Language acquisition, language diversity and the borderless university

Draft report[1]

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Foreword

Although this report is not aimed specifically at academics or language specialists, the issues raised in it and the recommendations proposed for discussion are based on theoretical considerations about language, culture and society, pedagogy and didactics, and human and machine communication. For reasons of legibility, many of these more theoretical aspects have been put in appendices or in footnotes rather than in the body of the report. My personal position is that language diversity, for many reasons, is the only acceptable way forward, and I make no apology for that. Others may disagree. Language diversity does not, however, mean that a *lingua franca* should not or could not also be promoted, where appropriate. The aim of the report is therefore to provoke discussion, debate, disagreement, to provide the opportunity for practitioners and decision-makers to air their different views and hopefully work towards a common ground on which to build policies. References to certain recommendations are made throughout the report: they have been grouped together under various headings at the end.

Introduction

Borderless (higher) education is a fine concept but what does it mean, what are its objectives and how should they be achieved? In order to try and answer these questions it is first of all necessary to identify different types of border, the order being of no relevance here. Traditionally, they may be:

- Geographical, i.e. borders that separate countries.

- Spatial, i.e. physical distances between prospective students and places of learning. These borders include geographical ones but also exist within countries.

- Temporal, in the sense that the acquisition of knowledge may be synchronous with its dissemination, as in the presence of students at a lecture or tutorial, or asynchronous, as in the reading of written materials, the use of recorded materials, etc.

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- Financial, i.e. those borders that separate well-endowed universities from those less fortunate, richer students from the less well-off, people who can afford to study from those who cannot.

- Generational, i.e. borders between those who undertake university studies at a more traditional age (today, more or less straight from school, sometimes after a gap year) and those who either go to university for the first time a number of years later or go back to university, having already been there at an earlier stage, i.e. lifelong learners.

- Psychological, i.e. between those who adapt easily to university life and take full advantage of their studies with little or no difficulty and those who find it harder to adapt.

- Functional, i.e. the borders that outline the different objectives of university education, from the point of view of the institution, the teaching staff, the students, society. These objectives may be utilitarian, vocational, a question of personal fulfilment, a question of providing an educated population, a way to advance knowledge, a way to train people for the future, a way to respond to market needs, etc. and they often overlap.

- Linguistic and cultural, the two elements being intimately connected. Though several countries may well share a common language, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, for example, or Germany and Austria, or France, Belgium and Switzerland, the cultural differences may be such that the notion of border would not be inappropriate. At the same time, cultural similarities exist despite linguistic differences.

Today, however, many of these borders are becoming blurred, notably through the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). This process, which began with the Open University and more traditional distance learning, in different forms, is now accelerating not only in quantitative terms but also in qualitative ones. Students and teachers no longer have to be physically present but can communicate on-line in real time, thus breaking down the notions of spatial and temporal borders, for example. This offers the possibility of increased access, thus broadening the potential student population in terms of number and background, enabling people to study full time at a distance, to work and study part-time, to reconcile university with other commitments. It facilitates initial learning and enables the notion of lifelong learning to become a reality.

But as a corollary, new borders are appearing, in the form of machines and technology which come between the different users. Consequently, students and teachers need to be computer literate; they also have to rely on a solid technological infrastructure and backup when things go wrong. Moreover, much information on the Internet is available mainly or only in English, or at least an international form of English, the new *lingua franca* of the technological age. Although these changes do increase access to learning and knowledge for many, they may also close the doors to others who have neither the money nor the computing or language skills to use these technologies, thus broadening the economic, digital and linguistic divide and increasing the risk of social exclusion (see recommendation 2). Similarly, as physical distances are breaking down, thus bringing people closer together, at least virtually, cultural and linguistic distances risk pulling people apart, unless they are prepared and acquire the competences necessary to overcome them.

Turning now to the other side of the question, what are the different objectives of borderless higher education? It would be a truism to say that it is a question of breaking down the

various borders, and impossible to break down all those mentioned above. But what is necessary is to rethink the borders, see how they change our expectations and, conversely, look at how our expectations and needs inform the way we see the borders. Perhaps the one general objective would be to break down the different barriers between individuals and peoples of different countries, languages, cultures or generations, so as to encourage greater understanding and tolerance, to enable people to benefit from each other's experience and view of the world, thus combating xenophobia and contributing to transforming globalisation from something that is endured by most to something that is enriched by all, both individually and collectively. This is a very lofty ideal and goes far beyond the confines of higher education, but although fewer people attend university than do not, university as a seat of learning, as one of the places in society where values are developed, strengthened and passed on, where the boundaries of knowledge are pushed out, has a seminal role to play in the achievement of this ideal.

In more concrete terms, how can the borderless university be achieved? Does it mean taking the university to the student, through greater use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), thus reducing or erasing the obstacles of the spatial and temporal borders? This is however a two-way process and can either make university available to those who traditionally do not or cannot attend by taking it into their homes or, on the contrary, send back home those who traditionally study at university. It is, therefore, a double-edged weapon because however good it may be to increase access to university and learning, the attendant risk is to isolate people from each other by forgetting the social and community element of academic exchange, the cut and thrust of face-to-face discussion, the informality of chance meetings and unplanned activities that, by definition, cannot exist when people have to log on at the same time. There are certain things that ICT (and libraries, for that matter) cannot replace, as a German Erasmus student studying law in Paris so aptly pointed out: "I could have read the books back home in Germany, but attending the classes taught by the professors who wrote them and, more importantly, taking part in student discussions during tutorials were irreplaceable and by far the most enriching aspect of the experience"[2]. The question of ICT and language will be discussed in more detail later on in the report.

Does the borderless university mean that just one language should be used? This can be seen in both positive and negative terms. Having one common language, presumably English, could be cost-effective in that it could be taught as a core subject to everyone, and only those who wish to do so would learn other languages. In terms of numbers, too, more people will be able to communicate if they have the same foreign (or in some cases, native) language than if there is an exponential number of combinations. But what about language diversity? What about the relationship between language and culture? What about the fact that using a language as a means of access to information has little or nothing to do with knowledge and understanding of the country and of the people for whom it is their native tongue? What about the fact that one's view of the world is intimately connected to the language and culture one is brought up in? If only one language is used, is imposed, to what extent will the community created by the borderless university be a world unto its own, cut off from the countries, cultures and languages of origin, as is already the case with what is known familiarly as Eurospeak or Eurobabble, a tongue that only those working in Brussels really understand?

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[2] In the context of student mobility, a specific form of the borderless university, a questionnaire was sent to two categories of student: those who had begun their university studies in France and then gone abroad as part of their degree or to do a further degree, and those who had begun their university studies abroad and then come to study in Paris. The questionnaire, reproduced in appendix A, focused on language and cultural needs. The first category answered mainly with respect to their knowledge of English, the second with respect to French.

It is clear that several inter-related issues are at stake here. The first is the place of ICT in education, the second the choice between a *lingua franca* and a plurilingual and pluricultural education, i.e. a choice between a form of efficiency and an attempt to preserve language and cultural diversity. The third is the question of physical mobility, i.e. of students actually going to other countries to study. The fourth is what I would call intellectual mobility, i.e. the ability to function in another language with its own way of thinking, which is essential whether the student is physically mobile or in front of a computer screen at home. If the global aims of education in general, and the borderless university in particular, are personal development, employability, greater tolerance and understanding of others, what policy decisions have to be made, remembering of course that whatever is decided it will have a cost?

1. Language and culture: general considerations

Before going any further, it is necessary to understand a certain number of concepts, as they are central to any discussion on the linguistic and cultural practicalities and implications of the borderless university today. The best way is to refer to the definitions of multilingualism, plurilingualism, and plurilingual and pluricultural competence as defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment* of the Council of Europe.

> *Multilingualism* […] is the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society. Multilingualism may be attained by simply diversifying the languages on offer in a particular school or educational system, or by encouraging pupils to learn more than one foreign language, or reducing the dominant position of English in international communication[3].
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> *Plurilingualism* […] the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact. In different situations, a person can call flexibly upon different parts of this competence to achieve effective communication with a particular interlocutor. […] Those with some knowledge, even slight, may use it to help those with none to communicate by mediating between individuals with no common language. In the absence of a mediator, such individuals may nevertheless achieve some degree of communication by bringing the whole of their linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression in different languages or dialects, exploiting paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.) and radically simplifying their use of language[4].
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> *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 person, viewed as 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 concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence tends to:

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[3] Common European Framework, section 1.3.
[4] Common European Framework, section 1.3.

- 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 communicative proficiency[5].

[Indeed], the pluricultural profile differs 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)[6].

These definitions are however insufficient, if they are not read in conjunction with more theoretical considerations about different aspects of language, language teaching, culture and evaluation. They are presented, for those who are interested, in a simplified table form in Appendix B.

2. Language awareness and exposure to languages

My brief is to consider what kind of language learning and competence should be promoted at university level in order to make the borderless university a reality and, if possible, to encourage and develop student mobility. It is rather late, however, to consider language competence at this stage (whether limited to English or in view of defending language diversity) and much effort should be put, and is being put into early learning, not only at secondary school level but also at primary school.

This should however be put into the broader context of language awareness, which can be and in some countries is developed outside the educational system. Language awareness takes many forms, one of which is regular exposure to foreign languages. This can be done through national radio and, more especially, television, by showing more foreign programmes and films in their original languages (in the case of television, with or without subtitles). Today, with the advent of satellite and digital TV, it is also becoming easier and easier to watch all kinds of programmes from around the world, in different languages, but the audience is not the same. Whereas in the latter case the non-native viewer has made a deliberate choice to watch a foreign programme and will not have the benefit of subtitles, in the former case it is the national authorities that have chosen and that have decided whether to dub the programme or to add subtitles. The best way to ensure greater exposure for all would therefore be a deliberate policy to show more foreign programmes on national television, with subtitles. This is however a very sensitive political question and goes beyond the remit of this report[7].

Language awareness through non-academic exposure to foreign languages is a good indication of how governments and categories of population generally perceive the presence of and/or need for certain foreign languages and this has to be looked at in a little more detail, since it is a factor in national language policy and in the decisions people make not only about whether or not to study one or more foreign languages but also which one(s) to choose (assuming that they have a choice).

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[5] Common European Framework, section 8.1.

[6] Common European Framework, section 6.1.3.1.

[7] For further discussion of the question of non-academic exposure to foreign languages, see Appendix C.

If we take the example of France, a survey done at European level in December 2000 shows that only 27% of French people think that everyone should be able to speak at least two foreign languages in addition to their mother tongue. And 27.3% of those surveyed say that they are 'no good at languages'[8]. This is the highest figure for all European countries. In addition to this lack of enthusiasm (or is it realism?) must be added other elements which influence the number and choice of languages taught and studied and which must be taken on board when deciding language policy.
The first are the positive or negative representations people have concerning individual languages. In France, for instance, English is considered to be 'useful', 'necessary', 'easy', Italian is 'cultural' or 'decorative' but not very useful, Portuguese is seen as the language of immigrants (and therefore negative, since immigrants should learn French and not the other way round) rather than the language of Brazilians, whose country is potentially a place of great cultural and economic exchange. Arabic, too, is seen in a negative light. German is considered to be a difficult language and therefore chosen by – or imposed on – the 'best students', whether they want to study it or not, at the same time excluding weaker students.
The second concerns the social representation of plurilingualism. If an individual is truly bilingual or multilingual, this is seen very positively. If, however, someone uses several languages imperfectly, if their linguistic competence is partial, this is seen very negatively and poor performance in other subjects is often blamed on this.

The third is a question of geographical proximity. The languages (in addition to English) taught in schools are often those of the nearest neighbour. But why, say some commentators, should the south-east of France have to study Italian, the east German, the south-west Spanish? Of course, transborder exchanges are easier, but the risk, they suggest, is that these languages will *only* or mainly be available in these regions, thus marginalising them even more. After all, there may well be a need for Italian, say, in the centre of France, because of local industry and business, and this will go unheeded (see recommendation 5). With such a policy, the language needs of a local population will not be met, with perhaps serious economic consequences, and at the same time the dissemination of less widely used and less taught languages will be reduced[9].

Finally, there is the perception of language as a source of national cohesion and an interesting example is that of Switzerland, a country with four official languages. Given the fact that English has taken first place over the other foreign languages, it has been decided that all children will study their own language, a second official one and English. The advantages are threefold: national cohesion will be reinforced since everyone, at least in the long term, will speak at least two national languages; people will still be able to acquire a 'useful' language, i.e. English; language diversity will be sustained.

[8] Quoted by Jack Lang, the then Education Minister, in *L'enseignement des langues vivantes – perspectives*: 14.
[9]Geographical and physical proximity can however be usefully exploited. In the Netherlands minority languages are taught (in primary schools) in the areas where they are used. Until 1997 this only concerned Frisian in Friesland. As of 1997, Limburgian in Limburg was also recognised as an official language, which means that people can use it instead of Dutch to communicate with local/regional authorities. But more than just being taught as a subject, minority and foreign languages may also be the medium of education. "Dutch is the language of instruction in the Netherlands, but schools in the province of Friesland can also teach in Frisian. Children from a non-Dutch background may, under certain conditions, receive lessons in their home language and culture, for instance Turkish or Arabic, but these are then provided outside the normal programme of activities. In a number of primary schools close to the border, some teaching is being done in the languages of the neighbouring countries (French and German) by way of an experiment".

What is clear from these remarks is that the needs and desires of the individual, of the institution and of society must converge and that policy-makers must take this into account. What then are the linguistic and cultural needs of the individual and the institution, if a borderless university is to become a reality? What skills are required?

3. Skills

Before looking at the linguistic and cultural skills necessary for a borderless university, it would be useful to think for a moment about the skills that everyone needs in order to function in today's society, the knowledge and information society. Whether they are for personal development, citizenship, education and training or employability, they include traditional and digital literacy, numeracy, IT skills, technological culture, personal and social skills, communication skills and, many say, foreign languages[10].

If we consider the borderless university, then there is no doubt that proficiency in foreign languages becomes a key issue, with serious implications of changes in curriculum, pedagogy and ongoing support beyond the classroom. But what must not be forgotten is that language does not exist in a vacuum, it is not an abstract subject but informs and is informed by the culture it expresses and is the basis of human exchange and communication. It cannot and must not be perceived merely in utilitarian terms as a tool, like a code or a computer language disconnected from people; language is rooted in society. Defending language diversity means defending different cultures, it means enabling communities to exist. Following on from this, the borderless university is not therefore a virtual world where everyone sits at home surfing the Internet and 'communicating' via machines in a language or languages devoid of meaning once the machine has been switched off. It is a real place for social and not just intellectual intercourse, it is more than a place of learning, it is an integral part of the wider real world outside.

The consequences of such an analysis are costly, however, since this would mean putting 'useful', 'easy', 'decorative' and 'elitist' languages on the same level, giving as much importance to 'less widely used' languages as to those spoken or used by millions of people. It would mean that even if in reality some languages will be favoured over others, even if the policy may be to have a *lingua franca* alongside as wide a choice as possible of other languages, the necessary resources for students to acquire proficiency are expensive and will have to be found somewhere.

What then are language skills and which ones need to be acquired for a borderless university to function, whether using one language or several? To answer the first question, traditionally language is broken down into four skills: Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking[11] (recognition and recall skills). It has been assumed in the past that they are of equal importance to the learner, that the two oral skills should be taught together as should the two

[10] In the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning Consultation Process: A Review of Member State and EEA Country Reports*, Cedefop – European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Draft, (October 2001), we learn that most countries (in particular, see Austria, Belgium, Germany, France and Portugal) recognise the great importance of multilingualism in today's Europe. Iceland points specifically to its incontrovertible necessity for small nations using lesser-spoken languages. Several countries (for example, Austria, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom) also underline the importance of multiple language competence This includes learning languages spoken by indigenous or immigrant groups in one's own country or those spoken in neighbouring countries.

[11] Although language teachers in France try to teach all four, it is interesting and puzzling to note that a traditional CV in French always omits oral comprehension: 'lu, écrit, parlé' is what one usually finds!

written ones[12]. It is also assumed that an educated native speaker has equal mastery of all four in all situations[13]. These assumptions are not, however, correct, and language teaching should be rethought accordingly, depending on the use to which the language will be put. But whatever the skills being developed, several important points need to be made. First, the skills are not mechanical, they cannot be reduced to grammar rules and vocabulary, they cannot be learned simply by reading or consulting documents on-line, however useful this may be. They need to be taught and used, honed and polished, as far as possible in a real native speaker context, whether through actual student mobility, on-line discussions and tutorials with professors and other students from elsewhere, or in specially devised learning situations which will be discussed below.

Second, a language does not only function through what is said but also through presuppositions, shared beliefs and implicit elements. Native speakers or members of the same group or sub-group communicate a great deal without actually saying anything or just in half-sentences; they make vague allusions, use body language and other forms of non-verbal complicity. For a non-native speaker this is one of the most difficult things to learn as what is not said is, by definition, not to be found in a book and remains relatively invisible. What is more, similar non-verbal forms of communication may well exist in the learner's language and culture but with different meanings[14]. These kinds of thing would be lost or misunderstood if only one language were to be used, moreover by non-native speakers in a non-native context. The question that has to be answered is 'does it matter?'.

Policy-makers will have to take all of this into account when deciding what kind of language teaching to provide, whether the student is using ICT from home or studying at a foreign university. In the latter case, they will have to decide what is necessary to prepare a student for study abroad, what support is necessary once the student is there (and whether it should be provided by the original or the host university). They will also have to consider whether general language teaching is sufficient and cost-effective or whether language for special purposes would be more appropriate; whether the needs of the students are the same whatever the subject studied, whatever the language used, whatever their year of study in their main subject. How, then, can a non-native speaker be helped to acquire these skills so as to be able to get the most out of the borderless university? What methods and approaches should be adopted to enable students to acquire the necessary proficiency?

4. Methods and approaches

As has already been said, language (lexis and grammar[15]) informs the way we see the world as well as enabling us to communicate in and about it. In other words, language is

[12] See Appendix D for a more detailed discussion of language skills.

[13] The assumption that 'educated' native speakers have equal mastery of all four skills is not true. Variable competence is a fact of life for them, too. They may be able to access certain areas of knowledge in recognition for receptive purposes but fail to access them in recall for production. What they do have, however, is either the systemic knowledge (of the language) or the schematic knowledge (of the domain or the cultural context) that enables them to fill in the gaps more easily than a non-native speaker and it is particularly the latter that is more difficult to acquire.

[14] Take, for example, the movement of the head to express agreement or disagreement. A French or English person will nod their head to show agreement but shake it to disagree. In Bulgaria it is the contrary.

[15] If the lexis and grammar of language are analysed in terms of words, three categories have been identified:
Full words: lexis, lexical meaning, e.g. cat, have (to possess), do (to make, to act)
Form words: grammar, grammatical meaning, e.g. and, have/do (auxiliary verbs)
Between the two
Formulaic patterns (lexicalised sentences, set expressions, large-scale lexical items)

instrumental in the establishment of shared categories of context for a given society. As a result, interaction *within* linguistic communities is facilitated, but interaction *between* them is impeded by the differences between their conceptual and communicative economies. The problem is how to teach the non-native speaker to recognise and overcome these differences, i.e. how to provide the systemic and schematic knowledge[16] that a native speaker has. In other words, what kind of language should be taught to students of the borderless university and how should it be done?

What kind of language should be taught?

Students' language needs vary according to the communicative contexts in which they find themselves (reading documents, attending lectures, taking part in tutorials, writing essays, taking notes, surviving in a foreign country). As these contexts change, so do the categories of words that tend to be required[17]. If the borderless university is understood as being the use of ICT in one's home country for access to documents and for interactive tutorials between people of different languages and cultures with little shared or pre-existing knowledge, then greater but not sole emphasis should be put on the acquisition of full words (not, of course, in isolation but in context). If, on the other hand, the borderless university also means student mobility, then equal emphasis should be given to all categories of words, so that the student is operational both in a formal learning context and in everyday exchange (see recommendation 3).

Whatever the needs, however, two questions must be asked first. What is the academic profile of the students, and how can they be motivated[18] so that what is taught is learnt, so that the methods adopted are cost-effective for both the learner (in terms of time, effort and results) and the institution (in terms of money, other forms of investment and return)?

Although it seems to be stating the obvious, it should never be forgotten that whatever a learner's linguistic abilities, he or she is an intelligent individual with different knowledge in different domains. In the case that interests us here, all the learners are adults studying different subjects at university level, some just starting out in their chosen field, some already quite advanced, others highly specialised. Similarly, as far as foreign language skills are concerned, some are hardly more than beginners while others are already quite proficient. What we can hopefully assume is that the foreign language learner (university student) has knowledge of and interest in his or her field of study and it is this knowledge that can and should be built on and used as a source of motivation and as a resource in the language-learning process. This is especially true for students who leave school with a very average level in foreign languages and who see themselves (because this is how the system sees them)

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e.g. be that as it may, further to your letter of, veuillez trouver ci-joint, il n'y a pas de quoi.

[16] See Appendix B.

[17] "If language is used to *establish* a context of shared knowledge rather than to *identify* aspects of pre-existing knowledge, then there is likely to be a higher degree of explicit lexical reference and so a higher proportion of full words. Since a good deal of writing is context-establishing in this way, it generally reveals higher levels of lexical density than does, for example, spoken conversation, which tends to be context-identifying, concerned with giving the sharper indexical focus to shared lexical information which form words can provide. But one cannot simply associate high lexical density with writing and low lexical density with speaking. What is at issue is the way different uses of language realise the complementary relationship between linguistic resources and contextual factors." Widdowson: 90-91.

[18] I am assuming that students doing degrees in modern languages are motivated, so their case is not addressed here. Many of those who answered the questionnaire said that the day they decided to study abroad or the day they realised that language skills were essential for their chosen career was when they really began to take languages seriously. Given the fact that they have all studied abroad, it is difficult to extrapolate from this and draw any general conclusions. What did come out was the lack of *interesting* language classes.

as language failures. But it is also true for the good students, especially as in the future they will have been studying languages at school for many years and the risk is that, like the weaker students, they will become bored; in addition there is the risk that their skills will level out or even regress, and that the advantages of early language learning in primary school will be lost (see recommendation 4).

What are the advantages of using this knowledge? It means that in many domains the students know *what* is being talked or written about even if the weaker ones are unable to talk or write about the topic themselves[19]. It means that when reading a text or listening to someone speak, the students can use this knowledge to anticipate what is coming next, to build up meaning, to become more autonomous. It transforms the language into a medium of instruction as well as a subject to be studied. As and when the student comes up against linguistic difficulties that hinder performance in the area of study, they can be worked on, not because they come next in some abstract language syllabus but because the language is necessary for the performance of a specific task. In this way grammar and lexis can be taught meaningfully with the needs of the student and the specificities of the domain in mind[20].

This language for special purposes approach does however require difficult policy choices, concerning the role and profile of teachers, the criteria for dividing students into groups and the cost, since it should always be borne in mind that institutional, economic and practical constraints may well work against the choices of policy makers, course designers and teachers. Some of these concerns are addressed in the section on teacher and student profiles, but before looking at this it is necessary to ask ourselves how language should be taught.

How should the language be taught?

Everyone will agree that differences exist between first and second language acquisition, in that knowledge of the language and knowledge of the world are acquired simultaneously in

[19] Although ability in the domain compensates for and helps improve language proficiency, which in turn enables the student to learn more about the domain, this is more true of some domains than others. Examples of those where pre-existing knowledge is extremely helpful include the earth sciences, economics, mathematics and computing, history and geography, medicine and dentistry where, once allowance is made for a certain national and cultural bias, the concepts are sufficiently similar to be a help and not a hindrance. However, not all domains can be used as easily as a resource in the same way and the most obvious example is that of law. Here, the systemic and schematic knowledge are so closely intertwined that the conceptual categories are difficult to acquire in a language other than that of which they are part. This is particularly problematic for students who are not good at languages. European law is an exception, since the concepts and language have been developed and have evolved side by side, not always with very felicitous linguistic results, but that is another debate.

[20] What learners need to know is how grammar, words and contexts function together so as to achieve meaning in general. At the same time, the words and contexts have be meaningful for the learners (no pun intended). Let us look at the following three sentences.

a) I've taken your dog's bone and I've sent his note to the dentist's grandmother.

b) I've taken your daughter's schoolbag and I've sent her book to the teacher's house.

c) I've taken your patient's ECG and I've sent her results to the heart specialist's secretary.

In the first example, even though the statement is grammatically correct it is nonsensical as an expression of meaning. Syntactic structure alone is clearly not sufficient, it is also a question of lexis. The second and third versions have been relexicalised and though they may not actually be attested they do seem normal because it is relatively easy to imagine a context for them. Normality is not thus a question of actual occurrence but of contextual plausibility. What then is the difference between b) and c)? In terms of meaning there is no difference; in terms of meaningfulness to some learners, there is. It is highly unlikely that a student will be able to relate to the problems of daughters and schools in b) whereas it is probable that a student doctor will come across similar contexts to that in c). In other words, the specialist domain of the student should be taken into account when giving formal language instruction as it is more relevant and thus contributes to his or her motivation.

the first case but not in the second. Second language acquisition cannot therefore be 'authentic' in the same way because the contexts of communication are not. Is it nevertheless possible, desirable and efficient to try to create 'authentic' learning situations at the university or is this an illusion, and what impact does it have on student motivation and thus on results? If immersion is considered to be the most authentic situation, what are the advantages and limitations of such an approach? Thirdly, what role can ICT play not only in the acquisition of language and the development of plurilingual and pluricultural competence but also in the borderless university itself?

Authenticity

Why is it illusory to think that authenticity is possible in the language class, even if the language presented is a genuine record of native-speaker use, be it in the form of written or recorded materials? It is because the learner's engagement with it is artificial. The purpose of the documents is diverted from study of the content to study of the language, though this is not a hard and fast distinction as language is always about something, it cannot exist alone. To compound the artificiality of the situation, even if the teacher is a native speaker the other learners are not, so native-speaker response is also missing. Of course, the more advanced the learner, the greater the emphasis on content and the closer his or her behaviour will be to that of a native speaker who uses the same materials for content and yet from time to time may ponder over words or expressions he or she is not familiar with, thus turning the language temporarily into the subject of study.

Authenticity of a different sort is achieved where learners of different nationalities and languages are all following the same language class together in a country where it is spoken. The language being studied is the only means of communication and the communication situation is therefore authentic. Maybe only the teacher provides native-speaker response but at least the artificiality of, for example, Spanish speakers all trying to speak Greek among themselves does not exist[21].

But when deciding on language policy, is lack of or limited authenticity a problem? Some would argue that even to try to imitate the conditions of natural use of language in the classroom is misguided. After all, the whole purpose of pedagogy is to devise economical and more effective means for language learning than is provided by natural exposure and experience; "inauthentic language-*using* behaviour may be authentic language-*learning* behaviour"[22]. And it is no different for other subjects. When a law student solves a legal problem from a textbook rather than a legal problem for a real client, the materials are authentic, the context is not. Or rather, it is an authentic learning situation, not an authentic using situation. There is a method, however, which seems to provide both an authentic learning situation and an authentic using situation for language acquisition and that is immersion.

Immersion

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[21] However, artificiality (linguistic and cultural) is reintroduced when a French-speaking economics professor, say, gives a class in English to French students (cf p. 13 of this document). It is also introduced in the context of student mobility if the class is not a language one but a course designed exclusively for foreigners. This is unfortunately to be found in certain European universities where Erasmus students are taught apart from the local student population and just follow courses tailored specially for them. That one or two special or remedial courses should exist for students not familiar with certain basic notions can only be applauded, but this lack of contact with others does little to improve cultural competence and exchange with respect to the host country.

[22] Breen, *Authenticity in the Language Classroom*, Applied Linguistics, 6/1, 1985, quoted in Widdowson: 46.

A rather particular example of immersion is to be found in Canada, a country with two official languages, where French is taught not as a subject in its own right but as a medium of instruction for other subjects on the curriculum. Language thus becomes a means and not an end[23]. In purely language terms, however, immersion has certain limitations and they must be taken on board when defining language policy. Nearly twenty years ago, Stern[24] made the following comments:

> "Efforts to create bilingualism by means of bilingual schooling – as, for example, in the immersion programme in Canada – are likely to be more successful than conventional language teaching as a subject because the language is treated in school as a medium rather than as a subject. But even in these cases the success is likely to be short-lived if it is not backed by bilingual contacts and exchanges in the community at large (my emphasis). Thus, the success of language teaching is dependent upon major forces in society, such as the role, or perception of, language in that society."

Of course, the borderless university is not about bilingualism, but about linguistic and cultural proficiency. When, therefore, some commentators have observed that in an immersion situation students are more fluent than accurate this may be perfectly acceptable from a plurilingual perspective if accuracy is not required; it all depends on what our expectations are, on the ultimate aim and needs of the learner and the institution. Others go further and suggest that the natural exposure and engagement provided by immersion are not enough and that students also need some formal language instruction, which is in fact the case of first language acquisition since native speakers effectively learn their own language through a combination (and not just a juxtaposition) of formal instructional and natural use. This has been borne out in the questionnaires, where a number of students felt the need for formal language teaching (expressed in terms of grammar and vocabulary) in addition to the general exposure to the language, either at their original university prior to departure or at the host university, at least for the first few weeks.

A final comment on immersion could usefully be made here, concerning the growing trend of providing classes *in* a foreign language, often English, on the pretext that it will improve the local students' capacity in that language and that it will also encourage foreign students whose *lingua franca* (but not mother tongue) is English to come and study in the countries concerned. For the first category it is a totally artificial immersion, for the second it is contradictory, since the students are immersed in one language during classes (but with no language backup *per se*) and a different one outside, and often make no effort to learn the language and culture of the country. Although this is comprehensible where the language is not widely spoken or taught (Danish, Finnish, Greek or Swedish, for example), it seems to go completely against the notion of language diversity, totally misunderstands the relationship between language and culture, and risks accelerating the decline of languages such as French (see recommendation 10).

Before moving to the third point, that of the place of Information and Communication Technologies in education in general and borderless education in particular, it would be appropriate to look rapidly now at the question of teacher and student profiles in the light of the new needs that are appearing.

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[23] Other examples can be found nearer to home and include the *sections internationales* in the French education system, the new experiment in Dutch schools near their borders, French in primary schools in Zagreb, French in secondary schools in parts of Germany as both a subject and a medium of instruction, to name but a few.
[24] *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*, OUP, 1983: 426, quoted in Widdowson: 14-15.

Teacher and student profiles

Briefly, a couple of points need to be made concerning the demands that will be put on teachers helping to train students for study not *of* foreign languages but *using* foreign languages, sometimes in another country. Given the remarks made by many of the students who answered the questionnaire, the major problems they encountered at the beginning included i) lack of specialised vocabulary and cultural references, ii) lack of certain concepts, iii) lack of some domain knowledge, iv) difficulty in taking notes, v) problems in knowing how to write an essay in line with the cultural traditions and stylistic constraints of the host system, vi) problems in understanding what was expected or required of them[25]. The first three are common both to students who remain in their own country and to those studying abroad, the others are more specific to the latter.

Naturally, each society has its own ways of teaching and learning, its own traditions, its own view of education, its own pedagogical methods and standards. The question is how best to prepare a student using foreign materials or going to a foreign university for such a 'culture shock'. For the second group, not everything is best dealt with in the original country, some aspects are better left for the host country through induction courses (see recommendations 6 to 9).

It is clear that the main challenge is for language teachers (for they are the ones who are trained in teaching language as a subject and not just in using it as a tool) as their task is becoming more complex. They must, of course, have a good mastery of the language they are teaching, they must have the pedagogical skills of their profession but, in addition, they must have enough of the domain knowledge to be able to prepare the students to study a particular subject in that language. They thus have to work on two levels, style and content, language and domain, systemic and schematic knowledge, which could mean the emergence of new occupational profiles that cross over traditional professional and sectoral boundaries (for example, a specialist teacher in German and philosophy rather than a German teacher and a philosophy teacher). An alternative would be to have the language teacher and the domain specialist working in tandem but, whatever the solution, it is a costly investment, for both the teacher and the institution, and needs to be given careful thought.

As for the student profile, which dictates the way classes are organised, i.e. the criteria for putting students into different groups, the jury is still out on the question of banding according to language ability. Other criteria are also used, such as age (first year students together, second year students together, and so on), domain (French for economics, German for philosophy, Italian for art history, Russian for law, etc.), objective (preparing an exam such as IELTS, DELF[26]). There is no easy answer. Putting students together according to age offers the advantage of a similar level of maturity, experience, general knowledge. Putting them together according to domain allows for greater specialisation. Putting them together according to language level assumes that their ability is the same in all four skills, which may or may not be true. It also begs the question of how they are assessed to put them into

[25] To give just one concrete example, French students take copious notes, often almost verbatim. This surprises German students, who write very little during a lecture, since the information can generally be found in books, or during a tutorial, where what they are looking for is to discuss and exchange.
[26] See appendix E for details of the different testing systems.

groups[27]. Of course, several criteria can be combined but, whatever the choice, it always has a cost. But not only a cost, a price, too. What now has to be considered, in a plurilingual and pluricultural perspective, is the place of Information and Communication Technologies in education in general and in language proficiency in particular.

Information and Communication Technologies (*ICT*)

In *Borderless Education: Bridging Europe*, *a Summary Report*, Professor Calzolari referred to the reception of ICT as generally being favourable, due to its potential to modify higher education by increasing quality and reducing costs. In the *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning Consultation Process: A Review of Member State and EEA Country Reports*[28], however, many countries equally emphasise that "harvesting this potential is dependent upon its anchoring within a sound human and social framework[29] for learning". They also insist that the human-based pedagogic relation is irreplaceable, and that ICT should not be promoted to the exclusion of other tools for learning. In other words, learning is an interactive, group-based activity, it is essentially a social process. They go on to suggest that "whilst ICT can favour the development of individualised pathways, it cannot hope to reduce the overall costs of teaching and learning provision through cutting down on the contribution of education and training practitioners". Although the memorandum deals specifically with lifelong learning and vocational education and training, these comments are valid for all stages of learning. Where language is concerned, be it a subject for study or a medium of communication, the comments are even more true.

What we need to see very rapidly is to what extent there really is a qualitative improvement, in plurilingual and pluricultural terms, and whether the price to pay is not, in some ways, greater than the apparent savings offered by these technologies. This does not mean that ICT is bad, it just means that we need to be aware of its limitations when making policy decisions for the borderless university.

One of the clear advantages offered by ICT is the greater flexibility of learning opportunities. Students can work at their own pace, they no longer have to rely entirely on library facilities (opening hours, availability of documents) and have fast access to a far greater range and quantity of information than a library could ever provide. Students can also communicate with others (students and teachers) via email, thus increasing a particular form of contact. Interactive communication and video-conferences are also possible, thus bringing together people who are geographically miles apart. Information (knowledge?) is brought to the student, whereas in the past it was the other way round and the student had to go where the information was. So far, so good, but what are the downsides of these technologies?

The most obvious one is that social relations between users, in terms of community, language and culture, are changing and not only for the better[30]. Those who are critical of turning to

[27] Some students deliberately do badly in order to get into an easy group, do little work but get a good grade, a problem raised by a number of French students. The result is a good mark, but the proficiency of the student has not improved and his or her motivation has nothing to do with language acquisition.
[28] Cedefop – European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Draft, (October 2001), section 2.4.2.
[29] Underlined in the original.
[30] ICT has been described as a supermarket where the learner can browse and consume documents, reject those that are unsuitable or 'different', but feedback is not part of the picture, at least not in this scenario. On-line lectures and, more particularly, tutorials are a partial solution, but other problems arise. One of them is the absence of informality and spontaneity that exist in a real face-to-face situation. Certain commentators have remarked on the fact that informal evaluation of a student's work (glancing over their shoulder at their notes

communication technologies as we are "losing our civilisation of a spoken language" may have a point. It is the spoken language which is the cement of a community since we all speak before we can read and write, and those who are illiterate (a serious problem affecting native speakers in Europe) nevertheless have oral skills. On the other hand, some suggest that communication technologies are a good way to build new forms of learning communities, particularly for lifelong and distance learners. Of course, and we just need to consider how education is brought to children in the Australian outback (originally via radio) to see that technology can help reduce the isolation of people in remote parts of a country (or those who are housebound for whatever reasons) to see that it is positive. The difference between the Australian outback and the borderless university, however, is that in the first case the learners are anchored in a language and culture, they are part of it, whereas in the second case the learner is anchored in one but functions, virtually speaking, in another.

In other words, if we are not careful these new learning communities will exist in a virtual world. In addition, each community will develop its own linguistic rules, its own culture, initially superimposed on existing language and culture but possibly, in the very long term, in place of them[31]. The problem is that ICT, if used alone, does little to enhance understanding between existing peoples and cultures, one of the aims of borderless education.

All of these comments are, of course, valid for all subjects but are perhaps exacerbated in the acquisition of plurilingual and pluricultural competences. Knowledge of a language and culture are not only manifested verbally or in writing. They may exist implicitly, through shared beliefs and values that are 'known' by the native speaker because they have been acquired through natural exposure. ICT therefore most certainly has a place, but not as an imitation of or replacement for the classroom experience, or personal experience of a different language and culture. In the same way that language labs, which were originally seen as *the* way to teach languages, were then rethought and used as one resource among others, ICT must be understood as an incredible and valuable tool, but nothing more than that. Communities, be they national, professional, learning, are places of social exchange, stimulation of interest, interaction between members. In a truly borderless university, nothing can replace student exchanges and physical mobility. And it is during such exchanges that the pluricultural and plurilingual proficiency of the student will really be put to the test, the litmus test of authentic use.

5. Evaluation

In the preceding section I have assumed that language is taught as part of the university curriculum, whether as a subject in its own right, to help students use ICT in a foreign language or to prepare them for study abroad. In all cases proficiency will be assessed and it is here that policy makers and practitioners will have to ask themselves the following

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during the tutorial, for example, or sensing body language) is no longer possible since the participants are not physically present. The second is that discussion often continues outside the tutorial room and is off-line. The third is that the role of the affect (*l'affectif*), which should not be underestimated in the learning process, is mediated by a machine, and physical contact, for example, (or absence thereof) is not possible. Lastly, the tutorial is only part of the culture and out-of-class activities, relations with the local population, cannot be transmitted or experienced this way. Metaphorically speaking, it is as artificial as a 'French week' in a Vienna store, where Austrian people can buy pastis, snails and frogs' legs. Drinking pastis and eating snails and frogs' legs in Vienna is not the same thing as doing so (how many French people do it, anyway?) in France with discussion, exchange of conversation, etc.

[31] Technology is one of the forces that leads to language change, as the phenomenon of text messaging clearly shows. However, language change is natural, it is inevitable, it is not always something to worry about.

questions. Who will do the evaluation, what is its purpose and who will use the result? In the first two cases the evaluation is usually defined as part of general university policy concerning standards at different stages of a degree, already a complex task[32]. But when the evaluation is also used outside the university, as it often is, as an indication of language ability by a prospective employer or a foreign university, it can be totally misleading (cf footnote 26).

The question policy makers have to address is therefore how to reconcile different situations, different needs, different expectations. A university grade as it now stands may be a good classical indication of achievement but there is no necessary correspondence between achievement in learning and proficiency in use. In addition, it is extremely difficult to convert one into the other, since the rationale behind them is not the same. What we need to think about, then, is whether or not university is the best place for language proficiency to be assessed, even if it is a good place for proficiency to be developed. Or rather, we need to think about what would be the most efficient way of providing reliable language testing schemes (and who should be responsible for accreditation of the schemes) so that the system would be cost-effective, not divert too much time and effort away from language teaching and into evaluation, would be something that can be used and recognised outside, and also defend the interests of those countries whose languages are less widely used and less taught. Who therefore would be responsible for devising the tests and who would be responsible for administering them?

When the Magna Charta of Universities was signed in Bologna in 1988, one of the principles enshrined in the Charta was and is the autonomy and independence of universities. But what do we understand by autonomy? Surely it does not mean that each university necessarily has to do things alone, thus perhaps replicating what has been done elsewhere. Rather than reinvent the wheel, universities can and already do cooperate and share information in many areas. In the context that interests us here, evaluation of language proficiency, there are two possible models of autonomy:

1. Each country is responsible for evaluation and accreditation for its *own* language, e.g. France and/or Belgium is responsible for French, Great Britain and/or Ireland for English, Germany and/ or Austria for German, Spain for Spanish, etc.
2. Each country responsible for *all* languages.

[32] The first thing to realise when discussing evaluation is that there are two kinds, formative and summative. The former is a continuous monitoring of progress, the latter a periodic measurement or assessment. Whereas the first is positive and looks at what the learner is now able to do, what skills or competences he or she has acquired (this is the approach underpinning the European Language Portfolio), the second is negative and focuses on the errors. The first is a relative assessment (with respect to what the student could do before), the second an absolute assessment (with reference to a predefined standard). This distinction is crucial because it highlights a major problem, that of the place of languages in a university curriculum and the ambiguity of the evaluation.
To compound the problem, if the language class is an integral part of the curriculum (language degrees are excluded from this discussion, of course), there is the perennial dilemma of deciding how to weight the effort the student has made and the level of achievement or proficiency the student has reached. If a student has a low mark and this means failing a degree, two questions arise. Should a student fail an economics degree or a degree in architecture, say, just because he or she is not good at languages? Or should the student be given a good mark to get him or her through the year, thus making a mockery out of the grade? Added to this is the question of classes organised according to level. A beginner who has worked well and achieved the level expected of the class deserves a good mark, but this is a reflection of achievement, not of proficiency. It is difficult and unfair to compare a 14/20 for a hardworking beginner with a 14/20 for a hardworking advanced student, at least in terms of performance.

In both models there would be Europe-wide standards and local enforcement, i.e. the evaluation would follow along the lines of the Common European Framework and, of course, the students would take the tests where they are and not in the country whose language they are being tested in (unless they happen to be there). But the two models do not offer the same advantages, as we shall see.

Whatever the system, it costs money. An enormous number of test subjects in all their forms have to be devised and provided at very regular intervals, candidates have to be registered, the tests have to be administered and marked, the results have to be sent to the candidates, etc. Although both of the models would be able to meet the challenge, I would argue that the first of the two would be better, for a number of reasons. The first is that one team (or group of teams) in just one or two countries where the language is spoken would be responsible for devising tests for all the other countries[33]. Whether the test is taken by 1,000, 10,000 or 100,000 candidates, the actual designing and preparation of the tests is the same. As for implementation, it would be done locally, and one could imagine that the number of people required would be proportional, very broadly speaking, to the size of the population, allowing of course for the fact that some languages are more popular than others. The second advantage is that the tests would be devised entirely with respect to the language being tested and thus remove the linguistic and cultural bias that risks being introduced by non-native speakers working from another country. The third advantage is that if each country is responsible for its own language, it can defend that language by the very fact that evaluation and accreditation exist. Given the financial and material constraints that we have to work with, it would be very unrealistic to think that, if the second model were chosen, each country would provide testing in all languages. Finally, it would mean that universities can use their resources for language teaching proper, either to prepare specifically for such tests or as part of their own curricula, in line with their educational traditions and needs. Thus the principle of autonomy would be respected (see recommendation 11).

However, given both the vast sums of money already spent on devising local (national) schemes of accreditation for foreign languages (as opposed to local schemes for one's own language) and the principle of autonomy, it would be incorrect to say that there is no place for the first group. But there is a caveat, which is that of recognition outside. Multiplication of accreditation schemes for each language leads to a lack of transparency and credibility, a point raised by several of my informants[34]. This should be taken on board when defining language policy, not only in the borderless university but also in the world beyond.

As I said in the foreword of this report, my personal position is that language diversity is the only way forward and this runs as a leitmotiv throughout. Language, culture and society are intimately connected, and it is their variety that enables us individually and collectively to move forward. A borderless university based on monolingualism (poorly mastered, at that) would impoverish communication. When, in addition, communication is machine mediated through the use of ICT, we lose some of our humanity. Whatever the cost of maintaining language diversity (perhaps alongside a *lingua franca*) and direct human contact, it will still be less than the price we would otherwise have to pay.

[33] Such tests already exist, cf appendix E.

[34] And also mentioned in *the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, where the Dutch report fears that too many kinds of widely available certificates in Europe would inevitably lead to a counterproductive process of credential inflation.

6. Recommendations

For ease of reading, the recommendations below have been grouped into different categories and do not necessarily follow the logic and structure of the report. Some of them overlap, some can only be looked at from a long-term perspective, others can be implemented very quickly and indeed have already been implemented in certain countries or universities. They are here to serve as a basis for discussion, not as a list of things that must be done without question.

General principles

1. The more languages a person learns, the more each language can fertilise the others. In the name of short-term efficiency many promote the study of English, to the detriment of language diversity,. A way to reconcile the two would be to offer ***English <u>and</u> a wide choice of a second language, to similar levels***.

2. ***Investment needs to be made in two major areas: teachers and a solid ICT infrastructure that is cheap for the user and easily accessible***. In a borderless university more teachers are needed rather than fewer, to help students use ICT intelligently and wisely whatever the language and to prepare the students to work in foreign languages, whether at home or abroad.

What kind of language should be taught

3. ***The general approach to language teaching should be that of plurilingualism***. This means that the four skills (oral and written comprehension and oral and written expression) do not necessarily have to be of the same standard and that a student may well have highly developed passive skills in one language, reasonably developed active and passive skills in a second and survival level in a third. As and when the need arises, the relevant skill can be developed.

4. ***Greater focus on LSP (Languages for Special Purposes)***. Students who have done badly at languages at school don't want to find themselves doing the same thing over and over again and failing over and over again. Learning language as a means to understand and work in their field of study is more motivating and more efficient than learning language in the abstract. When the incorrect use of lexis or grammar not only makes communication difficult or impossible but, even worse, gives a totally different (or wrong) message, the student will make the necessary effort. In other words, at university level the foreign language should be seen as a tool to do other things rather than just as something to be studied for itself. (Of course, a student specialising in languages and/or training for a career as a translator or interpreter will systematically combine the two).

5. In order to develop and promote plurilingual and pluricultural competence, ***more combined degrees involving two or more countries should be introduced***, along the lines, for example, of the combined degrees in law offered by the Université Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne) and different partners, depending on the option. An equal number of students from Paris I and the partner university (King's College, London; Cologne; Complutense, Madrid, etc.) spend the first two years together in the partner university, the last two years in Paris. They graduate with two law degrees, one from each country, have access to the Bar exams of the two, and have attained excellent levels of linguistic and cultural proficiency.

Student mobility

6. ***An effort should be made to promote greater awareness among faculty and administrative staff of the presence and specific needs of foreign students and the contribution they make to university life***. This involves, among other things, rethinking assessment and grading criteria to allow for language difficulties and cultural differences, problems of method (at least at the beginning), gaps in background knowledge that is taken for granted for students who have only studied in the host university (country). It is also an opportunity to relativise the cultural values underpinning our society and to understand that there is not necessarily just one way of looking at things.

7. When a student arrives in the host country, much more attention should be paid to the student's immediate needs. ***Induction courses of some kind would be useful*** (and more efficient and more economical than doing the same in the original countries). They must be practical and could include the following:
   - intensive language training and support for those who need it, in the field of study
   - training in specific techniques such as note-taking in the foreign language
   - a short course in method, e.g. how to write a dissertation in law, how to present a scientific experiment, how to give an oral paper. Although local students may also have problems of method, general method classes for all students (local and foreign) is not the solution, since foreign students have specific difficulties that need to be addressed.
   - a detailed explanation of course requirements, methods of assessment, the university system of which this particular degree course is a part
   - specific help, preferably from volunteer students from the host country, in finding accommodation, carrying out the various formalities (opening a bank account, registering with a doctor, filling out different university forms, etc.)

8. ***In terms of housing***, although student halls of residence are an excellent way of bringing people together, ***it would be better to have as broad a mix as possible of 'native' and foreign students rather than have specific halls for foreigners***. If possible, the accommodation office of a university should pay particular attention to students from abroad and include flat sharing and bedsits with the local population among the offers.

9. ***Erasmus students (and other foreign students) should be part of mainstream university life, rather than follow courses designed specifically for them, with little or no contact with local students***. In terms of language, this results in non-native speakers only communicating among themselves, thus reinforcing mistakes (some of which may be serious) and cutting them off from the general population. Even if they are registered in general classes, they are not always treated the same way and can find themselves excluded. Culturally speaking, the result is often very enriching but more in terms of tourism than in terms of getting to know the country one has chosen to study in and the people who live there. However laudable this may be, it is not perhaps the main aim of student mobility.

10. With the exception of universities in countries whose languages are less widely used and less taught (Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, for instance), ***it would be better to offer degree courses to foreigners in the language of the country rather than in English,*** as seems to be a worrying trend today. This does not mean there should be no visiting

professors (whose only medium of expression is English) and that no course should ever be given in a language other than that of the country, but this is true for classes for all students and not just foreign ones.

Evaluation

11. Although the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages provides a comprehensive, transparent, coherent and flexible system to refer to in terms of teaching, learning and assessment objectives and accreditation, and although it is right to enable each country to develop and introduce such teaching and assessment schemes for different languages (including its own), this is not necessarily the best or most efficient way of defending languages, and in particular lesser used and less taught ones. Currently, many resources are devoted to the setting up of assessment and accreditation, to the detriment of actual teaching and learning. ***Would it not be more efficient if each country were to develop and expand its own scheme(s) for its own language (DELF and DALF in France, for example) and train teachers and testers in other countries***.

Conclusion

The borderless university is but one facet of an open, tolerant and peaceful society and student mobility is only one part of the picture. Plurilingual and pluricultural competence should be encouraged not only for immediate or utilitarian purposes (academic, economic, business, etc) but also with a view to personal development and enrichment. I hope this report is a useful contribution to the debate.

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Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues, who have shared with me their successes and failures in the teaching of languages to students preparing degrees in non-language subjects.

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APPENDIXES

A. Questionnaire sent out to some of my former students. It has no scientific value but served as a useful indicator and is a reflection of actual experience. Initially it was intended for foreign students in France but I then asked French students with similar experience abroad to adapt it appropriately. French students studied in Britain, Canada, Ireland or the USA or followed courses abroad where English was the medium of communication. Foreign students studying in France are from the following countries: Argentina, Austria, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland. page 24

B. Theoretical aspects of language, language teaching, culture and evaluation. page 26

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Appendix A
Questionnaire - Request for information
European Universities – New Age: New Responsibilities

General context

This is an international conference focussing on the future of European universities as part of a continuing three-stage research inquiry undertaken by the Europaeum, looking at how European universities can lead the current Knowledge Revolution.

The focus will be on the new roles that leading European universities should now play within their society and community, and in relation to their key stakeholders. The aim will be to develop the theme of how universities today can discharge their responsibilities to government, society, employers, and individuals, in terms of providing intellectual leadership; producing critical and independent research and policy advice on key issues of the age, (for example, cohesion, competitiveness, tolerance, globalisation, sustainability, employment, development and pluralism), and combating social exclusion by reaching out to those most disadvantaged by the learning revolution. Of course, we see our Europaeum network as an example of how European universities should work together to strengthen themselves, and their relation to society in general, in order to grasp the full benefits of new technology and the Internet.

Language

I have been asked to prepare a policy report specifically for how language diversity can be sustained with an increasingly borderless – and largely Anglophile – approach to collaborative higher education learning. I have to consider whether it is possible to locate a place for other languages (including marginal and minor languages) in the new learning age, and if so where and how? The report needs to include specific recommendations for future reforms and improvements.

My specific request

In the light of your personal experience and also any other knowledge or information you may have concerning foreign language acquisition, could you answer the following questions.

1. What is the language policy in your country, both at primary/secondary school level and at university? Could you please state whether you are giving general policy information or your own experience (and whether your experience is typical of the general policy of your country or specific to you)?

- Primary school
  a) Do children study one or more foreign languages?
  b) If so, which one(s), who chooses, how many hours per week?
  c) Additional information

- Secondary school
  a) Do pupils study one or more foreign languages?
  b) If so, which one(s), who chooses, how many hours per week?
  c) Additional information

- University
  a) Do students study one or more foreign languages?
  b) Do students continue to study languages they have already studied, can they begin a new one (new ones), or both?
  c) If so, which one(s), who chooses, how many hours per week?
  d) Is your answer specific to law students or is it the same for other disciplines?
  e) What do you study:
    General language
    Language for law/other disciplines
    Law/other disciplines in the foreign language
    Other
  f) Is the focus on written comprehension and writing skills, oral comprehension and expression or a combination?

2. How useful is the teaching and how operational were you once you needed to use the language(s) in a non-teaching and non-work environment (travel, leisure activities)?

3. How useful is it and how operational were you once you needed to use the language(s) in a teaching environment (university, etc.)?

   a) As far as French is concerned, what kinds of language difficulties, if any, did you encounter once you arrived in France?
      In general terms(survival or functional French to cope with settling into the country)
      French for law/other disciplines
      Law/other disciplines in French
      Other

   b) Were these difficulties 'purely' linguistic, cultural, methodological or a combination?

4. How useful is it and how operational were you once you needed to use the language(s) in a work environment (summer or holiday job, traineeship or internship, fixed or open contract)?

5. If appropriate, please give the same information for English and for any other foreign languages you speak and use in similar contexts (questions 2 to 4).

6. Please give your own personal and family background of foreign languages, where relevant and where this influences your language skills with respect to those of the average student of your country.

7. In the light of your university experience in France (and elsewhere), what recommendations would you make to improve the language teaching you received in your country before studying abroad, and in the host university once you arrived.

8. Any other suggestions or comments you feel may be useful.

Appendix B
Theoretical aspects of language, language teaching, culture and evaluation

For a detailed discussion, see *Aspects of Language Teaching*, Widdowson, OUP, 1990.

The two approaches, semantic and pragmatic, are not to be seen as conflicting concepts but as complementary ones.

Semantic approach	**Pragmatic approach**
The semantic approach to language description provides an account of how the language contains within itself, within its grammar and lexis, the essential resources for meaning.	The pragmatic approach to language description focuses on how these resources have to be exploited for language users to achieve meaning.
Virtual meaning, contained within the language.	Actual meaning, as used in context.
Sentence meaning. A sentence has one invariant meaning (or if it has more than one, as in the case of structural or lexical ambiguity, its meanings can be exactly specified.	Utterance meaning. Utterances are protean in character. Their meanings change to suit the circumstances in which they are used, but always with respect to a conventional meaning of linguistic signs.
Symbolic meaning inheres in the signs themselves.	Indexical meaning must be achieved by the language user associating symbols with some relevant aspect of the world outside language, in the situation or in the mind.

Understanding what people mean by what they say is not the same as understanding the linguistic expressions they use in saying it, e.g. *The letter is in the drawer*. As a sentence this poses no problem for understanding. But as a *use* of language, as an utterance, presented in isolation it is incomprehensible. To attach a meaning to this linguistic expression we need to invoke some pre-existing knowledge or other, or some co-existing feature of the situation of utterance. Here, the addressee knows what letter is being referred to, knows what drawer it is. Every linguistic expression contains the potential for a multiplicity of meanings and which one is realised on a particular occasion is determined by non-linguistic factors of context[35].

Types of conceptualisation are codified as linguistic knowledge (e.g. a letter as a lexical item, a general conceptual type, a codified abstraction). They are more or less stable, established by convention.	*Tokens* are particular and actualised instances (e.g. the letter I'm referring to in the above example). They are conditioned by context.
Systemic knowledge (internalisation of the symbolic function of signs).	*Schematic* knowledge (i. conceptual content or topic area; and ii. mode of communication or background knowledge about the formal, rhetorical, organisational structures of different kinds of texts).

[35] Widdowson: 99.

Meaning is intrinsic to language itself, signalled through the *medium* of language. The medium concept defines meaning as a function of the linguistic sign as formal symbol. Meaning is a matter of encoding and decoding messages by reference to linguistic knowledge. The medium account of meaning involves the semantics of sentence grammar.

Meaning is a pragmatic matter of negotiating an indexical relationship between linguistic signs and features of the context. Meaning is achieved by the pragmatic *mediation* of language users. The mediation account of meaning involves the pragmatics of language use.

In natural first language acquisition, systemic and schematic knowledge develop concurrently and are mutually supportive. In second language acquisition the process is different, since learners have already been socialised into the schematic knowledge associated with their mother tongue. When they confront uses of the foreign language they are learning, they naturally tend to interpret them in reference to this established association. The relative importance attached by teachers to the two kinds of knowledge will have an impact on the methods of teaching and evaluation.

Meaning is transmitted by the semantic medium of language. The emphasis is on *initiation*, through the authority of teaching. The teacher is *authoritarian*.

Meaning is achieved by the pragmatic mediation of the language user. The emphasis is on *initiative* and the autonomy of learning. The teacher is *authoritative*.

Competence orientation: teaching language *for* communication as an end. It is a matter of knowing (acquiring knowledge).

Communicative orientation: teaching language *as* communication as a means. It is a matter of doing something with that knowledge.

Structural means of teaching: learning activities are a means to the internalisation of knowledge. The doing is subservient to knowing. Exams traditionally test knowledge of the subject itself as defined by language teachers and are based on the norm of what has been taught.

Communicative ends of learning: learning activities are ends achieved by the use of knowledge. The knowing is subservient to doing. Exams test what learners have learned to do by means of the subject and are based on the criterion of what needs to be learnt.

The medium approach sets a high premium on correctness. Learner errors are seen as failures to internalise the devices necessary for the proper formulation of meaning. Errors are *defective sentences*. Non-conformity is negatively evaluated as error.

The mediation approach sees the non-conformist features of learner behaviour as positive signs of successful learning since the learner has used available linguistic resources to mediate meaning. Errors are *effective utterances*. Non-conformity is positively evaluated as the achievement of an interim interlanguage.

Appendix C
Non-academic exposure to foreign languages

Two examples could be given of the impact of non-academic exposure to foreign languages, but it must be borne in mind that they concern Denmark and the Netherlands, whose languages are not widely spoken outside the country, thus increasing people's motivation to learn other languages and the need for the government to encourage and promote such language acquisition. According to one of my Danish informants, who teaches French in Danish schools and Danish to immigrants, English is considered by human resource managers today in Denmark to be a basic requirement and not something which distinguishes the exceptional applicant from the others. Whereas in the past employers would have to send certain employees, especially those straight out of school, to evening classes to brush up their English, standards have improved so much that it is no longer necessary to do so and the classes were abolished ten or so years ago. The reason given by my informant is that all foreign films are shown on television in the original (many are American or British films). That, coupled with the fact that more and more people use computers and the Internet, most often in English, provides massive exposure to English outside the school system. Within the system itself, language teaching is highly developed, and children start English between the ages of seven and eleven, depending on the schools. A bill to make English compulsory for all school children from the age of nine is being considered. The advantages are clear: not only would an obviously 'useful' or 'essential' language like English continue to be taught (exposure through television or computers is not enough) but it would also mean that a second language could be introduced at the age of eleven rather than later, as is currently the case. It would thus encourage and sustain language diversity, a goal that is shared by many.

My Dutch informant, who has just completed a postgraduate degree in law in Paris, made the following comment: "Out of school we can see a very large influence of television. Almost all programs are subtitled in Dutch (i.e. not dubbed), except for some Walt Disney cartoons in the cinemas. Furthermore almost everyone has cable, so one can receive BBC as well as all the German channels (less French ones). So the ear for foreign languages (i.e. English and German) is logically developed by the hobby of most youngsters (as it was for me), by watching TV."

Appendix D
Language skills

The most difficult skill to acquire is oral comprehension, yet it is the most essential one, in the case of student mobility or video-conference tutorials. Being unable to understand what is being said is a source of anxiety and makes the person feel very insecure. They cannot control the situation, they are dominated by the other, who sets the pace. Oral production, on the other hand, gives the learner a measure of control since he or she can decide what to talk about (though it is necessary to understand the other's reply). In simplistic terms, once a number of stock phrases and useful expressions have been learned, they can be brought out as and when required, which is not the case for oral comprehension, since it impossible to predict what the other will say. This has been verified by the students who answered the questionnaire and who were, of course, far more competent than suggested here. Nevertheless, one of the main difficulties many of them mentioned was that of understanding what was being said, at least at the beginning. Other students and the general population were the most difficult to understand, whereas professors, probably because they spoke more clearly in a teaching context, were easier. Since oral comprehension required great efforts of concentration, many of the students initially found it difficult to take notes, as it was impossible to "understand, remember, write down and listen to the next bit" all at the same time. All of this would suggest that, contrary to popular belief, oral comprehension and expression should not be taught strictly in parallel, the first being far more important than the second.

Turning now to the written skills, written comprehension too is more socially useful than written expression. We are surrounded by the written word but do not systematically have to react in writing. Unlike oral comprehension, written comprehension is easier to master and learners can quite quickly become operational. To summarise, learner autonomy is closely related to recognition skills which will provide the building bricks for recall. It is therefore essential for language teachers in general to focus on these recognition or receptive skills, without which the learner is totally unable to function. Production skills are, of course, important but the necessary degree of competence will depend on the area of study of the student in the borderless university. In other words, different skills are needed at different times and for different reasons and should be developed accordingly. Moreover, with the exception of the rare truly bilingual or multilingual individual, plurilingual and pluricultural competence is generally uneven in one or more ways:

- Learners generally attain greater proficiency in one language than in the others;
- The profile of competences in one language is different from that in others (for example, excellent speaking competence in two languages, but good writing competence in only one of them);
- the pluricultural profile differs 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)[36].

[36] Common European Framework, section 6.1.3.1.

Appendix E
About ALTE
Association of Language Testers in Europe

ALTE - the Association of Language Testers in Europe - comprises language institutions which develop examinations designed to test ability in the mother tongue of their own country or region. Founded in 1989 by the Universities of Cambridge and Salamanca, ALTE has grown from eight to 18 members representing 15 European languages.

ALTE members which have collaborated on the Computer Test:

Alliance Française
Alliance Française is a state-approved, non-profit making organisation, founded in 1883. It is dedicated to the teaching and dissemination of French language and culture, and has over 1300 centres serving 380,000 students in 133 countries. All over the world the Alliance offers a variety of cultural activities and courses at all levels for people of all ages and occupations. It also offers seven different diplomas in language, civilisation, literature, business French and commercial translation, all set and marked in Paris.

The Goethe-Institut
The Goethe-Institut is a non-profit-making, publicly funded organisation based in Munich. It was founded in 1951 to promote a wider knowledge of the German language abroad and to foster cultural co-operation with other countries. A world-wide organisation, it now has over 140 centres in 76 countries and helps over 108,000 students. The Goethe-Institut plays an important role in providing access to German language and culture all over the world and offers a range of German language examinations, ranging from 'threshold' (basic) level to very advanced, and leading to internationally recognised qualifications in German.

Universidad de Salamanca
Founded in 1218, the Universidad de Salamanca has a strong international scientific and intellectual reputation, due in part to its promotion of Spanish language and culture, and its teaching and research activities in the field of Spanish as a Foreign Language. The University is responsible for developing, setting, marking and evaluating the official Diplomas in Spanish as a Foreign Language which are issued and certified by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate - UCLES - is one of the world's largest and best known educational and assessment agencies. It develops formal examination syllabuses across a broad range of academic and vocational subject areas which are used around the world as part of national education programmes. UCLES is a part of the University of Cambridge.

Current ALTE members, and the languages they represent
Generalitat de Catalunya (Direcció General de Política Lingüística) - Catalan
Danish Language Testing Consortium - Danish
Instituut voor Toetsontwikkeling (CITO), Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal (CNaVT), Université Catholique de Louvain and Dutch Language Union - Dutch
University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate - English
University of Jyväskylä - Finnish

Alliance Française - French
Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV) and the Goethe-Institut - German
University of Athens - Greek
Institíuid Teangeolaíochta Éireann (ITÉ) - Irish
Università per Stranieri, Perugia - Italian
Centre de Langues Luxembourg (CLL) - Luxembourgish
Norsk Språktest, Universitetet i Bergen - Norwegian
Universidade Lisboa - Portuguese
Instituto Cervantes and Universidad de Salamanca - Spanish
Stockholms Universitet – Swedish

At a meeting in Bergen in 1998 the members of ALTE agreed to admit Associate members from:
Estonia - National Examination and Qualification Centre
Latvia - Republic of Latvia Naturalisation Board
Lithuania - Lithuanian Language Centre
For an up to date list of ALTE members, contact ALTE at www.alte.org

ALTE levels
ALTE - the Association of Language Testers in Europe - was set up in order to promote the trans-European recognition of language certification by encouraging and developing common standards for all stages of the language testing process. The ALTE Framework of Levels for Language Ability was developed in response to ALTE's objectives and has gained currency throughout Europe as the common standard to which all language qualifications should be linked. The Framework also corresponds to the Common European Framework established by the Council of Europe.

ALTE Level 5
Upper advanced level. Fully operational command of the language in most real world situations, e.g. in the workplace can argue a case confidently, justifying and making points persuasively. e.g. Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)

ALTE Level 4
Lower advanced level. Good operational command of the language in a range of real world situations, e.g. can participate effectively in discussions and meetings. e.g. Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)

ALTE Level 3
Upper-intermediate level. Generally effective command of the language in a range of familiar situations, e.g. can make a contribution to meetings on practical matters, but is unlikely to follow a complex argument. e.g. First Certificate in English (FCE)

ALTE Level 2
Lower-intermediate level. Limited but effective command of the language in familiar situations, e.g. can take part in a routine meeting on familiar topics, particularly in a exchange of simple factual information. e.g. Preliminary English Test (PET)

ALTE Level 1
Elementary level. Very limited command of the language in a range of familiar situations, e.g.. can understand and pass on simple messages. e.g. Key English Test (KET)

Can-do statements - The ALTE Can Do Project

ALTE has produced a series of Can Do statements, which describe what language users are actually able to do in a particular language. These statements have been through a thorough validation process, in order to place them correctly on the 5 levels of the ALTE Framework. There are approximately 400 statements, which are divided into three main subject areas: Social & Tourist, Work, Study. Within each subject area there are sets of statements relating to separate skills: Listening & Speaking, Reading, Writing.
Some example statements appear below:

Writing (Work)Reading (Study)Listening/Speaking (Social & Tourist)

Level 5 CAN make full and accurate notes on all routine meetings. CAN make full and effective use of dictionaries for productive and receptive purposes. CAN keep up casual conversations for an extended period of time.
Level 4 CAN draft a set of straightforward instructions. CAN assess appropriacy of source material quickly and reliably. CAN show visitors round and give a detailed description of a place.
Level 3 CAN write a non-routine letter where this is restricted to matters of fact. CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text. CAN ask for advice and understand the answer, provided this is given in everyday language.
Level 2 CAN write a simple routine request to a colleague. CAN assess whether a textbook or article is within the required topic area. CAN go to a counter service shop and ask for most of what (s)he wants.
Level 1 CAN leave a simple message giving information. CAN understand simple visuals of familiar topics. CAN express an opinion about food.

For further information about the project and the statements, please contact:
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What is BULATS?

What is BULATS?
The Business Language Testing Service (BULATS) is a language assessment service specifically for the use of companies and organisations. BULATS is for organisations which need a reliable way of assessing the language ability of groups of employees or trainees. The service is designed to test the language of employees who need to use a foreign language in their work, and for students and employees on language courses or on professional/business courses where foreign language ability is an important element of the course. The service provides:

- relevant, useful and reliable language tests in work contexts
- test administration to suit the client company's individual requirements
- rapid turn around of test results
- information to help the interpretation of test results
- advice to companies on appropriate strategies for language testing,
- assessing language needs (language auditing) and training.

What is BULATS used for?
BULATS is useful in many contexts. Here are some examples:

Evaluating the language skills of staff within a company
A company decides it wants a complete language profile of its staff. BULATS can be used to test some or all employees. The service can also be used at regular intervals to monitor the company language profile
Evaluating the language skills of job applicants
A company is recruiting staff to work in its international sales department. BULATS provides a simple way of testing prospective employees and providing the company with an up-to-date and accurate assessment of language ability.
Placing learners on suitable courses for language training
A business college provides language training courses for its students and needs to place them in courses at the right level. BULATS can be used to place the students in suitable courses.
Screening learners who are unsuitable for the training courses provided
A company wants to concentrate its language training on employees who are already close to the level of language required. BULATS can provide a test to screen off unsuitable candidates and so help make best use of resources available.
Evaluating language training given
The training division of a company needs to assess the quality of language training being provided by an external training organisation. BULATS can be used to test people at the beginning and end of the course to monitor progress.
Recommending suitable standard examinations for learners
An organisation would like to motivate its staff by sponsoring them to take standard examinations which provide a certificate with international currency (such as the Cambridge First Certificate in English). BULATS provides a test to help advise which standard examination would be most suitable.
To provide testing support for language audits
Language audits are being used increasingly - BULATS can provide a valuable language testing tool in carrying out the assessment of a company's language requirements.

Cambridge examinations (accredited by UK Government regulator, 4 February 2002)

The Government's exam regulator has formally accredited the English language examinations provided by UCLES. This is the first time that qualifications in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) have been included in the UK's National Qualifications Framework.

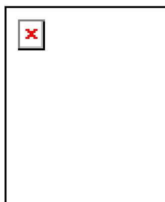
Accreditation means that schools and colleges in the UK will be able to obtain funding for courses leading to these exams, widening access to further and higher education in the UK for learners whose first language is not English. Accreditation was granted in early February by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and its counterparts in Wales and Northern Ireland. It covers the Cambridge Main Suite Examinations (KET, PET, FCE, CAE and CPE) as well as IELTS, the Business English Certificates (BEC) and the new Certificates in English Language Skills. QCA will also be considering the accreditation of teaching qualifications CELTA and DELTA.

According to Chief Executive of UCLES EFL Peter Hargreaves, '*we are moving beyond our traditional emphasis on "EFL" to reflect the full range of contexts in which people learn English, including the growing number of UK residents whose first language is not English. Accreditation by QCA is an important step forwards in our attempts to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse learner population.*' The number of people taking the Cambridge EFL examinations rose to over one million in 2001 and the examinations are recognised by government departments, universities, colleges and employers throughout the world. As well as forming part of the UK National Qualifications Framework, the examinations are closely aligned with the Council of Europe's Framework for Modern Languages.

Qualifications table

National Qualifications Framework Level	Council of Europe Level	General English	Business English Certificates	Certificates in English Language Skills
3	C2 (ALTE Level 5)	CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English)		
2	C1 (ALTE Level 4)	CAE (Certificate in Advanced English)	BEC Higher	CELS Higher
1	B2 (ALTE Level 3)	FCE (First Certificate in English)	BEC Vantage	CELS Vantage
Entry 3	B1 (ALTE Level 2)	PET (Preliminary English Test)	BEC Preliminary	CELS Preliminary
Entry 2	A2 (ALTE Level 1)	KET (Key English Test)		

Further information
Stephen McKenna
Tel: +44 (0)1223 553826, E-mail: mckenna.s@ucles.org.uk



July 2 , 2002 | www.dele.org (as part of www.donquijote.org)

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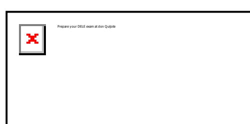

Your DELE course
at don Quijote

The **DELEs** (**Diplomas of Spanish as a Foreign Language**) are the official accreditation of the degree of fluency of the Spanish Language, issued and recognised by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain.
The Instituto Cervantes is the institution in charge of organising the exams, while the University of Salamanca is in charge of the preparation, correction and final evaluation of all the tests.

The DELEs are divided into three levels depending on the language level:

C.I.E: (Certificado Inicial de Español).
Intermediate-mid/threshold level.
This accredits sufficient knowledge of the language to allow control in situations which require an elementary use of the language.

D.B.E.: (Diploma Básico de Español).
High-intermediate level.
This accredits the neccessary knowledge of the language to allow communication in everyday situations which do not require specialized terms.

D.S.E: (Diploma Superior de Español).
Superior level.
This which accredits an advanced knowledge of the language allowing communicaton in all situations requiring advanced use of the language and a knowledge of cultural background.

In these pages we offer you all the information you may need about DELEs and registration possibilities all over the world.

Maintenance and property of this page corresponds to
¿? don Quijote In-Country Spanish language courses

DELF and DALF

Examinations Levels:
Each diploma consists of several units which can be taken at one's own pace: all at the same session or over a number of years. Both diplomas are awarded on successful completion of all units. Units may be taken individually in any order. Please note, however, that the DELF 1 examinations increase in difficulty with each unit.

DELF 1
Basic language skills, particularly the ability to communicate in everyday life situations. A pass in the 4 Units of DELF 1 allows candidates to sit the DELF 2 examinations.

A1 Basic communication skills

A2 Expressing ideas and feelings

A3 Comprehension and writing

A4 Use of language

If their level of French is sufficiently good, candidates may gain exemption from DELF 1 by taking the DELF 2 Access Test (see below).

DELF 2
Intermediate level; a wider knowledge of French is required, including general knowledge of French civilisation and culture and the first elements of specialised French in the field chosen by the candidate.

A5 Culture and Civilisation - Written examination on specialised subject

A6 Oral examination

Candidates may gain exemption from DELF 2 by taking DALF Access Test.

DALF
Advanced level or for those intending to study in France. These examinations may not be attempted unless the candidate has passed DELF 2 or has taken and passed the DALF Access test. The DALF units are not graded in difficulty. The level of French is that required for study in France. The successful DALF student is capable of following courses in a French university in the specialised field chosen and is therefore exempt from language tests for entry to French universities.

B1 Reading and writing

B2 Aural comprehension

B3 Reading and writing specialist French

B4 Oral examination on specialised subject

Access Test to DELF and to DALF
Candidates whose French is of the required standard may take these tests to gain exemption from taking lower levels. The tests in themselves do not form part of the Diploma and no certificates are awarded for success. A pass in an Access Test does not mean that the student is capable of passing the next level, only that he or she has sufficient knowledge of French to prepare for the examination. It should be noted that Access Test passes are valid for two years only. After this period, the candidate would need to sit a further Access Test.

EAQUALS

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1991, **EAQUALS** is a pan-European Association of language training providers aiming to promote and guarantee quality in modern language teaching institutions. To achieve these aims it has established and published a demanding set of criteria for membership. These are laid out in the form of a Code of Conduct, Student, Staff and Information Charters (ISBN 88-900072-0-6), and backed up by a rigorous inspection scheme.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to private or state institutions which are involved in the delivery of quality language training or are, in some other way, committed to the achievement of excellence in this area. There are three types of members (see below for the current list):

Founder Member:

These are the ten institutions and organisations which were jointly responsible for establishing the Association and developing its structure and principles.

Full Member:

To become a Member, language training institutions must prove their full adherence to the Code of Practice and Charters through submitting themselves to the inspection, which is repeated every three years, or more frequently if deemed to be necessary. It follows that only institutions that have been successfully inspected can be Full Members and display the mark.

Associate Member:

This category of membership is for organisations with considerable involvement or interests in language teaching. Associate membership is by invitation only and the essential criterion is a commitment to the achievement of quality. Typically they will be examination boards, publishers, national associations, cultural bodies and so on.

The CODE OF PRACTICE

The basic principles underlying the Code of Practice are:
*fair dealing with clients, students and staff
*veracity of advertising and information provided to the public
*value for money
*respect for the legal constitution of **EAQUALS**

The Student and Staff Charters further define the Code of Practice, of which they are an integral part.

The STUDENT CHARTER

This is a clear undertaking by each member to provide quality services in all areas related to a language course. The main areas covered are :qualifications, experience and professional skills of the teachers; the teaching materials and organisation of the teaching programmes; suitability of the premises; and the provision of detailed, truthful information about the course of studies. The Student Charter is to be displayed in its entirety in each school.

The STAFF CHARTER

This concerns itself with the working conditions, duties and entitlements of both the academic and non-academic staff where not already defined in national law. It requires a school to deal fairly with its staff, in accordance with local conditions, to provide suitable working conditions, and to have and publicise grievance procedures. The Staff Charter is to be displayed in its entirety in each school.

The INFORMATION CHARTER
This guarantees the veracity, comprehensiveness and clarity of the information provided by the school in its brochures, publicity and other information sources.

Useful EAQUALS web links

There are links to the web sites of all EAQUALS members in the lists of full and associate members. Here are some links of general interest for language learning.

The Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe with information on the Common European Framework and European Language Portfolio:
http://culture.coe.int (Education):homepage

Information about the European Language Portfolio can be found on:
http://culture.coe.int/portfolio

The European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, with programmes of the centre and copies of the reports of workshops and studies:
http://www.ecml.at

The site of the British Council in Italy provides information about the new Italian project 2000 and the system of "credito formativo" - EAQUALS schools are recognised for credito formativo
http://www.britishcouncil.it/ita/infoexch/credframe.htm

The site of ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) contains information about European projects in language assessment.
http://www.alte.org

CILT (the Centre for Information for Language Teaching) has lots of details on research and publications on language teaching.
http://www.cilt.org.uk

DIALANG is a project for creating self-assessment and diagnostic testing online. It is supported by the European Union.
http://www.sprachlabor.fu-berlin.de/dialang/

AiSLi is the association of language schools in Italy.
http://www.eaquals.org/aisli/aisli.htm

Pilgrims in Canterbury has a web magazine called "Humanising Language Teaching".
http://www.htlmag.co.uk

Eurydice has just published the study "Foreign Language Teaching in Schools in Europe". The study covers the situation in 29 countries, namely the 15 Member States of the European Union, the three EFTA/EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and 11 pre-accession countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, the Slovak Republic and Cyprus). It focuses mainly on primary education and lower and general upper secondary education.
http://www.eurydice.org/Publication_List/En/FrameSet.htm

IELTS - International English Language Testing System

What are the tests like? Extracts

1. An Introduction to the International English Language Testing System IELTS.
The International English Language Testing System, is designed to assess the language ability of candidates who need to study or work where English is used as the language of communication. It is recognised widely as a language requirement for all courses in further and higher education. Results are issued two weeks after candidates have taken the test. Band scores are recorded on a Test Report Form, showing overall ability as well as performance in listening, reading, writing and speaking.

IELTS is jointly managed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), The British Council and IDP Education Australia: IELTS Australia.

A descriptive statement giving a summary of the English of a candidate classified at each band level is provided below.

Band 9 - Expert User
Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.
Band 8 - Very Good User
Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.
Band 7 - Good User
Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.
Band 6 - Competent User
Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.
Band 5 - Modest User
Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.
Band 4 - Limited User
Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
Band 3 - Extremely Limited User
Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
Band 2 - Intermittent User
No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty in understanding spoken and written English.
Band 1 - Non User
Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
Band 0 - Did not attempt the test
No assessable information provided.

17. Interpretation of Results

Assessment of performance in IELTS does not depend on reaching a fixed pass mark. It depends on how the candidate's ability in English relates to the language demands of courses of study or training. The appropriate level required for a given course of study or training is ultimately something which institutions/departments/colleges must decide in the light of knowledge of their own courses and their experience of overseas students taking them.

The British Council has, however, used its experience of placing overseas students to establish certain guidelines relating to acceptance on courses or length of study required for an acceptable language level.

These are useful guidelines only and relate to an assessment of language ability only. Additional criteria often apply for acceptance on particular courses. Recommendations for hours of language tuition are influenced by a number of affective variables. It has been shown that individuals can take up to 200 hours to improve by one IELTS band. There is also a marked tendency for more rapid rates of progress at lower levels. Receiving institutions are advised to consider both the Overall Band Score and the Bands recorded for each individual module. These module Bands indicate a candidate's particular strengths or weaknesses. Language skills can be matched to particular courses. For example, if a course has a lot of reading and writing, but no lectures, listening comprehension might not be quite as important and a score of, perhaps, 5.5/6 in Listening might be acceptable if the Overall Band Score was 7. However, for a course where there are lots of lectures and spoken instructions a score of 5.5/6 in Listening might be unacceptable even though the Overall Band Score was 7.

Receiving institutions should also consider a candidate's IELTS results in the context of a number of factors: age and motivation educational and cultural background first language and language learning history.

A. BandLinguistically demanding academic courses, e.g. Medicine, Law, Linguistics, Journalism, Library Studies
B. Linguistically less demanding academic courses, e.g. Agriculture, Pure Mathematics, Technology, Computer-based work, Telecommunications
C. Linguistically demanding training courses, e.g. Air Traffic Control, Engineering, Pure Applied Sciences, Industrial Safety
D. Linguistically less demanding training courses, e.g. Animal Husbandry, Catering, Fire Services

9.0-7.5 A. Acceptable; B. Acceptable; C. Acceptable; D. Acceptable
7.0 A. Probably Acceptable; B. Acceptable; C. Acceptable; D. Acceptable
6.5 A. English study needed; B. Probably Acceptable; C. Acceptable; D. Acceptable
6.0 A. English study needed; B. English study needed; C. Probably Acceptable; D. Acceptable
5.5 A. English study needed; B. English study needed; C. English study needed; D. Probably Acceptable

19. Production of IELTS Question Papers

The EFL Division at UCLES has specific responsibility for the production of IELTS question papers. For the majority of UCLES EFL question papers there are main stages in the production process, beginning with the commissioning of material and ending with the printing of question papers: Commissioning; Editing; Pretesting; Analysis and banking of material; Question paper construction. Before IELTS papers are released there is an additional stage: Standards fixing.

Throughout the writing and editing process, carried out simultaneously in Australia, New Zealand and Britain, strict guidelines are followed in order to ensure that the materials conform to the test specifications. Topics or contexts of language use which might introduce a bias against any group of candidates of a particular background (i.e. on the basis of sex, ethnic origin etc.) are avoided. After selection and editing, the items are compiled at UCLES into pretest papers. Pretesting plays a central role as it allows for texts and questions with known measurement characteristics to be banked, so that new versions of question papers can be produced on a regular basis. The pretesting process helps to ensure that all versions conform to the test requirements in terms of content and level of difficulty.

Pretesting is carried out on IELTS preparation courses at selected centres world-wide. Completed pretests are returned to the Pretesting Section at UCLES. The pretests are marked and analysed and those which are found to be suitable are banked. Before the final question papers are selected, the banked material is compiled into Trial Papers. These are either a 30 minute Listening test or a 60 minute Reading test. A procedure known as Standards fixing is then applied in which the Trial Papers are administered to representative IELTS candidates and the results analysed in order to allow accurate Band Score conversion tables to be constructed. Standards fixing is necessary to ensure the equivalence of Listening and Reading versions and the reliability of the measurement of each paper.

The Foreign-Language Certificate System UNIcert®

In agreement with the Federal Conference of Ministers of Culture and Higher Education and the Association of University Rectors, the AKS has resolved that awarding certificates in language learning at university level is a matter of great priority. Certificates of this kind only fulfil their purpose if their validity is not limited by the specific characteristics of any one institution. In 1992, the AKS responded to the recent increasing demands on language teaching dictated by the rapid changes towards European integration and internationalisation in virtually all fields of academic study by introducing UNIcert®, a comprehensive, interinstitutional system of certification.

The UNIcert® system of certification is based upon a framework of reference agreed upon by leading German universities and institutions of higher education. Its objective is to promote equivalent norms in language teaching at university level, contribute towards increased standardisation in foreign language certification in tertiary education, and thereby lead to a system of certification which, as a result of greater transparency, can establish itself more successfully on the job market. Simultaneously it serves as a guarantee for the quality of the language teaching offered by accredited institutions of higher education.

UNIcert® operates under the aegis of the AKS. A framework of reference serves as a general guideline, model curricula and model examination requirements indicate ways in which these can be put into practice. In accordance with the guidelines laid down in the framework, individual institutions interested in awarding UNIcert® certificates design and implement their own curricula and examination regulations which, while adhering to the standards laid down by the central organisation, contain the necessary flexibility to account for the individual specialisations or needs of the particular institution. These regulations are accredited by the AKS UNIcert® committee, which is also responsible for all other matters arising in conjunction with UNIcert®. The UNIcert® committee can be contacted via the AKS office or directly at

Arbeitsstelle UNIcert®
TU Dresden
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Currently more than 35 universities and institutions of higher education in almost all of the German Länder have joined the system. At a European level, too, e.g. in Cercles, there is evidence of a growing interest in the UNIcert® concept.

Further information can be found on the UNIcert® homepage
http://rcswww.urz.tu-dresden.de/~unicert

The current list of all accredited members of UNIcert® can also be found on the UNIcert® homepage under http://rcswww.urz.tu-dresden.de/~unicert/akkrinstdeu.htm

Appendix F
Useful sites

Alliance française		www.alliancefr.org
ALTE	Association of Language Testers in Europe	www.alte.org
BALEAP	British Association of Lecturers of English for Academic Purposes	www.baleap.org.uk
British Council		www.britishcouncil.org
BULATS	Business Language Testing Service	www.bulats.org
Council of Europe	European Language Portfolio Portfolio européen des langues	www.coe.int
DELE	Diplomas de Espa✶ol como Lengua Extranjera	www.dele.org
DELF/DALF	Diplôme d’Etudes en Langue Française Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française	www.ciep.fr/langue/delfdalf
Goethe Institut		www.goethe.de/enindex.htm
IELTS	International English Language Testing System	ielts@ucles.uk.org
Instituto Cervantes		www.cervantes.es www.cervantes.es/internet/gab/foll/par_ing.htm
OCR	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA examinations	www.ocr.org.uk
TOEFL ETS	Test of English as a Foreign Language Educational Testing Service	www.toefl.org www.ets.org
TOEIC TFI (Ottawa)	Test of English for International Communication Test de français international	www.toeic.com
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate	www.ucles.org.uk
UNICERT		rcswww.urz.tu-dresden.de/~unicert/index-english.htm