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**COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION**

**Education Committee**

**"Language Learning for European Citizenship"**

**Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment.  
A Common European Framework of Reference.**

Draft 2 of a Framework Proposal

## CONTENTS

	Page
Prefatory Note .....	ii
Synopsis .....	iii
Chapter 1. Historical background .....	1
Chapter 2. Aims and Functions of the Framework.....	6
Chapter 3. Approach adopted .....	9
Chapter 4. Language use and the language user/learner .....	18
Chapter 5. Tasks and Text .....	63
Chapter 6. The processes of language learning and teaching.....	79
Chapter 7. Linguistic diversification and the curriculum .....	95
Chapter 8. Scaling and levels .....	110
Chapter 9. Assessment .....	142
Appendix. Illustrative scales of descriptors .....	161

## PREFATORY NOTE.

This Second Draft of the proposal for a Common European Framework of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment represents the latest stage in a process which has been actively pursued since 1971 and owes much to the collaboration of many members of the teaching profession across Europe and beyond.

The Council of Europe therefore acknowledges with gratitude the contribution made by:

- the Project Group *Language Learning for European Citizenship*, representing all member countries of the Council for Cultural Cooperation with Canada as a participating observer, for their general oversight of its development;
- the Working Party set up by the Project Group, with twenty members from the member countries representing the different professional interests concerned, as well as representatives of the European Commission (DG XXII) and its LINGUA programme, for their invaluable advice and supervision of the project;
- the Authoring Group set up by the Working Party, consisting of Dr. J.L.M. Trim (Project Director), Professor D. Coste (Ecole Normale Supérieure de Fontenay / Saint Cloud, CREDIF, France), Dr. B. North (Eurocentres, Switzerland) together with Mr. J. Sheils, Programme Adviser. The Council of Europe expresses its thanks to the institutions mentioned for making it possible for the experts concerned to contribute to this important work. The Authoring Group has produced both the First and this revised Second Draft;
- the many colleagues and institutions across Europe, who responded, often with great care and in concrete detail, to the request for feedback on the First Draft, circulated in the autumn of 1995.

Well over 1000 copies of the First Draft were sent out for comment and over 200 questionnaires returned, many being the result of extensive consultations on an institutional or in some cases national scale. The Second Draft is the result of careful study of those returns and has been extensively amended in consequence. It will now be submitted for scrutiny and approval to the Final Conference of the Modern Language Project in April 1997 and subsequently, following any further revisions, to the higher decision-making authorities of the Council of Europe. It is then intended to pilot its practical use in a wide range of educational situations in most, if not all, member countries with a view to its adoption on a Europe-wide basis for reflection and mutual information.

The attention of readers is drawn to a series of *User Guides* issued to facilitate the use of the Framework by practitioners. In addition to a General Guide, separate guides have been prepared for a) learners, b) teachers, c) teacher trainers, d) examiners, e) textbook authors, f) curriculum developers, g) educational policy decision makers, h) providers of adult education.

## Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference

### Synopsis

**Chapter 1** provides the historical background to the proposal, namely the series of decisions and recommendations by the Committee of Ministers and other Council of Europe bodies as well as an Intergovernmental Symposium held at Rüschtikon, Switzerland in 1991, which together defined the aims, objectives and functions of the proposed Framework and set out the criteria which it should satisfy

**Chapter 2** sets out the intended functions of the Framework, in the light of the linguistic and cultural diversity in the field of education. Accordingly, the Framework is not intended to promote any single system of, or approach to, language teaching but to provide a comprehensive framework which will help practitioners (learners, teachers, teacher trainers, course designers and authors, evaluation specialists, administrators, parents, employers, elected policy-makers, etc.) to situate and orientate their exercise of options and to inform each other accordingly in a transparent and coherent way.

**Chapter 3** explains the approach adopted. Its basis is an analysis of language use in terms of the strategies used by learners to activate general and communicative competences in order to carry out the activities and processes involved in the production and reception of texts dealing with particular themes, which enable them to fulfil the tasks facing them in the situations which arise in the various domains of social existence. The words underlined designate the parameters for the description of language use and the user/learner's ability to use language. Progress in language learning can then be calibrated in terms of a flexible series of levels of attainment defined by appropriate descriptors. This apparatus should be rich enough to accommodate the full range of learner needs and thus the objectives pursued by different providers, or required of candidates for language qualifications.

**Chapter 4** establishes in some (but not exhaustive or definitive) detail the categories needed for the description of language use and the language user/learner according to the parameters identified, covering in turn: the domains and situations providing the context for language use; the tasks, purposes and themes of communication; communicative activities and processes; text; the user/learner's general and communicative competences and strategies.

**Chapter 5** discusses in greater detail the role of tasks and text in language learning and use.

**Chapter 6** considers the processes of language learning and teaching, dealing with the relation between acquisition and learning as well as with methodological options of a general or more specific kind.

**Chapter 7** is concerned with the implications of linguistic diversification for curriculum design and considers such issues as: multilingualism and multiculturalism; differentiated learning objectives; principles of curriculum design; curricular scenarios; life-long language learning; modularity and partial competences.

**Chapter 8** deals in principle with the management of longer-term language learning through the establishment of scaling and levels, dealing first with the need for a 'vertical' dimension, then with methods of and criteria for, scaling and the requirements for formulating descriptors. A 'branching' approach to give both flexibility and comparability in formulating levels in differently orientated systems is then presented. Options are discussed for the description of levels of achievement in respect of the parameters and categories presented in Chapter 4 and elsewhere.

**Chapter 9** discusses the various purposes of assessment and corresponding assessment types, in the light of the need to reconcile the competing criteria of comprehensiveness, precision and operational feasibility.

**Appendix** based on the initial results of a Swiss National Science Research Council Project presents an extensive corpus of illustrative scales of descriptors for the descriptive parameters of Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The work of the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe, organised since its foundation in a series of medium-term projects, has derived its coherence and continuity from adherence to three basic principles set down in the preamble to Recommendation R(82)18 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

'- that the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding;

- that it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and cooperation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination

- that member states, when adopting or developing national policies in the field of modern language learning and teaching, may achieve greater convergence at the European level by means of appropriate arrangements for ongoing cooperation and coordination of policies'.

In the pursuit of these principles, the Committee of Ministers called upon member governments

(F14) 'To promote the national and international collaboration of governmental and non- governmental institutions engaged in the development of methods of teaching and evaluation in the field of modern language learning and in the production and use of materials, including institutions engaged in the production and use of multi-media materials'.

(F17) 'To take such steps as are necessary to complete the establishment of an effective European system of information exchange covering all aspects of language learning, teaching and research, and making full use of information technology.'

Consequently, the activities of the CDCC, its Committee for Education and its Modern Languages Section, have been concerned to encourage, support and coordinate the efforts of member governments and non-governmental institutions to improve language learning in accordance with these fundamental principles and in particular the steps which they take to implement the general measures set out in the Appendix to R(82)18:

### A. General measures

1. To ensure, as far as possible, that all sections of their populations have access to effective means of acquiring a knowledge of the languages of other member states (or of other communities within their own country) as well as the skills in the use of those languages that will enable them to satisfy their communicative needs and in particular:

1.1. to deal with the business of everyday life in another country, and to help foreigners staying in their own country to do so;

- 1.2. to exchange information and ideas with young people and adults who speak a different language and to communicate their thoughts and feelings to them;
- 1.3. to achieve a wider and deeper understanding of the way of life and forms of thought of other peoples and of their cultural heritage.
2. To promote, encourage and support the efforts of teachers and learners at all levels to apply in their own situation the principles of the construction of language-learning systems (as these are progressively developed within the Council of Europe "Modern languages" programme):
  - 2.1. by basing language teaching and learning on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners;
  - 2.2. by defining worthwhile and realistic objectives as explicitly as possible;
  - 2.3. by developing appropriate methods and materials;
  - 2.4. by developing suitable forms and instruments for the evaluating of learning programmes.
3. To promote research and development programmes leading to the introduction, at all educational levels of methods and materials best suited to enabling different classes and types of student to acquire a communicative proficiency appropriate to their specific needs.

In November 1991, on the initiative of the Swiss Federal Government, an Intergovernmental Symposium was held in Rüşchlikon, Switzerland on: 'Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Evaluation, Certification'. The Symposium 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.).

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.

### 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 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 recommended that the Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Cooperation (CDCC) should 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.

Following the Rüschtikon Symposium, the Secretariat convened meetings of invited experts to clarify issues and to make proposals for further action. The experts agreed that the Framework should be comprehensive, transparent and coherent. They considered that to be comprehensive, the Framework should not only attempt to specify as full a range of language

knowledge, skills and use as possible (without of course attempting to forecast a priori all possible uses of language in all situations - an impossible task), but that all forms of language learning and teaching should be describable within it, that all bona fide users shall be able to describe their objectives, etc. by reference to it. They also considered that the Framework should be

- multi-purpose: usable for the full variety of purposes involved in the planning and provision of facilities for language learning
- flexible: adapted for use in different circumstances
- open: capable of further extension and refinement
- dynamic: in continuous evolution in response to experience in its use
- user-friendly: presented in a form readily understandable and usable by those to whom it is addressed
- non-dogmatic: not irrevocably and exclusively attached to any one of a number of competing approaches.

These criteria were accepted by the Modern Language Project Group, which emphasised the need for the Framework, whilst remaining descriptive rather than prescriptive and recognising the diversity of educational systems in Europe, to provide clear orientation and act as an agent of change in language planning covering all educational sectors. The scheme should draw on tried and tested practice as well as on successful innovation and research findings. The Group set up a Working Party to oversee the development of the Framework and commission studies on specific aspects.

At its first meeting held in Strasbourg in October 1993, the Working Party commissioned a small authoring group to prepare a First Draft of the Common European Framework of Reference. Successive variations of this Draft have been presented to the Working Party and the Modern Languages Project Group and revised in accordance with their recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2: AIMS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE FRAMEWORK

The aims, practices and approaches with respect to modern language learning in Europe are extremely diverse and can but remain so. Variety is essential in the provision of language learning and teaching depending on the context and point of learning, the groups and individuals concerned. The notion of uniform methodologies is a thing of the past.

But the diversity which is now characteristic of language teaching in general should nevertheless be identified and described, not only for the purposes of information and classification, but also because the majority of partners need benchmarks and points of comparison to help them make their choices. Learners, course writers, teacher trainers, course designers, employers and evaluation specialists can situate and orient their options and explain them to one another (which it is essential to do) only if they have common or compatible instruments to help them take account of and exploit this diversity. At a time when language learning in Europe occurs partly for and through the mobility of persons and goods (travel, career development, circulation of information and products), learning paths and their different stages must be amenable to description in a transparent and coherent manner.

For this reason the development, dissemination and regular updating of a reference framework not only makes sense but responds to a need. The main aim of such a framework is to present a taxonomy showing the relationships between descriptive categories and sub-categories facilitating the description of the objectives and content of teaching or learning, the results obtained and the levels reached, and the possible connections between the different elements and stages within a learning path. In order to do this, it must fulfil its twofold function:

- **to facilitate users in deciding on choices to be made;**
- **to assist all the partners involved in informing one another through the provision of a common basis for doing so.**

Within a Europe which is itself in transition, where different educational traditions add further to the diversity already noted in the field of language learning/teaching, it is all the more necessary to design a framework of reference which is not determined by any particular theoretical or ideological model, but which can accommodate different approaches and situations. On the other hand, it would be somewhat naive to imagine that a classification, whatever form it might take, could be presented as being completely neutral, impartial and purely descriptive. It is clear that in the Council of Europe's "Modern Languages" Project and, more generally, in keeping with its mission as an international organisation, language learning, in its extreme diversity, should above all contribute to the personal and professional development of individuals, interpersonal communication, and intercultural and international exchanges. A European Framework of reference for language teaching, learning and assessment, therefore, has to take such options into consideration while at the same time taking account of the variety of ways and means of implementing them.

Essentially, in keeping with the Conclusions of the Rüsclikon Symposium, the general aim is to overcome linguistic barriers in order to:

- increase personal mobility;
- increase the effectiveness of international cooperation;
- increase respect for identity and cultural diversity;

- improve access to information;
- intensify personal interaction;
- improve working relations;
- achieve a deeper mutual understanding.

In this general context, any form of presentation that may be proposed for a reference framework will tend to stress its essentially dynamic nature and establish a link between learning and communication, between the learner and the contexts in which he/she will use the target language.

## 2.2 FUNCTIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

In addition to facilitating users in their decision-making, a major function of a general framework is to allow all the different partners in the language teaching and learning process to inform others as transparently as possible of their objectives, primarily in terms of what they wish learners to achieve, the methods they use and the results actually achieved. This information will be of very great value in an interactive Europe to allow the different partners to provide learners with coherent provision and also to facilitate educational, vocational and professional as well as personal mobility across a continent in which artificial barriers to movement, communication and cooperation are being progressively removed.

No learner can encompass the whole of a language so as to be able to communicate effectively on any subject with any speaker. However, no part of a language can be excluded from consideration as being outside any learner's possible compass. Science, scholarship and technology are international and no terms or practices are so recondite as not to be of interest and concern at least to a foreign specialist in the same field. Exogamy makes the intimate language of the family a central concern to those involved in the raising of a bilingual family. An overall framework must therefore be comprehensive, in the sense that all forms and directions of language learning and teaching can be accommodated. It cannot, of course, be comprehensive in the sense that it describes in detail all language that anyone would ever want to learn or teach. That is not merely quite impracticable. In a dynamically evolving society it is theoretically impossible. Language is in continuous change. The framework has then to identify the necessary parameters and higher categories for description, leaving practitioners to supply the concrete elements to the degree of detail they consider appropriate. To do so within a comprehensive overall framework may also encourage them to consider aspects of learner's competence and performance to which they have not previously given their attention. To see the more detailed specifications produced by other practitioners will also stimulate further reflection upon current practice. Learners may also be assisted in developing their awareness and in giving more structure to self-directed learning.

In chapters 4 to 9 of this document a series of questions are addressed to users of the Framework. They are intended to stimulate practitioners to reflect upon and, if they consider it appropriate, to rethink or restate their current practice. The treatment is by no means exhaustive of the issues raised. Experienced practitioners will no doubt be concerned with some issues which have been passed over, and may well be dissatisfied with all the options set out. In many cases they may feel them to be too crude to express a position which may be more *nuançée* or deserving of a fuller treatment.

All users of the Framework are asked to cooperate in its further development by increasing its descriptive power. Reformulations of questions as well as widening of options and enrichment of their content are welcome. Accounts of experience, negative as well as positive, with respect to particular methodological options are also valuable. As has been repeatedly stated, it is not the role of a comprehensive Framework to foreclose on **any** options, even where they may appear to be out of tune with current theoretical approaches to language

acquisition, learning and teaching, or with the basic aims and approach of the Council of Europe's modern languages programme itself. The Council of Europe stands for dialogue, not dogmatism, and all who are sincerely engaged in the linguistic and cultural education of young people or of adults have a valued role in the interplay of ideas and practices in this complex, multifaceted continent.

## CHAPTER 3: APPROACH ADOPTED

### 3.1 An Action-oriented approach

### 3.2 Sub-categories

- 3.2.1 The general competences of an individual
- 3.2.2 Communicative language competence
- 3.2.3 Language activities
- 3.2.4 Domains
- 3.2.5 Tasks, strategies and texts

### 3.1 AN ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH

A reference framework must relate to a very general view of language use and learning. The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one insofar as it views users and learners of a language primarily as members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action. While speech acts occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context which alone is able to give them their full meaning.

It is legitimate to speak of a task insofar as the action is performed by one or more individuals strategically using their own specific competences to achieve a given result. The action-based approach therefore also takes into account the cognitive, emotional and volitive resources and full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent.

Accordingly, any form of language use and learning could be described as follows:

Language use and learning are two of the many actions performed by a social agent who, as an individual, has at his or her disposal and develops a range of **general competences** and in particular **communicative language competence**. He or she draws on these competences in different kinds of **language activities** in order to process **text** (receptively or productively) in relation to specific **domains**, activating those **strategies** which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. This contextualised use of general competences, and in particular of communicative competence, provides feedback which in turn leads to their modification.

The *general competences* of each social agent are the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics, and which allow him or her to perform actions.

*Communicative language competence* is that competence which permits a social agent to act using linguistic means.

*Language activity* is the exercise of his or her communicative language competence in a specific domain in processing (receptively or productively) one or more texts in order to carry out a task.

*Text* is any sequence or discourse (spoken and/or written) related to a specific domain and which in the course of carrying out a task becomes the occasion of a language activity, whether as a support or as a goal, as product or process.

*Domain* refers to the broad sectors of social life in which social agents operate. A higher order categorisation has been adopted here limiting these to major categories relevant to language learning/teaching and use: the educational, occupational, public and personal domains.

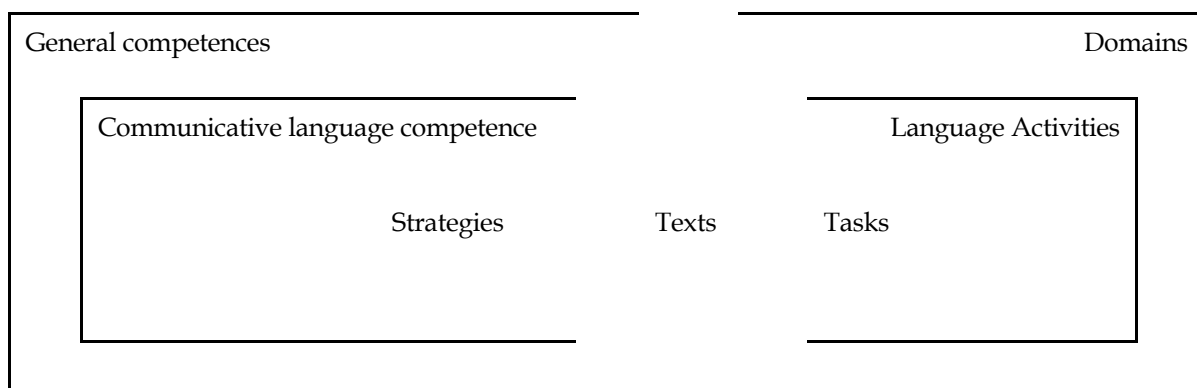
A *strategy* is any organised, purposeful and regulated line of action chosen by an individual to carry out a task which he or she sets for himself or herself or with which he or she is confronted.

A *task* is defined as any purposeful action considered by an individual as necessary in order to achieve a given result in the context of a problem to be solved, an obligation to fulfil or an objective to be achieved. This definition would cover a wide range of actions such as moving a wardrobe, writing a book, obtaining certain conditions in the negotiation of a contract, playing a game of cards, ordering a meal in a restaurant, translating a foreign language text or preparing a class newspaper through group work.

If it is accepted that the different dimensions highlighted above are interrelated in all forms of language use and learning, then any act of language learning or teaching is in some way concerned with each of these dimensions: strategies, tasks, texts, an individual's general competences, communicative language competence, language activities, and domains.

At the same time, it is also possible in learning and teaching that the objective, and therefore assessment, may be focused on a particular component or sub-component (the other components then being considered as means to an end, or as aspects to be given more emphasis at other times, or as not being relevant to the circumstances). Learners, teachers, course designers, authors of teaching material and test designers are inevitably involved in this process of focusing on a particular dimension and deciding on the extent to which other dimensions should be considered and ways of taking account of these: this is illustrated with examples below. It is immediately clear, however, that although the often stated aim of a teaching/learning programme is to develop communication skills (possibly because this is most representative of a methodological approach ?), certain programmes in reality strive to achieve a qualitative or quantitative development of language activities in a foreign language, others stress performance in a particular domain, yet others the development of certain general competences, while others are primarily concerned with refining strategies. The claim that "everything is connected" does not mean that the objectives cannot be differentiated.

For the moment, a deliberately simplified figure will serve to illustrate the above:



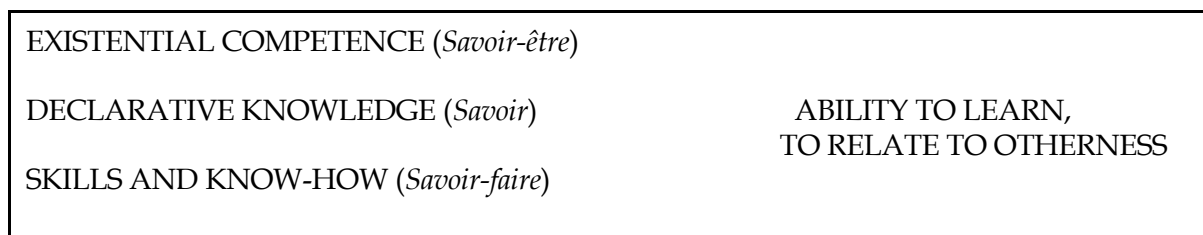
**Figure 1: overall categories**

## 3.2 SUB-CATEGORIES

Each of the main categories outlined above can be divided into sub-categories, still very generic, which will be looked at in the following chapters. Here, we are looking only at the various components of general competences, communicative competence, language activities and domains.

### 3.2.1 The general competences of an individual

The *general competences* of the language learner or user consist in particular of the **knowledge**, **skills** and **existential competence** (*savoir-être* - see chapter 4, section 4.7.1.3) he or she possesses, and also **ability to learn**:



**Figure 1.1: the general competences of an individual**

*Existential competence* (*savoir-être*) may be considered as the individual characteristics, personality traits and attitudes which concern for example, self-image and one's view of others, introversion or extroversion in social interaction. This type of competence is not seen simply as immutable personality characteristics, but includes factors which may be modified.

These personality traits, attitudes and temperaments are in fact often taken into account in language learning and teaching. Self confidence (actual or apparent) is generally seen as a positive factor but could also be presented as a secondary benefit of progress made in learning a language. Many approaches to teaching consider that a composed and relaxed attitude will facilitate the understanding and acquisition of new information. On the other hand, successful language learning is considered more difficult for those who are wary of the unfamiliar or little disposed to establishing a relationship with foreigners. At any event (this is not the time for commenting on the validity of any particular claim), an individual's actual or inferred personality attributes are undeniably more often linked to language learning than to any other area of knowledge acquisition. Accordingly, even though they may be difficult to define, they should be included in a framework of reference, particularly if they are considered to be part of an individual's general competences and therefore an aspect of his or her abilities, and also capable of being acquired or modified in use and through learning (for example, of one or more languages). Their inclusion in a framework of reference is even more necessary if, as has frequently been noted, existential competences are culture-related and therefore sensitive areas for inter-cultural perceptions and relations: the way one member of a specific culture expresses friendliness and interest may be perceived by someone from another culture as aggressive or offensive.

*Knowledge*, i.e. declarative knowledge (*savoir*), is understood as knowledge resulting from social experience (empirical knowledge) and from more formal learning (academic knowledge). It is not a question of prejudging the correctness of this knowledge or the level of expertise reached; what is significant is the fact that for any individual it is likely to be restructured many times over the years.



As far as language use and learning are concerned, the knowledge which comes into play is not exclusively directly related to language and culture. Academic knowledge in a scientific or technical educational field, and academic or empirical knowledge in a professional field clearly have an important part to play in the reception and understanding of texts in a foreign language relating to those fields. But empirical knowledge relating to day-to-day living (organisation of the day, mealtimes, means of transport, communication and information), in the public or private domains, are just as essential for the management of language activities in a foreign language. Teaching and learning methods presuppose this awareness of the world, these multiple areas of knowledge which vary from individual to individual, which may be culture-specific but which nevertheless also relate to more universal constants.

If one accepts that any new knowledge is not simply added onto the knowledge one had before but is conditioned by the nature, richness and structure of one's previous knowledge and, furthermore, serves to modify and restructure the latter, however partially, then clearly the knowledge which an individual has already acquired is directly relevant to language learning.

Moreover, in certain contexts (immersion, attending school or university where the language of tuition is not one's mother tongue), language learning, though essential, may be secondary to the main objective of acquiring knowledge in areas other than linguistic. Here again, when there is simultaneous and correlated enrichment of linguistic and other knowledge, consideration must be given to the relationship between knowledge and communicative competence.

*Skills and know-how (savoir-faire)*, whether it be a matter of driving a car, playing the violin or chairing a meeting, depend more on procedural skills than on declarative knowledge, but this skill may have required the acquisition of "forgettable" knowledge and be accompanied by forms of existential competence (for example relaxed attitude or tension in carrying out a task).

The example quoted above of driving a car, which through repetition and experience becomes a series of almost automatic processes (declutching, changing gear, etc.), initially requires an explicit break-down of conscious and verbalisable operations ("Slowly release the clutch pedal, slip into third gear, etc.") and the acquisition of certain facts (there are three pedals in a manual car set out as follows, etc.) which one does not have to consciously think about once one "knows how to drive". When one is learning to drive, one generally needs a high level of concentration and heightened self-awareness since one's own self-image is particularly vulnerable (risk of failure, of appearing incompetent). Once the skills have been mastered, the driver can be expected to be much more at ease and self-confident, otherwise this would be disconcerting for passengers and other motorists. Clearly, it would not be difficult to draw parallels with certain aspects of language learning.

In the schema presented above, the *ability to learn* is shown as mobilising existential competence, declarative knowledge and skills, suggesting that the ability to learn draws on various types of competence. In this context, ability to learn should also be paraphrased as "knowing how, or being disposed, to discover 'otherness' " - whether the other is another language, another culture, other people or new areas of knowledge.

Whilst the notion of ability to learn is particularly relevant to language learning, it refers in general to abilities linked to:

- existential competence: e.g. a willingness to take initiatives or even risks in face-to-face communication, so as to afford oneself the opportunity to speak, to prompt assistance from the people with whom one is speaking, such as asking them to rephrase what they have said in simpler terms, etc; also listening skills, attention to what is said, heightened awareness of the risks of cultural misunderstanding in relations with others;

- declarative knowledge: e.g. knowledge of what morpho-syntactical relations correspond to given declension patterns for a particular language; or, awareness that there may be a taboo or particular rituals associated with dietary or sexual practices in certain cultures or that they may have religious connotations;

- skills and know-how: e.g. facility in using a dictionary or being able to find one's way easily around a documentation centre; knowing how to manipulate audiovisual or computer media as learning resources.

Depending on the learners in question, the ability to learn may comprise varying degrees and combinations of existential competence, declarative knowledge and skills and know-how. Such variations should be considered alongside concepts such as "learning styles" or "learner profiles" as long as the latter are not regarded as being immutably fixed once and for all. For the same individual there can be many variations in the use of skills and know-how and the ability to deal with the unknown:

- variations according to the event, depending on whether the individual is dealing with new people, a totally unknown area of knowledge, an unfamiliar culture, a foreign language;

- variations according to context: faced with the same event (e.g. parent/child relationships in a given community), the processes of discovery and seeking meaning will doubtless be different for an ethnologist, tourist, missionary, journalist, educator or doctor, each acting according to his or her own discipline or outlook.

- variations according to the prevailing circumstances and past experience: it is quite probable that the skills applied in learning a fifth foreign language will be different from those applied in learning the first.

For learning purposes, the strategies selected by the individual in order to accomplish a given task will depend on the diversity of the various abilities to learn at his/her disposal. But it is also through the diversity of learning experiences, provided they are not compartmentalised nor strictly repetitive, that the individual extends his/her ability to learn.

### 3.2.2. Communicative language competence

Of all the individual's general competences, communicative language competence, intentionally singled out here, can be considered as comprising several components: a *linguistic component*, a *sociolinguistic component* and a *pragmatic component*. Each of these components also falls under the categories of an individual's general competences and is postulated as consisting of, in particular, knowledge and skills and know-how.





**Figure 1.2: Communicative language competence**

The components identified here as constituting communicative language competence are one possible option amongst others which are used in the specialist literature to define this concept. Such a categorisation requires further clarification.

- In the arrangement proposed above, the *sociolinguistic component* referring to sociocultural conditions of language use, is shown graphically on the left hand side of the diagram, creating to a certain extent a link between communicative competence and the other competences. This arrangement was chosen in order to highlight the importance of the cultural dimension in contributing to communicative competence. Through its sensitivity to social conventions (rules of politeness, norms governing relations between generations, sexes, classes and social groups, linguistic codification of certain fundamental rituals in the functioning of a community), the sociolinguistic component strictly affects all language communication between representatives of different cultures, even though participants may often be unaware of its influence.

- The *linguistic component* refers to lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system, independently of the sociolinguistic value of its variations and the pragmatic functions of its realisations. This component, considered here from the point of view of a given individual's communicative language competence, relates not only to the range and quality of knowledge (e.g. in terms of phonetic distinctions made or the extent and precision of vocabulary) but also to cognitive organisation and the way this knowledge is stored (e.g. the various associative networks in which the speaker places a lexical item) and to its accessibility (activation, recall and availability). Knowledge may be conscious and readily expressible or may not (e.g. once again in relation to mastery of a phonetic system), its organisation and accessibility will vary from one individual to another and vary also within the same individual (e.g. for a plurilingual person depending on the varieties inherent in his or her plurilingual competence). It can also be held that the cognitive organisation of vocabulary and the storing of expressions etc. depend, amongst other things, on the cultural features of the community or communities in which the individual has been socialised and where his or her learning has occurred.

- The *pragmatic component* of communicative language competence comprises the knowledge (*savoirs*), existential competence (*savoir-être*) and skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*) relating to what the linguistic system and its sociolinguistic variations, as well as the use of gestures, mime and proxemics in spoken language and visual and graphic usages in written language, make it possible to accomplish through language and communication: functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts), drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges, mastery of discourse cohesion and coherence, identification of text types and forms, irony, parody. For this component even more than the linguistic component, it is hardly necessary to stress the major impact of interactions and cultural environments in which such abilities are constructed.

Each of these components will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4. As with any classification, their number and scope in the present proposal, which in fact partly overlaps with other existing models, is a matter for discussion. It is simply pointed out here that:

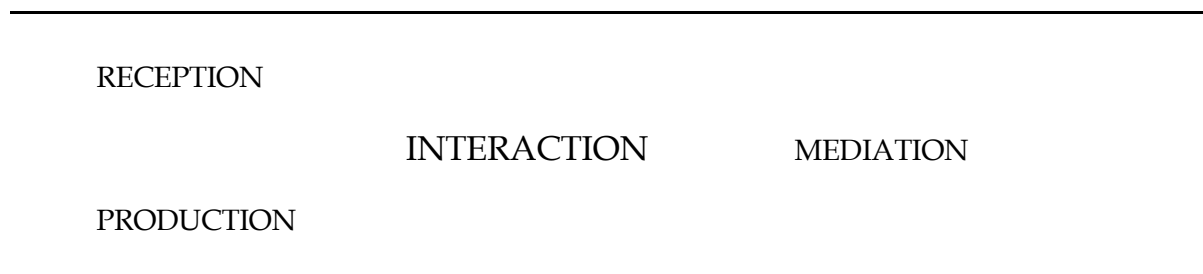
- all the categories used here are intended to characterise areas and types of

competences interiorised by a social agent, i.e. internal representations, mechanisms and capacities, the cognitive existence of which can be considered to account for observable behaviour and performance; but at the same time, any learning process will help to develop or transform these same internal representations, mechanisms and capacities.

- it would have been possible to include in communicative competence a *strategic* component which activates, coordinates and balances the other components (in particular, but not solely, for compensatory purposes); the preferred option here is to interpret this strategic dimension more broadly and to accord it a more central role, i.e. as linking on the one hand all the competences available to the individual (and not only communicative competence) and, on the other hand, the tasks in relation to which these strategies are employed (see Figure 1 and 3.2.5 below).

### 3.2.3 Language activities

The language learner/user's communicative language competence is activated through various *language activities*, related to **reception**, **production**, **interaction** or **mediation** (in particular interpreting or translating), each of these types of activity being possible in oral or written form, or both.



**Figure 1.3** Language activities

Here also, the form of presentation requires further comment:

- The central position and graphic highlighting of *interaction* (where at least two individuals participate in an oral and/or written exchange in which production and reception alternate) highlights the importance generally attributed to it in language use and learning.

- However, *reception* and *production* (oral and/or written) as such are obviously primary as regards interaction and fundamental as regards the role they play; the former (receptive activities) for their importance in reading, following the media, many forms of learning (understanding course content, consulting text books and documents) and the latter (productive activities) for their function in many academic and professional fields (oral presentations, written studies and reports) and because of the particular social value which is attached to them (judgments made of what has been submitted in writing or of fluency in speaking and delivering oral presentations).

- in both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of *mediation* make it possible, through translation or interpretation, a summary or a record, to produce for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access. Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies.

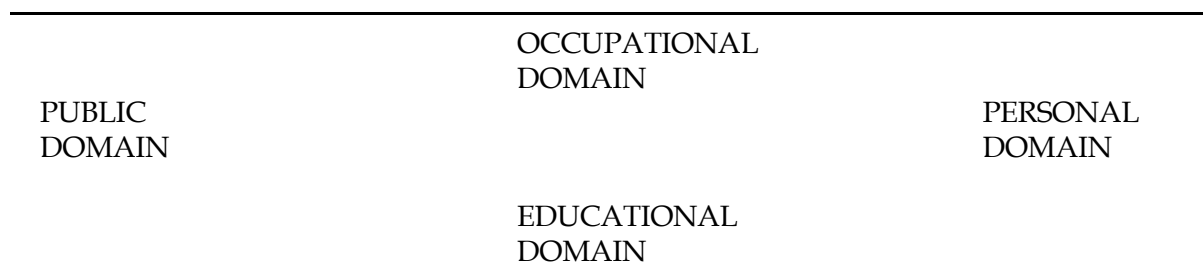
### 3.2.4 Domains

These language activities are contextualised within *domains* which may themselves be

very diverse, but which in relation to language learning may be broadly classified as fourfold: the *public domain*, the *personal domain*, the *educational domain* and the *occupational domain*.

The *public domain* refers to everything connected with ordinary social interaction (business and administrative bodies, public services, cultural and leisure activities of a public nature, relations with the media, etc.). Complementarily, the *personal domain* comprises family relations and individual social practices (reading for pleasure, keeping a personal diary, pursuing a special interest or hobby).

The *occupational domain* embraces everything concerned with an agent's activities and relations in the exercise of his or her occupation. The *educational domain* is concerned with the learning/training context (generally of an institutional nature) where the aim is to acquire specific knowledge or skills.



**Figure 1.4: Domains**

The arrangement adopted above quite simply suggests, reading from left to right:

- on the one hand, that the public domain, with that which is involved in terms of social and administrative interactions and transactions, and contact with the media, opens up to the other domains and often constitutes a sort of necessary entry point: in both the educational and professional domains, many interactions and language activities fall under the ordinary social functioning of a group rather than reflect a connection with occupational or learning tasks; similarly, the personal domain should by no means be considered as a sphere apart (media penetration into family and personal life, distribution of various "public" documents in "private" letter-boxes, advertising, public texts on the packaging of products used in private daily life, etc.).

- on the other hand, that the personal domain, the "exit point" of the proposed schema, individualises or personalises the agent's actions in the other domains and the way in which, without ceasing to be a social agent, he or she situates himself or herself as a person; a technical report, a class presentation, a purchase made can - fortunately - enable a "personality" to be expressed other than solely in relation to the professional, educational or public domain of which, in a specific time and place, its language activity forms part.

### 3.2.5 Tasks, strategies and texts

Communication and learning involve the performance of *tasks* which are not solely language tasks even though they involve language activities and make demands upon the individual's communicative competence. To the extent that these tasks are neither routine nor automatic, they require the use of *strategies* in communicating and learning. In so far as carrying out these tasks involves language activities, they necessitate the processing (through reception, production, interaction or mediation) of oral or written *texts*.



STRATEGIES	X T S	TASKS
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**Figure 1.5 Strategies, texts and tasks**

The overall approach outlined above is distinctly action-oriented. It is centred on the relationship between, on the one hand, the agent's use of strategies (themselves linked to his/her competences and how he/she perceives or imagines the situation to be) and on the other, the task or tasks to be accomplished in a specific context under particular conditions.

Thus someone who has to move a wardrobe (task) may try to push it, take it to pieces so as to carry it more easily and then reassemble it, call on outside labour or give up and convince himself or herself that it can wait until tomorrow, etc. (all strategies). Depending on the strategy adopted, the performance (or avoidance, postponement or redefinition) of the task may or may not involve a language activity and text processing (reading instructions for dismantling, making a telephone call, etc.). Similarly, a learner at school who has to translate a text from a foreign language (task) may look to see if a translation already exists, ask another learner to show what he or she has done, use a dictionary, try to work out some kind of meaning on the basis of the few words or structures he or she knows, think of a good excuse for not handing in this exercise, etc. (all possible strategies). For all the cases envisaged here there will necessarily be language activity and text processing (translation/mediation, verbal negotiation with a classmate, letter or verbal excuses to the teacher, etc.).

The relationship between strategies, task and text depends on the nature of the task. This may be primarily language-related, i.e. it may require largely language activities and the strategies applied relate primarily to these language activities (e.g. reading and commenting on a text, completing a "fill in the gaps"-type exercise, giving a lecture, taking notes during a presentation). It may include a language component, i.e. where language activities form only part of what is required and where the strategies applied relate also or primarily to other activities (e.g. cooking by following a recipe). It may be possible to carry it out with or without recourse to a language activity, i.e. the activities involved are not language-related at all and the strategies applied relate to other types of activity (e.g. erecting a tent can be carried out in silence by several people who know what they are doing, they may eventually engage in a few oral exchanges relating to technique, or they may at the same time hold a conversation having nothing at all to do with the task, or they may carry out the task while one of them is humming a tune).

In this type of analysis communication strategies and learning strategies are but strategies among others, just as communicative tasks and learning tasks are but tasks among others. Similarly, "authentic" texts or texts specially designed for teaching purposes, texts in textbooks or texts produced by learners are but texts among others. In the following chapters the concepts of strategy, task and text will be discussed in more detail, particularly in relation to different forms of language use and learning (see Chapter 4: sections 4.2 (Tasks), 4.6 (Text), 4.8 (Strategies); Chapter 5: sections 5.1 (Tasks), 5.2.3 (Strategies), 5.4 (Text); Chapter 6: sections 6.7.2.1 (Texts), 6.7.2.2 (Tasks)).

## **CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE USE AND THE LANGUAGE USER/LEARNER**

- 4.1 The context of language use**
  - 4.1.1 domains
  - 4.1.2 situations
  - 4.1.3 conditions and constraints
  - 4.1.4 the user/learner's mental context
  - 4.1.5 the mental context of the interlocutor(s)
  
- 4.2 Communicative tasks and purposes**
  
- 4.3 Communication themes**
  
- 4.4 Communicative language activities**
  - 4.4.1 productive
    - 4.4.1.1 oral production (speaking)
    - 4.4.1.2 written production (writing)
  
  - 4.4.2 receptive
    - 4.4.2.1 aural reception (listening)
    - 4.4.2.2 visual reception (reading)
    - 4.4.2.3 audio-visual reception
  
  - 4.4.3 interactive
    - 4.4.3.1 oral interaction
    - 4.4.3.2 written interaction
  
  - 4.4.4 mediating
  
- 4.5 Communicative language processes**
  - 4.5.1 planning
  - 4.5.2 execution
    - 4.5.2.1 production
    - 4.5.2.2 reception
    - 4.5.2.3 interaction
  
  - 4.5.3 monitoring
  - 4.5.4 practical actions
  - 4.5.5 paralinguistic behaviour
  - 4.5.6 paratextual features
  
- 4.6 Texts**
  - 4.6.1 media
  - 4.6.2 genres and text-types
    - 4.6.2.1 spoken texts
    - 4.6.2.2 written texts

## 4.7

### The user/learner's competences

#### 4.7.1 General competences

##### 4.7.1.1 declarative knowledge (*savoir*)

- 4.7.1.1.1 knowledge of the world
- 4.7.1.1.2 sociocultural knowledge
- 4.7.1.1.3 intercultural awareness

##### 4.7.1.2 skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*)

- 4.7.1.2.1 practical skills and know-how
- 4.7.1.2.2 intercultural skills and know-how

##### 4.7.1.3 existential competence (*savoir-être*)

##### 4.7.1.4 ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*)

- 4.7.1.4.1 language and communication awareness
- 4.7.1.4.2 general phonetic skills
- 4.7.1.4.3 study skills
- 4.7.1.4.4 heuristic skills

#### 4.7.2 Communicative language competences

##### 4.7.2.1 linguistic competences

- 4.7.2.1.1 lexical competence
- 4.7.2.1.2 grammatical competence
- 4.7.2.1.3 semantic competence
- 4.7.2.1.4 phonological competence

##### 4.7.2.2 sociolinguistic competence

- 4.7.2.2.1 markers of social relations
- 4.7.2.2.2 politeness conventions
- 4.7.2.2.3 expressions of folk-wisdom
- 4.7.2.2.4 register differences
- 4.7.2.2.5 dialect and accent

##### 4.7.2.3 pragmatic competences

- 4.7.2.3.1 discourse competence
- 4.7.2.3.2 functional competence
- 4.7.2.3.3 schematic design competence

## 4.8

### Strategies

- 4.8.1 Reception
- 4.8.2 Production
- 4.8.3 Interaction
- 4.8.4 Mediation



## 4.1 THE CONTEXT OF LANGUAGE USE

- 4.1.1 domains
- 4.1.2 situations
- 4.1.3 conditions and constraints
- 4.1.4 the user/learner's mental context
- 4.1.5 the mental context of the interlocutor(s)

### 4.1.1 Domains

Each act of language use is set in the context of a particular situation within one of the domains (spheres of action or areas of concern) in which social life is organised. The number of possible domains is indeterminate, since any definable sphere of activity or area of concern may constitute the domain of a user or a course of instruction. For general purposes of language learning and teaching it may be useful to distinguish at least the following:

- the personal domain, in which the person concerned lives as a private individual, centred on home life with family and friends;
- the public domain, in which the person concerned acts as a member of the general public, or of some organisation and is engaged in transactions of various kinds for a variety of purposes;
- the occupational domain, in which the person concerned is engaged in his or her job or profession;
- the educational domain, in which the person concerned is engaged in organised learning, especially (but not necessarily) within an educational institution.

It should be noted that in many situations more than one domain may be involved, e.g. there is often some personal aspect to shopping, eating out, etc. For a teacher the occupational and educational domains largely coincide.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *in which domains the learner will need/be equipped/be required to operate.*

### 4.1.2 Situations

In each domain, the situations which arise may be described in terms of:

- the locations in which, and the times at which, they occur;
- the institutions or organisations, the structure and procedures of which control much of what can normally occur;
- the persons involved, especially in their relevant social roles in relation to the user/learner;
- the objects, (animate and inanimate) in the environment;
- the events which take place;
- the operations performed by the persons involved;
- the texts encountered within the situation.

Table 1 gives some examples of the above situational categories, classified according to domains, likely to be met in most European countries. The table is purely illustrative and suggestive. It makes no claim to be exhaustive. In any situation of language use, the participants identify the relevant features of the situation as it develops (see 4.1.4/5 and 4.2).

**Table 1 EXTERNAL CONTEXT OF USE**

Domain	Locations	Institutions	Persons	Objects	Events	Operations	Texts
<b>Personal</b>	Home: own ) house of family ) rooms of friends ) garden of strangers ) Own space in hostel, hotel The countryside, seaside etc.	The Family  Social networks	(Grand)Parents, Offspring, Siblings, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, In-laws, Spouses Intimates, Friends, Acquaintances	Furnishing & furniture Clothing Household equipment Toys, tools, personal hygiene Objets d'art, Books, Pets, Wild / domestic animals, Trees, Plants, Lawn, Ponds, Household goods, Handbags, leisure/sports equipment	Family occasions Encounters Incidents, accidents, Natural phenomena Parties, visits Walking, cycling, motoring Holidays, excursions  Sports events	Living routines e.g. dressing, undressing cooking, eating, washing DIY, gardening Reading, Radio & TV Entertaining  Hobbies Games & sports	Teletext Guarantees Recipes Instructional material Novels, magazines, Newspapers Junk mail Brochures Personal letters Broadcast and recorded spoken texts
<b>Public</b>	Public spaces : street, square, park, etc. Public transport Shops (super)markets Hospitals, surgeries, clinic Sports stadia, fields, halls Theatre, cinema, entertainment Restaurant, pub, hotel Places of worship	Public authorities Political bodies The law Public Health Services clubs Societies Political parties  Denominations	Members of the Public Officials Shop personnel Police, army, security Drivers, conductors, Passengers Players, fans, spectators Actors, audiences Waiters, barpersons Receptionists Priests, Congregation	Money, purse, wallet Forms, Goods Weapons Rucksacks Cases, Grips Balls Programmes Meals, Drinks, Snacks Passports, Licences	Incidents Accidents, illnesses Public meetings Law-suits, Court trials Rag-days, Fines, Arrests Matches, contests Performances  Weddings, Funerals	Buying and obtaining public services  Using medical services  Journeys by road/rails/ship/air  Public entertainment and leisure activities Religious services	Public announcements and notices Labels & packaging Leaflets, Graffiti Tickets, Timetables Notices, Regulations Programmes Contracts Menus Sacred texts Sermons, Hymns
<b>Occupational</b>	Offices Factories Workshops Ports, railways Farms Airports Stores, shops etc. Service industries Hotels	Firms Civil Service Multinational Corporations Nationalised industries Trade Unions	Employers/ees Managers Colleagues Subordinates Workmates Clients Customers Receptionists, Secretaries Cleaners etc.	Business machinery Industrial machinery Industrial & craft tools	Meetings Interviews Receptions Conferences Trade fairs Consultations Seasonal sales Industrial accidents Industrial disputes	Business admin. Industrial management Production operations Office procedures Trucking Sales operations Selling, marketing Computer operation Works office Maintenance	Business letter Report Memorandum Life & safety notices Instructional manuals Regulations Advertising material Labelling & packaging Job description Sign posting Visiting cards etc.
<b>Educational</b>	Schools : Hall Classrooms, Playground, Sports fields, corridors Colleges Universities Lecture Theatres Seminar rooms Student Union Halls of Residence Laboratories Canteen	School College University Learned societies  Professional Institutions Adult education bodies	Class teachers Teaching staff Caretakers Assistant staff Parents Classmates Professors, lecturers (Fellow) Students Library & laboratory staff Refectory staff, cleaners Porters, Secretaries etc.	Writing material School uniforms Games equipment & clothing Food Audio-visual equipment Black-board & chalk Computers Briefcases & School bags	Return to school / entry Breaking up Visits and Exchanges Parents' days / evenings Sports days, Matches Disciplinary problems	Assembly Lessons Games Playtime Clubs & societies Lectures, Essay writing Laboratory work Library work Seminars & tutorials homework Debates & discussions	Authentic texts (as above) Textbooks, Readers Reference books Blackboard text OP text Computer screen text Videotext Exercise materials Journal articles Abstracts Dictionaries

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *the situations which the learner will need/be equipped/be required to handle;*
- *the locations, institutions/organisations, persons, objects, events and actions with which the learner will be concerned.*

### **4.1.3 Conditions and Constraints**

The external conditions under which communication occurs impose various constraints on the user/learner and his/her interlocutors, e.g.:

- physical conditions:

a) for speech:

- clarity of pronunciation
- ambient noise (trains, aircraft, 'static', etc.)
- interference (crowded street, markets, pubs, parties, discos, etc.)
- distortions (poor telephone lines, radio reception, public address systems)
- weather conditions (wind, extreme cold, etc.)

b) for writing:

- poor reproduction of print
- difficult handwriting
- poor lighting, etc.

- social conditions

- number of interlocutors
- relative status of participants (power and solidarity, etc.)
- presence/absence of audience or eavesdroppers
- social relationships between participants (eg friendliness/hostility, co-operativeness)

- time pressures

- different pressures for speaker/listener (real time) and writer/reader (more flexible)
- preparation time (for speeches, reports, etc.)
- limitations on time allowed (eg by rules, expense, competing events and commitments, etc.) for turns and interactions.

- other pressures:

- financial; anxiety-producing situations (e.g. examinations), etc.

The external context is highly organised independently of the individual. This organisation is extremely rich. It provides a very fine articulation of the world, closely reflected in the language of the community concerned and acquired by its speakers in the course of their maturation, education and experience, at least in so far as it is seen to be relevant to them. As a factor in the participation of a communicative event, however, we must

distinguish between this external context, which is far too rich to be acted upon or even perceived in its full complexity by any individual, and the user/learner's mental context.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *how the physical conditions under which the learner will have to communicate will affect what he/she is required to do;*
- *how the number and nature of the interlocutors will affect what the learner is required to do;*
- *under what time pressure the learner will have to operate.*

#### 4.1.4 The user/learner's mental context

The external context is filtered and interpreted through the user's:

- perceptual apparatus;
- attention mechanisms;
  - long-term experience, affecting: memory  
associations  
connotations;
- practical classification of objects, events, etc. influenced (though under-determined) by mother-tongue linguistic categorisation.

These factors influence the user's observation of the context. The extent to which the observed context provides the mental context for the communicative event is further determined by considerations of relevance in the light of the user's:

- intentions in entering into communication;
- line of thought: the stream of thoughts, ideas, feelings, sense, impressions, etc. attended to in consciousness;
- reflection on the operation of thought processes upon experience (e.g. deduction, induction);
- needs, drives, motivations, interests, which lead to a decision to act;
- conditions and constraints, limiting and controlling the choices of action.
- state of mind (fatigue, excitement, etc.), health and personal qualities (see 4.7.1.3).

The mental context is thus not limited to reducing the information content of the immediately observable external context. Line of thought may be more powerfully influenced by memory, stored knowledge, imagination and other internal cognitive (and emotive) processes. In that case the language produced is only marginally related to the observable external context. Consider, for example, an examinee in a featureless hall, or a mathematician or poet in his or her study.

External conditions and constraints are also relevant in so far as the user/learner recognises, accepts and adjusts to them (or fails to do so).

In a communicative event we have also to consider the user's interlocutor. The need for communication presupposes a "communication gap", which can however be bridged because of the overlap, or partial congruence between the mental context of the user in focus

and the mental context of the interlocutor(s).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what assumptions are made about the learner's ability to observe and identify relevant features of the external contexts of communication;*
- *how communicative and learning activities relate to the learner's drives, motivations and interests;*
- *how far the learner is required to reflect on experience;*
- *in what ways the mental characteristics of the learner condition and constrain communication.*

#### **4.1.5. The mental context of the interlocutor(s)**

In face-to-face interaction, user and interlocutor(s) share the same external context (except, crucially, for the presence of the other), but for the reasons given above their observation and interpretation of the context differ. The effect - and often all or part of the function - of a communicative act is to increase the area of congruence in the understanding of the situation in the interest of effective communication so as to serve the purposes of the participants (see 4.7.2.3).

The interlocutor(s) may be subject to partially or wholly different conditions and constraints from the user/learner, and react to them in different ways. For instance, an employee using a public address system may be unaware how poor its output is. One partner to a telephone conversation may have time to kill whilst the other has a client waiting, etc. These differences greatly affect the pressures upon the user.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *to what extent the learners will need to adjust to the interlocutor's mental context.*

## **4.2. COMMUNICATIVE TASKS AND PURPOSES**

**4.2.1** Acts of communication with one or more interlocutors are generally undertaken by a language user in pursuance of his or her needs in a given situation. In the personal domain, the intention may be to entertain a visitor by exchanging information on families, friends, likes and dislikes, to compare experiences and attitudes, etc. In the public domain, it will usually be to transact business, say to buy clothes of good quality at a reasonable price. In the occupational domain, it may be to understand new regulations and their implications for a client. In the educational domain it may be to contribute to a role-play or a seminar, or write a paper on a specialised topic for a conference or for publication, etc.

**4.2.2** Over the years, needs analyses and language audits have produced an extensive literature on the language-using tasks a learner may be equipped or required to tackle in order to deal with the exigencies of the situations which arise in the various domains. As examples among

many others, the following examples of tasks in the vocational domain from *Threshold Level 1990* may be helpful (Chapter 2, section 1.12):

### Communicating at work:

As temporary residents learners should be able to:

- seek work permits etc. as required;
  - enquire (e.g. from employment agencies) about the nature, availability and conditions of employment (e.g. job description, pay, laws of work, free time and holidays, length of notice);
- read employment advertisements;
  - write letters of application and attend interviews giving written or spoken information about own personal data, qualifications and experience and answer questions about them
- understand and follow joining procedures;
  - understand and ask questions concerning the tasks to be performed on starting work;
- understand safety and security regulations and instructions;
  - report an accident and make an insurance claim;
- make use of welfare facilities;
- communicate appropriately with superiors, colleagues and subordinates;
  - participate in the social life of the enterprise or institution (e.g. canteen, sports and social clubs, etc.).

As a member of the host community, a learner should be able to assist an English-speaking (native or non-native) person with the tasks listed above.

Chapter 7, section 1 gives examples of tasks in the personal domain.

### Personal identification.

The learners can say who they are, spell their name, state their address, give their telephone number, say when and where they were born, state their age, sex, state whether they are married or not, state their nationality, say where they are from, what they do for a living, describe their family, state their religion, if any, state their likes and dislikes, say what other people are like; elicit/understand similar information from others.

Practitioners (teachers, course-writers, examiners, curriculum designers, etc) and users (parents, school governors, employers, etc.) as well as learners themselves have found these highly concrete task specifications very meaningful and motivating as learning objectives. Tasks are, however, indefinitely large in number. It is not possible for a general framework to specify *in extenso* all the communicative tasks that may be required in real-life situations. It is for practitioners to reflect upon the communicative needs of the learners with whom they are concerned and then, using as appropriate the full resources of the Framework model (e.g. as detailed in 4.7.2.3.2/3), to specify the communicative tasks they should be equipped to face. Learners should also be brought to reflect on their own communicative needs as one aspect of awareness-raising and self-direction.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *the communicative tasks in the personal, public, occupational and/or educational domains which the learner will need/be equipped/be required to tackle;*
- *the assessment of learner needs on which the choice of tasks is based.*

**4.2.3** In the educational domain it may be helpful to distinguish between the tasks which learners are equipped/required to tackle as language users and those in which they engage as part of the language learning process itself (see also Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, section 6.7.2.2).

With regard to tasks as vehicles for planning, carrying out and reporting on language learning and teaching, information can be given as appropriate concerning:

Types of task, e.g. simulations, role-play, classroom interaction etc.;

Goals, e.g. the group-based learning goals in relation to the differing, less predictable goals of participants;

Input, e.g. instructions, materials, etc. selected or produced by teachers and/or learners;

Outcomes, e.g. output artefacts such as texts, summaries, tables, presentations, etc. and learning outcomes such as improved competences, awareness, insights, strategies, experience in decision-making and negotiation, etc.;

Activities, e.g. cognitive/affective, physical/reflective, group/pair/individual etc (see also section 4.5 below);

Roles, the roles of participants both in the tasks themselves and in task planning and management;

Monitoring and evaluation of the relative success of the task conceived and as carried out using such criteria as relevance, difficulty expectations and constraints, and appropriateness.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *the tasks which learners will need/be equipped/be required to undertake in the educational domain a) as participants in guided, goal-oriented interactions, projects, simulations, role-plays, etc. b) in other ways when the L2 is used as the medium of instruction in teaching of i) the language itself ii) other curricular subjects etc.*

## **4.2.4 Ludic uses of language**

The use of language for playful purposes often plays an important part in language learning and development, but is not confined to the educational domain. Examples of ludic activities include:

### **4.2.4.1 social language games:**

- oral (story with mistakes; how, when, where, etc.);
- written (consequences, hangman, etc.);



- audio-visual (picture lotto, snap, etc.);
- board and card games (Scrabble, Lexicon, Diplomacy, etc.);
- charades, miming, etc.

#### 4.2.4.2 individual activities:

- puzzles (crossword, rebus, anagram, etc.);
- media games (TV and radio: chiffres et lettres, Catchword, etc.).

#### 4.2.4.3 verbal joking (punning, etc.) e.g. in:

- advertisements e.g. (for a car) '*Make your money go a long way*';
- newspaper headlines e.g. '*Feminism or bust!*';
- graffiti e.g. '*Grammar rules - O.K.?*'.

### 4.2.5. Aesthetic uses of language

Imaginative and artistic uses of language are important both educationally and in their own right. Aesthetic activities may be productive, receptive, interactive or mediating (see 4.4.4 below), and may be oral or written. They include such activities as:

- singing (nursery rhymes, folk-songs, pop songs, etc.)
- retelling and rewriting stories, etc.
- listening to, reading, writing and speaking imaginative texts (stories, rhymes, etc.) including audio-visual texts, cartoons, picture stories, etc.
- performing scripted or unscripted plays, etc.
- the production, reception and performance of literary texts, e.g.:
  - reading and writing texts (short stories, novels, poetry, etc.)
  - performing and watching/listening to recitals, drama, opera, etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *in which ludic and aesthetic activities the learner will need/be equipped/ be required to engage.*

### 4.3. COMMUNICATION THEMES.

Within the various domains we may distinguish themes, the topics which are the subjects of discourse, conversation, reflection or composition, as the focus of attention in particular communicative acts. Thematic categories can be classified in many different ways. One influential classification, into themes, sub-themes and 'specific notions' is that presented in *Threshold Level 1990*, Chapter 7:

1. personal identification
2. house and home, environment
3. daily life
4. free time, entertainment
5. travel
6. relations with other people
7. health and body care

8. education
9. shopping
10. food and drink
11. services
12. places
13. language
14. weather

In each of these thematic areas, subcategories are established. For example, area 4, 'free time and entertainment', is subcategorised in the following way:

- 4.1. leisure
- 4.2. hobbies and interests
- 4.3. radio and TV
- 4.4. cinema, theatre, concert, etc.
- 4.5. exhibitions, museums, etc.
- 4.6. intellectual and artistic pursuits
- 4.7. sports
- 4.8. press

For each sub-theme, 'specific notions' are identified, covering the locations, institutions etc. to be treated. For instance, under 4.7. 'sport', *Threshold Level 1990* specifies:

1. locations: field, ground, stadium
2. institutions and organisations: sport; team, club
3. persons: player
4. objects: cards, ball
5. events: race, game
6. actions: to watch, to play (+name of sport), to race, to win, to lose, to draw

Clearly, this particular selection and organisation of themes, sub-themes and specific notions results from the authors' decisions in the light of their assessment of the communicative needs of the learners concerned. It will be seen that the above themes relate mostly to the personal and public domains. Some (e.g. area 4) are partly in the personal and partly in the public domain - as is appropriate to temporary visitors who are unlikely to enter into the vocational and educational life of the country. Users of the Framework, including where possible the actual learners concerned, will of course make their own decisions based on their assessment of learner needs, motivations, characteristics and resources in the relevant domain or domains with which they are concerned. For example, vocationally-oriented language learning (VOLL) may develop themes in the occupational area relevant to the students concerned. Students in upper secondary education may explore scientific, technological, economic, etc. themes in some depth. The use of a foreign language as medium of instruction will necessarily entail a close concern with the thematic content of the subject area taught.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *which themes learners will need/be equipped/be required to handle in the selected domains;*
- *which sub-themes they will handle with respect to each theme;*
- *which specific notions relating to locations, institutions/organisations, persons, objects, events and operations they will need/be equipped/be required to handle in order to deal with each (sub)theme.*

## 4.4. COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

### 4.4.1 productive

- 4.4.1.1 oral production (speaking)
- 4.4.1.2 written production (writing)

### 4.4.2 receptive

- 4.4.2.1 aural reception (listening)
- 4.4.2.2 visual reception (reading)
- 4.4.2.3 audio-visual reception

### 4.4.3 interactive

- 4.4.3.1 oral interaction
- 4.4.3.2 written interaction

### 4.4.4 mediating

To carry out communicative tasks, users have to engage in communicative language activities.

Many communicative activities, such as conversation and correspondence, are interactive, that is to say, the participants alternate as producer(s) and receiver(s).

In other cases, as when speech is recorded or broadcast or written texts are sent out or published, producers are separated from receivers, whom they may not even know and who are unable to respond. In these cases the communicative event can be regarded as the speaking, writing, listening to or reading of a text. Interaction involves the participants in both productive and receptive activity, often with several turns.

In most cases, the user as speaker or writer is producing his own text to express his own meanings. In others, he/she is acting as a channel of communication (often, but not necessarily, in different languages) between two or more persons who for one reason or another cannot communicate directly. This process, mediation, may again be interactive or not.

Many if not most situations involve a mixture of activity types. In a school language class, for instance, a learner may be required to listen to a teacher's exposition, to read a text book, silently or aloud, to interact with fellow pupils in group or project work, to write exercises or an essay, and even to mediate, whether as an educational activity or in order to assist another pupil.

### 4.4.1 Productive activities

include speaking and writing activities.

4.4.1.1 In oral production (speaking) activities the language user produces an oral text which is received by an audience of one or more listeners. Examples of speaking activities include:

- public address (information, instructions, etc.)
- addressing audiences (speeches at public meetings, university lectures, sermons, entertainment, sports commentaries, sales presentations, etc.).

They may involve, for example;

- reading a written text aloud;
- speaking from notes, or to a written text or visual aids (diagrams, pictures, charts, etc.);
- acting out a rehearsed role;
- speaking spontaneously;
- singing.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *in what range of oral production (speaking) activities the learner will need/be equipped/be required to engage.*

4.4.1.2 In written production (writing) activities the language user as writer produces a written text which is received by a readership of one or more readers.

Examples of writing activities include:

- completing forms and questionnaires;
- writing articles for magazines, newspapers, newsletters, etc.;
- producing posters for display;
- writing reports, memoranda, etc.;
- making notes for future reference;
- taking down messages to dictation, etc.;
- creative and imaginative writing;
- writing personal or business letters, etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *for what purposes the learner will need/be equipped/be required to engage in which writing activities.*

## **4.4.2 Receptive activities**

include listening and reading activities.

4.4.2.1 In aural reception (listening) activities the language user as listener receives and processes a spoken input produced by one or more speakers. Listening activities include:

- listening to public announcements (information, instructions, warnings, etc.);
- listening to media (radio, TV, recordings, cinema);
- listening as a member of a live audience (theatre, public meetings, public lectures, entertainments, etc.);
- listening to overheard conversations, etc.

In each case the user may be listening :

- for gist;
- for specific information;
- for detailed understanding;
- for implications, etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *to what range of inputs the learner will need/be equipped/be required to listen;*
- *for what purposes the learner will listen to the input;*
- *in what mode of listening the learner will engage.*

4.4.2.2 In visual reception (reading) activities the user as reader receives and processes as input written texts produced by one or more writers. Examples of reading activities include:

- reading for general orientation;
- reading for information;
- reading and following instructions;
- using reference works;
- reading for pleasure.

The language user may read:

- for gist;
- for specific information;
- for detailed understanding;
- for implications etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate, state:*

- *for what purposes the learner will need, or wish/be equipped/be required to read;*
- *in which modes the learner will need or wish/be equipped/be required to read.*

4.4.2.3 In audio-visual reception the user simultaneously receives an auditory and a visual input. Such activities include:

- following a text as it is read aloud;
- watching TV, video, or a film with subtitles;
- using new technologies (multi-media, CD ROM, etc.).

### **4.4.3 Interactive activities**

#### **4.4.3.1 Spoken interaction**

In interactive activities the language user acts alternately as speaker and listener with one or more interlocutors so as to construct conjointly, through the negotiation of meaning following the co-operative principle, conversational discourse.

Reception and Production Strategies are employed constantly during interaction.

There are also classes of cognitive and collaborative strategies (also called discourse strategies and co-operation strategies) concerned with managing co-operation and interaction such as turntaking and turngiving, framing the issue and establishing a line of approach, proposing and evaluation solutions, recapping and summarising the point reached, mediating in a conflict, etc.

Examples of interactive activities include:

- transactions;
- casual conversation;
- informal discussion;
- formal discussion;
- debate;
- interview;
- negotiation;
- co-planning;
- practical goal-oriented co-operation;
- etc.

#### 4.4.3.2 Written interaction

Interaction through the medium of written language includes such activities as:

- passing and exchanging notes, memos etc. when spoken interaction is impossible and inappropriate;
- correspondence by letter, fax, e-mail etc.;
- negotiating the text of agreements, contracts, communiqués, etc. by reformulating and exchanging drafts, amendments, proof corrections, etc.;
- participating in on-line or off-line computer conferences.

4.4.3.3 Face-to-face interaction may of course involve a mixture of media: spoken, written, audio-visual, paralinguistic (see 4.5.5) and paratextual ( see 4.5.6).

4.4.3.4 With the increasing sophistication of computer software, interactive man-machine communication is coming to play an ever more important part in the public, occupational, educational and even personal domains.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *in which kinds of communicative interaction the learner will need/be equipped/be required to engage;*
- *which roles the learner will need/be equipped/be required to play in the interaction.*

#### **4.4.4 Mediating activities**

In mediating activities, the language user is not concerned to express his/her own meanings, but simply to act as an intermediary between interlocutors who are unable to understand each other directly, normally (but not exclusively) speakers of different languages. Examples of mediating activities include spoken interpretation and written translation as well as summarising and paraphrasing texts in the same language, when the language of the original text is not understandable to the intended recipient e.g.:

oral mediation:

- simultaneous interpretation (conferences, meetings, formal speeches, etc.);
- consecutive interpretation (speeches of welcome, guided tours, etc.);
- informal interpretation
  - of foreign visitors in own country
  - of native speakers when abroad
  - in social and transactional situations for friends, family, clients, foreign guests, etc.;
  - of signs, menus, notices, etc.

written mediation:

- exact translation (e.g. of contracts, legal and scientific texts, etc.);
- literary translation (novels, drama, poetry, libretti, etc.);
- summarising gist (newspaper and magazine articles, etc) within L2 or between L1 and L2;
- paraphrasing (specialised texts for lay persons, etc.).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *the mediating activities in which the learner will need/be equipped/be required to engage.*

## 4.5 COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE PROCESSES

To act as a speaker, writer, listener or reader, the learner must be able to carry out a sequence of skilled actions.

To speak, the learner must be able to:

- plan and organise a message (cognitive skills);
- formulate a linguistic utterance (linguistic skills);
- articulate the utterance (phonetic skills).

To write, the learner must be able to:

- organise and formulate the message (cognitive and linguistic skills);
- hand-write or type the text (manual skills) or otherwise transfer the text to writing (see 5.4.2).

To listen, the learner must be able to:

- perceive the utterance (auditory phonetic skills);
- identify the linguistic message (linguistic skills);
- understand the message (semantic skills);
- interpret the message (cognitive skills).

To read, the reader must be able to:

- perceive the written text (visual skills);
- recognise the script (orthographic skills);
- identify the message (linguistic skills);
- understand the message (semantic skills);



- interpret the message (cognitive skills).

Summary of communicative language processes:

4.5.1 planning

4.5.2 execution

- 4.5.2.1 production

- 4.5.2.2 reception

- 4.5.2.3 interaction

4.5.3 monitoring

4.5.4 practical actions

4.5.5 paralinguistic behaviour

4.5.6 paratextual features

The observable stages of these processes are well understood. Others, events in the central nervous system, are not. The following analysis is intended only to identify some parts of the process relevant to the development of language proficiency.

### **4.5.1 Planning:**

the selection, interrelation and coordination of components of general and communicative language competences to be brought to bear on the communicative event in order to accomplish the user/learner's communicative intentions.

### **4.5.2 Execution:**

#### **4.5.2.1 Production:**

The formulation component takes the output from the planning component and assembles it into linguistic form. This involves lexical, grammatical, phonological (and in the case of writing, orthographic) processes which are distinguishable and appear (e.g. in cases of dysphasia) to have some degree of independence but whose exact interrelation is not fully understood.

The articulatory component organises the motor innervation of the vocal apparatus to convert the output of the phonological processes into co-ordinated movements of the speech organs to produce a train of speech waves constituting the spoken utterance, or alternatively the motor innervation of the musculature of the hand to produce hand-written or typewritten text.

#### **4.5.2.2 Reception:**

The receptive process involves four steps which, while they take place in linear sequence (bottom-up) are constantly updated and reinterpreted (top-down) in the light of real world knowledge, schematic expectations and new textual understanding in a subconscious interactive process.

The four steps are:

- the perception of speech and writing: sound/character and word recognition (cursive and print);
- the identification of the text, complete or partial, as relevant;

- the semantic and cognitive understanding of the text as a linguistic entity;
- the interpretation of the message in context.

The skills involved include:

- perceptual skills;
- memory;
- decoding skills;
- inferencing;
- predicting;
- imagination;
- rapid scanning;
- referring back and forth.

Comprehension, especially of written texts, can be assisted by the proper use of aids, including reference materials such as:

- dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual);
- thesaurus;
- pronunciation dictionaries;
- electronic dictionaries, grammars, spell-checkers and other aids;
- reference grammars.

#### 4.5.2.3 Interaction:

Spoken interaction differs from the simple juxtaposition of speaking and listening activities in a number of ways:

- productive and receptive processes overlap. Whilst the interlocutor's utterance, still incomplete, is being processed, the planning of the user's response is initiated - on the basis of a hypothesis as to its nature, meaning and interpretation.
- discourse is cumulative. As an interaction proceeds, the participants converge in their readings of a situation, develop expectations and focus on relevant issues. These processes are reflected in the form of the utterances produced.

In written interaction (e.g. a correspondence by letter, fax, E-mail, etc.) the processes of reception and production remain distinct (though electronic interaction e.g. via the Internet is becoming ever closer to 'real time' interaction). The effects of cumulative discourse are similar to those for spoken interaction.

#### 4.5.3 **Monitoring:**

The strategic component (see 4.8) deals with updating of mental activities and competences in the course of communication; this applies equally to the productive and receptive processes. It should be noted that an important factor in the control of the productive processes is the feedback the speaker/writer receives at each stage: formulation, articulation and acoustic. In a wider sense, the strategic component is also concerned with the monitoring of the communicative process as it proceeds, and with ways of managing the process accordingly, e.g.:

- dealing with the unexpected such as changes of domain, theme schema, etc.

- dealing with communication breakdown in interaction or production as a result of such factors as:

- memory lapses;
- inadequate communicative competence for the task in hand by using compensating strategies like restructuring, circumlocution, substitution, asking for help;
- misunderstandings and misinterpretation (by asking for clarification);
- slips of the tongue, mishearings (by using repair strategies).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *to what degree which skills are required for the satisfactory accomplishment of the communicative tasks the learner is expected to undertake;*
- *which skills can be presupposed and which will need to be developed;*
- *which reference aids the learner will need/be equipped/ be required to use effectively.*

**4.5.4 Practical actions** accompanying language activities (normally face-to-face oral activities) include:

pointing, e.g. by finger, hand, glance, nod. These actions are used with deictics for the identification of objects, persons, etc., for example, 'Can I have that one? No, not that one, that one';

demonstration, with deictics and simple present verbs and pro-verbs.  
'I take this and fix it here, like this. Now you do the same!';

clearly observable actions, which can be assumed as known in the narrative, comment, orders, etc., such as:

'Don't do that!'  
'Well done there!'  
'Oh no, he's dropped it!'

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *how skilled learners will need/be equipped/be required to be in matching actions to words and vice versa;*
- *in which situations they will need/be equipped/be required to do so.*

**4.5.5 Paralinguistic behaviour** includes:

body language. Paralinguistic body language differs from practical actions accompanied by language in that it carries conventionalised meanings, for example:

- gesture (e.g. shaken fist for 'protest');
- facial expression (e.g. smile or scowl);
- posture (e.g. slump for 'despair' or sitting forward for 'keen interest');
- eye contact (e.g. a conspiratorial wink or a disbelieving stare);
- body contact (e.g. kiss or handshake);
- proxemics (e.g. standing close or aloof).

use of extra-linguistic speech-sounds. Such sounds are paralinguistic in that they carry conventionalised meanings but do not enter into the regular phonological system as do the phonemes of a language, for example, (in English):

'sh'	"be quiet"
"s-s-s'	public disapproval
'ugh'	disgust
'humph'	disgruntlement
'tut, tut'	polite disapproval
etc.	

use of prosodic qualities. The use of these qualities is paralinguistic if they carry conventionalised meanings (e.g. related to attitudes and states of mind), but fall outside the regular phonological system in which prosodic features of length, tone, stress may play a part, for example:

voice quality	(gruff, breathy, piercing, etc.)
pitch	(growling, whining, screaming, etc.)
loudness	(whispering, murmuring, shouting, etc.)
length	(e.g. ve-e-e-ery good!)

Many effects are produced by combinations of pitch, length, loudness and voice quality.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *which target paralinguistic behaviours the learner will need/be equipped/be required to a) recognise and understand b) use.*

#### 4.5.6 Paratextual features

A similarly 'paralinguistic' role is played in relation to written texts by such devices as:

- illustrations (photographs, drawings, etc.)
- charts, tables, diagrams, figures, etc.
- typographic features (fonts, pitch, spacing, underlining, layout, etc.)

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *which paratextual features the learner will need/be equipped/be required to a) recognise and respond to b) use.*

## 4.6 TEXTS

- 4.6.1 media
- 4.6.2 genres and text-types
  - 4.6.2.1 spoken texts
  - 4.6.2.2 written texts

As explained in greater detail in Chapter 5 (section 5.4), 'text' is used to cover any piece of language, whether spoken utterance or a piece of writing, which users/learners receive, produce or exchange. There can thus be no act of communication through language without a text; language activities and processes are all analysed and classified in terms of the relation of the user/learner and any interlocutor(s) to the text whether viewed as a finished product, an artefact, or as an objective or as a product in process of elaboration. These activities and processes are dealt with in some detail in 4.4 and 4.5. Texts have many different functions in social life and result in corresponding differences in form and substance. Different media are used for different purposes. Differences of medium and purpose and function lead to corresponding differences not only in the context of messages, but also in their organisation and presentation. Accordingly, texts may be classified into different text types belonging to different genres. See also section 4.7.2.3.2 (macrofunctions).

#### 4.6.1 Media include:

- voice (viva voce);
- telephone, videophone, teleconference;
- public address systems;
- radio broadcasts;
- TV;
- cinema films;
- computer (e-mail, CD Rom, etc.);
- videotape, -cassette, -disc;
- audiotape, -cassette, -disc;
- print;
- manuscript;
- etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *which media the learner will need/be equipped/be required to handle*  
*a) receptively b) productively c) interactively d) in mediation.*

#### 4.6.2 Text-types include:

##### 4.6.2.1 Spoken, e.g.:

- public announcements and instructions;
- public speeches, lectures, presentations, sermons;
- rituals (ceremonies, formal religious services);
- entertainment (drama, shows, readings, songs);
- sports commentaries (football, cricket, boxing, horse-racing, etc.);
- news broadcasts;
- public debates and discussion;
- inter-personal dialogues and conversations;
- telephone conversations;
- job interviews;
- etc.

- 4.6.2.2 Written, e.g:
- books, fiction and non-fiction, including literary journals;
  - magazines;
  - newspapers;
  - instruction manuals (DIY, cookbooks, etc.);
  - textbooks;
  - comic strip;
  - brochures, prospectuses;
  - leaflets;
  - advertising material;
  - public signs and notices;
  - supermarket, shop, market stall signs;
  - packaging and labelling on goods;
  - tickets, etc.
  - forms and questionnaires;
  - dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual), thesauri;
  - business and professional letters, faxes;
  - personal letters;
  - essays and exercises;
  - memoranda, reports and papers;
  - notes and messages, etc.;
  - data bases (news, literature, general information, etc.);

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *with which text-types the learner will need/be equipped/be required to deal*  
*a) receptively, b) productively, c) interactively, d) in mediation.*

## 4.7 THE USER/LEARNER'S COMPETENCES

In order to carry out the tasks and activities required to deal with the communicative situations in which they are involved, users and learners draw upon a number of competences developed in the course of their previous experience. In return, participation in communicative events (including, of course, those events specifically designed to promote language learning) results in the further development of the learner's competences, for both immediate and long-term use. All human competences contribute in one way or another to the language user's ability to communicate and may be regarded as aspects of communicative competence. It may however be useful to distinguish those less closely related to language from linguistic competences more narrowly defined.

### 4.7.1 General competences

- 4.7.1.1 declarative knowledge (savoir)
- 4.7.1.2 skills and know-how (savoir-faire)
- 4.7.1.3 existential competence (savoir-être)
- 4.7.1.4 ability to learn (savoir-apprendre)

### 4.7.2 Communicative language competences

- 4.7.2.1 linguistic competences
- 4.7.2.2 sociolinguistic competence
- 4.7.2.3 pragmatic competences

## 4.7.1 General competences:

### 4.7.1.1 Declarative knowledge (*savoir*)

- 4.7.1.1.1 knowledge of the world
- 4.7.1.1.2 sociocultural knowledge
- 4.7.1.1.3 intercultural awareness

#### 4.7.1.1.1 Knowledge of the world

This embraces knowledge (whether by experience, education or from information sources, etc.) of:

- the locations, institutions and organisations, persons, objects, events, processes and operations in different domains as exemplified in table 1 (4.1.2). Of particular importance to the learner of a particular language is factual knowledge concerning the country or countries in which the language is spoken such as its major geographical, demographic, economic and political factors;
- classes of entities (concrete/abstract, animate/inanimate, etc.) and their properties and relations (temporo-spatial, associative, analytic, logical, cause/effect, etc.)

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate, state:*

- *what knowledge of the world the language learner will be assumed/required to possess;*
- *what new knowledge of the world, particularly in respect of the country in which the language is spoken the learner will need/be equipped to acquire in the course of language learning.*

#### 4.7.1.1.2 Sociocultural knowledge

Strictly speaking, knowledge of the society and culture of the community or communities in which a language is spoken is one aspect of knowledge of the world. It is, however, of sufficient importance to the language learner to merit special attention, especially since unlike many other aspects of knowledge it is likely to lie outside the learner's previous experience and may well be distorted by stereotypes.

The features distinctively characteristic of a particular European society and its culture may relate, for example, to:

1. *everyday living*, e.g.

- food and drink, meal times, table manners;
- public holidays;
- working hours and practices;
- leisure activities (hobbies, sports, reading habits, media).



2. *living conditions*, e.g.
  - living standards (with regional, class and ethnic variations);
  - housing conditions;
  - welfare arrangements.
  
3. *interpersonal relations*, (including relations of power and solidarity), e.g. with respect to:
  - class structure of society and relations between classes;
  - relations between sexes (gender, intimacy);
  - family structures and relations;
  - relations between generations;
  - relations in work situations;
  - relations between public and police, officials, etc.;
  - race and community relations;
  - relations among political and religious groupings.
  
4. *major values, beliefs and attitudes* in relation to such factors as:
  - social class.
  - occupational groups (academic, management, public service, skilled and manual workforces);
  - wealth (income and inherited);
  - regional cultures;
  - security;
  - institutions;
  - tradition and social change;
  - history;
  - minorities (ethnic, religious);
  - national identity;
  - foreign countries, states, peoples;
  - politics;
  - arts (music, visual arts, literature, drama, popular music and song);
  - religion;
  - humour.
  
5. *body language* (see 4.5.5). Knowledge of the conventions governing such behaviour form part of the user's/learner's sociocultural competence.
  
6. *visiting*: conventions, e.g. with regard to:
  - punctuality;
  - presents;
  - dress;
  - refreshments, drinks, meals;
  - behavioural and conversational conventions and taboos;
  - length of stay;
  - leave-taking.
  
7. *ritual behaviour* in such areas as:
  - religious observances and rites;

- audience and spectator behaviour at public performances;
- dances, discos, etc.

#### 4.7.1.1.3 Intercultural awareness

Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation (similarities and distinctive differences) between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce an intercultural awareness. It is of course important to note that intercultural awareness includes an awareness of the regional and social diversity of both worlds. It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2. This wider awareness helps to place both in context.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what prior socio-cultural experience and knowledge the learner is assumed/required to have;*
- *what new experience and knowledge of social life in his/her community as well as in the target community the learner will need to acquire in order to meet the requirements of L2 communication;*
- *what awareness of the relation between home and target cultures the learner will need so as to develop an appropriate intercultural competence.*

#### 4.7.1.2 Skills and know-how (savoir-faire)

4.7.1.2.1 practical skills and know-how

4.7.1.2.2 intercultural skills and know how

##### 4.7.1.2.1 Practical skills and know-how include:

- social skills: the ability to act in accordance with the types of convention set out in 4.7.1.1.2 above and to perform the appropriate routines;
- living skills: the ability to carry out effectively the routine actions required for daily life (bathing, dressing, walking, cooking, eating, etc.); maintenance and repair of household equipment, etc.
- vocational and professional skills: the ability to perform specialised actions (mental and physical) required to carry out the duties of (self-) employment;
- leisure skills: the ability to carry out effectively the actions required for leisure activities, e.g.
  - arts (painting, sculpture, playing musical instruments, etc.)
  - crafts (knitting, embroidery, weaving, basketry, carpentry, etc.)
  - sports (team games, athletics, jogging, climbing, swimming, etc.)
  - hobbies (photography, gardening, etc.)

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what practical skills and know-how the learner will need/be required to possess in order to communicate effectively in an area of concern.*

4.7.1.2.2 Intercultural skills and know-how include:

- the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other;
- cultural sensitivity and the ability to identify and use a variety of strategies for contact with those from other cultures;
- the capacity to fulfil the role of cultural intermediary between one's own culture and the foreign culture and to deal effectively with intercultural misunderstanding and conflict situations.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what cultural intermediary roles and functions the learner will need/be equipped/be required to fulfil;*
- *what features of the home and target cultures the learner will need/be enabled/required to distinguish;*
- *what provision is expected to be made for the learner to experience the target culture;*
- *what opportunities the learner will have of acting as a cultural intermediary.*

4.7.1.3 'Existential' competence (savoir-*être*)

The communicative activity of users/learners is affected not only by their knowledge, understanding and skills, but also by selfhood factors connected with their individual personalities, characterised by the attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles and personality types which contribute to their personal identity. These include:

1. attitudes, such as the user/learner's degree of:
  - openness towards, and interest in, new experiences, other persons, ideas, peoples, societies and cultures;
  - willingness to relativise one's own cultural viewpoint and cultural value-system;
  - willingness and ability to distance oneself from conventional attitudes to cultural difference.
2. motivations:
  - intrinsic/extrinsic;
  - instrumental/integrative;
  - communicative drive, the human need to communicate.
3. values, e.g. ethical and moral.
4. beliefs, e.g. religious, ideological, philosophical.
5. cognitive styles:
 

cognitive style (convergent/divergent; holistic/analytic/synthetic).

6. personality factors: e.g.

- loquacity/taciturnity;
- enterprise/timidity;
- optimism/pessimism;
- introversion/extroversion;
- proactivity/reactivity;
- intropunitive/extrapunitive/impunitive personality (guilt);
- (freedom from) fear or embarrassment;
- rigidity/flexibility;
- openmindedness/closed-mindedness;
- spontaneity/self-monitoring;
- intelligence;
- meticulousness/carelessness;
- memorising ability;
- industry/laziness;
- ambition/(lack of) ambition;
- (lack of) self-awareness;
- (lack of) self-reliance;
- (lack of) self-confidence;
- (lack of) self-esteem;
- etc.

Attitudes and personality factors greatly affect not only the language users'/learners' roles in communicative acts but also their ability to learn. The development of an 'intercultural personality' involving both attitudes and awareness is seen by many as an important educational goal in its own right. Important ethical and pedagogic issues are raised, such as:

- the extent to which personality development can be an explicit educational objective;
- how cultural relativism is to be reconciled with ethical and moral integrity;
- which personality factors a) facilitate b) impede foreign or second language learning and acquisition;
- how learners can be helped to exploit strengths and overcome weaknesses;
- how the diversity of personalities can be reconciled with the constraints imposed on and by educational systems.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *whether, and if so which personality features, learners will need/be encouraged/equipped/required to develop/display;*
- *whether, and if so, in what ways learner characteristics are taken into account in provisions for language learning, teaching and assessment.*

4.7.1.4 Ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*)

This enables the learner to deal more effectively and independently with new language learning challenges, to see what options exist and to make better use of opportunities. It has several components, such as:

- 4.7.1.4.1 language and communication awareness;
- 4.7.1.4.2 general phonetic skills;

- 4.7.1.4.3 study skills;
- 4.7.1.4.4 heuristic skills.

#### 4.7.1.4.1 Language and communication awareness

Sensitivity to language and language use, involving knowledge and understanding of the principles according to which languages are organised and used, so that new experience can be assimilated into an ordered framework, welcomed as an enrichment and therefore more readily learnt and used, rather than resisted as a threat to the learner's already established linguistic system which is believed to be normal and 'natural'.

#### 4.7.1.4.2 General phonetic awareness and skills

Many learners, particularly mature students, will find their ability to pronounce new languages facilitated by:

- an ability to distinguish and produce unfamiliar sounds and prosodic patterns;
- an ability to perceive and catenate unfamiliar sound sequences;
- an ability, as a listener, to resolve (i.e. divide into distinct and significant parts) a continuous stream of sound into a meaningful structured string of phonological elements;
- an understanding/mastery of the processes of sound perception and production applicable to new language learning.

These general phonetic skills are distinct from the ability to pronounce a particular language.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what steps if any are taken to develop the learner's language and communication awareness;*
- *what auditory discrimination and articulatory skills the learner will need/be assumed/equipped/required to possess.*

#### 4.7.1.4.3 Study skills, such as:

- ability to make effective use of the learning opportunities created by teaching situations, e.g.:
  - to maintain attention to presented information;
  - to grasp the intention of task set;
  - to co-operate effectively in pair and group work;
  - to make rapid and frequent active use of language learnt;
- ability to use available materials for independent learning;
- ability to organise and use materials for self-directed learning;
- ability to learn effectively (both linguistically and socioculturally) from direct observation of and participation in communication events by the cultivation of perceptual, analytical and heuristic skills;
- awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses as a learner and ability to identify one's own needs and goals and to organise one's own strategies and procedures accordingly.

#### 4.7.1.4.4 Heuristic skills

- the ability of the learner to come to terms with new experience (new language, new people, new ways of behaving, etc.) and to bring other competences to bear (e.g. by observing, grasping the significance of what is observed, analysing, inferencing, memorising, etc.) in the specific learning situation;
- the ability of the learner (particularly in using Internet and other computer databases as well as in certain specific domains) to use the target language to find, understand and if necessary convey new information.
- the ability to use new technologies (e.g. by searching for information in databases, hypertexts, etc.).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what study skills learners are encouraged/enabled to use and develop;*
- *what heuristic abilities learners are encouraged/enabled to use and develop;*
- *what provision is made for learners to become increasingly independent in their learning and use of language.*

## 4.7.2 Communicative language competences

For the realisation of communicative intentions, users/learners bring to bear their general capacities as detailed above together with a more specifically language-related communicative competence. Communicative competence in this narrower sense has the following components:

- linguistic competences;
- sociolinguistic competence;
- pragmatic competences.

#### 4.7.2.1 Linguistic competences

Knowledge of, and ability to use the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated. There is at present no general theory of linguistic competence which commands general acceptance. The scheme which follows does not aim to provide such a theory but only to offer as classificatory tools some parameters and categories which may be found useful for the description of linguistic content. Those practitioners who prefer to use a different frame of reference are free, here as elsewhere, to do so. They should then identify the theory, tradition or practice they are following. Here, we distinguish:

- 4.7.2.1.1 - lexical competence;
- 4.7.2.1.2 - grammatical competence;
- 4.7.2.1.3 - semantic competence;
- 4.7.2.1.4 - phonological competence.

##### 4.7.2.1.1 Lexical competence

Knowledge of, and ability to use, the vocabulary of a language.

This consists of a) lexical elements and b) grammatical elements.

a) Lexical elements are either:

- i) fixed expressions, consisting of several words, which are used and learnt as wholes;
- ii) single word forms. A particular single word form may have several distinct meanings (polysemy), e.g. *tank*, a liquid container or an armoured armed vehicle.

i) Fixed expressions include:

- sentential formulae, often used as:
  - \* direct exponents of language functions (see 4.7.2.3.2) such as greetings, e.g. *How do you do? Good morning!* etc.
  - \* proverbs etc. (see 4.7.2.2.3)
  - \* relict archaisms, e.g. *Be off with you!*
- phrasal idioms, often:
  - \* semantically opaque, frozen metaphors, e.g.:  
*He kicked the bucket*, (i.e. he died).  
*It's a long shot* (= unlikely to succeed).  
*He drove hell for leather* (i.e. very fast).
  - \* intensifiers, e.g. as *white as snow/a sheet*. Their use is often contextually and stylistically restricted.
- fixed frames, learnt and used as unanalysed wholes, into which words or phrases are inserted to form meaningful sentences, e.g.: '*Please may I have.....!*'
- other fixed phrases:
  - \* phrasal verbs e.g. *to put up with, to make do (with)*;
- \* compound prepositions e.g. *in front of*.
- fixed collocations, consisting of words regularly used together, e.g. *to make a speech/mistake*.

ii) single word forms include members of the open word classes: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, though these may include closed lexical sets (e.g. days of the week, months of the year, weights and measures, etc.). Other lexical sets may also be established for grammatical and semantic purposes (see below).

b) grammatical elements belong to closed word classes, e.g. (in English):

articles	(a, the)
quantifiers	(some, all, many, etc.)
demonstratives	(this, that, these, those)
personal pronouns	(I, we, he, she, it, they, me, you, etc.)
question words and relatives	(who, what, which, where, how, etc.)
possessives	(my, your, his, her, its, etc.)
prepositions	(in, at, by, with, of, etc.)
auxiliary verbs	(be, do, have, modals)
conjunctions	(and, but, if, although)
particles	(e.g. in German: ja, wohl, aber, doch, etc.)

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *which lexical elements (fixed expressions and single word forms) the learner will need/be equipped/be required to recognise and/or use;*
- *how they are selected and ordered.*

#### Lexical selection.

Constructors of testing and textbook materials are obliged to choose which words to include. Curriculum and syllabus designers are not obliged to do so, but may wish to provide guidelines in the interests of transparency and coherence in educational provision. There are a number of options:

- to select key words in thematic areas required for the achievement of communicative tasks relevant to learner needs;
- to follow lexicostatistical principles selecting the highest frequency words in large general word-counts or those undertaken for restricted thematic areas;
- to select (authentic) spoken and written texts and learn/teach whatever words they contain;
- not to preplan vocabulary development, but to allow it to develop organically in response to learner demand when engaged in communicative tasks.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *according to which principle(s) lexical selection has been made.*

#### 4.7.2.1.2 Grammatical competence

Knowledge of, and ability to use, the grammatical resources of a language.



The grammar of a language may be seen as the set of principles governing the assembly of elements into meaningful labelled and bracketed strings (sentences). Grammatical competence is the ability to understand and express meaning by producing and recognising well-formed phrases and sentences in accordance with these principles (as opposed to memorising and reproducing them as fixed formulae). The grammar of any language in this sense is highly complex and so far defies definitive or exhaustive treatment. There are a number of competing theories and models for the organisation of words into sentences. It is not the function of the Framework to judge between them or to advocate the use of any one, but rather to encourage users to state which they have chosen to follow and what consequences their choice has for their practice (see 6.7.2.5.2). Here we limit ourselves to identifying some parameters and categories which have been widely used in grammatical description.

The description of grammatical organisation involves the specification of:

- elements, e.g. morphs  
morphemes-roots and affixes  
words
- categories, e.g. number, case, gender  
concrete/abstract, countable/uncountable  
(in)transitive, active/passive voice  
past/present/future tense  
progressive, (im)perfect aspect
- classes, e.g. conjugations  
declensions  
open word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, closed word  
classes (grammatical elements - see 4.7.2.1.1.(b))
- structures, e.g. compound and complex words  
phrases: (noun phrase, verb phrase, etc.)  
clauses: (main, subordinate, coordinate)  
sentences: (simple, compound, complex)
- processes (descriptive),  
e.g. nominalisation  
affixation  
suppletion  
gradation  
transposition  
transformation
- relations, e.g. government  
concord  
valency  
etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *on which theory of grammar they have based their work;*
- *which grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, processes and relations*

*are learners, etc. equipped/required to handle.*

A distinction is traditionally drawn between morphology and syntax.

**Morphology** deals with the internal organisation of words. Words may be analysed into morphemes, classed as:

- roots, or stems;
- affixes (prefixes, suffixes, infixes), including:
  - word-forming affixes (e.g. re-, un-, -ly, -ness)
  - inflexional affixes (e.g. s, -ed, -ing.)

Word-formation:

Words may be classified into:

- simple words (root only, e.g. six, tree, break);
- complex words (root + affixes, e.g. unbrokenly, sixes);
- compound words (containing more than one root, e.g. sixpence, breakdown, oak-tree, evening dress.

Morphology also deals with other ways of modifying word forms, e.g:

- vowel alternation (sing/sang/sung, mouse/mice)
- consonant modification (lend/lent)
- irregular forms (bring/brought, catch/caught)
- suppletion (go/went)
- zero forms (sheep/sheep, cut/cut/cut)

Morphophonology deals with the phonetically conditioned variation of morphemes (e.g. English s/z/iz in walks, lies, rises t/d/id in laughed, cried, shouted).

and the morphologically conditioned phonetic variation (e.g. i:/e in creep/crept, mean/meant, weep/wept).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what morphological elements and processes the learner will need/ be equipped/required to handle.*

**Syntax** deals with the organisation of words into sentences in terms of the categories, elements, classes, structures, processes and relations involved, often presented in the form of a set of rules. The syntax of the language of a mature native speaker is highly complex and largely unconscious. The ability to organise sentences to convey meaning is a central aspect of communicative competence.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, processes and relations learners will need/ be equipped/required to handle.*



#### 4.7.2.1.3 Semantic competence

deals with the learner's awareness and control of the organisation of meaning:

lexical semantics deals with questions of word meaning, e.g.

- relation of word to general context:
  - reference;
  - connotation;
  - exponence of general specific notions;
- interlexical relations, such as:
  - synonymy/antonymy;
  - hyponymy;
  - collocation;
  - part-whole relations;
  - componential analysis;
  - translation equivalence.

grammatical semantics deals with the meaning of grammatical elements, categories, structures and processes (see 4.7.2.1.2).

pragmatic semantics deals with logical relations such as entailment, presupposition, implicature, etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what kinds of semantic relation learners are equipped/required to build up/demonstrate.*

Questions of meaning are of course central to communication and are treated *passim* in this Framework.

#### 4.7.2.1.4 Phonological competence

involves a knowledge of, and skill in the perception and production of:

- the sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realisation in particular contexts (allophones);
- the phonetic features which distinguish phonemes (distinctive features, e.g. voicing, rounding, nasality, plosion);
- the phonetic composition of words (syllable structure, the sequence of phonemes, word stress, word tones);
- sentence phonetics (prosody)
  - sentence stress and rhythm
  - intonation;
- phonetic reduction
  - vowel reduction
  - strong and weak forms
  - assimilation
  - elision

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what new phonological skills are required of the learner;*
- *what is the relative importance of sounds and prosody;*
- *whether phonetic accuracy and fluency are an early learning objective or developed as a longer term objective.*

#### 4.7.2.2 Sociolinguistic competence

The sociolinguistic component of communicative competence concerns the language aspect of sociocultural competence discussed above (sections 4.7.1.1/4.7.1.2). Since language is a social phenomenon, much that is discussed elsewhere could be considered here (e.g. the lexical expression of the conceptual categories constituting knowledge of the world; realisations of language functions). Aspects treated here are:

- 4.7.2.2.1 markers of social relations
- 4.7.2.2.2 politeness conventions
- 4.7.2.2.3 expressions of folk-wisdom
- 4.7.2.2.4 register differences
- 4.7.2.2.5 dialect and accent

##### 4.7.2.2.1 Markers of social relations

These are of course widely divergent in different languages and cultures, depending on such factors as a) relative status, b) closeness of relation, c) register of discourse, etc. The examples given below for English are not universally applicable and may or may not have equivalence in other languages.

- use and choice of greetings:
  - on arrival e.g. *Hello! Good morning!*
  - introductions e.g. *How do you do?*
  - leave-taking e.g. *Good-bye.....See you later*

- use and choice of address forms:

formal	frozen	e.g. <i>My Lord, Your Grace</i>
	e.g. <i>Sir, Madam, Miss</i>	- <i>Mr., Mrs., Miss. Ms, + surname</i> <i>Dr., Professor (+ surname)</i>
	informal	e.g. first name only, such as <i>John! Susan!</i> no address form
	familiar	e.g. <i>dear, darling;</i> (popular) <i>mate, love</i>
	peremptory	e.g. surname only, such as <i>Smith! You (there)!</i>
	ritual insult	e.g. <i>you stupid idiot!</i> (often affectionate)

- conventions for turntaking

- use and choice of expletives (e.g. *Dear, dear!, My God!, Bloody Hell!, etc.*)

##### 4.7.2.2.2 Politeness conventions

Politeness conventions provide one of the most important reasons for departing from the straightforward application of the 'co-operative principle' (see 4.7.2.3.1). They vary from one culture to another and are a frequent source of inter-ethnic misunderstanding.

1. positive politeness e.g.
  - showing interest in a person's well being, etc.
  - sharing experiences and concerns, 'troubles talk' etc.

- expressing admiration, affection, gratitude, etc.

2. negative politeness, e.g.
  - avoiding face-threatening behaviour (dogmatism, direct orders, etc.)
  - expressing regret, apologising for face-threatening behaviour (correction, contradiction, prohibitions, etc.)
  - using hedges, etc.
3. appropriate use of 'please', 'thank you', etc.
4. impoliteness (deliberate flouting of politeness conventions), e.g.
  - bluntness, frankness
  - expressing contempt, dislike
  - strong complaint and reprimand
  - venting anger, impatience
  - asserting superiority

#### 4.7.2.2.3 Expressions of folk-wisdom

These fixed formulae, which both incorporate and reinforce common attitudes, make a significant contribution to popular culture.

- proverbs e.g. *a stitch in time saves nine*
- idioms e.g. *a sprat to catch a mackerel*
- expressions of:

belief, such as	- weather-saws	e.g. <i>Fine before seven, rain by eleven</i>
attitudes, such as	- clichés	e.g. <i>It takes all sorts to make a world</i>
values		e.g. <i>It's not cricket.</i>

Graffiti, T-shirt slogans, TV catch phrases, work-place cards and posters now often have this function.

#### 4.7.2.2.4 Register differences

- frozen, e.g. *Pray silence for His Worship the Mayor!*
- formal e.g. *May we now come to order, please.*
- neutral e.g. *Shall we begin?*
- informal e.g. *Right. What about making a start?*
- familiar e.g. *O.K. Let's get going.*
- intimate e.g. *Ready dear?*

#### 4.7.2.2.5 Dialect and accent

Sociolinguistic competence also includes the ability to recognise the linguistic markers of for example:

- social class
- regional provenance
- national origin
- occupational group

Such markers include:

lexicon e.g. Scottish *wee* for 'small'  
grammar e.g. Cockney *I ain't seen nothing* for 'I haven't seen anything'  
phonology e.g. New York *boid* for 'bird'

vocal characteristics (rhythm, loudness, etc.)

paralinguistics

body language

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what range of greetings, address forms and expletives learners should need/be equipped/required to a) recognise b) evaluate sociologically c) use themselves;*
- *which politeness conventions learners should need/be equipped/be required to a) recognise and understand b) use themselves;*
- *which forms of impoliteness learners should need/be equipped/ be required to a) recognise and understand b) use themselves and in which situation to do so;*
- *which proverbs, cliches and folk idioms learners should need/be equipped/be required to a) recognise and understand b) use themselves;*
- *which registers learners should need/be equipped/be required to a) recognise b) use;*
- *which social groups in the target community and, perhaps, in the international community the learner should need/be equipped/be required to recognise by their use of language.*

#### 4.7.2.3 Pragmatic competences

4.7.2.3.1 discourse competence

4.7.2.3.2 functional competence

4.7.2.3.3 schematic design competence

Pragmatic competence is concerned with the user/learner's knowledge of the principles according to which messages are:

- a) organised, structured and arranged ('discourse competence');
- b) used to perform communicative functions ('functional competence');
- c) sequenced according to interactional and transactional schemata ('design competence').

##### 4.7.2.3.1 Discourse competence

includes knowledge of and ability to control the ordering of sentences and sentence components in terms of:

- topic/focus;
- given/new;
- 'natural' sequencing: e.g. temporal
  - He fell over (and) I hit him.
  - I hit him (and) he fell over.
- cause/effect (invertible) - prices are rising - people want higher wages.
- ability to structure and manage discourse in terms of:
  - thematic organisation;
  - coherence and cohesion;



- logical ordering;
- style and register;
- rhetorical effectiveness;
- the '*co-operative principle*' (Grice): 'make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged, by observing the following maxims:
  - quality (try to make your contribution one that is true);
  - quantity (make your contribution as informative as necessary, but not more);
  - relevance (do not say what is not relevant);
  - manner (be brief and orderly, avoid obscurity and ambiguity)'.

Departure from these criteria for straightforward and efficient communication should be for a specific purpose rather than because of inability to meet them.

- Text design: knowledge of the design conventions in the community concerning, e.g.
  - how information is structured in realising the various macrofunctions (description, narrative, exposition, etc.)
    - how stories, anecdotes, jokes, etc. are told
    - how a case is built up (in law, debate, etc.)
    - how written texts (essays, formal letters, etc.) are laid out, sign- posted and sequenced.

#### 4.7.2.3.2 Functional competence

This component is concerned with the use of spoken discourse and written texts in communication for particular functional purposes: (see 4.2)

1. Macrofunctions are categories for the functional use of spoken discourse or written text consisting of a (sometimes extended) sequence of sentences, e.g.

description  
 narration  
 commentary  
 exposition  
 exegesis  
 explanation  
 demonstration  
 instruction  
 argumentation  
 persuasion

2. Microfunctions are categories for the functional use of single (usually short) utterances, usually as turns in an interaction. Microfunctions are categorised in some detail (but not exhaustively) in *Threshold Level 1990*, Chapter 5:

1. imparting and seeking factual information:

- identifying
- reporting
- correcting
- asking

- answering

2. expressing and finding out attitudes:

- factual (agreement/disagreement)
- knowledge (knowledge/ignorance, remembering, forgetting, probability, certainty)
- modality (obligations, necessity, ability, permission)
- volition (wants, desires, intentions, preference)
- emotions (pleasure/displeasure, likes/dislikes, satisfaction, interest, surprise, hope, disappointment, fear, worry, gratitude)
- moral (apologies, approval, regret, sympathy)

3. persuasion:

- suggestions, requests, warnings, advice, encouragement, asking help, invitations, offers

4. socialising:

- attracting attention, addressing, greetings, introductions, toasting, leave-taking

5. structuring discourse:

- (28 microfunctions, opening, turn-taking, closing, etc., etc.)

6. communication repair

- (16 microfunctions)

4.7.2.3.3 Schematic design competence:

knowledge of and ability to use the schemata (patterns of social interaction) which underlie communication, such as verbal exchange patterns. The interactive communicative activities set out in 4.4.3 involve structured sequences of actions by the parties in turns. At their simplest, they form pairs such as:

question:	answer
statement:	agreement/disagreement
request/offer/apology:	acceptance/non -acceptance
greeting/toast:	response

Triplets, in which the first speaker acknowledges or responds to the interlocutor's reply, are common. Pairs and triplets are usually embedded in longer transactions and interactions. For instance, in more complex goal-oriented co-operative transactions, language is used as necessary to:

- form the working group and establish relations among participants;
- establish common knowledge of the relevant features of the current situation and arrive at a common reading;
- identify what could and ought to be changed;
- establish common agreement on goals and on the action required to meet them;
- agree roles in carrying out the action;
- manage the practical actions involved by e.g.:
  - identifying and dealing with problems which arise;
  - co-ordinating and sequencing contributions;
  - mutual encouragement;

- recognising the achievement of sub-goals;
- recognise the final achievement of the task;
- evaluate the transaction;
- complete and terminate the transaction.

The total process can be represented schematically. An example is the general schema offered for the purchase of goods or services in *Threshold Level 1990*, Chapter 8:

General Schema for purchase of goods or services.

1. Moving to place of transaction
  - 1.1 Finding the way to the shop, store, supermarket, restaurant, station, hotel, etc.
  - 1.2 Finding the way to the counter, department, table, ticket office, reception, etc.
2. Establishing contact
  - 2.1 Exchanging greetings with the shopkeeper/assistant/waiter/receptionist, etc.
    - 2.1.1 assistant greets
    - 2.1.2 customer greets
3. Selecting goods/services
  - 3.1 identifying category of goods/services required
    - 3.1.1 seeking information
    - 3.1.2 giving information
  - 3.2 identifying options
  - 3.3 discussing pros and cons of options (e.g. quality, price, colour, size of goods)
    - 3.3.1 seeking information
    - 3.3.2 giving information
    - 3.3.3 seeking advice
    - 3.3.4 giving advice
    - 3.3.5 asking for preference
    - 3.3.6 expressing preference etc.
  - 3.4 identifying particular goods required
  - 3.5 examining goods
  - 3.6 agreeing to purchase
4. Exchanging goods for payment
  - 4.1 agreeing prices of items
  - 4.2 agreeing addition of total
    - 4.3 receiving/handing over payment
- 4.4 receiving/handing over goods (and receipt)

- 4.5 exchanging thanks
  - 4.5.1 assistant thanks
  - 4.5.2 customer thanks
- 5. Leave-taking
  - 5.1 expressing (mutual) satisfaction
    - 5.1.1 assistant expresses satisfaction
    - 5.1.2 customer expresses satisfaction
  - 5.2 exchanging interpersonal comment (e.g. weather, local gossip)
  - 5.3 exchanging parting greetings
    - 5.3.1 assistant greets
    - 5.3.2 customer greets

**NB** It should be noted that, as with similar schemata, the availability of this schema to shoppers and shop assistants does not mean that shopping always takes this form. Especially under modern conditions language is often used more sparingly, particularly to deal with problems that arise in an otherwise depersonalised and semi-automated transaction.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what discourse features the learner is equipped/required to control;*
- *which macrofunctions the learner is equipped/required to produce;*
- *which microfunctions the learner is equipped/required to produce;*
- *what interaction schemata are needed by/required of the learner;*
- *which he/she is assumed to control and which are to be taught;*
- *according to what principles macro- and microfunctions are selected and ordered;*
- *how qualitative progress in the pragmatic component can be characterised.*

## 4.8. STRATEGIES

- 4.8.1 Reception
- 4.8.2 Production
- 4.8.3 Interaction
- 4.8.4 Mediation

Strategies are a means the language user exploits to mobilise and balance his or her resources, to activate skills and procedures, in order to fulfil the demands of communication in context and successfully complete the task in question in the most comprehensive or most economical way feasible depending on his or her precise purpose. Communication strategies should therefore *not* be viewed simply with a disability model - as a way of making up for a language deficit or a miscommunication. Native speakers regularly employ communication strategies of all kinds (which will be discussed below) when the strategy is appropriate to the communicative demands placed upon them.

The use of communication strategies can be seen as the application of the metacognitive principles: *Pre-planning*, *Execution*, *Monitoring*, and *Repair Action* to the different kinds of communicative activity: Reception, Interaction, Production and Mediation.

The word "strategies" has been used in different ways. Here what is meant is the adoption of a particular line of action in order to maximise effectiveness. Skills which are an inevitable part of the process of understanding or articulating the spoken and written word (e.g. chunking a stream of sound in order to decode it into a string of words carrying propositional meaning) are treated as lower-level skills, in relation to the appropriate communicative process (see Section 4.5).

### 4.8.1 Reception

Reception strategies involve identifying the context and knowledge of the world relevant to it, activating in the process what are thought to be appropriate *schemata*. These in turn set up expectations about the organisation and content of what is to come (*Framing*). During the process of receptive activity cues identified in the total context (linguistic and non-linguistic) and the expectations in relation to that context set up by the relevant *schemata* are used to build up a representation of the meaning being expressed and a hypothesis as to the communicative intention behind it. Through a process of successive approximation, apparent and possible gaps in the message are filled in order to flesh out the representation of meaning, and the significance of the message and of its constituent parts are worked out (*Inferring*). The gaps filled through inference may be caused by linguistic restrictions, difficult receptive conditions, lack of associated knowledge, or by assumed familiarity, obliqueness or understatement on the part of the speaker/writer. The viability of the current model arrived at through this process is checked against the evidence of the incoming co-textual and contextual cues to see if they "fit" the activated schema - the way one is interpreting the situation (*Hypothesis testing*) . An identified mismatch leads to a return to step one (*Framing*) in the search for an alternative schema which would better explain the incoming cues (*Revising Hypotheses*).

Planning	- Framing (selecting mental set, activating schemata, setting up expectations).
Execution	- Identifying cues and inferring from them.
Evaluation	- Hypothesis testing: matching cues to schemata.
Repair	- Revising hypotheses.

### 4.8.2 Production

Production strategies involve mobilising resources, balancing between different competences - exploiting strengths and underplaying weaknesses - in order to match the available potential to the nature of the task. Internal resources will be activated, possibly involving conscious preparation (*Rehearsing*), possibly calculating the effect of different styles, discourse structures or formulations (*Considering audience*), possibly looking things up or obtaining assistance when dealing with a deficit (*Locating resources*). When adequate resources have *not* been mobilised or located the language user may find it advisable to go for a more modest version of the task and for example write a postcard rather than a letter; on the other hand, having located appropriate support, he or she may choose to do the reverse - scaling up the task (*Task adjustment*). In a similar way, without sufficient resources the learner/user may have to compromise what he or she would really like to express in order to match the linguistic means available; conversely additional linguistic support, perhaps available later

during re-drafting, may enable him or her to be more ambitious in forming and expressing his or her thoughts (*Message adjustment*).

Ways of scaling down ambitions to fit resources in order to ensure success in a more limited area have been described as *Avoidance strategies*; scaling up and finding ways to cope have been described as *Achievement strategies*. In using achievement strategies the language user adopts a positive approach with what resources he or she has: approximating and overgeneralising with simpler language, paraphrasing or describing aspects of what he or she wants to say, even "foreignising" L1 expressions (*Compensating*); using highly accessible pre-fabricated language he or she feels sure of - "islands of reliability" - to create stepping stones through what for the user is a novel situation or concept he or she wants to express (*Building on previous knowledge*), or just having a go with what he or she can half remember and thinks *might work* (*Trying out*). Whether or not the language user is aware of compensating, skating over thin ice or using language tentatively, feedback in terms of facial expression, gesture and subsequent moves in the conversation offer him or her the opportunity to monitor the success of the communication (*Monitoring success*). In addition, particularly in non-interactive activities (e.g. giving a presentation, writing a report) the language user may consciously monitor linguistically as well as communicatively, spot slips and "favourite" mistakes and correct them (*Self correction*).

Planning- Rehearsing;

- Locating resources;
- Considering audience;
- Task adjustment;
- Message adjustment.

Execution- Compensating;

- Building on previous knowledge;
- Trying out.

Evaluation - Monitoring success;

Repair - Self-correction.

### 4.8.3 Interaction

Interaction encompasses both receptive and productive activity as well as activity unique to the construction of joint discourse and therefore all reception strategies and all production strategies mentioned above are also involved in interaction. However, the fact that interaction entails the collective creation of meaning by the establishment of some degree of common mental context, defining what can be taken as given, working out where people are coming from, converging towards each other or defining and maintaining a comfortable distance, usually in real time, means that in addition to receptive and productive strategies there is a class of strategies exclusive to interaction concerned with the management of this process. In addition, the fact that interaction is primarily face to face tends to provide far greater redundancy both in textual, linguistic terms and with regard to paralinguistic features, contextual cues, all of which can be made more or less elaborate, more or less explicit to the extent that the constant monitoring of the process by the participants indicates that this is appropriate.

Planning for interaction involves the activation of schemata or a "praxeogram" of the exchanges possible and probable in the forthcoming activity (*Framing*) and consideration of the communicative distance from other interlocutors (*Identifying information/opinion gap; Judging what can be taken as given*) in order to decide on options and prepare possible moves in those exchanges (*Planning moves*). During the activity itself, language users adopt turntaking strategies in order to obtain the discourse initiative (*Taking the floor*), in order to cement the collaboration in the task and keep the discussion on course (*Co-operating: interpersonal*), to help

mutual understanding and a focused approach to the task at hand (*Co-operating: ideational*), and so that they themselves can ask for assistance in formulating something (*Asking for Help*). As with Planning, Evaluation takes place at a communicative level: judging the "fit" between the schemata thought to apply, and what is actually happening (*Monitoring: schemata, praxeogram*) and the extent to which things are going the way one wants them to go (*Monitoring: effect, success*); miscomprehension or intolerable ambiguity leads to requests for clarification which may be on a communicative or linguistic level (*Asking for, giving clarification*), and to active intervention to re-establish communication and clear up misunderstandings when necessary (*Communication Repair*).

- Planning
  - Framing (selecting praxeogram)
  - Identifying information/opinion gap (felicity conditions)
  - Judging what can be presupposed
  - Planning moves
- Execution
  - Taking the floor
  - Co-operating (interpersonal)
  - Co-operating (ideational)
  - Dealing with the unexpected
  - Asking for help
- Evaluation
  - Monitoring (schema, praxeogram)
  - Monitoring (effect, success)
- Repair
  - Asking for clarification
  - Giving clarification
  - Communication repair

#### 4.8.4 Mediation

Mediation strategies reflect ways of coping with the demands of using finite resources to process information and establish equivalent meaning. The process may involve some pre-planning to organise and maximise resources (*Developing background knowledge; Locating supports; Preparing a glossary*) as well as consideration of how to tackle the task at hand (*Considering the interlocutors' needs; Selecting the size of interpretation unit*). During the process of interpretation, glossing, or translation, the mediator needs to look ahead at what is coming next whilst formulating what has just been said, generally juggling with two different "chunks" or interpretation units simultaneously (*Previewing*). He or she needs to note ways of expressing things to extend his or her glossary (*Noting possibilities, equivalences*), and to construct islands of reliability, (prefabricated chunks) which free up processing capacity for previewing. On the other hand he or she also needs to use techniques to skate over uncertainty and avoid breakdown - whilst maintaining previewing (*Bridging gaps*). Evaluation takes place at a communicative level (*Checking congruence*) and at a linguistic level (*Checking consistency of usage*) and, certainly with written translation, leads to repair through consultation of reference works and people knowledgeable in the field concerned (*refining by consulting dictionaries, thesaurus; consulting experts, sources*).

- Planning
  - Developing background knowledge;
  - Locating supports;
  - Preparing a glossary;
  - Considering interlocutors' needs;
  - Selecting unit of interpretation.
- Execution
  - Previewing: processing input and formulating the last chunk simultaneously in real time;



- Noting possibilities, equivalences;
- Bridging gaps;
- Evaluation - Checking congruence of two versions;
- Checking consistency of usage;
- Repair- refining by consulting dictionaries, thesaurus;
- Consulting experts, sources.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *which strategies are most relevant to the communicative needs of the learners concerned;*
- *what kind of communicative activity will give learners the opportunity to develop such relevant strategies;*
- *which of the strategies lend themselves to promotion with those learners in awareness-raising activities, and which strategies may be better developed indirectly through activity alone;*
- *how to take account of strategy use in assessment.*

## **CHAPTER 5:        TASKS AND TEXT**

### **5.1        Task description**

### **5.2        Task performance**

- 5.2.1    Competences
- 5.2.2    Conditions and constraints
- 5.2.3    Strategies

### **5.3        Task difficulty**

- 5.3.1    Learner competences and characteristics
  - 5.3.1.1 Cognitive
  - 5.3.1.2 Affective
  - 5.3.1.3 Linguistic
- 5.3.2    Task conditions and constraints
  - 5.3.2.1 Interaction and production
  - 5.3.2.2 Reception

### **5.4        Text**

- 5.4.1 Texts and activities
- 5.4.2 Texts and media

## **5.1    TASK DESCRIPTION**

Tasks are a feature of everyday life in the personal, public, educational or occupational domains. Task accomplishment by an individual involves the strategic activation of specific competences in order to carry out a set of purposeful actions in a particular domain with a clearly defined goal and a specific outcome (see Chapter 3, Section 3.1). Tasks can be extremely varied in nature, and may involve language activities to a greater or lesser extent, for example: creative (painting, story writing), skills based (repairing or assembling something), problem solving (jigsaw, crossword), routine transactions, interpreting a role in a play, taking part in a discussion, giving a presentation, planning a course of action, reading and replying to (an e-mail) message etc. A task may be quite simple or extremely complex (e.g. studying a number of related diagrams and instructions and assembling an unfamiliar and intricate apparatus). A particular task may involve a greater or lesser number of steps or embedded sub-tasks and consequently the boundaries of any one task may be difficult to define.

Communication is an integral part of tasks where participants engage in interaction, production, reception or mediation, or a combination of two or more of these, for example: interacting with a public service official and completing a form; reading a report and discussing it with colleagues in order to arrive at a decision on a course of action; following written instructions while assembling something, and if an observer/helper is present, asking for help or describing/commenting on the process; preparing (in written form) and delivering a public lecture, interpreting informally for a visitor etc.

Similar kinds of tasks are a central unit in many syllabuses, textbooks, classroom learning experiences and tests, although often in a modified form for learning or testing purposes. These 'real-life', 'target' or 'rehearsal' tasks are chosen on the basis of learners' needs outside the classroom, whether in the personal and public domains, or related to more specific occupational or educational needs.

Other kinds of classroom tasks are specifically 'pedagogic' in nature and have their basis in the social and interactive nature and immediacy of the classroom situation where learners engage in a 'willing suspension of disbelief' and accept the use of the target language rather than the easier and more natural mother tongue to carry out meaning-focused tasks. These pedagogic tasks are only indirectly related to real-life tasks and learner needs, and aim to develop communicative competence based on what is believed or known about learning processes in general and language acquisition in particular. Communicative pedagogic tasks (as opposed to exercises focusing specifically on decontextualised practice of forms) aim to actively involve learners in meaningful communication, are relevant (here and now in the formal learning context), are challenging but feasible (with task manipulation where appropriate), and have identifiable (and possibly less immediately evident) outcomes. Such tasks may involve 'metacommunicative' (sub)tasks, i.e. communication around task implementation and the language used in carrying out the task. This includes learner contributions to task selection, management, and evaluation, which in a language learning context may often become integral parts of the tasks themselves.

Classroom tasks, whether reflecting 'real-life' use or essentially 'pedagogic' in nature, are communicative to the extent that they require learners to comprehend, negotiate and express meaning in order to achieve a communicative goal. The emphasis in a communicative task is on successful task completion and consequently the primary focus is on meaning as learners realise their communicative intentions. However, in the case of tasks designed for language learning or teaching purposes, performance is concerned both with meaning and the way meanings are comprehended, expressed and negotiated. A changing balance needs to be established between attention to meaning and form, fluency and accuracy, in the overall selection and sequencing of tasks so that both task performance and language learning progress can be facilitated and appropriately acknowledged.

## **5.2 TASK PERFORMANCE: COMPETENCES, TASK CONDITIONS AND CONSTRAINTS, AND STRATEGIES**

### 5.2.1 Competences

### 5.2.2 Conditions and constraints

### 5.2.3 Strategies

In considering task performance in pedagogical contexts it is necessary to take into account both the learner's competences and the conditions and constraints specific to a particular task (which may be manipulated in order to modify the level of difficulty of classroom tasks), and the strategic interplay of learner competences and task parameters in carrying out a task.

### **5.2.1 Competences**

Tasks of any kind require the activation of a range of appropriate general competences, for example: knowledge and experience of the world; sociocultural knowledge (concerning life in the target community and essential differences between practices, values and beliefs in that community and the learner's own society); skills such as intercultural skills (mediating

between the two cultures), learning skills, and everyday practical skills and know-how (see Chapter 4, Section 4.7.1). In order to accomplish a communicative task, whether in a real-life or learning/examination setting, the language user or learner draws also on communicative language competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge and skills - see Chapter 4, Section 4.7.2)). In addition, individual personality and attitudinal characteristics affect the user or learner's task performance.

Successful task accomplishment may be facilitated by the prior activation of the learner's competences, for example, in the initial problem-posing or goal-setting phase of a task by providing or raising awareness of necessary linguistic elements, by drawing on prior knowledge and experience to activate appropriate schemata, and by encouraging task planning or rehearsal. In this way the processing load during task execution and monitoring is reduced and the learner's attention is freer to deal with any unexpected content and/or form-related problems that may arise, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful task completion in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

## **5.2.2 Conditions and constraints**

In addition to user/learner competences and characteristics, performance is affected by certain task-related conditions and constraints which can vary from task to task, and the teacher or textbook writer can control a number of elements in order to adjust the level of task difficulty upwards or downwards.

Comprehension tasks may be designed so that the same input may be available to all learners but different outcomes may be envisaged quantitatively (amount of information required) or qualitatively (standard of performance expected). Alternatively, the input text may contain differing amounts of information or degrees of cognitive and/or organisational complexity, or different amounts of support (visuals, key words, prompts, charts, diagrams etc.) may be made available to help learners. Input may be chosen for its relevance to the learner (motivation) or for reasons extrinsic to the learner. A text may be listened to or read as often as necessary or limits may be imposed. The type of response required can be quite simple (raise your hand) or demanding (create a new text). In the case of interaction and production tasks, performance conditions can be manipulated in order to make a task more or less demanding, for example by varying: the amount of time allowed for planning and for realisation; the duration of the interaction or production; the degree of (un)predictability, amount and kind of support provided etc.

## **5.2.3 Strategies**

Task performance is a complex process, therefore, involving the strategic interplay of a range of learner competences and task-related factors. In responding to the demands of a task the language user or learner activates those general and communicative strategies which are most efficient for accomplishing the particular task. The user or learner naturally adapts, adjusts and filters task inputs, goals, conditions and constraints to fit his or her own resources, purposes and (in a language learning context) particular learning style.

In carrying out a communication task, an individual selects, balances, activates and coordinates the appropriate components of those competences necessary for task planning, execution, monitoring/evaluation, and (where necessary) repair, with a view to the effective achievement of his or her intended communicative purpose. Strategies (general and communicative) provide a vital link between the different competences that the learner has (innate or acquired) and successful task completion (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.5 Tasks,

strategies and texts; Chapter 4, Section 4.8 Strategies).

## 5.3 TASK DIFFICULTY

### 5.3.1 Learner competences and characteristics

5.3.1.1 Cognitive

5.3.1.2 Affective

5.3.1.3 Linguistic

### 5.3.2 Task conditions and constraints related to

5.3.2.1 Interaction and production

5.3.2.2 Reception

Individuals may differ considerably in their approach to the same task. Consequently the difficulty of any particular task for an individual, and the strategies which he or she adopts to cope with the demands of the task, are the result of a number of interrelated factors arising from his or her competences (general and communicative) and individual characteristics, and the specific conditions and constraints under which the task is carried out. For these reasons the ease or difficulty of tasks cannot be predicted with certainty, least of all for individual learners, and in language learning contexts consideration needs to be given to ways of building flexibility and differentiation into task design and implementation.

In spite of the problems associated with establishing task difficulty, the effective use of classroom learning experiences requires a principled and coherent approach to task selection and sequencing. This means taking into account the specific competences of the learner and factors that affect task difficulty, and manipulating task parameters in order to modify the task according to the needs and capabilities of the learner.

In considering levels of task difficulty, therefore, it is necessary to take into account:

- user/learner's competences and characteristics, including the learner's own purposes and learning style;
- task conditions and constraints which may affect the language user/learner's performance in carrying out specific tasks, and which, in learning contexts, may be adjusted to accommodate learner competences and characteristics.

### 5.3.1 Learner competences and characteristics:

The learner's different competences are closely related to individual characteristics of a cognitive, affective and linguistic nature which need to be taken into account in establishing the potential difficulty of a given task for a particular learner.

5.3.1.1 Cognitive

5.3.1.2 Affective

5.3.1.3 Linguistic

#### 5.3.1.1 Cognitive

- task familiarity: cognitive load may be lessened and successful task completion facilitated according to the extent of the learner's familiarity with:
  - the type of task and operations involved
  - the theme(s);

- type of text (genre);

- interactional schemata (scripts and frames) involved as the availability to the learner of unconscious or 'routinized' schemata can free the learner to deal with other aspects of performance, or assists in anticipating text content and organisation;
- necessary background knowledge (assumed by the speaker or writer);
- relevant sociocultural knowledge, e.g. knowledge of social norms and variations, social conventions and rules, language forms appropriate to the context, references connected with national or cultural identity, and distinctive differences between the learner's culture and the target culture (see Chapter 4, Section 4.7.1.1.2) and intercultural awareness (see 4.7.1.1.3).
- skills: task completion depends on the learner's ability to exercise, *inter alia*,
  - the organisational and interpersonal skills necessary to carry out the different steps of the task;
  - the learning skills and strategies that facilitate task completion, including coping when linguistic resources are inadequate, discovering for oneself, planning and monitoring task implementation;
  - intercultural skills (see Chapter 4, Section 4.7.1.2.2), including the ability to cope with what is implicit in the discourse of native speakers.
- ability to cope with processing demands: a task is likely to make greater or lesser demands depending on the learner's capacity to:
  - handle the number of steps or 'cognitive operations' involved, and their concrete or abstract nature ;
  - attend to the processing demands of the task (amount of "on-line thinking") and to relating different steps of the task to one another (or to combining different but related tasks).

#### 5.3.1.2 Affective:

- self-esteem: a positive self-image and lack of inhibition is likely to contribute to successful task completion where the learner has the necessary self-confidence to persist in carrying out the task; for example, assuming control of interaction when necessary (e.g. intervening to obtain clarification, to check understanding, willingness to take risks, or, when faced with comprehension difficulties, continuing to read or listen and making inferences etc.); the degree of inhibition may be influenced by the particular situation or task;
- involvement and motivation: successful task performance is more likely where the learner is fully involved; a high level of intrinsic motivation to carry out the task - due to interest in the task or because of its perceived relevance, for example to real-life needs or to the completion of another linked task (task interdependence) - will promote greater learner involvement; extrinsic motivation may also play a role, for example where there are external pressures to complete the task successfully (e.g. to earn praise or in order not to lose face, or for competitive reasons);
- state: performance is influenced by the learner's physical and emotional state (an alert and relaxed learner is more likely to learn and to succeed than a tired and anxious one);
- attitude: the difficulty of a task which introduces new sociocultural knowledge and experiences will be affected by, for example: the learner's interest in and openness to otherness; willingness to relativise his or her own cultural viewpoint and value system; willingness to assume the role of 'cultural intermediary' between his or her own and the foreign culture and to resolve intercultural misunderstanding and



conflict.

### 5.3.1.3 Linguistic

- The stage of development of the learner's linguistic resources is a primary factor to be considered in establishing the suitability of a particular task or in manipulating task parameters: level of knowledge and control of grammar, vocabulary and phonology or orthography required to carry out the task, i.e language resources such as range, grammatical and lexical accuracy, and aspects of language use such as fluency, flexibility, coherence, appropriacy, precision.

A task may be linguistically demanding but cognitively simple, or vice versa, and consequently one factor may be offset against the other in task selection for pedagogic purposes, (although an appropriate response to a cognitively demanding task may be linguistically challenging in a real life context). In carrying out a task learners have to handle both content and form. Where they do not need to devote undue attention to formal aspects, then more resources are available to attend to cognitive aspects, and vice versa. The availability of routinised schematic knowledge frees the learner to deal with content and, in the case of interaction and spontaneous production activities, to concentrate on more accurate use of less well established forms. The learner's ability to compensate for 'gaps' in his or her linguistic competence is an important factor in successful task completion for all activities (see communication strategies, Chapter 4, Section 4.8).

## 5.3.2 Task conditions and constraints

A range of factors may be manipulated with regard to conditions and constraints in classroom tasks involving:

- interaction and production;
- reception.

### 5.3.2.1 Interaction and Production

Conditions and constraints affecting the difficulty of interaction and production tasks:

- Support
  - Time
  - Goal
  - Predictability
  - Physical conditions
  - Participants
- *Support:*

The provision of adequate information concerning contextual features and the availability of language assistance can help reduce task difficulty.

- amount of contextualisation provided: task accomplishment may be facilitated by the provision of sufficient and relevant information about participants, roles, content, goals, setting (including visuals) and relevant, clear and adequate instructions or guidelines for carrying out the task;

- extent to which language assistance is provided: in interaction activities, task rehearsal or carrying out a parallel task in a preparatory phase, and the provision of language support (key words etc.) helps to create expectations and to activate prior knowledge or experience and acquired schemata; non-immediate production activities will obviously be facilitated by the availability of resources such as reference works, relevant models, and assistance from others.

- *Time:*

The less time available for task preparation and performance, the more demanding the task is likely to be. Temporal aspects to be considered include:

- time available for preparation i.e. the extent to which planning or rehearsal is possible: in spontaneous communication intentional planning is not possible and consequently a highly developed and subconscious use of strategies is required for successful task completion; in other instances the learner may be under less severe time pressure and can exercise relevant strategies at a more conscious level, for example where communication schemata are fairly predictable or determined in advance as in routine transactions, or where there is adequate time for planning, executing, evaluating, and editing text as is normally the case with interaction tasks which do not require an immediate response (corresponding by letter) or non-immediate spoken or written production tasks;

- time available for execution: the greater the degree of urgency inherent in the communicative event, or the shorter the time allowed for learners to complete the task, then the greater the pressure in carrying out the task in spontaneous communication; however, non-spontaneous interaction or production tasks may also create time pressure, for example, to meet a deadline for completing a text, which in turn reduces the time available for planning, execution, evaluation and repair;

- duration of turns: longer turns in spontaneous interaction (e.g. recounting an anecdote) are normally more demanding than short turns;

- duration of the task: where cognitive factors and performance conditions are constant, a lengthy spontaneous interaction, a (complex) task with many steps, or the planning and execution of a lengthy spoken or written text is likely to be more demanding than a corresponding task of a shorter duration.

- *Goal:*

The greater the amount of negotiation required to achieve the task goal(s) the more demanding the task is likely to be. In addition, the extent to which expectations with regard to task outcomes are shared by the teacher and learners will facilitate the acceptance of diversified but acceptable task accomplishment.

- convergence or divergence of task goal(s): in an interaction task a convergent goal normally involves more 'communicative stress' than a divergent goal, i.e. the former requires participants to arrive at a single, agreed outcome (such as reaching a consensus on a course of action to be followed) which may involve considerable negotiation as specific information which is essential for successful task completion is exchanged, whereas the latter has no single, specific intended outcome (e.g. a simple exchange of views);

- learner and teacher attitudes to goals: teacher and learner awareness of the possibility and acceptability of different outcomes (as opposed to learners' (perhaps subconscious)

striving for a single "correct" outcome) may influence task execution.

- *Predictability:*

Regular changes in task parameters during task execution are likely to increase demands on interlocutors.

- in an interaction task, the introduction of an unexpected element (event, circumstances, information, participant) obliges the learner to activate relevant strategies to cope with the dynamics of the new and more complex situation; in a production task the development of a 'dynamic' text (e.g. a story involving regular changes of characters, scenes and with time shifts) is likely to be more demanding than producing a 'static' text (e.g. describing a lost or stolen object).

- *Physical conditions:*

Noise can add to the processing demands in interaction

- interference: background noise or a poor telephone line, for example, may require participants to draw on prior experience, schematic knowledge, inferencing skills etc. to compensate for 'gaps' in the message;

- *Participants:*

In addition to the above parameters, a variety of participant-related factors, although they cannot normally be manipulated, need to be taken into account when considering conditions influencing the ease of difficulty of real-life tasks involving interaction.

- co-operativeness of interlocutor(s): a sympathetic interlocutor will facilitate successful communication by ceding a degree of control over the interaction to the user/learner, e.g. in negotiating and accepting modification of goals, and in facilitating comprehension, for example by responding positively to requests to speak more slowly, to repeat, to clarify;

- features of speech of interlocutors e.g. rate, accent, clarity, coherence;

- visibility of interlocutors (accessibility of paralinguistic features in face to face communication facilitates communication);

- general and communicative competences of interlocutors, including behaviour (degree of familiarity with norms in a particular speech community), and knowledge of the subject matter;

### 5.3.2.2 Reception

Conditions and constraints affecting the difficulty of comprehension tasks:

- Task support
- Text characteristics
- Type of response required

- *Task support*

The introduction of various forms of support can reduce the possible difficulty of texts,

for example, a preparatory phase can provide orientation and activate prior knowledge, clear task instructions help to avoid possible confusion, and work arrangements involving small group settings offer possibilities for learner co-operation and mutual assistance.

- preparatory phase: creating expectations, providing necessary background knowledge, activating schematic knowledge, and filtering specific linguistic difficulties during a pre-listening/viewing or pre-reading phase reduce the processing load and consequently task demands; contextual assistance may be provided also by studying questions accompanying a text (and therefore ideally placed before a written text), and from clues such as visuals, layout, headings etc.;

- task instructions: uncomplicated, relevant and sufficient task instructions (neither too much nor too little information) lessen the possibility of confusion about task procedures and goals;

- small group setting: for certain learners, and particularly but not exclusively for slower learners, a small group work arrangement involving co-operative listening/reading is more likely to result in successful task completion than individual work, as learners can share the processing load and obtain assistance and feedback on their understanding from one another;

- *Text characteristics*

In evaluating a text for use with a particular learner or group of learners, factors such as linguistic complexity, text type, discourse structure, physical presentation, length of the text and its relevance for the learner(s), need to be considered.

- linguistic complexity: particularly complex syntax consumes attentional resources that might otherwise be available for dealing with content; for example, long sentences with a number of subordinate clauses, non-continuous constituents, multiple negation, scope ambiguity, use of anaphorics and deictics without clear antecedents or reference. Syntactic over-simplification of authentic texts, however, may actually have the effect of increasing the level of difficulty (because of the elimination of redundancies, clues to meaning etc.);

- text type: familiarity with the genre and domain (and with assumed background and sociocultural knowledge) helps the learner in anticipating and comprehending text structure and content; the concrete or abstract nature of the text is also likely to play a role; for example, concrete description, instructions or narratives (particularly with adequate visual supports), for example, are likely to be less demanding than abstract argumentation or explanation;

- discourse structure: textual coherence and clear organisation (for example, temporal sequencing, main points clearly signalled and presented before illustration of the points), the explicit rather than implicit nature of information presented, the absence of conflicting or surprising information, all contribute to reducing information processing complexity;

- physical presentation: written and spoken texts obviously make differing demands because of the need to process information in spoken text in real time. In addition, noise, distortion and interference (e.g. weak radio/television reception, or untidy/smudged handwriting) increase the difficulty of comprehension; in the case of spoken (audio) text the greater the number of speakers and the less distinct their voices, the more difficult it is to identify and understand individual speakers; other factors which increase difficulty in listening/viewing include overlapping speech, phonetic reduction, unfamiliar accents, speed of delivery, monotony, low volume etc.;

- length of text: in general a short text is less demanding than a long text on a similar topic as a longer text requires more processing and there is an additional memory load, risk of fatigue and distraction (especially in the case of younger learners). However, a long text which is not too dense and contains considerable redundancy may be easier than a short dense text presenting the same information;

- relevance to the learner: a high level of motivation to understand due to personal interest in the content will help to sustain the learner's efforts to understand (although it will not necessarily assist comprehension directly); while the occurrence of low frequency vocabulary may be expected to increase the difficulty of a text in general, a text containing quite specific vocabulary on a familiar and relevant topic is likely to be less demanding for a specialist in the field than a text containing wide-ranging vocabulary of a more general nature, and it may be approached with greater confidence;

Encouraging learners to express their personal knowledge, ideas and opinions within a comprehension task may increase motivation and confidence, and activate linguistic competence related to the text. Embedding a comprehension task within another task may also help to make it inherently purposeful and increase learner involvement.

- *Type of response required*

While a text may be relatively difficult the type of response required by the task which is set may be manipulated in order to accommodate the learner's competences and characteristics. Task design may also depend on whether the aim is to develop comprehension skills or to check understanding. Accordingly, the type of response demanded may vary considerably, as numerous typologies of comprehension tasks illustrate.

A comprehension task may require global or selective comprehension, or understanding of important points of detail. Certain tasks may require the reader/listener to show understanding of the main information clearly stated in a text, while others may require the use of inferencing skills. A task may be summative (to be completed on the basis of the complete text, or may be structured so as to relate to manageable units (e.g. accompanying each section of a text) and thus making less demands on memory.

The response may be non-verbal (no overt response or a simple action such as ticking a picture) or a verbal response (spoken or written) may be required. The latter may, for instance, involve identifying and reproducing information from a text for a particular purpose or may, for example, require the learner to complete the text or to produce a new text through related interaction or production tasks.

The time allowed for the response may be varied so as to decrease or increase task difficulty. The more time a listener or reader has to replay or reread a text, the more he or she is likely to understand and the greater the opportunity to apply a range of strategies for coping with difficulties in understanding the text.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *principles for the selection and weighting of 'real-life' and 'pedagogic' tasks for their purposes, including the appropriateness of different types of tasks in particular learning contexts;*
- *the criteria for selecting tasks which are purposeful and meaningful for the learner, and*

- *provide a challenging but realistic and attainable goal, involving the learner as fully as possible, and allowing for differing learner interpretations and outcomes;*
- *the relationship between tasks that are primarily meaning-oriented and learning experiences specifically focused on form so that the learner's attention might be focused in a regular and useful manner on both aspects in a balanced approach to the development of accuracy and fluency;*
- *ways of taking into account the pivotal role of the learner's strategies in relating competences and performance in the successful accomplishment of challenging tasks under varying conditions and constraints (see Chapter 4, Section 8 and Chapter 9, Section 9.4.3);*
- *ways of facilitating successful task accomplishment and learning (including activation of the learner's prior competences in a preparatory phase);*
- *criteria and options for selecting tasks, and where appropriate manipulating task parameters in order to modify the level of task difficulty so as to accommodate learners' differing and developing competences, and diversity in learner characteristics (ability, motivation, needs, interests);*
- *how the perceived level of difficulty of a task might be taken into account in the evaluation of successful task completion and in (self) assessment of the learner's communicative competence (see in particular Chapter 8, Section 8.5).*

## 5.4 Text

Section 4.6 confines itself to giving examples of text types and the media which carry them. Users of the Framework may, however, wish to consider more closely the nature and functions of texts in relation to activities and media.

### 5.4.1 Texts and activities

The output of the process of language production is a text which once it is uttered or written becomes an artefact carried by a particular medium and independent of its producer. The text then functions as the input to the process of language reception. Written artefacts are concrete objects, whether carved in stone, handwritten, typed, printed or electronically generated. They allow communication to take place despite the complete separation of producer and receiver in space and/or time - a property on which human society largely depends. In face-to-face oral interaction the medium is acoustic, sound waves which are normally ephemeral and irrecoverable. Indeed, few speakers are able to reproduce in exact detail a text they have just uttered in the course of conversation. Once it has served its communicative purposes it is discarded from memory - if indeed it has ever lodged there as a complete entity. However, as a result of modern technology, sound-waves can be recorded and broadcast or stored in another medium and later reconverted into speech-waves. In this way, the temporo-spatial separation of producer and receiver is made possible. Furthermore, recordings of spontaneous discourse and conversation can be transcribed and analysed at leisure as texts. There is necessarily a close correlation between the categories proposed for the description of language activities and the texts resulting from those activities. Indeed the same word may be used for both. 'Translation' may denote either the act of translating or the text produced. Similarly, 'conversation', 'debate' or 'interview' may denote the communicative interaction of the participants, but the sequence of their exchanged utterances constitutes a text of a particular type belonging to a corresponding genre.

All the activities of production, reception, interaction and mediation take place in time. The real-time nature of speech is apparent, both in the activities of speaking and listening and in the medium itself. 'Before' and 'after' in a spoken text are to be taken quite literally. In a written text, which is usually (excluding 'scrolled' texts) a static spatial artefact, this is not necessarily so. In production, a written text can be edited, passages inserted or deleted. We cannot tell in what order the elements have been produced, though they are presented in a linear order as a string of symbols. Receptively, the reader's eye is free to move over the text in any way, possibly following the linear sequence in strict order, as a child learning to read will generally do. Skilled, mature readers are much more likely to scan a text for highly information-bearing elements in order to establish an overall structure of meaning and then return to read more closely - and if need be to re-read a number of times - such words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs as are of particular relevance to their needs and purposes. An author or editor may well use paratextual features (see 4.5.6) to steer this process and, indeed, plan the text in accordance with the way in which it is expected to be read by the audience for which it is intended. Similarly, a spoken text may be carefully planned in advance so as to appear to be spontaneous, yet to ensure that an essential message is effectively conveyed under the different conditions that constrain the reception of speech. Process and product are indissolubly linked.

The text is central to any act of linguistic communication, the external, objective link between producer and receiver, whether they are communicating face to face or at a distance. Figure 2 shows in a schematic form the relation between the user/learner, on whom the Framework is focused, the interlocutor(s), activities and texts. A solid line represents a productive or receptive activity in the user/learner's immediate environment. A dotted line represents an activity at a distance in space or time. In diagram 1: Productive, the user/learner produces a spoken or written text, received, normally at a distance, by one or more listeners or readers, who are not called upon to reply. In diagram 2: Receptive, the user/learner receives a text from a speaker or writer, normally at a distance, and is not called upon to reply. Diagram 3: Interactive, represents a situation in which the user/learner enters into a face-to-face dialogue with an interlocutor. The text of the dialogue consists of utterances respectively produced and received by each party in alternation. Diagram 4: Mediation, represents two situations. In 4.1 the user/learner receives a text from a speaker or writer, who is not present, in one language or code and produces a parallel text in a different language or code to be received by another person as listener or reader at a distance. In 4.2, the user/learner acts as an intermediary in a face-to-face interaction between two interlocutors who do not share the same language or code, receiving a text in one language and producing a corresponding text in the other.

**Diagram 4**



**FIGURE 2: Language activities**

In addition to interaction and mediation activities as defined above, there are many activities in which the user/learner is required to produce a textual response to a textual stimulus. The textual stimulus may be an oral question, a set of written instructions (e.g. an examination rubric), a discursive text, authentic or composed, etc. or some combination of these. The required textual response may be anything from a single word to a three-hour essay. Both input and output texts may be spoken or written and in L1 or L2. The relation between the two texts may be meaning preserving or not. Accordingly, even if we overlook the part which may be played in the teaching/learning of modern languages by activities in which the learner produces an L1 text in response to an L1 stimulus (as may often be the case with regard to the sociocultural component), some 24 activity types may be distinguished. For example, the following cases in which both input and output are in the target language:

Input		Output text			
<i>Medium</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Language</i>	<i>Meaning preserving</i>	<i>Activity type (examples)</i>
spoken	L2	spoken	L2	Yes	repetition
spoken	L2	written	L2	Yes	dictation
spoken	L2	spoken	L2	No	oral question/answer
spoken	L2	written	L2	No	written answers to oral L2 questions
written	L2	spoken	L2	Yes	reading aloud
written	L2	written	L2	Yes	copying, transcription
written	L2	spoken	L2	No	spoken response to written L2 rubric
written	L2	written	L2	No	writing in response to written L2 rubric

**Table 2**

Whilst such text-to-text activities have a place in everyday language use, they are particularly frequent in language learning/teaching and testing. The more mechanical meaning-preserving activities (repetition, dictation, reading aloud, phonetic transcription) are currently out of favour in communication-oriented language teaching owing to their artificiality and what are seen as undesirable backwash effects, though a case can be made for them as testing devices for the technical reason that performance depends closely on the ability to use linguistic competences to reduce the information content of the text. The fact that they are out of favour is, of course, no reason for excluding them from mention in a

comprehensive framework. Those who employ them, whether out of conviction or simply continuing an accepted tradition, should be encouraged to reflect on and state - perhaps even justify - their current practice. Continuing debate is surely better than the suppression of heresy! The advantage of examining all possible combinations of categories in taxonomic sets is not only that it enables experience to be ordered, but also that it reveals gaps and suggests new possibilities.

## 5.4.2 Texts and media

As has been illustrated earlier (see Chapter 4, Section 4.6.1), every text is carried by a particular medium, normally by sound-waves or written artefacts. Subcategories can be established according to physical properties of the medium which affect the processes of production and reception, e.g. for speech, direct close-up speech as against public address or telephone, or for writing print as against cursive writing, or different scripts. To communicate using a particular medium, user/learners must have the necessary sensory/motor equipment. In the case of speech, they must be able to hear well under the given conditions and have fine control of the organs of phonation and articulation. In the case of normal writing, they must be able to see with the necessary visual acuity and have control of their hands. They must then have the knowledge and skills described elsewhere, on the one hand to identify, understand and interpret the text or on the other to organise, formulate and produce it. This will be true for any text, whatever its nature.

The above must not discourage people who have learning difficulties or sensory/motor disabilities from learning or using foreign languages. Devices ranging from simple hearing aids to eye-operated computer speech synthesisers have been developed to overcome even the most severe sensory and motor difficulties, whilst the use of appropriate methods and strategies have enabled young people with learning difficulties to achieve worthwhile language learning objectives with remarkable success. Lip-reading, the exploitation of residual hearing, phonetic training and the use of sign language have all enabled the severely deaf to achieve a high level of communication. Given the necessary determination and encouragement, human beings have an extraordinary capacity to overcome obstacles to communication and the production and understanding of texts.

In principle, any text can be carried by any medium. However, in practice medium and text are more closely related. Scripts do not generally carry the full meaningful phonetic information carried by speech. Alphabetic scripts do not generally carry prosodic information systematically (e.g. stress, intonation, pausing, stylistic reduction, etc.). Consonantal and logographic scripts carry less. Paralinguistic features are usually unrepresented in any script, though they may of course be referred to in the text of a novel, play, etc. In compensation, paratextual features are employed in writing, which are tied to the spatial medium and not available to speech. Moreover, the nature of the medium exercises a strong pressure on the nature of the text and *vice versa*. As extreme examples, a stone inscription is difficult and expensive to produce and is very durable and immovable. An air-letter is cheap and easy to use, easily transported, but light and fragile. Electronic communication using a VDU need not produce a permanent artefact at all. The texts they typically carry are correspondingly contrasted: in the one case, a carefully composed, frugal text preserving monumental information for future generations and inducing reverence for the place and person(s) celebrated, and in the other, a hastily scribbled personal note of topical but ephemeral interest to the correspondents. A similar ambiguity of classification thus arises between text-types and media to that between text-types and activities. Books, magazines and newspapers are, from their physical nature and appearance, different media. From the nature and structure of their contents they are different text-types. Medium and text-type are closely related and both are derivative from the function they perform.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *whether and, if so, how the differences in the medium and in the psycholinguistic processes involved in speaking, listening, reading and writing in productive, receptive and interactive activities are taken into account a) in the selection, adaptation or composition of the spoken and written texts presented to learners, b) in the way that the learners are expected to handle the texts c) in the evaluation of the texts which learners produce;*
- *whether and, if so, how learners and teachers are made critically aware of the textual characteristics of a) classroom discourse b) testing and examination rubrics and answers c) instructional and reference materials;*
- *whether and, if so, how learners are brought to make the texts they produce more appropriate to: a) their communicative purposes, b) the contexts of use (domains, situations, recipients, constraints), c) the media employed.*

## **CHAPTER 6: THE PROCESSES OF LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING**

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 What is it that learners have to learn or acquire?
- 6.3 Ends and means
- 6.4 Language acquisition and learning
- 6.5 How do learners learn?
- 6.6 What can each kind of Framework user do to facilitate language learning?
- 6.7 Some methodological options for modern language learning and teaching

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 4 attempts to set out what a fully competent user of a language is able to do and what language and skills make these activities possible. It sets out to do so as comprehensively as possible since we cannot know which activities will be of importance to a particular learner. In this chapter we ask:

In what ways does the learner come to be able to carry out the tasks, activities and processes and build up the competences necessary for communication?  
How can teachers, assisted by their various support services, facilitate these processes?

Statements of the aims and objectives of language learning and teaching, as set out in Chapter 4, are based on an appreciation of the needs of learners and of society, on the tasks, activities and processes which the learners need to carry out in order to satisfy those needs, and on the competences and strategies they need to develop/build up in order to do so.

### **6.2 WHAT IS IT THAT LEARNERS HAVE TO LEARN OR ACQUIRE?**

**6.2.1** Chapter 4, sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, indicate that in order to participate in communicative events learners must have learnt or acquired:

- the necessary competences, e.g.:
  - general (declarative knowledge, skills and know-how, attitudes and personality factors etc., study and heuristic skills, etc.);
  - communicative, including:
    - linguistic (phonology/orthography, vocabulary, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics)
    - sociolinguistic
    - pragmatic (discourse, functional, design, etc.).
- the ability to put these competences into action in the production and reception of spoken utterances/written texts, so as to:
  - express and understand meanings in relation to relevant themes;
  - interpret and negotiate meaning in context;
  - engage in communicative activities (productive, receptive, interactive, mediating);



- perform communicative tasks as a participant in a communicative situation in a given domain in accordance with the co-operative principle.
- the ability to employ the strategies necessary to bring the competences into action, e.g.
  - planning;
  - execution;
  - monitoring (including repair and compensation).

**6.2.2** Whilst all these abilities have to be deployed by a language user to deal effectively with the full range of communicative events, not all learners will wish, or need, to acquire them all in a non-native language. For instance, some learners will have no requirement for written language. Others may be concerned only with the understanding of written texts. However, there is no strict implication that such learners should confine themselves to the spoken and written forms of the language respectively. It may be, according to the learner's cognitive style, that the memorisation of spoken forms is greatly facilitated by association with the corresponding written forms. *Vice versa*, the perception of written forms may be facilitated, or even necessitated, by associating them with the corresponding oral utterances. If this is so, the sense modality not required for use - and consequently not stated as an **objective** - may nevertheless be involved in language learning as a **means** to an end. It is a matter for decision (conscious or not) which competence, tasks, activities and strategies should be given a role in the development of a particular learner as objective or means.

**6.2.3** It is also not a logical necessity for a competence, task, activity or strategy which is identified as an objective as being necessary to the satisfaction of the learner's communicative needs, to be included in a learning programme. For instance, much of what is included as 'knowledge of the world' may be assumed as prior knowledge, already within the learner's general competence as a result of previous experience of life or instruction given in the mother tongue. The problem may then be simply finding the proper exponence in L2 for a notional category in L1. It will be a matter for decision what new knowledge must be learnt and what can be assumed. A problem arises when a particular conceptual field is differently organised in L1 and L2, as is frequently the case, so that correspondence of word-meanings is partial or inexact. How serious is the mismatch? To what misunderstandings may it lead? Accordingly, what priority should it be given at a particular stage of learning? At what level should mastery of the distinction be required or attended to? Can the problem be left to sort itself out with experience?

**6.2.4** Similar issues arise with respect to pronunciation. Many phonemes can be transferred from L1 to L2 unproblematically. In some cases the allophones concerned may be noticeably different. Other phonemes in L2 may not be present in L1. If they are not acquired or learnt, some loss of information is entailed and misunderstandings may occur. How frequent and significant are they likely to be? What priority should they be given? Here, the question of the age or the stage of learning at which they are best learnt is complicated by the fact that habituation is strongest at the phonetic level; to raise phonetic errors into consciousness and unlearn the automatised behaviours only once a close approximation to native norms becomes fully appropriate, may be much more expensive (in time and effort) than it would have been in the initial phase of learning, especially at an early age.

**6.2.5** Such considerations mean that the appropriate objectives for a particular stage of learning for a particular learner, or class of learner at a particular age, cannot necessarily be

derived by a straightforward across-the-board reading of the scales proposed for each parameter. Decisions have to be made in each case.

### **6.3 ENDS AND MEANS**

**6.3.1** Such statements of learning objectives say nothing about the processes by which learners come to be able to act in the required ways, or the processes by which they develop/build up the competences which make the actions possible. They say nothing about the ways in which teachers facilitate the processes of language acquisition and learning. Yet, since it is one of the principal functions of the Framework to encourage and enable all the different partners to the language teaching and learning processes to inform others as transparently as possible not only of their aims and objectives but also of the methods they use and the results actually achieved, it seems clear that the Framework cannot confine itself to the knowledge, skills and attitudes learners will need to develop in order to act as competent language users, but must also deal with the processes of language acquisition and learning, as well as with the teaching methodology.

**6.3.2** The role of the Framework in respect of language acquisition, learning and teaching must however be made clear once more. The Framework aims to be comprehensive, open, dynamic and non-dogmatic. For that reason it cannot take up a position on one side or another of current theoretical disputes on the nature of language acquisition and its relation to language learning, nor should it embody a particular approach to language teaching. Its proper role is to encourage **all** those involved as partners to the language learning/teaching process to state as explicitly and transparently as possible their own theoretical basis and their practical procedures. In order to fulfil this role it sets out parameters, categories, criteria and scales which users may draw upon and which may possibly stimulate them to consider a wider range of options than previously or to question the previously unexamined assumptions of the tradition in which they are working. This is not to say that such assumptions are wrong, but only that all those responsible for planning should benefit from a re-examination of theory and practice in which they can take into account decisions other practitioners have taken in their own and, particularly, in other European countries.

### **6.4 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND LEARNING**

**6.4.1** The terms 'language acquisition' and 'language learning' are currently used in a number of different ways. Many use them interchangeably. Others use one or the other as the general term, using the other in a more restricted sense. Thus 'language acquisition' may be used either as the general term or confined:

a) to interpretations of the language of non-native speakers in terms of current theories of universal grammar (e.g. parameter setting). This work is almost always a branch of theoretical psycholinguistics of little or no direct concern to practitioners, especially since grammar is considered to be far removed from accessibility to consciousness.

b) to untutored knowledge and ability to use a non-native language resulting either from direct exposure to text or from direct participation in communicative events.

'Language learning' may be used as the general term, or confined to the process whereby language ability is gained as the result of a planned process, especially by formal study in

an institutional setting.

At the present time it does not seem possible to impose a standardised terminology, especially since there is no obvious superordinate term covering 'learning' and 'acquisition' in their restricted senses.

*Users of the Framework are asked to consider and if possible state in which sense they use the terms and to avoid using them in ways counter to current specific usage.*

*They may also wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *how opportunities for language acquisition in the sense of (b) above can be provided and exploited.*

## 6.5 HOW DO LEARNERS LEARN?

**6.5.1** There is at present no sufficiently strong research-based consensus on how learners learn for the Framework to base itself on any one learning theory. Some theorists believe that the human information-processing abilities are strong enough for it to be sufficient for a human being to be exposed to sufficient understandable language for him/her to acquire the language and be able to use it both for understanding and for production. They believe the 'acquisition' process to be inaccessible to observation or intuition and that it cannot be facilitated by conscious manipulation, whether by teaching or by study methods. For them, the most important thing a teacher can do is provide the richest possible linguistic environment in which learning can take place without formal teaching.

**6.5.2** Others believe that in addition to exposure to comprehensible input, active participation in communicative interaction is a necessary and sufficient condition for language development. They too consider that explicit teaching or study of the language is irrelevant. At the other extreme, some believe that students who have learnt the necessary rules of grammar and learnt a vocabulary will be able to understand and use the language in the light of their previous experience and common sense without any need to rehearse. Between these polar extremes, most 'mainstream' learners, teachers and their support services will follow more eclectic practices, recognising that learners do not necessarily learn what teachers teach and that they require substantial contextualised and intelligible language input as well as opportunities to use the language interactively, but that learning is facilitated, especially under artificial classroom conditions, by a combination of conscious learning and sufficient practice to reduce or eliminate the conscious attention paid to low-level physical skills of speaking and writing as well as to morphological and syntactic accuracy, thus freeing the mind for higher level strategies of communication. Some (many fewer than previously) believe that this aim may be achieved by drilling to the point of overlearning.

**6.5.3** There is of course considerable variation among learners of different ages, types and backgrounds as to which of these elements they respond to most fruitfully, and among teachers, course-writers, etc. as to the balance of elements provided in courses according to the importance they attach to production vs. reception, accuracy vs. fluency, etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and, where appropriate, state the assumptions concerning*



*language learning on which their work is based and their methodological consequences.*

## **6.6 WHAT CAN EACH KIND OF FRAMEWORK USER DO TO FACILITATE LANGUAGE LEARNING ?**

**6.6.1** Those concerned with examinations and qualifications will have to consider which learning parameters are relevant to the qualifications concerned, and the level to be required. They will have to make concrete decisions on which particular tasks and activities to include, which themes to handle, which formulae, idioms and lexical items to require candidates to recognise or recall, what socio-cultural knowledge and skills to test, etc. They may not need to be concerned with the processes by which the language proficiency tested has been learnt or acquired, except in so far as their own testing procedures may have a positive or negative 'wash back' effect on language learning.

**6.6.2** Authorities, when drawing up curricular guidelines or formulating syllabuses, may concentrate on the specification of learning objectives. In doing so, they may specify only higher level objectives in terms of tasks, themes, competence, etc. They are not obliged, though they may wish to do so, to specify in detail the vocabulary, grammar and functional/notional repertoires which will enable learners to perform the tasks and treat the themes. They are not obliged, but may wish, to lay down guidelines or make suggestions as to the classroom methods to be employed and the stages through which learners are expected to progress.

**6.6.3** Textbook and course designers are not obliged, though they may well wish to do so, to formulate their objectives in terms of the tasks they wish to equip learners to perform or the competence and strategies they are to develop. They are obliged to make concrete, detailed decisions on the selection and ordering of texts, activities, vocabulary and grammar to be presented to the learner. They are expected to provide detailed instructions for the classroom and/or individual tasks and activities to be undertaken by learners in response to the material presented. Their products greatly influence the learning/teaching process and must inevitably be based on strong assumptions (rarely stated and often unexamined, even unconscious) as to the nature of the learning process.

**6.6.4** Teachers are generally called upon to respect any official guidelines, use textbooks and course materials (which they may or may not be in a position to analyse, evaluate, select and supplement), devise and administer tests and prepare pupils and students for qualifying examinations. They have to make minute-to-minute decisions about classroom activities, which they can prepare in outline beforehand, but must adjust flexibly in the light of pupil/student responses. They are expected to monitor the progress of pupils/students and find ways of recognising, analysing and overcoming their learning problems, as well as developing their individual learning abilities. It is necessary for them to understand learning processes in their great variety, though this understanding may well be an unconscious product of experience rather than a clearly formulated product of theoretical reflection, which is the proper contribution to the partnership for learning to be made by educational researchers and teacher trainers.

**6.6.5** Learners are, of course, the persons ultimately concerned with language acquisition and learning processes. It is they who have to develop the competences and strategies (in so far as they have not already done so) and carry out the tasks, activities and processes needed to participate effectively in communicative events. However, relatively few learn proactively, taking initiatives to plan, structure and execute their own learning processes. Most learn reactively, following the instructions and carrying out the activities prescribed for them by teachers and by textbooks. However, once teaching stops, further learning has to be autonomous. Autonomous learning can be promoted if 'learning to learn' is regarded

as an integral part of language learning, so that learners become increasingly aware of the way they learn, the options open to them and the options which best suit them. Even within the given institutional system they can then be brought increasingly to make choices in respect of objectives, materials and working methods in the light of their own needs, motivations, characteristics and resources. We hope that the Framework will be of use not only to teachers and their support services, but also directly to learners in helping to make them too more aware of the options open to them and articulate concerning the choices they make.

## 6.7 SOME METHODOLOGICAL OPTIONS FOR MODERN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

- 6.7.1 General approaches
- 6.7.2 Specific aspects of language learning and teaching
- 6.7.3 Errors and mistakes
- 6.7.4 Learning to learn

There are many ways in which modern languages are currently learnt and taught. For many years the Council of Europe has promoted an approach based on the communicative needs of learners and the use of materials and methods which will enable learners to satisfy these needs and which are appropriate to their characteristics as learners. However, as has been made clear in 6.3.2 above and *passim*, it is not the function of the Framework to promote one particular language teaching methodology, but instead to present options. A full exchange of information on these options and of experience with them must come from the field. At this stage it is possible only to indicate some of the options derived from existing practice and to ask users of the Framework to fill in gaps from their own knowledge and experience. A series of user guides is in preparation.

### 6.7.1 General approaches:

In general, learners may be expected to learn/acquire an L2 in one of the following ways:

- a) by direct exposure to authentic use of language in L2
  - i. face to face with native speaker(s);
  - ii. overhearing conversation;
  - iii. listening to radio, recordings etc.;
  - iv. watching and listening to TV, video, etc.;
  - v. reading unmodified, ungraded, authentic written texts (newspapers, magazines, stories, novels, public signs and notices etc.);
  - vi. using computer programmes, CD ROM, etc.;
  - vii. participating in computer conferences on- or off-line;
  - viii. participating in courses which employ the L2 as a medium of instruction.
- b) by direct exposure to specially selected (e.g. graded) spoken utterances and written texts in L2 ('intelligible input');
- c) by direct participation in authentic communicative interaction in L2, e.g. as a conversation partner with a competent interlocutor;
- d) by direct participation in specially devised and constructed tasks in L2 ('comprehensible output');
- e) autodidactically, by (guided) self-study, pursuing negotiated self-directed objectives and using available instructional media;

- f) by a combination of presentations, explanations, (drill) exercises and exploitation activities, all conducted in **L2** only;
- g) by a combination of activities as in f), but with **L1** as the language of classroom management, explanation, etc.;

- h) by some combination of a) - g), starting with g) but progressively reducing the use of L1 and including more tasks and authentic texts, spoken and written, and an increasing self-study component.;
- i) by combining the above with group and individual planning, implementation and evaluation of classroom activity with teacher support, negotiating interaction to satisfy different learner needs, etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and state which approaches, in general, they follow, whether one of the above, or some other.*

## 6.7.2 Specific aspects of language learning and teaching:

- 6.7.2.1 Texts
- 6.7.2.2 Tasks and activities
- 6.7.2.3 Roles of teachers, learners and media
- 6.7.2.4 General competences
- 6.7.2.5 Linguistic competences
- 6.7.2.6 Sociolinguistic competence
- 6.7.2.7 Pragmatic competences
- 6.7.2.8 Strategies

6.7.2.1 'Learners may (be expected or required to) learn from spoken and written **texts** (see 4.6 and 5.4)

- a) by simple exposure;
- b) by simple exposure, but ensuring that new material is intelligible by inferencing from verbal context, visual support, etc.;
- c) by exposure, with comprehension monitored and ensured by L2 question and answer, multiple choice, picture matching, etc.;
- d) as c), but with comprehension tests in L1;
- e) by exposure and comprehension monitoring as in c), but also with explanations in L2;
- f) as e) but with explanations, including any necessary *ad hoc* translation, in L1;
- g) as (d) or (f), but with pupil/student translation of text into L1;
- h) using pre-listening and/or group listening activities, pre-reading activities, etc.

6.7.2.1.2. The written or spoken texts presented to learners may be:

- a) 'authentic', i.e. produced for communicative purposes with no language teaching intent, e.g.:
  - i) untreated authentic texts which the learner encounters in the course of direct experience of the language in use (daily newspapers, magazines, broadcasts, etc.);
  - ii) authentic texts selected, graded and/or edited so as to be judged appropriate to the learner's experience, interests and characteristics (e.g. Longman's Graded Readers).
- b) specially composed for use in language teaching, e.g:
  - i) texts composed to resemble authentic texts as a (ii) above (e.g. specially written listening comprehension materials recorded by actors)

- ii) texts composed to give contextualised examples of the linguistic content to be taught (e.g. in a particular course unit)
- iii) isolated sentences for exercise purposes (phonetic, grammatical, etc.)
- iv) textbook instruction, explanations etc., test and examination rubrics, teacher's classroom language (instructions, explanations, classroom management etc.). These may be regarded as special text-types. Are they 'learner-friendly'? What consideration is given to their content, formulation and presentation to ensure that they are?

6.7.2.1.3 Learners have not only to process, but also to **produce** texts. These may be:

- a) spoken:
  - written texts read aloud;
  - oral answers to exercise questions;
  - reproduction of memorised texts (plays, poems, etc.);
  - pair and group work exercises;
  - contributions to formal and informal discussion;
  - free conversation (in class or during pupil exchanges);
  - presentations.
- b) written:
  - dictated passages;
  - written exercises;
  - essays;
  - translations;
  - written reports;
  - project work;
  - letters to penfriends;
  - contributions to class links using fax or E-mail.

6.7.2.1.4 In receptive, productive and interactive modes, learners may be expected and helped to differentiate text types and to develop different styles of listening, reading, speaking and writing as appropriate, acting both as individuals and as members of groups (e.g. by sharing ideas and interpretations in the processes of comprehension and formulation).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state the place of texts (spoken and written) in their learning/teaching programme and exploitation activities: e.g.*

- *according to what principles texts are selected, adapted or composed, ordered and presented;*
- *whether texts are graded;*
- *whether learners are a) expected b) helped to differentiate text-types and to develop different listening and reading styles as appropriate to text-type and to listen or read in detail or for gist, for specific points, etc.*

6.7.2.2 Learners may (be expected or required to) learn from **tasks and activities** (see 4.4.2 and 4.4.4 and Chapter 5)

- a) by simple participation in spontaneous activities;

- b) by simple participation in tasks and activities planned as to type, goals, input, outcomes, participant roles and activities, etc. (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.3);
- c) by participation not only in the task but in pre-planning as well as post-mortem analysis and evaluation;
- d) as c) but also with explicit awareness-raising as to goals, the nature and structure of tasks, requirements of participant roles, etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state the place of tasks in their language learning/teaching programme.*

6.7.2.3 Consideration should be given to the relative **roles of teachers, learners and media**. Different proportions of class time may be (expected to be) spent:

- a) by the teacher expounding, explaining, etc. to whole class;
- b) in whole-class question/answer sessions (distinguishing between referential, display and test questions);
- c) in group or pair working;
- d) in individual working.

6.7.2.3.1 **Teachers** should realise that their actions, reflecting their attitudes and abilities, are a most important part of the environment for language learning/acquisition. They present role-models which students may follow in their future use of the language and their practice as future teachers. Teacher parameters include their:

- teaching skills;
- classroom management skills;
- ability to engage in action research and to reflect on experience;
- teaching styles;
- understanding of and ability to handle testing, assessment and evaluation;
- knowledge of and ability to teach socio-cultural background information;
- inter-cultural attitudes and skills;
- knowledge of and ability to develop students' aesthetic appreciation of literature;
- ability to deal with individualisation within classes containing diverse learner types and abilities.

During individual, pair or group working, the teacher may:

- a) simply supervise and maintain order;
- b) circulate to monitor work;
- c) be available for individual counselling;
- d) adopt the role of supervisor and facilitator, accepting and reacting to students' remarks on their learning and co-ordinating student activities, in addition to monitoring and counselling.

6.7.2.3.2 **Learners** may (be expected or required to):

- a) follow all and only the teacher's instructions in a disciplined, orderly way, speaking only when called upon to do so;
- b) participate actively in the learning process in co-operation with the teacher and other students to reach agreement on objectives and methods, accepting compromise, and engaging in peer teaching and peer assessment so as to progress steadily towards autonomy;
- c) work independently with self-study materials including self-assessment.

6.7.2.3.3 The use made of **instructional media** (audio & video cassettes, computer, etc.) may be:

- a) none;
- b) for whole-class demonstrations, repetitions, etc.;
- c) in a language/ video/computer laboratory mode;
- d) in an individual self-instructional mode;
- e) as a basis for group work (discussion, negotiation, cooperative and competitive games, etc.);
- f) in international computer networking of schools, classes and individual students.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what are the relative roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners in the organisation, management, conduct and evaluation of the language-learning process*
- *what use is made of instructional media*

6.7.2.4 **General competences** (see Chapter 4.7.1) may be developed in various ways, e.g.:

- a) assumed to exist already, or be developed elsewhere (e.g. in other curricular subjects conducted in L1) sufficiently to be taken for granted in L2 teaching
- b) treated *ad hoc* as and when problems arise
- c) by selecting or constructing texts which illustrate new areas and items of knowledge
- d) by special courses or textbooks dealing with area studies (*Landeskunde, civilisation, etc.*) i) in L1, ii) in L2
- e) through an intercultural component designed to raise awareness of the relevant experiential, cognitive and socio-cultural backgrounds of learners and native speakers respectively
- f) through role-play and simulations
- g) through subject teaching using L2 as the medium of instruction
- h) through direct contact with native speakers and authentic texts.

The learner's personality features, motivations, attitudes, beliefs, etc. (see Chapter 4, section 4.7.1.3) may be:

- a) ignored as the learner's personal concern
- b) taken into account in planning and monitoring the learning process
- c) included as an objective of the learning programme

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state*

- *which of the above (or other) means they use to develop general competences.*
- *what differences arise if practical skills are a) talked about as themes, b) exercised, c) demonstrated through actions accompanied by language or d) taught using the target language as the medium of instruction.*



6.7.2.5 The development of the learner's **linguistic competences** may be facilitated in relation to vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, orthography.

#### 6.7.2.5.1 Vocabulary:

Learners may (be expected or required to) develop their vocabulary:

- a) by simple exposure to words and fixed expressions used in authentic spoken and written texts;
- b) by learner elicitation or dictionary, etc. look-up as needed for specific tasks and activities;
- c) through inclusion in context e.g. in course-book texts and subsequent recycling in exercises, exploitation activities, etc;
- d) by presenting words accompanied by visuals (pictures, gestures and miming, demonstrative actions, realia, etc.);
- e) by the memorisation of word-lists, etc. with translation equivalents;
- f) by exploring semantic fields and constructing 'mind-maps', etc.;
- g) by training in the use of monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, thesauruses and other works of reference;
- h) by explanation and training in the application of lexical structure (e.g. word formation, compounding, collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, etc.);
- i) by a more or less systematic study of the different distribution of semantic features in L1 and L2 (contrastive semantics).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state the ways in which vocabulary items (form and meaning) are presented to and learned by pupils and students.*

Size, range and control of vocabulary are major parameters of language acquisition and hence for the assessment of a learner's language proficiency and for the planning of language learning and teaching.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *what size of vocabulary (i.e. the number of words and fixed expressions) the learner will need/be equipped/be required to control;*
- *what range of vocabulary (i.e. the domains, themes etc. covered) the learner will need/be equipped/be required to control;*
- *what control over vocabulary the learner will need/be equipped/be required to exert*
- *what distinction, if any, is made between learning for recognition and understanding, and learning for recall and productive use?*
- *what use is made of inferencing techniques? How is their development promoted?*

#### 6.7.2.5.2 Grammatical competence

The ability to organise sentences to convey meaning is clearly central to communicative competence and most (though not all) of those concerned with language planning, teaching and testing pay close attention to the management of the process of learning to do so. This usually involves a selection, ordering and step-by-step presentation and drilling of new material, starting with short sentences consisting of a single clause with its constituent phrases represented by single words (e.g. Jane is happy) and finishing with multiclausal complex sentences - their number, length and structure being of course unbounded. This does not preclude the early introduction of analytically complex material as a fixed formula (i.e. a vocabulary item) or as a fixed frame for lexical insertion (please

may I have a .....), or as the globally learnt words of a song (In Dublin's fair city, where the girls are so pretty, I first set my eyes on sweet Molly Malone, as she wheeled her wheelbarrow through streets broad and narrow, crying 'Cockles and Mussels alive alive-oh').

Inherent complexity is not the only ordering principle to be considered.

1. The communicative yield of grammatical categories has to be taken into account, i.e. their role as exponents of general notions. For instance, should learners follow a progression which leaves them unable, after two years' study, to speak of past experience?
2. Contrastive factors are of great importance in assessing learning load and hence cost-effectiveness of competing orderings. For instance, subordinate clauses in German involve greater word-order problems for English and French learners than for Dutch learners. However, speakers of closely-related languages, e.g. Dutch/German, Czech/Slovak, may be prone to fall into mechanical word-for-word translation.
3. Authentic discourse and written texts may to some extent be graded for grammatical difficulty, but are likely to present a learner with new structures and perhaps categories, which adept learners may well acquire for active use before others nominally more basic.
4. The 'natural' acquisition order observed in L1 child language development might also perhaps be taken into account in planning L2 development.

The Framework cannot replace reference grammars or provide a strict ordering (though scaling may involve selection and hence some ordering in global terms) but provides a framework for the decisions of practitioners to be made known.

The sentence is generally regarded as the domain of grammatical description. However, some intersentential relations (e.g. anaphora: pronoun and pro-verb usage and the use of sentence adverbs) may be treated as part of linguistic rather than pragmatic competence (e.g. We didn't expect John to fail. However, he did).

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *the basis on which grammatical elements, categories, structures, processes and relations are selected and ordered;*
- *how their meaning is conveyed to learners;*
- *the role of contrastive grammar in language teaching and learning;*
- *the relative importance attached to range, fluency and accuracy in relation to the grammatical construction of sentences;*
- *the extent to which learners are to be made aware of the grammar of (a) the mother tongue (b) the target language (c) their contrastive relations.*

Learners may (be expected/required to) develop their grammatical competence:

- a) inductively, by exposure to new grammatical material in authentic texts as encountered;

- b) inductively by incorporating new grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, rules, etc. in texts specially composed to demonstrate their form, function and meaning
- c) as b), but followed by explanations and formal exercises
- d) by the presentation of formal paradigms, tables of forms, etc. followed by explanations using an appropriate metalanguage in L2 or L1 and formal exercises.
- e) by elicitation and, where necessary, reformulation of learners' hypotheses, etc.

If formal exercises are used, some or all of the following types may be employed:

- a) gap-filling
  - b) sentence construction on a given model
  - c) multiple choice
  - d) category substitution exercises (e.g. singular/plural, present/past, active/passive etc.)
  - e) sentence merging (e.g. relativisation, adverbial and noun clauses, etc.)
  - f) translation of example sentences L1 L2
  - g) question and answer involving use of particular structures
  - h) grammar-focused fluency exercises
- etc.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *how grammatical structure is a) analysed, ordered and presented to learners and (b) mastered by them.*
- *how and according to what principles lexical, grammatical and pragmatic meaning in L2 is conveyed to/elicited from learners, e.g.*
  - *by translation from/into L1*
  - *by L2 definition, explanation, etc.*
  - *by induction from context.*

#### 6.7.2.5.3 Pronunciation:

Learners may (be expected/required to) develop their ability to **pronounce** a language:

- a) simply by exposure to authentic spoken utterances;
- b) by chorused imitation of
  - i) the teacher;
  - ii) audio-recorded native speakers;
  - iii) video-recorded native speakers;
- c) by individualised language laboratory work;
- d) by reading aloud phonetically weighted textual material;
- e) by ear-training and phonetic drilling;
- f) as d) and e) but with the use of phonetically transcribed texts;
- g) by explicit phonetic training (see 4.7.1.4.1);
- h) by learning orthoepic conventions (i.e. how to pronounce written forms);
- i) by some combination of the above.

#### 6.7.2.5.4 Orthography

Learners may (be expected/required to) develop their ability to handle the

writing system of a language:

- a) by simple transfer from L1;

- b) by exposure to authentic written texts:
  - i) printed
  - ii) typewritten
  - iii) handwritten
- c) by memorisation of the alphabet concerned with associated phonetic values (e.g. Roman, Cyrillic or Greek script where another is used for L1), together with diacritics and punctuation marks;
- d) by practising cursive writing (including Cyrillic or 'Gothic' scripts, etc.) and noting the characteristic national handwriting conventions;
- e) by memorisation of word-forms (individually or by applying spelling conventions) and punctuation conventions;
- f) by the practice of dictation.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state how the phonetic and orthographic forms of words, sentences, etc. are conveyed to and mastered by learners*

6.7.2.6 The development of the learner's **sociolinguistic competence** (see 4.7.2.2) may be assumed to be transferable from the learner's experience of social life or facilitated:

- a) by exposure to authentic language used appropriately in its social setting;
- b) by selecting or constructing texts which exemplify sociolinguistic contrasts between the society of origin and the target society;
- c) by drawing attention to socio-linguistic contrasts as they are encountered, explaining and discussing them;
- d) by waiting for errors to be made, then marking, analysing and explaining them and giving the correct usage;
- e) as part of the explicit teaching of a socio-cultural component in the study of a modern language.

6.7.2.7 The development of the learner's **pragmatic competences** (see 4.7.2.3) may be:

- a) assumed to be transferable from education and general experience in the mother tongue (L1);  
or facilitated:
- b) by progressively increasing the complexity of discourse structure and the functional range of the texts presented to the learner;
- c) by requiring the learner to produce texts of increasing complexity by translating texts of increasing complexity from L1 to L2;
- d) by setting tasks which require a wider functional range and adherence to verbal exchange patterns;
- e) by awareness-raising (analysis, explanation, terminology, etc.) in addition to practical activities;
- f) by explicit teaching and exercising of functions, verbal exchange patterns and discourse structure.

6.7.2.8 The development of the learner's ability to use communicative **strategies** (see 4.8) may be:

- a) assumed to be transferable from the learner's L1 usage or facilitated:
- b) by creating situation and setting tasks (eg role play and simulations) which require the operation of planning, execution, evaluation and repair strategies;

- c) as b), but using awareness-raising techniques (eg recording and analysis of role plays and simulations);
- d) as b), but encouraging or requiring learners to focus on and follow explicit strategic procedures as the need arises.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- *to what extent socio-linguistic and pragmatic competences as well as the use of strategies can be assumed or left to develop naturally;*
- *what methods and techniques should be employed to facilitate their development where it is felt to be necessary or advisable to do so.*

### 6.7.3 Errors and mistakes

**Errors** are due to deviant competences or 'interlanguage'. In these cases, the learner's performance truly accords with his competence which has developed characteristics different from those of L2 norms. **Mistakes** in performance occur when a user/learner is unable to bring his competences properly into action.

6.7.3.1 Different attitudes may be taken to learner errors, e.g.:

- a) errors and mistakes are evidence of failure to learn;
- b) errors and mistakes are evidence of inefficient teaching;
- c) errors and mistakes are evidence of the learner's willingness to communicate despite risks;
- d) errors are an inevitable, transient product of the learner's developing interlanguage. Mistakes are inevitable in **all** language use, including that of native speakers.

6.7.3.2 The action to be taken with regard to learner mistakes and errors may be:

- a) all errors and mistakes should be immediately corrected by the teacher;
- b) immediate peer-correction should be systematically encouraged to eradicate errors;
- c) all errors should be noted and corrected at a time when doing so does not interfere with communication (e.g. by separating the development of accuracy from the development of fluency);
- d) errors should not be simply corrected, but also analysed and explained at an appropriate time;
- e) mistakes which are mere slips should be passed over, but systematic errors should be eradicated;
- f) errors should be corrected only when they interfere with communication;
- g) errors should be accepted as 'transitional interlanguage' and ignored.

6.7.3.3 What use is made of the observation and analysis of learner errors:

- a) in planning future learning and teaching on an individual or group basis?
- b) in course planning and materials development?
- c) in the evaluation and assessment of learning and teaching, e.g.

- are students assessed primarily in terms of their errors and mistakes in performing the tasks set?
- if not, what other criteria of linguistic achievement are employed?
- are errors and mistakes weighted and is so according to what criteria?
- what relative importance is attached to errors and mistakes in:
  - pronunciation
  - spelling
  - vocabulary
  - morphology
  - syntax
  - usage
  - sociocultural content?

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state their attitude to and action in response to learner errors and mistakes and whether the same or different criteria apply to:*

- *phonetic errors and mistakes;*
- *orthographic errors and mistakes;*
- *vocabulary errors and mistakes;*
- *morphological errors and mistakes;*
- *syntactic errors and mistakes;*
- *sociolinguistic and sociocultural errors and mistakes;*
- *pragmatic errors and mistakes.*

#### **6.7.4 Learning to learn**

Learners may (be expected/required to) develop their study and heuristic skills and their acceptance of responsibility for their own learning (see 4.7.1.4):

- a) simply as 'spin-off' from language learning and teaching, without any special planning or provision;
- b) by progressively transferring responsibility for learning from the teacher to the pupils/students and encouraging them to reflect on their learning and to share this experience with other learners;
- c) by systematically raising the learners' awareness of the learning/teaching processes in which they are participating;
- d) by engaging learners as participants in experimentation with different methodological options;
- e) by getting learners to recognise their own cognitive style and to develop their own learning strategies accordingly.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state the steps they take to promote the development of pupils/students as responsibly independent language learners and users.*



## **CHAPTER 7: LINGUISTIC DIVERSIFICATION AND THE CURRICULUM**

### **7.1 Plurilingual and Pluricultural Competence: Definition and Characterisation**

- 7.1.1 Definition and initial approach
- 7.1.2 An uneven and changing competence
- 7.1.3 Differentiated competence allowing for language switching
- 7.1.4 Development of awareness and the process of use and learning
- 7.1.5 Partial competence and plurilingual and pluricultural competence

### **7.2 Partial competences and variations in objectives in relation to the Framework**

- 7.2.1 Types of objectives in relation to the Framework
- 7.2.2 The complementarity of partial objectives

### **7.3 Options for Curricular Design**

- 7.3.1 Diversification within an overall concept
- 7.3.2 From the partial to the transversal

### **7.4 Towards Curriculum Scenarios**

- 7.4.1 Curriculum and variation of objectives
- 7.4.2 Some examples of differentiated curriculum scenarios

### **7.5 Assessment and School, out-of-school and post-school learning**

- 7.5.1 The place of the school curriculum
- 7.5.2 Portfolio and profiling

## **7.1 PLURILINGUAL AND PLURICULTURAL COMPETENCE: DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISATION**

### **7.1.1 Definition and initial approach**

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence refers to the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures. This is not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw.

The customary approach is to present learning a foreign language as an addition, in a compartmentalised way, of a competence to communicate in a foreign language to the competence to communicate in the mother tongue. The concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence tends to:

- move away from the supposed balanced dichotomy established by the customary L1/L2 pairing by stressing plurilingualism where bilingualism is just one particular

case;

- consider that a given individual does not have a collection of distinct and separate competences to communicate depending on the languages he/she knows, but rather a plurilingual and pluricultural competence encompassing the full range of the languages available to him/her;
- stress the pluricultural dimensions of this multiple competence but without necessarily suggesting links between the development of abilities concerned with relating to other cultures and the development of linguistic communication proficiency.

### 7.1.2 An uneven and changing competence

Plurilingual and pluricultural competence is generally uneven in one or more ways:

- generally greater proficiency in one language as compared with the others;
- different profile of competences in one language as compared with others (for example, excellent speaking competence in two languages, but good writing competence in only one of them);
- pluricultural profile different from the plurilingual profile (for example: good knowledge of the culture of a community but a poor knowledge of its language, or poor knowledge of a community whose dominant language is nevertheless well mastered).

Such imbalances are entirely normal and if, as is possible, the concept of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism is extended to take into account the situation of all social agents who in their native language and culture are exposed to different dialects and to the cultural variation inherent in any complex society, it is clear that here again imbalances (or, if preferred, different types of balance) are the norm.

This imbalance is also linked to the changing nature of plurilingual and pluricultural competence. Whereas the traditional view of "monolingual" communicative competence in the "mother tongue" suggests it is quickly stabilised, a plurilingual and pluricultural competence presents a transitory profile and a changing configuration. Depending on the career path, family history, travel experience, reading and hobbies of the individual in question, significant changes take place in his/her linguistic and cultural biography, altering the forms of imbalance in his/her plurilingualism, and rendering more complex his/her experience of the plurality of cultures. This does not by any means imply an instability, uncertainty or lack of balance on the part of the social agent in question, but rather contributes, in the majority of cases, to improved awareness of identity.

### 7.1.3 Differentiated competence allowing for language switching

Because of this imbalance, one of the features of plurilingual and pluricultural competence is that in applying this competence, the individual in question draws upon both his/her general and language skills and knowledge (see Chapters 3 and 4) in different ways. For example the *strategies* used in carrying out *tasks* involving language use may vary according to the language in question. Thus *savoir-être* (existential competence) demonstrating openness, conviviality, good will (as in the use of gestures, mime, proxemics) may in the case of a language in which the individual has poorly mastered the linguistic component, make up for this deficiency in the course of interaction with a native speaker, whereas in a language he or she knows better, this same individual may adopt a more distant or reserved attitude. The *task* may also be redefined, the linguistic message reshaped or redistributed, according to the resources available for expression or the individual's

perception of these resources.

A further characteristic of plurilingual and pluricultural competence is that it does not consist of the simple addition of monolingual competences but permits combinations and alternations of different kinds. It is possible to code switch during the message, to resort to bilingual forms of speech. A single, richer repertoire of this kind thus allows choice concerning strategies for task accomplishment drawing where appropriate on an interlinguistic variation and language switching.

#### 7.1.4 Development of awareness and the process of use and learning

It also means that plurilingual and pluricultural competence promotes the development of linguistic and communication awareness, and even metacognitive strategies which enable the social agent to become more aware of and control his or her own "spontaneous" ways of handling tasks and in particular their linguistic dimension. In addition, this experience of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism:

- exploits pre-existing *sociolinguistic and pragmatic components*, which in turn develops them further;
- leads to a better perception of what is general and what is specific concerning the linguistic organisation of different languages (form of metalinguistic, interlinguistic or so to speak "hyperlinguistic" awareness);
- by its nature refines knowledge of how to learn and the capacity to enter into relations with others and new situations.

It may, therefore, to some degree accelerate subsequent learning in the linguistic and cultural areas. This is the case even if plurilingual and pluricultural competence is "uneven" and if proficiency in a particular language remains "partial".

It can be claimed, moreover, that while the knowledge of one foreign language and culture does not always lead to going beyond what may be ethnocentric in relation to the "native" language and culture, and may even have the opposite effect (it is not uncommon for the learning of **one** language and contact with **one** foreign culture to reinforce stereotypes and preconceived ideas rather than reduce them), a knowledge of several languages is more likely to achieve this, while at the same time enriching the potential for learning.

In this context the promotion of respect for the diversity of languages and of learning more than one foreign language in school is significant. It is not simply a linguistic policy choice at an important point in the history of Europe, for example, nor even - however important this may be - a matter of increasing future opportunities for young people competent in more than two languages. It is also a matter of helping learners:

- to construct their linguistic and cultural identity through integrating into it a diversified experience of otherness;
- to develop their ability to learn through this same diversified experience of relating to several languages and cultures.

#### 7.1.5 Partial competence and plurilingual and pluricultural competence

It is in this perspective also that the concept of *partial competence* in a particular language is meaningful: it is not a matter of being satisfied, for reasons of principle or

pragmatism, with the development of a limited or compartmentalised mastery of a foreign language by a learner, but rather of seeing this proficiency, imperfect at a given moment, as forming part of a plurilingual competence which it enriches. It should also be pointed out that this "partial" competence, which is part of a *multiple* competence, is at the same time a *functional* competence with respect to a specific limited objective.

The partial competence in a given language may concern receptive *language activities* (for example with the emphasis on oral or written comprehension); it may concern a particular *domain* and specific *tasks* (for example, to allow a post office clerk to give information on the most usual post office operations to foreign clients speaking a particular language). But it may also involve *general competences* (for example non-linguistic *knowledge* about the characteristics of other languages and cultures and their communities), so long as there is a functional role to this complementary development of one or other dimension of the specified competences. In other words, in the framework of reference proposed here, the notion of partial competence is to be viewed in relation to the different components of the model (see Chapter 3) and variation in objectives.

## 7.2 PARTIAL COMPETENCES AND VARIATION IN OBJECTIVES IN RELATION TO THE FRAMEWORK

Curriculum design in language learning (no doubt even more so than in other disciplines and other types of learning) implies choices between kinds and levels of objectives. The present proposal for a framework of reference takes particular account of this situation. Each of the major components of the model presented may provide a focus for learning objectives and become a specific entry point for the use of the Framework.

### 7.2.1 Types of objectives in relation to the Framework

Teaching/learning objectives may in fact be conceived:

a) **In terms of the development of the learner's general competences** (see Chapter 3.2.1) and thus be a matter of *declarative knowledge (savoir)*, *skills and know-how (savoir-faire)*, *personality traits, attitudes, etc. (savoir-être)* or *ability to learn*, or more particularly one or other of these dimensions. In some cases, the learning of a foreign language aims above all at imparting declarative knowledge to the learner (for example, of the grammar or literature or certain cultural characteristics of the foreign country). In other instances, language learning will be seen as a way for the learner to develop his or her personality (for example greater assurance or self-confidence, greater willingness to speak in a group) or to develop his or her knowledge of how to learn (greater openness to what is new, awareness of otherness, curiosity about the unknown). There is every reason to consider that these particular objectives relating at any given time to a specific sector or type of competence, or the development of a partial competence, can in an across-the-board way contribute to the establishment or reinforcement of a plurilingual and pluricultural competence. In other terms, the pursuit of a partial objective may be part of an overall learning project.

b) **In terms of the extension and diversification of communicative language competence** (see Chapter 3.2.2) and is then concerned with the *linguistic component*, or the *pragmatic component* or the *sociolinguistic component*, or all of these. The main aim of learning a foreign language may be mastery of the linguistic component of a language (knowledge of its phonetic system, its vocabulary and syntax) without any concern for sociolinguistic finesse or pragmatic effectiveness. In other instances the objective may be primarily of a

pragmatic nature and seek to develop a capacity to act in the foreign language with the limited linguistic resources available and without any particular concern for the sociolinguistic aspect. The options are of course never so exclusive as this and harmonious progress in the different components is generally aimed at, but there is no shortage of examples, past and present, of a particular concentration on one or other of the components of communicative competence. Communicative language competence, considered as a plurilingual and pluricultural competence, being a whole (i.e. including varieties of the native language and varieties of one or more foreign languages), it is equally possible to claim that, at certain times and in certain contexts, the main objective of teaching a foreign language (even though not made apparent) was refinement of knowledge and mastery of the native language (eg by resorting to translation, work on registers and the appropriateness of vocabulary in translating into the native language, forms of comparative stylistics and semantics).

c) **In terms of the better performance in one or more specific language activities** (see Chapter 3.2.3) and is then a matter of *reception, production, interaction* or *mediation*. It may be that the main stated objective of learning a foreign language is to have effective results in receptive activities (reading or listening) or mediation (translating or interpreting) or face-to-face interaction. Here again, it goes without saying that such polarisation can never be total or be pursued independently of any other aim. However, in defining objectives it is possible to attach significantly greater importance to one aspect above others, and this major focus, if it is consistent, will affect the entire process: choice of content and learning tasks, deciding on and structuring progression and possible remedial action, selection of type of texts, etc.

It will be seen that generally speaking the notion of *partial competence* has been primarily introduced and used in respect of some of these choices (e.g. insistence on learning which emphasises in its objectives receptive activities and written and/or oral comprehension). But what is proposed here is an extension of this use:

- on the one hand by intimating that other partial competence-related objectives may be identified (as has been referred to in *a* or *b* or *d*) in relation to the reference framework;
- on the other hand by pointing out that this same reference framework allows for any so-called "partial" competence to be incorporated within a more general series of communicative and learning competences.

d) **In terms of optimal functional operation in a given domain** (see chapter 3.2.4) and thus concerns the *public domain*, the *occupational domain*, the *educational domain* or the *personal domain*. The main aim of learning a foreign language may be to perform a job better, or to help with studies or to facilitate life in a foreign country. As with the other major components of the model proposed, such aims are explicitly reflected in course descriptions, in proposals and requests for language services, and learning/teaching materials. It is in this area that it has been possible to speak of "specific objectives", "specialised courses", "vocational language", "preparation for a period of residence abroad", "linguistic reception of migrant workers". This does not mean that consideration given to the specific needs of a particular target group which has to adapt its plurilingual and pluricultural competence to a particular social field of activity must always require an educational approach appropriate to this aim. But, as with the other components, formulating an objective under this heading and with this focus normally has consequences for other aspects and stages of curriculum design and the provision of teaching and learning.

It should be noted that this type of objective involving functional adaptation for a given domain also corresponds to situations of bilingual education, immersion (as

understood by the experiments carried out in Canada) and schooling where the language of tuition is different from that spoken in the family environment (e.g. an education exclusively in French in some multilingual former colonies in Africa). From this point of view, and this is not incompatible with the main thrust of this analysis, these situations of immersion, whatever the linguistic results they may lead to, are aimed at developing partial competences: those relating to the educational domain and the acquisition of knowledge other than linguistic. It will be recalled that in many experiments of total immersion at a young age in Canada, despite the fact that the language of education was French, initially no specific provision was made in the time-table for teaching French to the English-speaking children concerned.

e) **In terms of the enrichment or diversification of strategies or in terms of the fulfilment of tasks** (see Chapter 3.2.5 and 4.8 and 5) and thus relates to the management of actions linked to the learning and use of one or more languages, and the discovery or experience of other cultures.

In many learning experiences it may seem preferable, at one time or another, to focus attention on the development of strategies which will enable one or other type of task having a linguistic dimension to be carried out. Accordingly, the objective is to improve the strategies traditionally used by the learner by rendering them more sophisticated, more extensive and more conscious, by seeking to adapt them to tasks for which they had not originally been used. Whether these are communication or learning strategies, if one takes the view that they enable an individual to mobilise his or her own competences in order to implement and possibly improve or extend them, it is worthwhile ensuring that such strategies are indeed cultivated as an objective, even though they may not form an end in themselves.

Tasks are normally focused within a given domain and considered as objectives to be achieved in relation to that domain, fitting in with point *d* above. But there are cases where the learning objective is limited to the more or less stereotyped carrying out of certain tasks which may involve limited linguistic elements in one or more foreign languages: an often quoted example is that of switchboard operator where the "plurilingual" performance expected, based on a decision taken locally in a given company, is limited to the production of a few fixed formulations relating to routine operations. Such examples are more a case of semi-automated behaviour than partial competences but there can be no denying that the carrying out of well-defined repetitive tasks in such cases can also constitute the primary focus of a learning objective.

More generally, formulating objectives in terms of tasks has the advantage, for the learner too, of identifying in practical terms what the expected results are, and can also play a short-term motivating role throughout the learning process. To quote a simple example, telling children that the activity they are about to undertake will enable them to play "Happy Families" in the foreign language (the objective being the possible carrying out of a "task") can also be a motivating way of learning the vocabulary for the various family members (part of the linguistic component of a broader communicative objective). In this sense too, the so-called project-based approach, global simulations and various role-playing games establish what are basically transitory objectives defined in terms of tasks to be carried out but the major interest of which as far as learning is concerned resides either in the language resources and activities which such a task (or sequence of tasks) requires or in the strategies employed or applied. In other terms, although in the rationale adopted for the conception of the framework of reference plurilingual and pluricultural competence becomes apparent and is developed through the carrying out of tasks, in the approach to learning adapted, these tasks are only presented, as apparent objectives or as a step towards the achievement of other objectives.

## **7.2.2 The complementarity of partial objectives**

Defining language teaching/learning objectives in this manner, in terms of the major components of a general reference model, or of each of the sub-components of these, is not a mere stylistic exercise but illustrates the possible diversity of learning aims and the variety to be found in the provision of teaching. Obviously, a great many types of provision, in and out of school, cover several of these objectives at the same time. And equally obviously, but it is worth repeating, pursuing a specifically designated objective also means, with respect to the coherence of the model illustrated here, that the achievement of the stated objective



will lead to other results which were not specifically aimed at or which were not the main concern.

If, for example, it is presumed that the objective is essentially concerned with a domain, and is focused on the demands of a given job, for example that of waiter in a restaurant, then to achieve this objective language activities will be developed which are concerned with oral interaction; in relation to communicative competence attention will be focused on certain lexical fields of the linguistic component (presentation and description of dishes, for example), and certain sociolinguistic norms (forms of address to use with customers, possible request for assistance from a third party, etc.); and there will no doubt be an insistence on certain aspects of *savoir-être* (discretion, politeness, smiling affably, patience, etc.), or on knowledge concerned with the cuisine and eating habits of the particular foreign culture. It is possible to develop other examples in which other components would be chosen as the main objective, but this particular example will no doubt suffice to complete what was said above (7.1) concerning the concept of *partial competence* (see the comments made in 7.3.1 on the relativisation of what may be understood by partial knowledge of a language).

It should be noted that, depending on the types of objective on which emphasis is placed, the possibilities for assessment will vary enormously, as will the related levels and scales proposed. This is illustrated in the section devoted more particularly to the assessment of what has been acquired (Chapter 9 and appendix). The proposals put forward are those which allow for ways of acknowledging and validating different types of partial competences.

A general observation can nevertheless be made, linking different distinct language learning components and paths. It is generally the case that language teaching in schools has to a large extent tended to stress objectives concerned with either the individual's *general competence* (especially at primary school level) or *communicative language competence* (particularly for those aged between 11 and 16), while courses for adults (students or people already working) formulate objectives in terms of specific *language activities* or functional ability in a particular *domain*. This emphasis, in the case of the former on the construction and development of competences, and in the latter case on optimal preparation for activities concerned with functioning in a specific context, corresponds no doubt to the distinct roles of general initial education on the one hand, and specialised and continuing education on the other. In this context, rather than treating these as opposites, the common framework of reference can help to relate these different practices with respect to one another and show that they should in fact be complementary.

## 7.3 OPTIONS FOR CURRICULAR DESIGN

### 7.3.1 Diversification within an overall concept

Discussion about curricula in relation to the Framework may be guided by three main approaches.

*The first* is that discussion on curricula should be in line with the overall objective of promoting linguistic diversity. This means that the teaching and learning of one language should also be examined in conjunction with the provision for other languages in the education system and the paths which learners might choose to follow in the long term in their efforts to develop a variety of language skills.

*The second* principle is that this diversification is only possible, particularly in schools, if the cost efficiency of the system is considered, so as to avoid unnecessary repetition and to promote the economies of scale and the transfer of skills which linguistic diversity facilitates. If, for example, the education system allows pupils to begin learning two foreign languages at a pre-determined stage in their studies, and provides for optional learning of a third language, then the objectives or kinds of progression in each of the chosen languages need not necessarily be the same (e.g. the starting point need not always be preparation for functional interaction satisfying the same communicative needs nor would it be necessary to continue to emphasise learning strategies).

*The third* principle is, therefore, that considerations and measures relating to curricula should not just be limited to a single language curriculum, nor even be an integrated curriculum for several languages, but should also be approached in terms of the potential for a kind of general language education in which it is assumed that linguistic knowledge (*savoirs*) and skills (*savoir-faire*), along with the ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*), play both a specific role in a given language and a transversal or transferable role across languages.

### **7.3.2 From the partial to the transversal**

Between "related" languages in particular - though not just between these - knowledge and skills are transferred by a kind of osmosis. And, with reference to curricula, it should be stressed that:

- all knowledge of a language is partial, however much of a "mother tongue" or "native language" it seems to be. It is always incomplete both in so far as it could never be as developed or perfect in an ordinary individual as it would be for the utopian, 'idealised' speaker, and also because a given individual never has equal mastery of the different component parts of the language in question for example (of oral and written skills, or of comprehension and interpretation and production skills);
- any partial knowledge is also more complete than it might seem: for instance, in order to achieve the "limited" goal of increasing understanding of specialised texts in a given foreign language on very familiar subjects it is necessary to acquire knowledge and skills which could also be used for many other purposes;
- those who have learnt one language also know a great deal about many other languages without necessarily realising that they do; the learning of other languages generally facilitates the activation of this knowledge and increases awareness of it, which is a factor to be taken into account rather than proceeding as if it did not exist.

Although leaving a very broad freedom of choice in drawing up curricula and progression, these different principles and observations also aim to encourage efforts to adopt a transparent and coherent approach when identifying options and making decisions. It is in this process that a framework of reference will be of particular value.

## **7.4 TOWARDS CURRICULUM SCENARIOS**

### **7.4.1 Curriculum and variation of objectives**

From the above, it can be seen that each of the major components and sub-components of the proposed model may, if selected as a main learning objective, result in various choices in relation to content approaches and means to facilitate successful learning. For example, whether it is a matter of "skills" (general competences of the individual learner/language user) or the "pragmatic component" (within communicative language competence) or strategies, or comprehension (under the heading of language activities), in each case it is a question of components (and for quite distinct elements of the taxonomy proposed in the Framework) upon which a curriculum might or might not place emphasis and which might be considered in different instances as an objective, a means or a prerequisite. And for each of these components the question of the internal structure adopted (for example, which sub-components to select in the pragmatic component? how to sub-categorise strategies?) and the criteria for any system of progression over time (e.g. linear ranking of different types of comprehension activities?) could at least be identified and considered, if not treated in detail. This is the direction in which the other sections of this document invite the reader to approach the questions and consider the options appropriate to his or her own particular situation.

This "exploded" view is all the more appropriate in the light of the generally accepted notion that the selection and ordering of objectives on which to base language learning may vary enormously depending on the context, the target group and the level in question. Furthermore, it should be stressed that objectives for the same type of public in the same context and at the same level could also vary regardless of the weight of tradition and the education system.

The discussion surrounding modern language teaching in primary schools illustrates this in that there is a great deal of variety and controversy - at national or even regional level within a country - concerning the definition of the initial, inevitably "partial" aims to be set for this type of teaching. Should pupils: learn some basic rudiments of the foreign language system (linguistic component)?; develop linguistic awareness (more general linguistic knowledge (*savoir*), skills (*savoir-faire*) and *savoir-être*?; become more objective with regard to their native language and culture or be made to feel more at home in it?; be given confidence from the realisation and confirmation that they are capable of learning another language?; learn how to learn?; acquire a minimum of oral comprehension skills?; play with a foreign language and become familiar with it (in particular some of its phonetic and rhythmic characteristics) through counting-rhymes and songs? It goes without saying that it is possible to keep several irons in the fire and that many objectives could be combined or accommodated with others. However, it should be emphasised that in drawing up a curriculum the selection and balancing of objectives, content, ordering and means of assessment are closely linked to the analysis which has been made for each of the specified components.

These considerations imply that:

- throughout the language learning period - and this is equally applicable to schools - there may be continuity with regard to objectives or they may be modified and their order of priority adjusted;
- in a language curriculum accommodating several languages, the objectives and syllabuses of the different languages may either be similar or different;
- quite radically different approaches are possible and each can have its own transparency and coherence with regard to options chosen, and each can be explained with reference to the Common European Framework.

- reflection on the curriculum may therefore involve the consideration of possible scenarios for the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competences and the role of the school in this process.

## 7.4.2 Some examples of differentiated curriculum scenarios

In the following brief illustration of what might be envisaged by scenario options or variations, two types of organisation and curriculum decisions for a particular school system are outlined, to include, as suggested above, two modern languages other than the language of instruction (conventionally, but mistakenly, referred to below as the native language, since everybody knows that the teaching language, even in Europe, is often not the native language of the pupils): one language starting in primary school (foreign language 1, hereafter FL1) and the other in lower secondary school (foreign language 2, hereafter FL2), with a third (FL3) being introduced as an optional subject at upper secondary level.

In these examples of scenarios a distinction is made between primary, lower secondary and upper secondary which does not correspond to all national contexts. However, these illustrative programmes can easily be transposed and adapted, even in contexts where the range of languages on offer is narrower or where the first institutional learning of a foreign language comes later than primary level. He who can do more can do less. The alternatives offered here include forms of learning for three foreign languages (two out of several on offer forming part of the compulsory programme and the third, which can also be chosen, being offered as an optional extra or in lieu of other optional subjects) because this seems to be the most realistic in the majority of cases and represents a useful basis to illustrate this point. The central argument is that for a given context various scenarios can be conceived and there can be local diversification, provided that in each case due attention is paid to the overall coherence and structure of any particular option.

### a) *First scenario:*

#### *Primary school:*

The first foreign language (FL1) begins in primary school with the main aim of developing "language awareness", a general consciousness of linguistic phenomena (relationship with the native language or other languages present in the classroom environment); the focus here is on partial objectives concerned above all with an individual's general competences - (discovery or recognition by the school of the plurality of languages and cultures, preparation for moving away from ethnocentrism, relativisation but also confirmation of the learner's own linguistic and cultural identity; attention paid to body language and gestures, sound aspects, music and rhythm, experience of the physical and aesthetic dimensions of certain elements of another language) - and their relationship with communicative competence, but without there being a structured and explicit attempt to develop this specific competence.

#### *Lower secondary school:*

- FL1 continues with the emphasis from now on placed on a gradual development of communicative competence (in its linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic dimensions) but taking full account of achievements at primary level in the area of language awareness.
- The second foreign language (FL2, not taught at primary school) would not start from scratch either; it too would take account of what had been covered at primary school on the basis of and in relation to FL1, whilst at the same time pursuing slightly different objectives from those now pursued in FL1 (for instance, by giving priority to comprehension activities over production activities, in other words a form

of partial competence).

*Upper secondary level:*

Continuing the example in this scenario, consideration should be given to:

- reducing the formal teaching of FL1 and using the language instead on a regular or occasional basis for teaching another subject (a form of domain-related learning and "bilingual education");
- maintaining the emphasis with regard to FL2 on comprehension, concentrating in particular on different text types and organisation of discourse, and relating it to what is being done or has already been done in the mother tongue, whilst also using skills learnt in FL1;
- inviting pupils who choose to study the optional third foreign language (FL3) initially to take part in discussions and activities relating to types of learning and learning strategies which they have already experienced; they are then encouraged to work more autonomously, using a resource centre and contributing to the drawing up of a group or individual work programme designed to achieve the objectives set by the group or the institution.

**b) *Second scenario:***

*Primary school:*

The first foreign language (FL1) starts at primary school with the emphasis on basic oral communication and a clearly predetermined linguistic content (with the aim of establishing the beginnings of a basic linguistic component, primarily phonetic and syntactic aspects, while promoting elementary oral interaction in class).

*Lower secondary school:*

- For FL1, FL2 (when this second foreign language is introduced) and the native language, time is spent going over the learning methods and techniques encountered in primary school for FL1 and, separately, for the native language: the aim at this stage would be to promote sensitivity to and increase awareness of the learner's approach to languages and learning activities.
- For FL1 a "regular" programme designed to develop the different skills continues until the end of secondary school but, at various intervals, this is supplemented with revision and discussion sessions relating to the resources and methods used for teaching and learning so as to accommodate an increasing differentiation between the profiles of different pupils and their expectations and interests.
- For FL2 at this stage particular emphasis could be placed on the sociocultural and sociolinguistic elements as perceived through increasing familiarity with the media (popular press, radio and television) and possibly linked with the native language course and benefiting from what has been covered in FL1. In this curriculum model, FL2, which continues until the end of secondary school, is the main forum for cultural and intercultural discussion fuelled through contact with the other languages in the curriculum and taking media-related texts as its main focus. It could also incorporate the experience of an international exchange with the focus on intercultural relations. Consideration should also be given to using other subjects (e.g. history or geography) to help initiate a well thought-out approach to pluriculturalism.

*Upper secondary level:*

- FL1 and FL2 each continue in the same direction but at a more complex and demanding level. Learners who opt for a third foreign language (FL3) do so

primarily for "vocational" purposes and relate their language learning to a more professionally-oriented or other academic branch of their studies (for example orientation towards the language of commerce, economics or technology).

It should be stressed that in this second scenario, as in the first, the final plurilingual and pluricultural profile of the learners may be "uneven" to the extent that:

- the level of proficiency in the languages making up plurilingual competence varies;
- the cultural aspects are unequally developed for the different languages;
- it is not necessarily the case that for the languages in which linguistic aspects received most attention the cultural aspect is also the most developed;
- 'partial' competences, as described above, are integrated.

To these brief indications it may be added that in all cases time should be allowed at some point or other, in the case of all languages, for considering the approaches and learning paths to which learners, in their respective development, are exposed or for which they opt. This implies building into curriculum design at school scope for explicitness, the progressive development of 'learning awareness', the introduction of general language education which helps learners establish metacognitive control over their own competences and strategies. Learners situate these in relation to other possible competences and strategies and with regard to the language activities in which they are applied in order to accomplish tasks within specific domains.

In other words, one of the aims of curriculum design, whatever the particular curriculum, is to make learners aware of categories and their dynamic interrelationship as proposed in the model adopted for the reference framework.

## **7.5 ASSESSMENT AND SCHOOL, OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND POST-SCHOOL LEARNING**

If the curriculum is defined, as suggested by its primary meaning, in terms of the path travelled by a learner through a sequence of educational experiences, whether under the control of an institution or not, then a curriculum does not end with leaving school, but continues in some way or other thereafter in a process of life-long learning.

In this perspective, therefore, the curriculum of the school as institution has the aim of developing in the learner a plurilingual and pluricultural competence which at the end of school studies may take the form of differentiated profiles depending on individuals and the paths they have followed. It is clear that the form of this competence is not immutable and the subsequent personal and professional experiences of each social agent, the direction of his or her life, will cause it to evolve and change its balance through further development, reduction and reshaping. It is here that adult education and continuing training, among other things, play a role. Three complementary aspects may be considered in relation to this.

### **7.5.1 The place of the school curriculum**

To accept the notion that the educational curriculum is not limited to school and does not end with it is also to accept that plurilingual and pluricultural competence may begin before school and proceed parallel with it: through family experience and learning, history and contacts between generations, travel, expatriation, emigration, and more generally belonging to a multilingual and multicultural environment or moving from one environment to another, but also through reading and through the media.



While this is stating the obvious, it is also clear that the school is a long way from always taking this into account. It is therefore useful to think of the school curriculum as part of a much broader curriculum, but a part which also has the function of giving learners:

- an initial differentiated plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire (with some possible ways being suggested in the two scenarios outlined above);
- a better awareness of, knowledge of and confidence in their competences and the capacities and resources available to them, inside and outside the school, so that they may extend and refine these competences and use them effectively in particular domains.

### **7.5.2 Portfolio and profiling**

It follows, therefore, that the recognition and assessment of knowledge and skills should be such as to take account of the circumstances and experiences through which these competences and skills are developed. The proposal to develop a *portfolio* enabling an individual to record and present different aspects of his or her language biography represents a step in this direction. It should include not only any officially awarded recognition obtained in the course of learning a particular language but also a record of more informal experiences involving contacts with languages and other cultures. However, in order to stress the relationship between the school curriculum and the out-of-school curriculum, when language learning is assessed on the completion of secondary education, it would be valuable to try to provide recognition for plurilingual and pluricultural competence as such, and thus to determine an exit profile which can accommodate varying combinations rather than using as a basis a single predetermined level in a given language, or languages, as the case may be.

"Official" recognition of partial competences may be a step in this direction (and it would be helpful if the major international qualifications were to show the way by adopting such an approach, for example by acknowledging separately the four skills covered by comprehension/expression and written/spoken, and not necessarily all of them grouped together). But it would be helpful if the ability to cope with several languages or cultures could also be taken into account and recognised. Translating (or summarising) a second foreign language into a first foreign language, participating in an oral discussion involving several languages, interpreting a cultural phenomenon in relation to another culture, are examples of interaction or mediation (as defined in this document) which have their place to play even though they are very rarely acknowledged by international qualifications. This is primarily because they are international and rely on an assessment of monolingual skills. In many respects qualifications should also assess and reward a plurilingual and pluricultural profile and the ability to manage such a repertoire.

### **7.5.3 A multidimensional and modular approach**

This chapter aims to draw attention generally to the shift in focus or at least the increasing complexity with regard to curriculum design, and the consequent implications for assessment and indeed certification. It is clearly important to define stages in relation to content and progression in terms of a primary component (linguistic or notional/functional, for example) or in terms of promoting progress in all dimensions for a particular language. But it is equally important to clearly distinguish the components of a *multidimensional curriculum* (taking account in particular of the different dimensions of the reference framework) and differentiated methods of evaluation, and to work towards *modular*

learning and certification arrangements. This would permit, synchronically (at a given moment in the learning path) or diachronically (through differentiated stages along this path), the development and recognition of "variable geometry" plurilingual and pluricultural competences (i.e. the components and structure of which vary from one individual to another and change over time for a given individual) and which justify this description in terms of their components.

As for the school curriculum, and the scenarios outlined briefly above, it is clear that, at certain times of the learner's school career, the introduction of short cross-curricular modules involving the various languages would give greater overall coherence and transparency to the underlying curricular choices and would doubtless improve the general structure without upsetting the programmes devised for other subjects. Such "translanguage" modules could encompass the various learning approaches and resources, ways of using the out-of-school environment, and dealing with misunderstandings in intercultural relations.

Furthermore, a modular approach to qualifications would enable, in an *ad hoc* module, a specific assessment to be made of the plurilingual and pluricultural management abilities referred to above.

Multidimensionality and modularity thus appear as key concepts in developing a sound basis for linguistic diversification in the curriculum and in assessment. The reference framework is structured in a manner that allows it, through the categories it offers, to indicate the directions for such a modular or multidimensional organisation. However, the way forward is clearly to implement projects and experimental work in the school environment and in a variety of contexts.

*Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:*

- whether the learners concerned already have some experience of linguistic and cultural plurality, and the nature of this experience;*
- whether learners are already able, even if only at a very basic level, to function in several linguistic and/or cultural communities, and how this competence is distributed and differentiated according to the contexts of language use and activities;*
- what experience of linguistic and cultural diversity learners may have at the time of their learning (for example parallel to and outside their attendance at a learning institution);*
- how this experience might be built on in the learning process;*
- what types of objectives appear best suited to learners (see 7.2) at a particular point in the development of a plurilingual and pluricultural competence, taking account of their characteristics, expectations, interests, plans and needs as well as their previous learning path and their existing resources;*
- how to encourage, for the learners concerned, the decompartmentalisation and establishment of an effective relationship between the different components of plurilingual and pluricultural competence in the process of being developed; in particular, how to focus attention on and draw on the learners' existing transferable and transversal knowledge and skills;*
- which partial competences (of what kind and for what purposes) might enrich, complexify and differentiate learners' existing competences;*

*- how to fit learning concerned with a particular language or culture coherently into an overall curriculum in which the experience of several languages and several cultures is developed:*

*- what options or what forms of differentiation in curriculum scenarios exist for managing the development of a diversified competence for particular learners; what economies of scale can be envisaged and achieved, if appropriate;*

*- what forms of organisation of learning (a modular approach, for example) are likely to favour management of the learning path in the case of the learners in question;*

*- what approach to evaluation or assessment will make it possible to take account of and accord proper recognition to the partial competences and the diversified plurilingual and pluricultural competence of learners.*