

1. Introduction

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This Website Handbook presents the outcomes of the CEF Professional project. Before the actual products the Origins of the CEF Professional are explained in Section 2. Section 3 provides a Summary to the Guidelines, including translations of Guidelines in German and French. Section 4 shows how the Profiles were made and how they were experimented. Section 5 gives a complete list of all the Profiles in Technology, Business, Health Care and Law. Section 6 provides the four experimentation reports in the fields of ICT, Mechanical Engineering, Business Administration and Law. Section 7 reports on the Piloting of CEF Professional in training seminars. Section 8 shows how the Guidelines were used for Model Courses. Section 9 reports on the dissemination activities during the project, including articles, conference presentations and references to other publications.

The CEF Professional project is an EU-funded Leonardo da Vinci project. Its aim is to help teachers tailor language and communication (LC) courses for professional purposes such as engineering and nursing. Partners in this two-year project come from Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria, representing higher education, secondary education and language consultancies.

The foundations of the project lie in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) and in needs analyses conducted for language and communication in the workplace. As the CEF, however, mostly concentrates on aspects of general language, there are no linkages to vocationally or professionally oriented language usage. This is the gap that this project aims to close. There is an increasing need for efficient language use at workplaces in Europe. The ability to express oneself professionally in an efficient manner has become increasingly important. Education for this purpose must be focused on workplace communication.

Vocationally Oriented Language Learning and Languages for Specific Purposes

Language for professional purposes is taught in several categories, VOLL (Vocationally Oriented Language Learning), LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) and LCPP (Language and Communication for Professional Purposes).

The term Vocationally Oriented Language Learning, VOLL, was developed for the Council of Europe programme in the 1990s “Languages for Work and Life”. VOLL is not only restricted to languages for special purposes but includes the teaching of foreign languages for communication in the workplace and beyond. Thus it refers to the teaching and learning of a foreign language within an occupational context for the effective performance of an occupation or profession. (See e.g. Fitzpatrick 1997.)

LSP (Languages for Specific Purposes) is an extension of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), which is the origin of LSP, still very much driven by English as target language. ESP is a particular case of the general category of special-purpose language teaching. Firstly, ESP is designed to meet the needs of the learner. ESP is content-related to the themes and topics of particular disciplines, occupations and activities. Thirdly, ESP is centred on the language appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse and semantics. Fourthly, ESP can be said to be in contrast to General English. These are the absolute characteristics of ESP according to Stevens. Additionally, ESP may also be restricted to one or more language skills (reading, speech recognition) and it may be taught to any methodology, though communicative methodology is often felt to be the most appropriate. (Stevens 1988: 1-2)

In this project we broaden the LSP concept to include communication as an interaction process of messages within its social context. The term profession is used in a broader sense where professionals are understood to include service and other occupations as well as typical professions such as law and medicine. LCPP refers to the language and communication competencies needed by a professional to be able to advance professionally in the working environment using a second language (L2). These competencies involve a minimum of intermediate level of language, understanding of the professional environment and knowledge of communication practices of the discourse community. The language user learns the genres and styles of the professional setting and can make use of his/her professional expertise in the setting. An adequate amount of specialist terminology is also needed, although terminology is not the primary contents of LCPP. (Huhta 2007: 33)

In short, this project describes the language and communication of professionals well enough to create purposeful courses for vocational and higher education target groups as well as in-house company training courses.

Needs of the world of work

The roots of the project lie in Finland. It was felt that, in spite of all the previous surveys (e.g. the Prolang study; see Huhta 1999) that have provided information on the needs of the working life as regards to the language and communication, these did not translate properly into the language curricula of the institutes of secondary and higher education. Indeed, the language course and curricula contents are often based on intuitions by language professionals or groups responsible for designing the course contents. Language teachers cannot have experience in all specialist fields nor contacts with all the workplaces involved. Therefore some of the course contents may be based on the impressions on what the needs to be taught without exact information on how language tuition should be organised.

Our Leonardo project CEF Professional was introduced to cater for the needs of the language and communication teachers working in the field of vocational and professional language education. It aims at a process of designing and implementing language courses that better correspond to the language needs of the future professionals in their respective fields. Four fields and seven subfields were selected for the project as they represent major fields of importance across Europe and were found significant for the partner organisations involved in the project. These were technology, business, health care and law and represent both secondary and higher education.

Project activities

The project was divided into six activities:

- 1) Producing seven language **profiles** in the professional fields selected,
- 2) **Experimenting** the profiles in actual organizations,
- 3) Creating **guidelines** on how to translate the findings into made-to-measure courses,
- 4) Designing two **model courses** that take the needs analysis profiles with their current language need information as a starting point,
- 5) **Piloting** in two teacher training seminars and
- 6) **Dissemination** of the expertise through articles and conference presentations.

Contents of the activities

For the project's needs analyses, several professionals working in companies and other organisations in a particular field were interviewed. Language curricula of the institutes providing vocational and professional language and communication studies were studied carefully. These professionals were asked to give information on several aspects of communication. The results of the needs analyses were processed in a special format that we call CEF Professional Profiles. They cover a wide range of contextual information on the communicative situations in the fields studied. Profiles for technology were created in Bulgaria and Finland. The business profiles were made in Finland and Germany. The health care profiles were created in Finland and the law profile in Poland. Five profiles were also experimented in the actual institutions.

As profiles were created all partner organisations contributed to the production of guidelines. This was also done to ensure that both profiles and guidelines reflected common practice across Europe. The aim of the guidelines is to provide a concrete tool for a practitioner to design efficient made-to measure courses to meet the needs of the group. To guarantee a wider coverage, the guidelines have been translated into French and German.

Two model courses were also created in the project, one of them in Warsaw University / Poland, on legal English and the other in Finland on business.

In two countries, Finland and Germany, a training seminar for teachers was organised. In Germany, the target group represented language teachers at vocational schools in secondary education, whereas in Finland both secondary and tertiary education was targeted. A model was developed of how to utilise the whole process of CEF Professional.

All the essential products and outcomes of the CEF Professional appear on this website

Enhancing quality

In order to assure quality, the profiles were evaluated by partner organisations and subsequently improved. Another procedure to improve the quality of our profiles was to test them through experimentation in actual course design and implementation. Using a documented method, each teacher taking part in the experimentation of the profile provided the coordinators with a detailed report on the usability of the profiles in their own course work. Five experimentation reports are to be presented in this publication.

Dissemination

The partner organisations have volunteered to give further information about the CEF Professional and its outcomes. The project has already been presented at numerous national and international conferences during its life-span, as well as in various language education publications. Articles < link to Articles> and conference presentations <link to presentations> materials can be accessed from this website.

It is, however, essential to realise that the scope of the project is not only limited to the four fields of the CEF Professional project. In spite of the importance of the findings as to the LC needs in the four different fields, the most important aspect of this project is the process itself, which is transferable to other fields as well. You can use this efficient tool to design and implement courses. If you are planning on making one yourself you can use

A blank CEF Professional Profile <link to Appendix A>
Interview Questions <Appendix B>.

Impact

The CEF Professional project has made a significant contribution to LSP and VOLL in several ways. The project has coupled language curriculum development more closely with needs of language and communication at the workplace. The project has extended this needs information to the practice of LCPP, language and Communication for Professional Purposes. Knowledge from professionals, consultancies and auditing organisations has proven to be vital for linking the information to the CEF Professional profiles.

The project results show that language course design must be based on real knowledge about workplace communication rather than intuition and guesswork of what might be useful to teach. This project has studied the language and communication contexts of a number of professions in four fields, and has experimented the profile data in teaching. The piloting teachers see that changes need to be made in their course design to meet the needs of the workplace better.

Also, the teachers see that the activities and suggestions presented in language teaching materials do not always meet the practices or priorities of workplace communication. Therefore, further research in workplace needs is crucial. It is up to publishers to study the outcome of the work conducted in CEF Professional and to consider its validity for coursebook design.

The CEF Professional project has also shown that the CEF Professional tool is applicable in several European countries and that the concept of the tool is well transferable over the European arena.

Thirdly, the project has been a learning experience for all the partner organisations and their members. The profile creation process, the guidelines, the model courses and the teacher training seminars are our concrete products. We feel the products are fully applicable to other fields an impression that has been corroborated by teachers in pilot seminars.

Teachers who experimented profiles in their teaching mention that their personal contacts to the working life and to degree programme managers have improved, as more discussion was generated at different stages of the experimentation. Some teachers discussed the profiles with students. As a consequence students' interest and motivation improved as they found themselves studying precisely the elements that would be expected at work. One can conclude that the working-life orientation of our courses has increased through the CEF Professional process.

Profiles contributed best to content design and for identifying the most relevant content and genres. Profiles can also contribute to locating good sources: companies, products, web sources. The profile work can support teachers' professional identity as experts of communication.