, stellvertr. Heinemannstrasse, 2, D - 5300 BONN 2

Greece: Mme Sophia KOURKOUTIDOU, Conseiller Pédagogique, 1, rue Aristoxenou, GR - 11635 PANGRATIATHENES

Hungary: Mr Pál HELTAI, Nyisztor tér 6., H - 2100 GÖDÖLL

Iceland: Ms Jacqueline FRIDRIKSDOTTIR, Hrisateigur 29, ISL - 105 REYKJAVIK

Mr Magnus FJALLDAL (PhD), Associate Professor of English, University of Iceland, Hrisateigur 29, ISL - 104 REYKJAVIK

Ireland: Mr Cathal O'DOCHARTAIGH, Assistant Chief Inspector, Department of Education, Floor 3, Hawkins House, Hawkins St., IRL - DUBLIN 2

Italy: Professeur Angelo MANENTI, Direction Générale des Relations Culturelles, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Palazzo della Farnesina, I - ROMA

Mme Laura SIGNORI, Inspecteur auprès de la Sovrintendenza Scolastica Regionale Lazio, Via Pianciani, 32, I - ROMA

Luxembourg: Professeur Jean-Pierre OESTREICHER, Président du Conseil Supérieur de l'Education Nationale, 11c, Boulevard Joseph II, L - 1840 LUXEMBOURG

M. Ernest WAGNER, Chargé de la Direction du Centre de langues, 80, Boulevard Général Patton, L - 2316 LUXEMBOURG

Malta: Mr. Andrew BUHAGIAR, Assistant Director of Education, Ministry of Education and the Interior, M - BELTISSEBH

M. Alfred FALZON, Education Officer, Ministry of Education and the Interior, M - BELTISSEBH

Netherlands: Mr dr. J.H.A.L. de JONG, National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), Department of Upper Secondary Education, Postbox 1034, NL - 6801 MG - ARNHEM

Norway: Ms Reidun Oanaes ANDERSEN, Coordinator, University of Bergen, Department of Norwegian as a second language (ANA), Sydnes plass 9, N - 5007 BERGEN

Mrs Helle PUTZ, Institute of Teacher Training, Trondheim University, N - 7055 DRAGVOLL

Poland: Professor Hanna KOMOROWSKA, Institute for Educational Research, Gorczewska 8, PL - WARSAW

Mme Lucyna TARASIEWICZ, Vice-Directeur du Départment de la Formation des Professeurs au Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Al. 1 Armii wp 25, PL - 00918 WARSZAWA

Portugal: Professeur Jao MALACA CASTELEIRO, Faculté des lettres, Université de Lisbonne, R. Duarte Lobo, 85, P - 1700 LISBOA

Mrs. Maria da Piedade MIRANDA MENDES, Direcçao-Geral do Ensino Basico e Secundario, Av. 24 de Julho, 138 - 3°, P - 1399 LISBOA CODEX

Russian Federation: Dr. Alexander BARCHENKOV, Prorector of the Moscow Linguistic University, 38, Ostozhenka, 119034 MOSCOW

Dr Sergei GONCHARENKO, Moscow Linguistic University, 38, Ostozhenka, 119034 MOSCOW

Ms Irina KHALEEVA, Rector, Moscow Linguistic University, 38, Ostozhenka, 119034 MOSCOW

San Marino: Mme Carla NICOLINI, Coordinatore, Dipartimento Istruzione e Cultura, Contrada S. Croce, 4847031 SAN MARINO

Mme Luisa PANTALEONI, Università di San Marino, Contrada delle Mura, 47031 SAN MARINO

Spain: Mme Isabel HERRANZ DE LA MORENA, Jefe del Servicio de Ordenación, Académica de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria, Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, Los Madrazo, 17, E - 28014 MADRID

Sweden: Mr. Bror ANDERED, Director of Education, National Agency of Education, S - 10620 STOCKHOLM

Mr. Rune BERGENTOFT, Sjöormstigen, 1, S - 13552 TYRESÖ

Mr. Jan HELLEKANT, Senior Lecturer, Gothenburg University, Language Teaching Research Unit P.B. 1010, S - 43126 MÖLNDAL

Switzerland: Mme Michelle BOVET, Présidente de la Commission L2, CDIP, Sulgeneckstrasse 70, CH - 3005 BERNE

M. Rolf SIEGWART, Gymnasiallehrer, Burgweg 3, CH - 2232 MAGGLINGEN

Turkey: Professor Dr. Özcan DEMIREL, Membre de la Faculté d'Education de l'Université Hacettepe, Beytepe, TR - 06532 ANKARA

M. Mustafa ERTÜRK, Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu Milli Egitim Bakanligi, TR - 06648 ANKARA

United Kingdom: Ms Elsa DICKS, National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), Accreditation and Quality Assurance Division, 222 Euston Road, GB - LONDON NW1 2BZ

HMI Miss Frances WHITE, Department of Education and Science, Apex Court, Woodlands, Almondsbury, GB - BRISTOL

Speakers, Members of the Preparatory Committee and other Experts

Mr. Brendan CARROLL, Educational Consultant, 8 Manor Place, Newbury, GB - BERKSHIRE RG13 1RB

M. le Professeur Daniel COSTE, Directeur de l'Ecole de Langue et de Civilisation françaises, Université de Genève 3, Place de l'Université, CH - 1211 GENEVE 4

Professor Jan A. van EK, Willem Pijperstraat, 74, NL - 1817 KK ALKMAAR

Professor Theo J.M. van ELS, Instituut voor Toegepaste taalwetenschap,
Erasmusplein 1, kamer 0.71, NL - 6525 HT NIJMEGEN

M. Denis GIRARD, Inspecteur Général Honoraire de l'Education Nationale,
39, Boulevard de Port-Royal, F - 75013 PARIS

Dr. Viljo KOHONEN, Associate Professor in Foreign Language Pedagogy,
University of Tampere, P.O. Box 607, SF - 3101 TAMPERE

Mme Annie MONNERIE, Centre International d'Etudes Pédagogiques (CIEP)
1, Avenue Léon-Journault, F - 92310 SEVRES

Mr. Brian NORTH, Symposium Coordinator, EUROCENTRES Foundation,
Seestrasse, 247, CH - 8038 ZURICH

Mr. Brian PAGE, Educational Consultant, 16, North Parade,
GB - LEEDS LE16 5AY

M. Louis PORCHER, Professeur à l'Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle,
10, rue du Dr. Roux, F - 75015 PARIS

Professeur René RICHTERICH, Ecole de Français Moderne, Université de
Lausanne BFSH 2 Dorigny, CH - 1015 LAUSANNE

Mr. Rolf SCHÄRER, Director General, EUROCENTRES Foundation,
Seestrasse, 247, CH - 8038 ZURICH

Dr. Günther SCHNEIDER, Directeur de l'"Institut für Deutsche Sprache",
Université de Fribourg, CH - 1700 FRIBOURG

Dr G.L.M. STOKS, Senior Curriculum Adviser for Modern Languages, National
Institute for Curriculum Development, (S.L.O.), Postbus 2041,
NL - 7500 CA ENSCHEDE

Mr. Beat VONARBURG, Président du Comité suisse d'organisation, EDK,
Spendacher, CH - 6285 HITZKIRCH

European Communities

M. Joachim OZDOBA, Administrateur Principal, Ressources Humaines,
Education, Formation et Jeunesse, Commission des Communautés Européennes,
200, rue de la Loi, B - 1049 BRUXELLES

LINGUA Programme

M. Charles BARRIERE, Directeur du Bureau LINGUA, Rue du Commerce, 10,
B - 1040 BRUXELLES

Dr. Anthony M. SHAW, Bureau LINGUA, Rue du Commerce, 10, B - 1040 BRUXELLES

Observers

European Parliament: Mme Elfi SCHOENER, Directeur, Direction Générale des Etudes, Secrétariat Général du Parlement Européen, Kirchberg,
L - 2929 LUXEMBOURG

Nordic Council of Ministers: Ms Marja-Liisa KARPPINEN, Director, Nordic Language and Information Centre, Hagnäsgatan 2, SF - 00530 HELSINGFORS

World Federation of Foreign Language Teachers' Associations:
Mr. Philip BAGGULEY, 112, Priory Road, West Bridgford, GB - NOTTINGHAM NG2 5HX

European Association of Distance Teaching Universities: Dr. Teresa GIBERT, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Facultad de Filología (Desp. 617), U.N.E.D., Senda del Rey, s/n, E - 28040 MADRID

Examining Bodies and Cultural Institutions

Alliance Française: Mme Simonne LIEUTAUD, Directeur Pédagogique, Alliance Française, 101, Boulevard Raspail, F - 75020 PARIS CEDEX

Association of British ESOL Examining Boards: Mr. James PAILING, Convener, Association of British ESOL Examining Boards, University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations, Ewert House, Ewert Place, Summertown,
GB - OXFORD OX2 7BZ

British Council: Mr. R. NESS, Head, Examinations Unit, British Council, 10 Spring Gardens, GB - LONDON SW1A 2BN

CITO: The National Institute for Educational Measurement:
Mr dr. J.H.A.L. de JONG, National Institute for Educational Measurement (CITO), Department of Upper Secondary Education, Postbox 1034, NL - 6801 MG - ARNHEM

European Certificate Project: Dr. Arturo TOSI, Co-ordinator, European Certificate Project, c/o University of London Examinations and Assessment Council, Stewart House, 32, Russell Square, GB - LONDON WC1B 5DN

European Schools Board: Mr. Ian MURPHY, Headmaster, European School Bergen, Postbus 99, NL - 1860 AB BERGEN NH

Goethe Institut: Frau Sabine SCHULZ, Leiterin der Prüfungszentrale, Zentralverwaltung, Goethe-Institut Balanstrasse 57, D - 8000 MUNCHEN 90

Dr Sibylle BOLTON, Prüfungszentrale, Goethe-Institut, Balanstrasse 5,
D - 8000 MÜNCHEN 90

Instituto Cervantes: Mr. Ernesto MARTIN PERIS, Director Académico, Instituto Cervantes, Libreros, 15, E-28801 ALCALA DE HENARES (MADRID)

Instituto de Cultura e Lingua Portuguesa: Professeur Jao MALACA CASTELEIRO, Faculté des lettres, Université de Lisbonne, R. Duarte Lobo, 85,
P - 1700 LISBOA

International Certificate Conference (ICC): Mr. Anthony FITZPATRICK, Secretary General of the International Certificate Conference (ICC), Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband, Pädagogische Arbeitsstelle, Holzhausenstrasse, 21, D - 6000 FRANKFURT/MAIN

Istituti Italiani di Cultura: Professeur Angelo MANENTI, Direction Générale des Relations Culturelles, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Palazzo della Farnesina, I - ROMA

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate: Dr. Peter HARGREAVES, Director English as a Foreign Language, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, Syndicate Buildings, 1 Hills Road, GB - CAMBRIDGE CB1 2EU

Dr. Michael MILANOVIC, Head of the Research and Evaluation Unit, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, Syndicate Buildings, 1 Hills Road, GB - CAMBRIDGE CB1 2EU

Università Italiana per Stranieri, Perugia: Prof. Fausto MINCIARELLI, Università Italiana per Stranieri Palazzzo Gallenga, Piazza Fortebraccio, I-PERUGIA

Università di Siena, Scuola di Lingua e Cultura Italiana per Stranieri: Prof.ssa Maria Cristina PECCIANTI, Docente, Scuola di Lingua e Cultura Italiana per Stranieri - Siena, Via dei Termini, 6I - 53100 SIENA

Non-Member States

United States of America: Dr. Richard LAMBERT, Director of the National Foreign Language Center at the John Hopkins University, Fourth Floor, 1619 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. WASHINGTON D.C. 200 36 / U.S.A.

Swiss Observers

Mr W. John ARNOLD, Eurocentres Foundation, Seestrasse 247, CH - 8038 ZURICH

Professor Dr. Urs BUHLER, Französisch an der Primarschule, Kaserne Zürich, Kasernenstrasse 49, CH - 8004 ZURICH

Dr. Christoph FLUGEL, Dipartimento della Pubblica Educazione, CH - 6501 BELLINZONA

Mr. Hansjörg GRAF, Päd. Sekretär, Abt. Volksschule, Schaffhauserstrasse 78, CH - 8090 ZURICH

Mr. Frank HEYWORTH, Eurocentres Foundation, Seestrasse 247, CH - 8038 ZURICH

Professor Georges LÜDI, Directeur, Séminaire des langues et littératures romanes, Université de Bâle, Stapfelberg 7-5, CH - 4057 BASEL

M. Gérard MERKT, IRDP, 48, rue de la Côte, CH - 2000 NEUCHATEL

Mr. Martin SCHATZMANN, SKA Personaldienst International,
Brandschenkenstrasse 10, CH - 8022 ZURICH

Mr. Rudolf WALTHER, Amt für Bildungsforschung, ED des Kt. Bern,
Sulgeneckstrasse 70, CH - 3005 BERN

Mr. Aldo WIDMER, Rektor, Kaufm. Berufschule, CH - 8507 WEINFELDEN

Mr. Arnold WYRSCH, ZBS, Luzernerstrasse 69, CH - 6030 EBIKON

Council of Europe

Mr Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Mr Jean-François ALLAIN, Deputy head, Modern Languages Department

Mme Marlène von den STEINEN, Secretary, Modern Languages Department

Ms Lisa CALVELEY, Secretary, Modern Languages Department

Mlle Marie-Claude LEROUX, Translator

Mlle Claudine CALISTE, Interpreter

M. Roland SCHEURER, Interpreter

M. Christopher TYCSKA, Interpreter

APPENDIX 2

SYMPOSIUM PROGRAMME

Sunday 10th November

OPENING CEREMONY

18.00   **Opening of the Symposium** by Pierre LUISONI, Chairman of the Education Committee of the Council of Europe, Delegate of the (CDIP/EDK) for International Relations, Chairman of the Symposium

18.15   **Opening Addresses** by:

- Mr. Jean CAVADINI, President, Swiss Conference of Cantonal Directors of Education (CDIP/EDK)

- Mr. Maitland STOBART, Deputy Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe

19.00   Aperitif and cold buffet

Monday 11th November

ORIENTATION

9.15   Opening Announcements by the Chairman

9.20   **The Symposium in the Context of the Modern Languages Projects of the Council of Europe**, by the General Rapporteur: Dr. John TRIM, Project Adviser

9.50   **The Symposium Phases**, by Mr. Beat VONARBURG, Chairman of the Swiss Committee

PHASE 1:   TRANSPARENCY AND COHERENCE IN THE DESIGN OF OBJECTIVES, ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES

10.00   **Transparency and Coherence: Why and for whom?** by Professor René RICHTERICH, University of Lausanne and Professor Günther SCHNEIDER, University of Fribourg

10.45   Break

11.15   Group Discussion

12.00   **Examples of Innovations:**

          - **The "Diplômes élementaire et approfondi de langue française -
          (DELF/DALF)**, by Mrs Annie MONNERIE, CIEP, Sèvres

          - **The English-Speaking Union (ESU) Framework** by
          Mr Brendan CARROLL, Educational Consultant

13.00   *Lunch*

15.00   Group Discussion

16.00   **Examples of Innovations (cont.):**

          - **"Treffpunkte"** by Mr Beat VONARBURG, Chairman, Swiss Committee

          - **"Graded Objectives"** by Mr Brian PAGE, Educational Consultant

17.00   *Break*

17.30   Group Discussion

18.30   *Transfer to Hotel Panorama, Feusisberg*

19.30:   *Dinner*

21.00   Show & Tell Sessions on Innovations

Tuesday 12th November

9.15   Announcements by the Chairman

9.30   **Foreign Language Learning as Learner Education: Facilitating Self-
          Direction in Language Learning**, by Professor Viljo KOHONEN,
          University of Tampere

10.00   **Modes of Language Assessment: Options in Test Construction**, by
          Mr Brendan CARROLL, Educational Consultant

10.30   *Break*

11.00   Group Discussion: producing poster reports

13.00   *Lunch*

          **PHASE 2: BEYOND THRESHOLD LEVEL: SPECIFYING OBJECTIVES FOR
          DIVERSE NEEDS: CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?**

15.00   **Observations of the Definition of Objectives and Modes of
          Evaluation Beyond threshold Level**, by Professor Daniel COSTE,
          University of Geneva

15.15	**Round Table: The Definition of Objectives Beyond Threshold Level from Different Perspectives**

Chair: Professor Daniel COSTE

Mr Rolf SIEGWART	(Swiss Upper Secondary Reform)
Prof. Theo VAN ELS	(Dutch Upper Secondary Reform)
Mr Tony FITZPATRICK	(International Certificate Conference)
Dr Arturio TOSI	(European Certificate Project)
Dr Ernesto MARTIN	(Instituto Cervantes)

17.00	*Break*

17.30	Group Discussion:

18.30	*Transfer to Hotel Panorama, Feusisberg*

19.30	*Gala Dinner*

Wednesday 12th November   Phase 2 (continued)

9.15	Group Discussion: Beyond Threshold Level (continued)

12.00	Group Reports: Plenary Discussion

13.00	*Lunch*

PHASE 3:   TOWARDS A LEARNER-CENTRED EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING LANGUAGE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

15.00	**Some Fundamental Issues in Designing a Framework**, by Mr Brian PAGE

15.30	**A European Language Portfolio, A Possible Format**, by Mr Rolf SCHÄRER, Eurocentres Foundation

16.00	*Break*

16.30	**Round Table Discussion** Chair: Professor Louis PORCHER, University "Sorbonne Nouvelle", Paris

Dr Sybille BOLTON, Goethe Institute	(Cultural Institute)
Dr Peter HARGREAVES, Cambridge Syndicate	(Exam Board)
Mr Frank HEYWORTH, Eurocentres	(Adult Education)
Mr Brian PAGE	(Educationalist)
Mr Martin SCHATZMANN, Credit Suisse	(Sponsor, End-user)
Mr Arnold WYRSCH, Central Swiss CDIP	(Teacher)

17.30	*Transfer to Hotel Panorama, Feusisberg*

19.30:	*Dinner*

21.00:	Information Fair: Examinations & Certificates

193

Thursday 14th November   Phase 3 (continued)

9.15   Announcements by the Chairman

9.30   **European Language Portfolio: Some Options for a Working Approach to Design Scales of Proficiency**, by Mr Brian North, Eurocentres Foundation

10.15   Break

11.45   Group Discussion

12.15   Excursion to the Solothurn Festival of Languages

PHASE 4:   CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS; NETWORKS & PROJECTS
Friday 15th November

9.00   **Formulation of Conclusions & Recommendations:**

- Objectives, Learning & Assessment: transparency & coherence in the design of objectives, assessment and certification procedures. (Phase 1)

- Beyond Threshold Level: defining objectives and qualification systems for diverse needs in upper secondary adult & professional education. (Phase 2)

- Towards a European Language Portfolio: designing a learner-orientated framework for reporting language learning achievement. (Phase 3)

Themes to be considered from different viewpoints:

- What: Transparency   -How: Feasibility
         Coherence   Cooperation
                                         Modularity
                                         Exemplification
                                         Dissemination
                                         Implementation

11.00   Break

11.30   **Ways Forward: Organising an Action Programme**

-   Formation of interaction networks according to interest and commitment

13.00   Lunch

15.00   Network Fair - Informal Networking

        Writing Conclusions and Recommendations

19.30   Dinner and Free Evening (Shopping Excursion)

PHASE 5: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS
Saturday 16th November

9.30   **Summing Up** by the Rapporteur Général

        Presentation of Conclusions and Recommendations

10.00   **Studying Conclusions & Recommendations:**
        informal consultations

11.15   **Adoption of Conclusions & Recommendations.**

12.15   **Closure of the Symposium:**

        Closing Addresses by:

        Mr Maitland STOBART

        Mr Denis GIRARD, Chairman of the Modern Languages Project Group

        Mr Pierre LUISONI

APPENDIX 3

SHOW & TELL SESSIONS ON INNOVATIONS IN THE DEFINITION OF LEVELS, ASSESSMENT AND CERTIFICATION

INFORMATION FAIR ON EXAMINATIONS AND CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

PRESENTATIONS

- Threshold Level 1990: Professor Jan Van Ek
- A Curriculum Design for Lifelong Language Learning: Professor Demirel
- Eurocentres "Map Plus": A coherent and transparent computer instrument for mapping learners' achievements and needs: Mr Frank Heyworth
- Les points de Rencontre: Tests: Mme Michelle Bovet & M. Rudolf Walther:
- Un test de classement des compétences en allemand langue seconde au passage de la scolarité secondaire de niveau I à II: M. Gérard Merkt
- Cahiers "Compétences-Seuils" pour les enseignements général, technique et professionnel: M. Michel Dumont
- The Dutch National Action Programme: Professor Theo Van Els
- The Outcomes Based Approach and Subject - The NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) Framework, Mrs Elsa Dicks
- "DATAFFLO": A computer instrument for the formulation of objectives for foreign language learning. SLO: Mr Gé Stoks.

ORGANISATIONS WITH STANDS:

Alliance Française
Association of British ESOL (English as a Second Language) Examining Bodies (ABEEB)
Cito
Danish examinations and certificates for Adult Education Language Learning
Finnish Foreign Language Diploma for Professional Purposes
International Certificate Conference
Interuniversity Consortium: European Certificate in Modern Languages
Instituto Cervantes
German Abitur: Levels & Guidelines
Goethe Institute
Maltese examination materials in French & German
National Council for Vocational Qualifications
Tests for Norwegian as a Foreign Language
Universita di Siena
Universita per Stranieri, Perugia
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

VIDEOS:

Workshop 1A: Objectives in Upper Secondary: Mr Gé Stoks
ICC Level 3: Mr Tony Fitzpatrick
Oral Assessment Situations for French at the end of Primary: Prof. Urs Bühler

POSTERS:

An attempt to describe Levels of Proficiency Tests across EC Languages as represented by examining bodies/interests in Member States; ALTE: Association of Language Testers in Europe: Peter Hargreaves

The European Certificate of Attainment in Modern Languages: a multilingual initiative in the field of language testing; Interuniversity Consortium: Arturo Tosi

APPENDIX 4

BRIEF ACCOUNTS OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS, PROJECTS, REFORMS, RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE SYMPOSIUM

ANDERED Bror / Sweden

There is a new Secondary Education Act (1991) for the upper secondary level. Curriculum work has just started. A national assessment has been launched.

ANDERSEN Reidun Oanaes / Norway

Test in Norwegian language for foreigners for Levels III, II & I

BAKOSSOVA Danica / Czechoslovakia

Importance of establishing the definition of language learning objectives, establishment of equivalences between descriptions of attainment across Europe, especially important in our conditions when bilingual high schools are established in Czechoslovakia.

BERGENTOFT Rune / Sweden

Proposed new syllabi for the teaching of modern languages in upper sec. schools (exists in English version). Elaborated by a team at Göteborg University: Models for evaluating oral proficiency in English, French and German in upper sec. schools.

BLIESENER Ulrich / Germany

There has been in recent years a number of attempts to redefine standards, only now (in view of the internal market) has serious work begun.

BOLTON Sibylle / Goethe Institute (Germany)

The Goethe Institute has developed three more examinations recently (now we offer 8 examinations in all at different levels from Waystage to Advanced). The three new examinations are: "Prüfung Grundstufe 1" (Waystage); "Abschlussprüfung Grundstufe für Jugendliche" (age 11-14); "Prüfung Wirtschaftsdeutsch International" (Business German). We also developed training material for examiners/markers (video and written information).

BOVET Michelle / Suisse

Dans "Les Points de Recontre" (parus dans "La Suisse - un défi", CDIP 1987) étaient définis les objectifs de fin de scolarité obligatoire (9e année scolaire ou niveau secondaire I). Suite à ce travail, des tests ont été élaborés, tests qui devraient servir de modèles, (exemples pour le CO, EO, CE, et EE). Pour le français langue étrangère, les modèles ont paru en version définitive, après analyse et correction. En ce qui concerne l'allemand comme langue étrangère, les modèles d'évaluation sont actuellement en phase d'analyse; ils vont être améliorés et paraître sous forme définitive en mars

1992. En plus, les modèles devront être adaptés pour les élèves de langue maternelle italienne.

Vu la complexité du problème d'évaluation, le travail ne s'arrêtera pas avec la publication des modèles, mais il sera intégré dans un contexte plus large qui devrait entre autre tenir compte de la réalité suivante: L'apprentissage de la 1ère langue étrangère devrait aboutir à des niveaux analogues.

En ce qui concerne le niveau secondaire II, il faut poursuivre les efforts déjà entrepris.

BUGHAGIAR Andrew / Malta

To date, Maltese candidates can sit for GCE Ordinary and Advanced level of UK Boards at 16+ and 19+ respectively. In addition a Malta Matriculation Board is co-organised by The University of Malta and the Department of Education. A major new project is the localisation process whereby these examinations will be run by the Malta Matriculation Board. The move from UK Boards is intended to reflect a more European orientation with emphasis on aural/oral skills. Languages: Maltese; English; Italian; French; German; Russian. The exercise should be in place by June 1993.

CINK Pavel / Czechoslovakia

- Participation in the work on the conception of language teaching in
    Czechoslovakia;
- Preparation of a new regulation in the State language education in the
    Czech Republic;
- Discussions concerning the conception of the State language examination
    (system of the State certification and qualification);
- Foreign languages and the school leaving examination/Maturita.

DEMIRAL Ozcan / Turkey

New curricula for foreign languages (English-French-German) at secondary education were drawn up by a Commission in the Ministry of Education. Objectives, especially in ELT programme were stated in terms of terminal behaviours. New textbooks will be written to attain the objectives in the new curricula.

DICKS Elsa / United Kingdom

New qualifications framework based on outcomes being developed for England, Wales and NI (National Vocational qualifications. The objective is to create a framework which is relevant to work; transparent and clearly understandable to employers; improves the skills and flexibility of the workforce, and provides pathways for access and progression to individuals.

DILK Friedhelm / Allemagne

a) Soucieux de faire en sorte que dans les deux pays le plus grand nombre possible de jeunes gens acquièrent une excellente connaissance de la langue, de la culture et des modes de pensée communs aux deux pays, le Ministre de

l'Education Nationale de la République Française et le Plénipotentiaire de la République fédérale d'Allemagne pour les Affaires Culturelles dans le cadre du traité sur la coopération franco-allemande sont convenus le 27 octobre 1987 à Francfort de rechercher une formule "intégrée" permettant d'acquérir simultanément les diplômes correspondant aux formations conduisant au baccalauréat et à la Hochschulreife. A partir de l'année scolaire 87/88 on a mis en oeuvre une expérience scolaire, d'abord au FriedrichEbert-Gymnasium de Bonn, lycée avec section bilingue franco-allemande, ayant pour but d'oeuvrer, en tenant compte des réalités nationales et des expériences menées en commun, pour créer les conditions nécessaires à la mise en place d'offres de formation correspondantes. Outre le lycée Friedrich-Ebert de Bonn participent à cette expérience les lycées Jean Perrin de Lyon et Wagenburg de Stuttgart et la Ziehenschule de Francfort. La mise en oeuvre de cette expérience scolaire se situe dans un cadre pédagogique commun dont les principales caractéristiques sont:

- La garantie de la possibilité d'étudier dans les deux pays

- La concordance des programmes d'enseignement et des exigences requises

- la coopération pour l'organisation de l'enseignement et des examens de fin d'études

Dans les établissements qui participent à l'expérience, une formation d'au moins trois années sera dispensée en vue de la délivrance simultanée des deux diplômes. Cette formation accueillera en règle générale des élèves allemand en République fédérale d'Allemagne et des élèves français en France qui étudient la langue du partenaire comme première langue vivante (étrangère).

Cette formation peut être suivie par un nombre limité d'élèves ayant la nationalité du pays partenaire.
Au Friedrich-Ebert-Gymnasium on a effectué deux sessions d'examens, en 1990 et 1991, avec succès.

b) projet-pilote au Friedrich-Ebert-Gymnasium de Bonn: enseignement du japonais.

DUMONT Michel / Belgique

Suite au rapport final d'une Commission scientifique pour l'apprentissage des langues modernes, installée par le Ministre de l'Education et de la recherche scientifique, je préside, actuellement, un groupe de travail interréseaux chargé de la mise en application des recommandations de cette commission.

Nous travaillons depuis une année à cette tâche qui nous a amenés à définir un cadre d'apprentissage, les objectifs à atteindre à l'issue de l'enseignement secondaire ainsi que les modalités d'évaluation et de certification. Notre réflexion s'est inscrite, bien sûr, dans le cadre des recommandations du Conseil de l'Europe et dans le souci, en matière d'évaluation et de certification, de nous intégrer dans le "Passeport européen des langues".

En outre, une nouvelle circulaire sur l'évaluation est en application depuis le 1.1.91 et son prolongement dans l'apprentissage des langues modernes insiste sur la pratique des 4 compétences.

ERTÜRK Mustafa / Turkey

A commission has been set up in the Ministry of National Education for the purpose of curriculum development and textbook writing regarding foreign languages (English-French-German) teaching at secondary education. A new curriculum for the first level of secondary education in 3 languages have been drawn up and approved by the Board of Education. The textbooks will be written in according with this new curricula.

FALZON Alfred / Malta

-   Adoption of a new method for teaching French as a foreign language to 11+ students (Secondary schools and Junior Lyceums) with special reference to French culture and civilisation, including the French-speaking world.

-   Examination reforms in French based on forward-looking methods.

-   Project on workbooks in French on Maltese socio-cultural environment and the Mediterranean region (with socio-linguistically motivated text types of present day French).

FITZPATRICK Anthony / International Certificate Conference

The International Certificate Conference is concerned with the comparability of standards/qualifications across 9 European languages in its unit-credit system. Recent developments have concentrated upon a "stage 3" (i.e. post Threshold level) as well as on the development of specifications for languages for specific purposes (e.g. "English for business Purposes").

FLÜGEL Christoph / Ticino (Switzerland)

Reform of the German "Matura" (school leaving) examinations. Project: Work on the "ESU Framework Project" (Carroll/West) with language teachers in Ticino with the aim of adapting the scales proposed by Carroll and West to the specific needs of the various languages taught at different school levels in Ticino.

R & D work within the field of evaluation and assessment (especially for German) at the end of compulsory schooling.

FRIDRIKSDOTTIR Jacqueline / Iceland

1) Revision of the curriculum at the upper-secondary level (16-20 year old) vocational and academic levels;
2) Survey on foreign needs at the upper-secondary level.

FRITZ Thomas / Austria

During the last few years the discussion about certification has been dominating developments in Austrian adult education both from a methodological as well as from a more general view. This is essentially true for German as a Foreign Language where any existing model is dominated by "German Perspectives".

HARGREAVES Peter / University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (United Kingdom)

UCLES is involved in a number of relevant projects:
1. An attempt to describe levels of proficiency tests across EC languages as represented by examining bodies in member countries;
2. Lingua-sponsored project on description of critical levels of language performance for interchange (commercial / cultural / etc in Europe.

HEINDLER Dagmar / Austria

New curriculum for foreign language teaching at the lower secondary level (1985)
New curriculum for foreign language teaching at the upper secondary level (1989)
New regulations for the "Matura" (final exam) based on the new syllabus to become effective in 1992.

HELTAI Pàl / Hungary

1. Rapid expansion in teaching English and German in Hungary leading to need for expansion in language teacher training.
2. Increased need for language learning in all walks of life.
3. Developments in 1. & 2. leading to increased demands on the national language testing centre.
4. Introduction of international examinations and revision of the Hungarian national foreign languages testing system leading to desire to achieve comparability between different language certifications.

HERRANZ Isabel / Spain

In the context of the new Spanish educational system, the new curricula for Primary and Compulsory Secondary Education have been recently published (September 1991). The curricula for upper secondary education are due for 1992. Work is being undertaken in both theoretical and formal aspects of evaluation in all levels of the school system (New regulations due for the end of 1992).

HELLEKANT Jan / Sweden

Unlike other European countries Sweden has no "Baccalauréat". Pupils are graded by their teachers according to a strictly norm-referenced system where there is no pass/fail criterion. Only pupils who leave school with very good grades have a chance of entering university. Accordingly, we have little experience of exams and certifications. On the other hand, we should know a great deal about language testing. When the baccalauréat was abolished in 1968, national tests were introduced which were not to replace the old exam but to guide teachers when they graded (i.e. ranked) their pupils. The aim of those responsible for the national language tests has been to produce tests on a scientific basis - tests which can compete with the best-known international language tests. The national tests are reading, listening and writing tests. The last few years we have experimented with various oral tests. Oral language tests may be introduced on a large scale in a not too distant future.

The new government has declared that it will drop the present normreferenced system, make curriculum objectives more comprehensive and precise, and introduce some kind of criterion-referenced evaluation. It is possible that such a reform will lead to the implementation of certain exams and certificates in the school system.

HEYWORTH Frank / Eurocentres

The development of a system of levels assessment and certification which aims to give a transparent account to multi-lingual participants from around the world of their language learning objectives, the progress they are making, and the achievement at the end of their courses. The development has involved the creation of language scales and sub-scales, and assessment procedures and will now address the issue of readily meaningful certification.

ILSOE Ingrid / Danemark

L'enseignement des langues étrangères dans les Centres d'Enseignement aux Adultes au Danemark.

KAILA Sakari / Finland

Development of national curricula (syllabuses) of foreign languages;
Teaching and testing oral skills (cf. Dr. Sauli Takala);
Co-operative learning (esp. Prof. Viljo Kohonen as an expert).

KOMOROWSKA Hanna/ Poland

In 1990 a new teacher training system was established in Poland whereby 1500 freshman students were enrolled in the English 400 in the French and 400 in the German stream at 55 new colleges. The 3 year course leading to a B.A. ought to lead to a qualifying exam in the field of both language and methodology. The system has just started its second year of existence - first graduates are expected in 1993.

LAMBERT Richard / United States

Research on National Language Policy in the United States and Europe Symposium on Language Testing for Diagnosis and Feedback

Research on Language Skill Attrition

Chair of task force on consensus standards for Proprietary Language Schools

MAKOSCH Mike / Migros Club Schools (Switzerland)

Attempting to provide a coherent/transparent system of options for language learners and teachers above threshold level with regard to courses and qualifications.

MARTIN PERIS Ernesto / Instituto Cervantes

The recent creation of the Instituto Cervantes for the diffusion of the Spanish language and culture in the world.
- Immediate Projects: definition of linguistic objectives and levels - methodoligical directives
Creation of Diplomas for Spanish, which have been available for 2 years.

MURPHY Ian / Netherlands

European schools have each a number of language sections in which pupils learn the basic subjects through the language of their section.

NESS Robert / The British Council (United Kingdom)

The British Council actively supports the educational and promotional efforts of British examining boards, and works closely with the boards overseas, We are also partowners of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with UCLES and an Australian partner.

OESTREICHER Jean-Pierre / Luxembourg

Enseignement des langues dans une situaton trilingue: luxembourgeois, allemand, français.

Deux langues à l'école primaire, l'allemand et le français (à côté de la langue maternelle: le luxembourgeois) - plus de 30 % d'enfants étrangers.

Au lycée s'àjoute, dès le 2e année l'anglais, et, selon les sections, le latin ou une 4e langue vivante.

Le rôle des langues vivantes dans l'enseignement technique.

PANTALEONI Luisa / San Marino

I am particularly interested in drawing a syllabus for Primary Foreign Language studies, and in curriculum development at University Level (see new degree for primary teachers in Italy).

I am involved in getting San Marino qualifications recognised by Italian Ministries (of Education, and University) and official European recognition of Diplomas and degrees issued by RSM.

SCHULZ Sabine / Institut Goethe

L'institut Goethe a développé au cours des années 1987 - 1991 trois nouveaux examens (dont deux sont de "special purposes") et du matériel (video) pour la formation des examinateurs.

SCHOENER ELFI / European Parliament

Diverses initiatives au niveau du Parlement européen et de ses commissions responsables.

SHANTOS Alecos / Cyprus

The State Institutes of Further Education (SIFE) are following the secondary school system in instituting common Island wide examinations in the foreign languages taught (English, French, German, Italian, Turkish and Greek as a foreign language). The exams are to be standardised at 3 levels (Elem-Interm-Adv), addressed independently and made available to non-SIFE students.

SHAW Tony / Lingua Bureau

The EC LINGUA Programme is very conscious of the need for EC-level (or wider) development of systems of certification and qualification: the need for comparability across languages and countries is self-evident, as is the need for certificates and qualifications to be meaningful and relevant to employers and employees (and others). Lingua is eager for early results, and has held two working group meetings on the subject, the second of which produced proposals for two projects, which are now being developed with a view to European Commission funding. These set out to identify and validate the job activities and levels of difficulty which are relevant and meaningful to employers, as a necessary foundation for proposals for a European framework for qualifications and certifications in this area.

SIEGWART ROLF / Suisse

Elaboration de plans d'études - cadres pour l'enseignement secondaire II de culture générale. (Les plans - cadres pour les langues seront brievement présentés dans la deuxième phase du symposium.

SIGNORI BALDO Laura / Italy

The current trend in Italy is the promotion of foreign language teaching in general. The new syllabus for primary education foresees the teaching of a foreign language from the age of 7 onwards. As for the first two years of secondary education , the teaching of a second foreign language is coordinated by a new project called "Brocea Project". As experimental level a second foreign language is already introduced at middle school level (from the age of 11 - 14).

STOKS Gé / Netherlands

Research and Development Programme Benelux Workshop 1a

Within the framework of the R & D programme of the Benelux workshop several projects are taking place. Research into the formulation of objectives takes place in several countries on the basis of the model (Van Ek 1986, 1987) presented at the Benelux workshop. A colloquy has been planned in cooperation with the INRP in Paris for February 1992, during which the parameters for the formulation of objectives will be analysed. An interim report on the progress of the work within the context of this R & D programme will be published later this year.

Reform of final examinations in the Netherlands.

A working committee chaired by professor Van Els will formulate recommendations for new final examinations for upper secondary general education. Issues addressed include level specifications, parameters for objectives and the role of the four skills within the examination syllabus.

Curriculum Development Project at the Institute for Curriculum Development, SLO.

In close collaboration with the working committee chaired by professor Van Els, the Modern Language Project "12 - 18" at SLO will elaborate a curricular framework for upper secondary general education. A syllabus for reading comprehension for French in upper secondary education with practical examples has already been developed. Further elaborations in other areas will follow later. The overall idea is to develop a task-based curriculum.

TAKALA Sauli / Finland

I have coordinated projects that have dealt with the analysis of FL needs in Finnish business and industry and subsequently coordinated the development of a proficiency testing system for English and German. Also I have contributed to the development of reforms in the international matriculation examination.

TARASIEWICZ Lucyna / Pologne

En fonction de la réforme de la formation professionnelle, le Ministère de l'Education a procédé à la révision et au sanctionnement des titres qualificatifs donnant l'accès aux postes de l'enseignement de langues vivantes. L'ordonnance du "BOEN" d'octobre 1991 ouvre de nouvelles voies d'accès à la profession. A part le diplôme traditionnel universitaire de Magister en philologie ou en linguistique appliquées on a sanctionné le diplôme du collège de la formation des enseignants des langues vivantes et le certificat de l'examen national professionel de langues vivantes, ouvert aux certifiés du DALF, CAE ou d'autres équivalents.

VAN ELS Theo J.M / Netherlands

The examinations Revision Committee is in the final stage of drawing up new exam programmes for the 5 languages, in which a fair degree of specification is attempted. The Dutch Government are in the process of establishing a Task Force (to be chaired by me) for the implementation of the National Action Programme, in the years 1992 - 1994.

VAN HAESENDONCK Julien / Belgique

- Renouvellement des programmes pour l'enseignement des langues étrangères
  - axé sur les besoins des apprenants
  - en accord avec les principes d'un "niveau survie" et d'un "niveau seuil"

- Réforme de l'inspection
  - l'inspection de l'Etat contrôle le niveau des études, sur la base d'objectifs officiels
  - des corps de conseilleurs pédagogiques conseillent, coordonnent, motivent.

207

WAGNER Ernest / Luxembourg

Le Centre de Langues Luxembourg a été creé en 1981 par l'actuel responsable du Centre pour donner à des adultes un moyen d'apprendre à communiquer, oralement et par écrit, dans la langue de leur choix . Par rapport à l'enseignement traditionnel au Luxembourg une importance plus grande est accordée à la compétence de communication à atteindre en un laps de temps raisonnable.

WHITE Frances / United Kingdom

- For learners aged 11 - 16 the introduction of a national curriculum including a foreign language requirement, associated assignment targets and certification
- Debate about the place of language learning in the post 16 (voluntary) sector
- The languages lead body, established via Department of employment to advise on National system of qualifications in the use of languages in the workplace
- Unprecedented demand for languages in all post 16 sectors of education.

WYRSCH-SCHWANDER Arnold / Central Cantons, (Switzerland)

Curriculum-development for primary and secondary school.

ACTION NETWORK PROPOSED BY PARTICIPANTS AT THE "NETWORK FAIR"

1. Surveys and Information Exchange

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Directory of Organisations with working interests related to Symposium themes:		E. Dicks U. Bliesener

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Survey of Existing Scales: of Proficiency	B. North	J. De Jong S. Lieutaud A. Barchenkov

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Glossary of Terms to be used in Scale descriptors:	Elsa Dicks	U. Bliesener

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Survey of FL Exams relevant to Vocational Training: (Lingua Action III)	Tony Fitzpatrick	Mike Makosch Sakari Kaila A. Buhagiar P. Cink

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Vocational/Occupational Language Frameworks Information Exchange: - Framework(s) - Assessment - Certification	Frances White	Elsa Dicks Tony Fitzpatrick Sakari Kaila A. Buhagiar

2. European Level "Framework Projects"

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
European Language Framework: Descriptors	A. Tosi B. North	Elsa Dicks Francis White Jan Van Ek Bob Ness Theo Van Els Ö. Demirel Pal Heltai S. Goncharenko

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Critical Levels & Categories relevant to World of Work: - identif. of job activities/performance indicators relevant to employers/ees - establish how they cluster at different levels	LINGUA Tony Shaw Mike Milanovic	Sabine Schultz Sybille Bolton Brian North John de Jong A. Buhagiar

PROJECT European Language Portfolio:	CONTACT M. Dumont	PARTNERS S. Kourkoutidou M. Petrova M. Miranda Mendes J.Van Haesendonck L. Signori A. Manenti F. Minciarelli E. Wagner R. Bergentoft J. Hellenkant F. Heyworth C. O'Dochartaigh D. Heindler Th. Fritz M. Bovet A. Falzon P. Cink A. Tosi I. Khaleeva

3.   Regional "Framework Projects"

PROJECT Swiss Project: - Framework - Portfolio - Assessment	CONTACT C. Flügel M. Bovet	PARTNERS Commission L2 CILA (Univ.'s) Eurocentres Club Schools Federal Author. van Haesendonck S. Kourkoutidou B. Andered S. Kourkoutidou U. Bliesener

PROJECT Benelux Project (Workshop 1A):	CONTACT	PARTNERS
- International Comparison of Objectives for Upper Secondary General	Theo Van Els Gé Stoks	J.Van Haesendonck M, Dumont C. Flügel U. Bliesener R. Bergentoft B. Andered A. Shantos P. Cink C. Versele (Eur. Schools)
- Communicative Testing & Teacher Support	B: J. Van Haesendonck UK: Robin Davis NL: Chantal Westrate	M. Dumont U. Bliesener R. Bergentoft Gé Stoks

PROJECT Nordic Project:Process & Product in Language Learning:	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Policies, goals and profic- iency scales in L2 and FL: towards the European Framework through Nordic compatibility	Bror Andered	Helle Putz Esther Glahn Sakari Kaila A. Shantos
- Self Directed Learning, through teacher cooperation (Workshop 2B Finland 1993)	Viljo Kohonen	Hanna Komorowsksa Özcan Demirel Sakari Kaila

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Italian & San Marino	L. Pantaleoni (SM)	A. Buhagiar
Workshop: - Investigate feasibility of transferable attainment targets for primary, lower, middle & upper sec, univ. - Beyond Threshold Level	L. Signori (I)	

4. Specialised Areas:

Assessment:

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Training for Language Testers & Examiners: - Rater training - Establishing Rating Scales - Defining Objectives - Statistical Analyses - Item writing - Item banking - Exam organisation	J. de Jong T. Fitzpatrick M. Milanovic	Reidun Andersen J. Van Haesendonck S. Lieutaud Pal Heltai P. Cink A. Tosi A. Shantos

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Translation and Interpreting as a tool of FL Assessment:	A. Barchekov	Pal Heltai

Vocational Training:

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
FL Education in Initial Vocational Training: - definition of needs - definition of objectives - development of courses - methodology - assessment & certification	U. Bliesener	A. Widmer J-P. Berset J. Brandenburg M. Bovet Ö. Demirel A. Buhagiar

Bilingualism:

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Bilingual Sections in Secondary Schools - organisation & TT - objectives - subjects taught in target language - evaluation & certification	F. Dilk	M. Dumont I Brandenburg A. Buhagiar D. Bakossova P. Cink A. Tosi

PROJECT	CONTACT	PARTNERS
Bilingualism & Education: - Assessment & Certification of top levels of competence (bilingual, univ. entrance) - Assessment & Certification of bilingual academic language use in multilingual schools and higher education	G. Lüdi A. Tosi	Theo Van Els C. Flügel G. Schneider M-C. Peccianti A. Buhagiar P. Cink

211