

2. The Origins of the CEF Professional Profile Concept Marjatta Huhta

(Parts of this text have previously been published in Huhta 2007.)

CEF Professional can be traced back to the Leonardo da Vinci Project **Prolang** mentioned earlier, where the language and communication needs of the workplace were surveyed in 70 companies in Finland. Interviews were conducted with 70 company HR (Human Resources) representatives, with 200 employees filling in a questionnaire. 20 LCPP language teachers were involved in conducting the interviews. The findings of the surveys indicated that

- the linguistic strengths of employees are in reading, listening and writing
- the challenges call for better oral skills and improved intercultural awareness skills
- personnel should be more plurilingual – uniformity is a problem
- language learning is at best integrated with other working skills such as interaction, problem-solving and research skills integrated to other work procedures
- Language teachers' competencies of teaching cultural awareness, workplace communication and integrated skills are a challenge. (Huhta, M. 1999, pp.153-162)

The idea of the profiles was to look at the use of LC in its sociocultural environment. Based on needs analyses it was understood that professional communication occurs in workplaces as social institutions. The groups of professionals in a workplace construct communicative practices in their collaboration. Social institutions are part of a domain, such as health care or industrial business. These factors - domain, institution and location - set the framework for the context of communication.

The social context of the workplace links communities of practice to crucial sites and critical moments (Candlin 2005b). Crucial sites are locations where the communication takes place. Critical moments are communication events where the professional must interact to perform well on the job.

The linguistic communication depends on the task at hand. The location and the social and organizational circumstances are vital for understanding the verbal and non-verbal language of the communication (Cicourel 1992: 294). Texts – oral or written – are produced at workplaces, which are made up of different discourses, such as telephone calls or speeches. Discourses represent identifiable genres such as emails or oral presentations. Candlin claims that language instructors may know what genres and discourses to teach (Candlin 2005a), but if most of the professional communication is interdiscursive practice the question arises as to what can we teach. Besides, according to Fairclough (1995), discursive practices change over time and are part of the socio-cultural change of society. Are language professionals observing the change – and teaching it? The contents of LCPP are evolving all the time.

These were the reasons why teachers of language for professional purposes wanted to start examining what the current contents of LCPP in certain fields might be.

Phase 1 – Establishing a Link for from Language Education Auditing to CEF

Following the Prolang project, two polytechnics, Central Ostrobothnia Polytechnic (COP) and Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia, conducted an audit on their language education in a project called COP-Stadia (Löfström, E. et al., 2002). In the audit the strengths and weaknesses of language education were analysed in the two organizations and potential strategies for the future developed. One of the important challenges discovered was how to link language learning more tightly into the contents of degree programs – technology, business, health care and culture. As a follow-up to this work the two institutions decided to do more study in the communication needs of companies and other professional communities and at the same time see how the recently published CEF (Common European Framework 2001) could be used to describe LCPP. A study of the CEF followed to see how the findings of needs analyses and results from Prolang, described above, could be merged to describe the language and communication of professional communities.

Around 15 colleagues of Stadia and Central Ostrobothnia Polytechnic convened in a meeting in May 2004 to identify which components in CEF could match the requirements of Prolang and other needs analyses conducted in communities of work. The relevant sections were identified as the following:

Content items selected from CEF to match the needs of the working life by the COP-Stadia project	The Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (2001)
Domains where the learner communicates: public, private, professional	pp. 80– 85
Typical tasks performed in the occupation/profession for gaining results	pp.86 – 90
Strategies Operations of the tasks needed to meet aims (interaction, mediation, listening...)	pp. 91 – 130
Texts/channel Oral or written products linked with specific areas of life (e.g. letter, email, dialogue)	pp. 134 -145; 201 – 202
General competencies	pp. 146 – 181
Communicative language competencies Skills required for receiving and producing messages (linguistic, socio-linguistic and pragmatic scripts/scenarios) individual/pair/group/social skills	p. 33
Vocabulary	pp. 208-
Grammar	pp. 209 – 211
Pronunciation	pp. 211-212
Approach to mistakes and errors	pp. 214 – 215
Assignments	p. 229
Assessment	pp. 242-267

Table 1. Relevant CEF contents for workplace purposes. The COP-Stadia project. Version 1. (Huhta, M. et al., 2006)

The plan was to describe the language and communication competencies required of all the above mentioned parts.

This was actually tried out in autumn 2004. About 15 professional ‘frameworks’ were described in the fields of technology, business, social services and health care. These descriptions proved to be informative and informative knowledge of implicit practices, but overly complicated to provide sufficient value for course design. These first draft versions, however, functioned well as the basis for the next step.

Phase 2 – Developing a Practical Tool for Course Design

In the second step a new project, Artemis, of arts universities and Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia, funded by the Finnish Ministry of Education, was initiated in the language teaching of the field of culture (www.artemisland.fi). One of the aims of the project is to mediate the contents of degree programs in arts and culture to newly recruited teachers. For this purpose, a simplified version had to be developed, one that could avoid the complexity of Version 1 and serve the practical needs of course design. After some discussion version 1 was developed into three parts. Thus, the previous profile type included a section for background information relevant to all languages, a section on general communication objectives, and a section related to a specific language with course design content. The background and communication sections remained the same for the two languages English and Swedish so that teachers could concentrate on drawing up language and contextual information. This description was called European Framework of Reference for Professional Purposes. Its content categories included the four categories of information as presented below (Huhta, M. et al., 2006):

EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES

A. BACKGROUND FACTORS (common to all languages)

- Field
- Education/program
- Specialization/s
- Degree/Qualification
- Language
- Drawn up by
- Date/city/country/ organization
- Methods used for collecting the information (methods, persons, dates)
- Typical occupations/ professions
- Typical employment/employers
- Typical tasks performed in the position/occupation

Additional information provided by

B. LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION (English)

Context information both for work and study

Locations

Collaboration partners: persons, communities, companies, institutions

Communication situations

Texts

Objectives, materials, methods and assessment (English)

Objectives of the study course

Grammar and structures

Oral communication

Written communication

Vocabulary

Materials used

Assignments and methods

Assessment

C. GENERAL COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

General communication competencies

Communication strategies

Communication processes

Linguistic communication skills

Approach to mistakes and errors

Table 2. CEF contents for professional purposes used by COP-Stadia and Artemis projects. Version 2.

The categorisation above, version 2, proved to be much more useful than version 1 for course design purposes. In fact, 12 descriptions were created for the field of culture (in the Artemis project) and an equal number in all to the fields of business, technology, and social services and health care during 2004-2005 (in the context of the COP-Stadia project). The culture-specific frameworks were published on the Artemis website in English, Finnish and Swedish (Eri alojen viitekehyksiä 2004) to facilitate the newly recruited teacher's effort to identify learning contents and find relevant material in the field. The remaining 15 professional frameworks were tested in spring 2005 in teaching LCPP language courses and the results of this experimentation were later published in Finnish (Huhta, M. et al., 2006).

It was found that the descriptions created in the second version of different professional fields had a number of benefits. First, they now proved to be simple enough to provide a quick, yet informative description of the professions and jobs in the field, including crucial communication situations for interaction and texts in L2 (Part A in Table 2). Secondly, the contextual information (Part B in Table 2) provided a wide, yet concrete

listing of a variety of communication situations and texts. This part was seen as an almost endless listing of all kinds of interactions and texts in the field, yet relevant for occupations in the field. For the purpose of curriculum design only a small amount of teaching contents could be selected from the lengthy listing. When designing the CEF Professional Profile in the Leonardo project, the experiences of Phases 1 and 2 were utilized.

Phase 3 –Developing the Framework Model to the CEF Professional Profile

A renewed, more practical structure was decided on for the new professional profile for the CEF Professional project. It was decided that some parts, A (background), B (profession/occupation) and C (context) should be fairly general. The latter section, Parts D (frequent situations), E (demanding situations) and F (snapshot) would zoom in on details so as to allow cases to be written based on the detailed information. The structure of the profile is detailed below:

CEF PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

A. TARGET PROFESSION

- Field
- Education/program
- Specialization/s
- Degree/Qualification
- Language
- Drawn up by
- Date/city/country/ organization
- Methods used for collecting the information (methods, persons, dates)

B. OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION

- Typical occupations/ professions
- Typical employment/employers
- Typical tasks performed in the position/occupation
- To extent the language is needed

C. CONTEXT INFORMATION

- Context information for work and study
 - Locations
 - Collaboration partners: persons, communities, companies, institutions
 - Communication situations
 - Texts

D. THE MOST FREQUENT SITUATIONS

Description including:
Type of situation
Location
Participants in the contact
Length of communication
Objective of contact
Sequence of events
What is essential for succeeding in this communication?

E. THE MOST DEMANDING SITUATIONS

Description including:
Type of situation
Location
Participants in the contact
Length of communication
Objective of contact
Sequence of events
Why is the situation experienced as demanding?

F. SNAPSHOT

Description of work situations in the life/lives of a professional/s. The aim is to bring life to the listing of communication situations. The style of this discourse is a story of 3-4 pages.

Table 3. The questions for the CEF Professional Profile. Version 3.

The CEF Professional Profile has taken the form of a grid, to make it easier to gain an overview of the communication events. As the listing above shows, Parts A and B provide background information, general for all languages. They are practically the same as in the two previous versions. Part C, context information, is a generalized list, but geared towards the requirements of a specific foreign language. This part has also remained the same from the previous version 2. The descriptions of frequent (D) and demanding communication situations (E) were not included in versions 1 or 2, but were already in the Prolang project. Experience showed that they gave rise to short listings or descriptions. The final part, snapshot (F), was added to CEF during the project. In the experimentation all the three last sections, frequent and demanding situations and the snapshot have helped a great deal in creating course activities.

Sources:

A Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. (2001) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Artemis – Language Teaching for Professional Purposes. 2004-2007.
http://www.uiah.fi/virtu/artemis/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6&Itemid=37

Artemis project. 2004. Reference Frameworks for Different Disciplines. Audio-visual Media Production, Performing Arts, Classical Music, Pop/Jazz Music, Arts Management, Radio and TV Studies, Fashion and Clothing, Media Production.
http://www.uiah.fi/virtu/artemis/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=29&Itemid=44 [Accessed Sept 30, 2007]

Candlin, C.N. (2005a) 'Accounting for interdiscursivity: challenges for professional expertise.' Keynote speech at the LSP Conference in Bergamo, Italy 2005. Unpublished.

Candlin, C.N. (2005b) Researching and Teaching for a Living Curriculum: Australia's Critical Contribution to praxis in Language Teaching and Learning. 18.4.2005.
<http://www.immi.gov.au/amep/reports/pubs/papers/candlin.htm>. [Accessed April 4, 2006]

Cicourel, A.V. (1992) The interpretation of communicative contexts: examples of medical encounters. In Duranti A and Goodwin, C. (Eds) *Rethinking context: language as an interactive phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fairclough, N.L. (1995) *Critical discourse analysis: papers in the critical study of language*. London: Longman.

Fitzpatrick, A. (1997) Certification and evaluation in VOLL. Descriptive parameters, organisation and assessment. In G. Eggloff & A. Fitzpatrick (eds) *Language for work and life: The Council of Europe and vocationally oriented language learning*. Council for Cultural Co-operation. Council of Europe Publishing, 66-86.

Huhta, M. (2007) CEF Professional Project - Developing a CEF-based Design Method for Professional Purposes in Schöpfer-Grabe, S. and Vogt K. (eds) *Fremdsprachen in der Berufswelt – Foreign Languages in the World of Work*. Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang. 33-46.

Huhta, M., Johnson, E. Lax, U. and Hantula, S. (eds) (2006). *Työelämän kieli- ja viestintätaito - Kohti ammatillisen kielen täsmäopetusta* (Language and Communication Skills in Language Teaching for Professional Purposes.) Helsinki: Helsingin ammattikorkeakoulu. Series A. Research report 8.

Huhta, M. (1999) *Language/Communication Skills in Business and Industry*. Helsinki: Opetushallitus. Julkaisukaappi/Publications shelf. <http://www.edu.fi/julkaisut/skills42.pdf> [Accessed April 4, 2006]

Stevens, P. ESP After Twenty Years: A re-appraisal in Tickoo, M.L (1988) *ESP: State of the Art*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre. Anthology Series 21. 13 pp.

Swales, J. 1991. Discourse analysis in professional contexts. In W. Grabe at al. (eds) *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 11. Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press. 103-114.