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(editors)

TRANSVERSAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN MODERN TEACHING PRACTICE

A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

PRO UNIVERSITARIA

Transversal Skills Development in Modern Teaching Practice

A Good Practice Guide

A volume published within the project

New Tools for the Integration of Transversal Skills

in Modern Teaching Practice (TRANSMOD),

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Monica Tilea, Oana-Adriana Duță,
Jón Freyr Johanssón, Patrick Murphy
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Foreword

The volume you are now reading is the major outcome of the project *New Tools for the Integration of Transversal Skills in Modern Teaching Practice (TRANSMOD)*, promoted by the University of Craiova (Romania), in partnership with Bifröst University (Iceland) and Nesna University College (Norway), and supported by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (within the framework of the EEA Grants scheme). It has been designed from the very beginning as a good practice guide on the integration of transversal skills in modern teaching practice, as a useful tool for providing a much needed shift of landscape in the educational process.

The first two contributions included in the volume refer to the TRANSMOD projects and its outputs. The other contributions can be suggestively summed up as *Good Practice… in Practice*, and they focus on concrete aspects of the deployment of transversal skills in teaching practice, in subjects such as literature, pedagogy, terminology, interpreting, international business, finance, management, compared linguistics, civilisation, etc.

The guide targets teaching staff irrespective of their field of specialisation or level of instruction, with a view to developing both their own transversal skills, and their capacity of fostering such transversal skills in their students. It is our belief that the genuine mission of responsible teaching staff is to educate the consciousness, capability and knowledge of the students, to make fully informed and reasonable decisions that do not only serve themselves, but also the society we live in and the generations to come.

The editors

Transversal Skills in Modern Teaching Practice

MONICA TILEA *

1. Transversal skills in 21st century education

The term "transversal skills" has lately become more and more frequently used within educational systems in Europe, not only in wide-encompassing approaches, such as educational strategies and policies, but also in specific, task-oriented documents (e.g. school, college and university syllabi, factsheets, reports, etc.). There is a growing awareness of their importance at multiple levels: educational decision makers (ministries/ departments of education, specialised authorities, councils and directorates, the management staff of schools and universities), teaching staff, and students. In the context of such multiple levels, transversal skills fall under the scope of a bi-directional flow; they are included in educational requirements, so that the teaching staff has to ensure their development in students (the top-down direction), but they are also more and more demanded by the students themselves, who are increasingly aware of what competences they need in order to become competitive on the labour market (the bottom-up direction).

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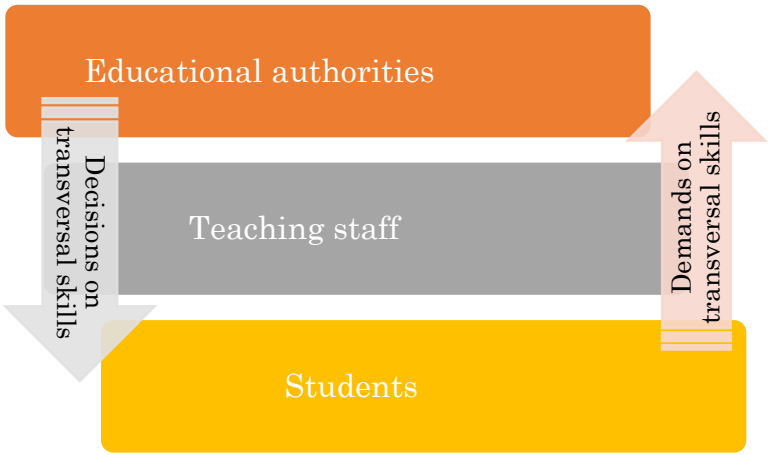
Figure 1: The interaction between stakeholders in the development of transversal skills



1.1 What do we understand by transversal skills?

From a terminological point of view, the phrase "transversal skills" may be considered equivalent to the not so frequently used, but more transparent term "transferable skills". The latter referred to the skills individuals have, which are relevant to jobs and occupations other than the ones they currently have or have recently had. These skills may also have been acquired through non-work or leisure activities or through participation in education or training. More generally, these are skills which have been learned in one context or to master a special situation/problem and can be transferred to another context (Cedefop 2008).

A significant number of scholars have tried to provide an accurate and complete definition for transversal skills. For instance, The Glossary of Education Reform, a service of the Great Schools Partnership, a non-profit school support organisation based in Portland, Maine contains a detailed entry on this issue, of which we have selected some relevant excerpts:

The term 21st century skills refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed […] to be critically important to success in today's world […]. Generally speaking, 21st century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas, and in all educational, career, and civic settings throughout a student's life.

It should be noted that the '21st century skills' concept encompasses a wide-ranging and amorphous body of knowledge and skills that is not easy to define and that has not been officially codified or categorized. While the term is widely used in education, it is not always defined consistently, which can lead to confusion and divergent interpretations. In addition, a number of related terms – including *applied skills*, *cross-curricular skills*, *cross-disciplinary skills*, *interdisciplinary skills*, *transferable skills*, *transversal skills*, *non-cognitive skills*, and *soft skills*, among others – are also widely used in reference to the general forms of knowledge and skill commonly associated with '21st century skills'. […]

While the specific skills deemed to be '21st century skills' may be defined, categorized, and determined differently from person to person, place to place, or school to school the term does reflect a general – if somewhat loose and shifting – consensus. The following list provides a brief illustrative overview of the knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits commonly associated with 21st century skills:

- Critical thinking, problem solving, reasoning, analysis, interpretation, synthesizing information;
- Research skills and practices, interrogative questioning;
- Creativity, artistry, curiosity, imagination, innovation, personal expression;
- Perseverance, self-direction, planning, self-discipline, adaptability, initiative;
- Oral and written communication, public speaking and presenting, listening;
- Leadership, teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, virtual workspaces;
- Information and communication technology (ITC) literacy, media and internet literacy, visual interpretation, data interpretation and analysis, computer programming;
- Civic, ethical, and social-justice literacy;
- Economic and financial literacy, entrepreneurialism;
- Global awareness, multicultural literacy, humanitarianism;

- Scientific literacy and reasoning, the scientific method;
- Environmental and conservation literacy, ecosystems understanding;
- Health and wellness literacy, including nutrition, diet, exercise, and public health and safety (Glossary of Education Reform 2014).

Another extremely helpful insight on this type of skills can be extracted from the Recommendation 2006/962/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning. These are defined as "a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context", being "particularly necessary for personal fulfilment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment" (Europa.EU 2011). Their relevance is further enhanced as follows:

> Key competences are essential in a knowledge society and guarantee more flexibility in the labour force, allowing it to adapt more quickly to constant changes in an increasingly interconnected world. They are also a major factor in innovation, productivity and competitiveness, and they contribute to the motivation and satisfaction of workers and the quality of work.
>
> Key competences should be acquired by:
>
> - young people at the end of their compulsory education and training, equipping them for adult life, particularly for working life, whilst forming a basis for further learning;
> - adults throughout their lives, through a process of developing and updating skills.

One may observe, thus, that such competences lied at the core of EU policies from as early as 2006. The same Recommendation goes on to describe the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes related to eight key competences:

- communication in the mother tongue;
- communication in foreign languages;
- mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
- digital competence;
- learning to learn;

- social and civic competences;
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- cultural awareness and expression (Europa.EU 2011).

The Career Center of the University of Michigan also publishes a detailed list of transferable skills on its website. Their rationale is that sometimes it is difficult for PhD students to identify what skills they have since the academic experience is not necessarily focused on articulating skill sets. Therefore, they propose the following list:

- analysis & problem-solving;
- interpersonal & leadership skills;
- project management and organization;
- research and information management;
- self-management and work habits;
- written and oral communication.

In Romania, the notion of transversal competence has been significantly clarified with the introduction of the National Qualification Framework in Higher Education, which includes a list of professional competences and transversal competences for each qualification. According to the methodology of this framework, transversal skills represent "acquisitions in terms of values and attitudes, transcending a certain field/study programme and expressed through descriptors such as: […] autonomy and responsibility; social interaction; personal and professional development" (National Qualifications Authority of Romania 2008).

Though differing in terminology and classification, the approaches presented above converge towards a unitary concept of transversal skills, perhaps best summed up, in a nutshell, as a range of skills other than profession-specific skills that enhance an individual's employability. The set of transversal skills may somehow differ from one field of activity to another. For example, knowledge of a foreign language is a professional skill, while digital literacy, negotiation abilities and marketing skills are transversal competences for a translator. On the other hand, digital skills are a professional must for a software programmer, while the capacity to

communicate in his/her mother tongue and in a foreign language represent valuable transversal skills for the same person.

Another important aspect of transversal skills is that they hardly fit in traditional educational patterns. While skills such as communication in a foreign language or digital literacy may well be taught and assessed by means of conventional methods, soft skills such as the sense of initiative, leadership and cultural awareness can only be stimulated and developed through specific techniques. More often than not, such techniques demand a high degree of creativity and innovation from the teacher or trainer and, of course, the challenges are much more complex than with traditional teaching. Transversal competences call for new ways of learning and teaching which go beyond conventional subject boundaries, and educational decision makers have become acutely aware of this reality. A thematic report of the European Commission analysing the assessment of key competences through national testing at the EU level shows that skills like mother tongue knowledge, mathematics, science and foreign languages are widely present in national tests, while social and civic competences and sense of initiative and entrepreneurship are barely there or, most frequently, completely absent (European Commission 2012a: 28).

1.2 The significance of transversal skills at multiple stakeholder levels

As outlined in the introduction to this article, references to transversal skills can be found in documents proposed, passed and adopted at multiple levels. It can be said that they are everywhere and everyone speaks of them. The institutions of the European Union have manifested an increasing focus on the necessity to develop such skills and to properly integrate them in training programmes. Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth of 2010-2014, stated that "It is only by equipping children and young people with the necessary skills, *including transversal skills*, that we will ensure that the European Union will have the means to remain competitive and to seize the opportunities of the knowledge economy" (our emphasis) (European Commission 2012b). Tibor Navracsics, the

European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport for 2014-2019, also underlined that it is important to "think soft, not hard" and when asked in an interview what skills are needed by Europe's students, he did not begin with the conventional EU answer: science, technology, engineering and maths – the so-called STEM topics. Instead, he said, *the ability to think like an entrepreneur*, *greater fluency with foreign languages* and *all things digital* are the three must-have skills for students (our emphasis) (Science | Business 2015).

The Communication passed by the European Commission in 2012, titled *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes*, is another strategic document stressing the significance of transversal skills in today's world. Its aim is to draw attention on three required fields of action: delivering the right skills for employment; new ways of teaching and learning; new approaches to funding and partnerships. The first heading of the chapter "Building skills for the 21st century" is suggestively titled *Transversal and basic skills*, while the list of challenges that ought to be addressed in member states begins as follows: "Efforts need to be concentrated on developing transversal skills" (2012c: 3). Other relevant stipulations of this Communication are the following:

- strengthening the provision of transversal skills that increase employability, such as entrepreneurial initiative, digital skills and foreign languages;
- key actions are to ensure that measures are taken to introduce transversal skills across all curricula from early stages of education up to higher education, using innovative and student-centred pedagogical approaches, and to design assessment tools through which levels of competence can be effectively assessed and evaluated;
- all young people should benefit from at least one practical entrepreneurial experience before leaving compulsory education.

Transversal skills are also prominent in the multilingual classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO), a part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The ESCO

classification identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations relevant for the EU labour market and education and training, systematically showing the relationships between the different concepts. ESCO has been developed in an open IT format, is available for use free of charge by everyone and can be accessed via the ESCO portal. Transversal skills are ranged as the first category under Cross-sector skills and competences, and are characterised as follows:

> Transversal skills and competences are relevant to a broad range of occupations and sectors. They are often referred to as *core skills*, *basic skills* or *soft skills*, the cornerstone for the personal development of a person. Transversal skills and competences are the building blocks for the development of the "hard" skills and competences required to succeed on the labour market.
>
> […]
>
> "Collaborate on tasks", "use office software", "negotiating" and "share information" are relevant for many occupations in a broad range of sectors (European Commission 2014).

Last but not least, there is a group working on Transversal Skills among the Education and Training 2020 Working Groups of the European Commission. According to its mandate, the primary focus of this working group is to benefit the member states in their work of furthering policy development on transversal skills through mutual learning and the identification of good practices. The group's activity concentrates on three transversal skills: Entrepreneurship, Digital Skills and Languages, building upon work undertaken in the previous generation of working groups, specifically the three Thematic Working Groups on Entrepreneurship Education, ICT & Education and Languages in Education & Training. The working group aims at achieving practical and tangible outputs addressing four key policy challenges, with the help of dedicated tools:

- mainstreaming delivery and development of transversal skills into education and training, including through supporting European Policy Experimentations;

- training educators to incorporate entrepreneurial skill development into their learning environment, including through the new Entrepreneurship360 tool;
- developing frameworks and tools to operationalise transversal skills in the education, training and youth fields;
- support country level policy and implementation (European Commission 2015).

At an institutional level, transversal skills are publicized and emphasized in the strategies, policies and syllabi of universities with a long-standing tradition of excellence. The Johns Hopkins University Mission Statement is highly relevant to this purpose:

> The Mission of JHU Experiential Education is to help grow students' passion and enjoyment for the outdoors by offering challenging and exciting experiential education courses that encourage and develop leadership, teamwork, environmental stewardship, character development, and lifelong transferable skills.

The University of Wales Trinity Saint-David includes the following heading under its core values:

> Employability and creativity by harnessing the entrepreneurial, research, creative and enterprising skills of our learners, we can offer educational programmes that allow our students to have the best opportunities to gain employment and develop their *transferable skills*. (our emphasis)

The University of Cambridge promotes its degree programme in Linguistics underlining the transferable skills a student may develop alongside with professional skills. According to this university's website, the Cambridge system equips students with the ability to work independently, meet deadlines, be self-directing, prioritize, take a broad and a detailed view, absorb and retain complex information, library and bibliographic research skills, analytic and problem-solving skills, IT skills (e-mail, word-processing and internet use). Another good practice example in this field is the doctoral school of the University of Luxembourg, that provides its doctoral candidates with training courses in transferable skills, dealing with topics such as lecturing and teaching,

time and self-management, career development, presentation skills for scientific conferences, scientific writing-planning and writing quality papers, academic writing boosting readability and effectiveness and proposal writing for young researchers. In addition, as it will be shown in detail in a further contribution to the hereby volume, the mission statement of Bifröst University of Iceland includes multiple references to the importance of developing the students' transversal skills, in order to properly prepare them for the future, as both successful professionals and reliable human beings.

As the primary beneficiary of the educational system's "outputs" (i.e. students), employers are also being more and more eager to involve themselves in the training process, to express their requirements and wishes and to cooperate with universities in order to make sure that the offer on the labour market will meet their desired skills profile. In today's globalised world, employers no longer are exclusively interested in finding job applicants who are perfectly qualified for the task at hand; their employees, irrespective of their field of work, also have to be willing to learn on a permanent basis, to communicate with fellow workers and in at least a foreign language, to use a computer, to negotiate, to responsibly manage their time, to meet their deadlines, etc. A relevant study on this matter was the Competency Barometer, a survey of skills demand among the member companies of Norway's largest employer organisation, the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO). The results were derived from the answers of approximately 5,300 companies, representing different company sizes, sectors, and industries. The findings were analysed and summarised in a working paper published by the research institute NIFU. Overall, it was found that a majority of firms have an unmet demand for skills.

The same survey also mapped demand for transversal skills and attitudes. As much as 63% of the companies surveyed reported that being able to speak Norwegian was of great importance for any new employee, while 42% said the same about the ability to write in Norwegian. ICT skills, numerical competence, and technological understanding were of lesser importance, although these still carried some weight. About half of the companies reported that it was of great, or some, importance for

employees to be able to communicate in a foreign language. Of these, English was the most important, followed by German, Polish, French and Spanish. The abilities to cooperate and to complete tasks were the most important attributes, in terms of hiring new employees, while ethical awareness and creativity were the two properties that were the least emphasised by the firms (Solberg, Rørstad, Børing & Carlsten 2014).

2. The project TRANSMOD

2.1 Rationale and goals

The project TRANSMOD was proposed in 2014 by a consortium including the University of Craiova (Romania), Bifröst University (Iceland) and Nesna University College (Norway) within the context of enhancing and strengthening institutional cooperation at the level of higher education sector between the three countries. Permanent contact, sharing of individual experiences, intercultural and interpersonal communication, team spirit, knowledge transfer and effective cooperation have since underpinned all project tasks.

The project was drawn up with the aim of providing a suitable context for the fruitful professional training and development of Romanian teaching staff in terms of modern teaching methods, by harnessing a wide array of innovative inputs from Icelandic and Norwegian universities. The objectives undertaken by the research team from the very beginning were clear cut and suggestive:

- Developing, fostering and enhancing personal and transversal competences for a better employability;
- Increasing the attractiveness and awareness of HEIs regarding the needs of the job market, citizens and society as a whole;
- Drawing up a good practice guide, as an auxiliary tool to the educational curricula in social sciences and humanities, for the effective integration of transversal skills in the teaching practice of project partners;
- Developing and implementing new working strategies and tools for the promotion of transversal skills in formal education.

Moreover, the rationale of the project has always been to target both direct beneficiaries, i.e. the teaching staff who have been project members; and indirect beneficiaries, i.e. students, who would develop their transversal skills with a view to participating in lifelong learning programmes and bringing a valuable contribution to the community, as well as other teaching staff of the involved higher education institutions. Therefore, the impact of the project was shaped around the transversal skills enhancement core and the beneficiary groups. Teaching staff would acquire useful and valuable training, so that they may be able not only to transfer knowledge, but also coach abilities and competences with direct involvement in the employment field. The project members would act as good practice ambassadors in their corresponding fields of study, propagating their know-how to the entire academic community. Thus, more and more students would be able to benefit from incremental reform.

The ultimate focus of TRANSMOD has been the development of transversal skills in and throughout the educational process. It has been our view that teaching in Romanian universities should go beyond job-specific knowledge transfer, and should include, as a major goal, the enhancement of personal and transversal skills in the student population.

As explained in the first part of this contribution, transversal skills, also named fundamental competences or employability skills, are generic and directly linked to basic knowledge, as well as behavioural, cognitive and organisational skills. In the recent years, this highly significant, yet challenging topic has become the spotlight of many conferences, studies and researches all over the world. Since they are not triggered by a specific vocational context and are not easy to quantify, measure and assess, transversal skills have been frequently overlooked in study curricula and in teacher training programmes in Romania. Therefore, our project aimed at generating a much needed shift of landscape. The participating Romanian teaching staff would be able to develop their capacity of delivering such knowledge, of fostering the acquisition of transversal skills by their students during their study programmes. The teaching staff would be able to effectively and

efficiently use any available educational devices and mechanisms in order to promote a full empowerment of their students' personality, with features such as a problem-solving-oriented mindset, flexibility, team spirit, entrepreneurship, citizenship, IT skills, etc. For instance, in a literature or a translation class, the texts students work on may be selected so as to depict and foster tolerance, civic spirit, volunteering, the capacity to think logically, to analyse and diagnose the nature of an event or the ability to understand and cope with cultural differences, stereotypes and taboos.

The transnational cooperation in the EEA was underpinned by the need of all three partner universities to develop an effective and user-friendly training tool for the proper integration of transversal skills in teaching activities, starting from comparative studies and exchange of good practice. The educational system of Nordic countries is internationally recognized as state-of-the art. For instance, Bifröst University is a strong and responsible Icelandic university that seeks to achieve a competitive edge through flexibility, innovation and quality. Throughout its course offerings and methods of instruction, it aims at developing as a knowledge centre with an emphasis on the interplay between individuals, the economy and society and a convergence point for personal development and social participation where transversal competences such as critical, creative thinking and strong environmental awareness are nurtured. The Nesna University College is the oldest institution of professional education in Nordland County, Northern Norway, as well as a dynamic higher education facility, founded on enduring educational traditions. It was founded as a Teacher Training College in 1918 and ever since it has been primarily engaged in the education of teachers.

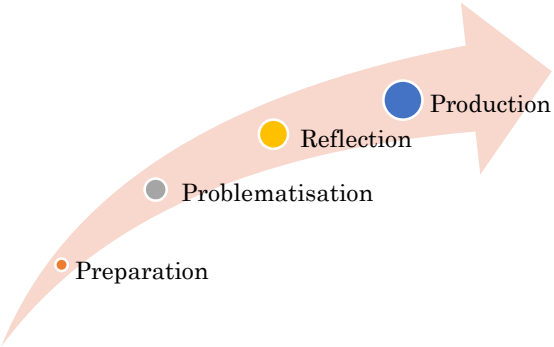
The project was thought to foster good practice exchange and sharing between three universities from different countries, with different cultural background, different experience and different educational systems, each with their specific strengths. Despite these differences, it ought to be remembered that employability requirements are practically the same nowadays: graduates should be able to successfully integrate on the job market and participate in lifelong

learning programmes. The fundamental principle of free workforce circulation between the three countries involved in the project requires a good transversal training of our graduates, with a view to facilitating their integration on the international labour market.

2.2 Development, challenges and results

The activities of the project were structured along four major phases: documentation and mobilities; detection and assessment of actual needs; drawing up a good practice guide; results validation and final design of the guide. The phases corresponded to four activities inherent to any responsible research: preparation, problematisation, reflection and actual production of the final outcome.

Figure 2: Research phases within the TRANSMOD project



The first phase of the project was a preparatory phase, where the members got better acquainted with the topic and with the challenges at stake, and included two activities: documentation; and virtual and actual mobilities. The major purpose was to evaluate the importance of transversal skills within national education systems, select transversal skills that should be developed in teaching modules according to European and national labour market demands, study relevant scientific literature, with a view to both establishing the current status of relevant research, and improving the understanding of the issue, as well as share experiences and require input on how to effectively teach transversal skills to students in humanities. Documentation included the study of

relevant scientific literature in the field of transversal skills (through individual work – each member studied hard copy and online resources that s/he deemed to be relevant for the project topic and joint work – the members had various work meetings and e-mail exchanges, where they shared what they had learned); the study of the actual implementation of transversal skills in the teaching techniques and mechanisms of partner universities (performed on an individual basis, in this stage, as the project team of each partner reviewed the teaching methodologies implemented in their own university, both by researching relevant documents and through discussions with peers); analysis of the curricula and syllabi of the study programmes of project member universities (performed on a mutual basis – the project team of each partner reviewed the relevant academic documents of the other partners, available on their websites and/or provided by e-mail). The same phase also witnessed mobilities of the Romanian team for documentation, good practice exchange with colleagues from academic institutions in Romania on the development of students' transversal skills, and good practice exchange and discussions of the Questionnaire for the subsequent activity with the Icelandic and Norwegian partners.

An inquisitive phase ensued, whereby the teaching staff of the three universities from the relevant fields of study were asked to answer questionnaires aiming at assessing the methods and strategies of integrating professional and transversal skills development in the educational process. The questionnaire included 32 questions, dealing with aspects such as the respondent's academic background, the respondent's background on transversal skills, the general and specific development of transversal skills and the assessment of such skills. The questionnaire was provided in English and Romanian, and was published using Google Forms. Answers to the questionnaire were provided both online and in hard copy (the hard copy answers were subsequently digitalized and input to Google Forms as well). The answers to the questionnaire highlighted both convergences between the Romanian university and the Nordic universities, which will be presented in detail in another contribution to this volume. By and large, the findings of the questionnaire helped to focus the project members' efforts towards the

proposal of new tools for developing transversal skills in modern teaching practice. Moreover, the respondents appreciated that the questionnaire was useful because they found out more about a topic as important as transversal skills. A joint online workshop was organised in the following, where project members evaluated the responses to the questionnaires and established a joint action plan for the organisation of the upcoming seminar, the design of the good practice guide.

The subsequent months of the project were devoted to the elaboration of contributions to the hereby Good Practice Guide. The researchers from the University of Craiova met on a weekly basis and a constant communication was ensured with partners from Bifröst University and Nesna University College. The researchers mutually consulted one another on the content of their own contributions (in order to achieve consistency, to avoid overlapping and, in general, to foster the homogeneity of the resulting volume) and appreciated that they got relevant and useful feedback. A major milestone of this phase was the Joint International Seminar, whose primary aim was to reunite all the members of the project, summarize the intermediary results and obtain the final versions of the written materials. Moreover, two working sessions were organised with students of the University of Craiova, with a two-fold purpose: comparing the answers provided by Romanian students to those of Norwegian students in order to validate a scientific contribution, and finding out the students' opinion on the implementation of transversal skills in their institution.

In terms of outcomes, the learning-oriented results of the project include the teaching staff's awareness and implementation of new tools and strategies, with a view to effectively transferring and training transversal skills to students, as well as the design of the hereby good practice guide, supporting the established educational curricula in social sciences and humanities. It is our belief that the genuine mission of responsible teaching staff is to educate the consciousness, capability and knowledge of their students to make fully informed and reasonable decisions that do not only serve themselves, but also the society we live in and the generations to come.

Moreover, we estimate the direct impact in terms of teacher training to be double-folded. On the one hand, teachers will enhance and improve their own skills by means of experience exchange, focused on the transition from an exclusively theoretical background to hands-on applied training, along with a proper development of personal skills. On the other hand, the hereby volume will be made available to other teaching staff of the partner higher education institutions, who will use it as reference for their own work. This will represent a guarantee for the proper enhancement of teachers' transversal skills.

3. Conclusions

Paraphrasing President Barroso's message to the conference 'Can creativity be measured?' (Villalba 2009), there is a clear need to create a favourable environment to empower people to continuously learn and adapt to change, to develop and enhance their talents, to equip them, from early childhood to maturity, with the proper skills to cope with a wide array of requirements of the contemporary society. As underlined by Cinque (2012:9), according to prestigious scholars, researchers and policy makers, "the best possible response to the economic crisis depends upon increasing levels of training in soft and transversal skills such as team building, problem solving and public speaking". It has, thus, been our purpose to establish, by means of the TRANSMOD project, a solid and structured network of cooperation on the integration of transversal skills in modern teaching practice.

Both categories of direct beneficiaries (the teaching staff participating in the project and the target audience of the project activities, the hereby guide included) will ultimately channel the valuable know-how and input acquired towards the indirect beneficiaries (students), thus ensuring social sustainability and increasing their employability. In the current economic context, characterised by a soaring rate of unemployment, recent graduates are a potentially disadvantaged category, whose needs must be properly and proactively met. A proper training of teachers is a prerequisite for a suitable training of students, because, in the absence of an adequate transfer of transversal skills from the teacher (i.e. when the teacher is not able to or interested

in delivering transversal skills), a student finds himself/herself actually compelled to deal with the development of competences such as civic spirit, tolerance, entrepreneurial thinking, etc. on his/her own.

A better employability of students, along with their better social integration will help the three universities in the TRANSMOD project establish themselves at an international level as higher education institutions fully committed to the enhancement of transversal skills. This will help them attract more students and maintain their status as top-flight universities. Furthermore, the social integration of students benefitting from advanced transversal skills training fosters the development of the entire community, for a better equipped society of tomorrow, which should be more supportive of lifelong learning.

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ABSTRACT

The term "transversal skills" has lately become more and more frequently used within educational systems in Europe. A suggestive definition of the term is the one provided by the European Commission in its classification of European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO): "Transversal skills and competences are relevant to a broad range of occupations and sectors. They are often referred to as *core skills*, *basic skills* or *soft skills*, the cornerstone for the personal development of a person."

TRANSMOD was proposed by the University of Craiova (Romania) in cooperation with Bifröst University (Iceland) and Nesna University College (Norway) with a three-fold purpose: clarifying the status of transversal skills in the three partner institutions, exchanging good practices in the field and creating a valuable instrument that may help teachers effectively integrate such skills in their classes. The project has adopted a gradual approach and has undergone three major phases of research: documentation and mobilities; questionnaire-based research; and elaboration of good practice guidelines.

A Questionnaire-Based Approach of Transversal Skills in Romania, Norway and Iceland

OANA-ADRIANA DUȚĂ *

1. Introduction

The questionnaire on transversal skills developed within the TRANSMOD project was administered during September and October 2014 and its main purpose was to collect reliable information based on which the relevant contributions and guidelines could be drawn up. The questionnaire was available both online (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/174RuVAv7WOob7R2zfKS5pH-RVCNt38KtxBt6tZH7HeQ/viewform?c=0& w=1) and in hard copy. Subsequently, the responses provided on hard copy questionnaires were input into the online form, so as to have a full image. All in all, 192 responses were collected, of which 147 from the University of Craiova (Romania; in the following: UCV), 28 from Nesna University College (Norway; in the following: Nesna) and 17 from Bifröst University (Iceland; in the following: Bifröst). The distribution of questionnaires among the three higher education institutions might seem unequal, but a fair proportion to the total number of teaching staff is ensured (the Norwegian and Icelandic universities have far less teaching staff than the Romanian one).

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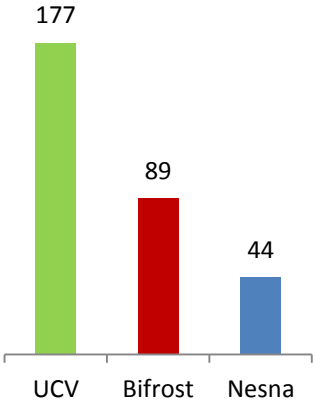
The purpose of delivering this questionnaire was to obtain a quantitative approach, that could underpin the qualitative remarks to be formulated in the following. The research team started with the assumption that hard facts were needed in order to propose reliable and effective strategies for the development of transversal skills in teaching practice. Obviously, such proposals have to give due consideration to what is already done and have to try to improve the existing situation.

After the responses to the questionnaire were received, it was noticed that in fact a win-win result was obtained, with advantages for both sides: the research team was provided with useful feedback for the upcoming research, and the participating teaching staff stated that they had found out interesting information and their awareness was raised on an actual topic like transversal skills.

2. Questions dealing with background on the teaching staff

The teaching staff providing answers to the questionnaire represent academic disciplines like Humanities (UCV and Nesna) and Economics (UCV and Bifröst). Their experience in higher education spans over 1-10 years (Bifröst), 11-20 years (Nesna) and 11-30 years (UCV). The average number of students/teacher is one of the factors where most difference is seen between the partner universities, with Nesna having an average of 44 students/teacher in each academic year, Bifröst an average of 89 students/teacher and UCV 177 students/teacher.

Figure 1: The average number of students/teacher

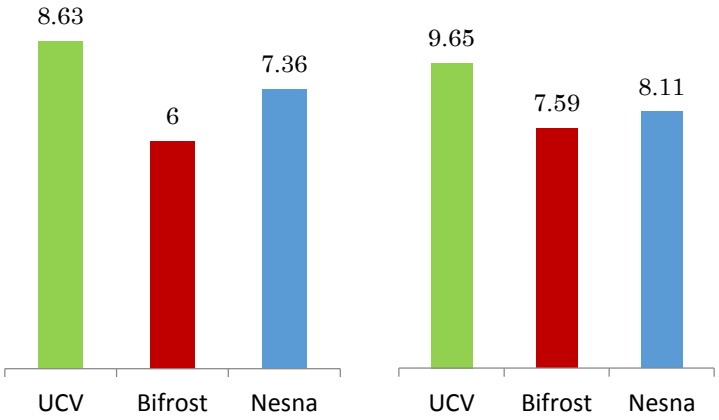


3. Questions regarding the development of transversal skills

A motto that could sum up many of the findings of the questionnaire is one of the catch-phrases used in European Union documents: *Unity in diversity*. Interestingly, though the underlying

culture is highly different and, as seen before, there is significant divergence in the number of students/teacher, many answers provided by the teaching staff in the three institutions converge in the same direction. Thus, as seen from the average marks presented in the charts below, all the universities award a higher share to the development of academic content than to the development of transversal skills.

Figure 2: Importance awarded to the development of transversal skills (left) and to academic content (right)



Moreover, teaching staff from all universities agree that the development of transversal skills is mostly fostered within specifically oriented classes, and that student needs are taken into account in the development of transversal skills.

When asked to rank the transversal skills they consider important, out of the list of key competences proposed by the European Commission, the teaching staff has provided answers ranked as follows:

- UCV: Communication in foreign languages, followed by Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and Digital competence;
- Bifröst: Communication in the mother tongue, followed by Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship and Cultural awareness;
- Nesna: Social and civic competences, followed by Learning to learn and Communication in the mother tongue.

When asked to rank the transversal skills that students consider important, out of the same list of key competences, the following answers were provided:

- UCV: Digital competence, followed by Communication in foreign languages and Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- Bifröst: Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, followed by Communication in the mother tongue and Social and civic competences;
- Nesna: Communication in the mother tongue, followed by Learning to learn, Digital competence and Social and civic competences.

A degree of convergence can be seen in the answers of all universities regarding the significance of communication (in foreign languages for the Romanian staff, in their mother tongue for the Icelandic and Norway respondents), digital skills and the sense of initiative. The prominence of social and civic competences should be emphasized in the answers provided by Icelandic and Norway teachers.

Subsequently, the teaching staff were asked to do the same thing for other transversal skills, proposed by the research team. The teachers answered that they considered the following skills to be important:

- UCV: Development of critical and creative thinking, followed by Personal development and Interpersonal communication skills;
- Bifröst: Development of critical and creative thinking, followed by the Interplay between students and society, Leadership skills and Environmental awareness;
- Nesna: Development of critical and creative thinking, followed by Personal development, Interpersonal communication, Tolerance and Environmental awareness.

From the students' point of view, the following skills were outlined:

- UCV: Personal development, followed by the Interplay between students and economy and Leadership skills;
- Bifröst: Development of critical and creative thinking and Personal development, followed by the Interplay between students and society, Leadership skills, and Interplay between students and economy;

- Nesna: Personal development, followed by Interplay between students and society and Development of critical and creative thinking.

The convergence between the staff in the three HEIs is noticed in the significance awarded to transversal skills like development of critical and creative thinking, personal development and leadership skills. On the other hand, the answers of Icelandic and Norwegian respondents, unlike Romanian ones, mention the interplay between students and society and environmental awareness.

Finally, when asked about what transversal skills they aimed to develop in their classes, the respondents ranked them as follows:

- UCV: Learning to learn, followed by Communication in foreign languages and Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- Bifröst: Communication in the mother tongue and Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, followed by Social and civic competences and Mathematical competence;
- Nesna: Learning to learn, followed by Cultural awareness and Communication in the mother tongue.

Again, a focus on communication and learning to learn (enhancing the students' autonomy) can be seen in the answers of teachers from the three institutions.

4. Questions regarding the students' learning process

Several questions were asked regarding the students' learning process. The answers revealed a relative degree of convergence, with a prevalence of student freedom and autonomy in the Icelandic and Norwegian universities. Thus, students at UCV and Nesna do mostly individual work, while at Bifröst they work both individually and in pairs. UCV students have to do their projects according to a compulsory title and bibliography and following a compulsory method of analysis, while students at Nesna and Bifröst are allowed to have a work plan, a title, a bibliography, methods and corpora of their own choice. In UCV and Bifröst, students work in groups established by themselves, whereas in Nesna the groups are established by both themselves and the teacher. Moreover, UCV and Bifröst students have to deal with compulsory tasks, while Nesna students usually work on tasks they define themselves.

As for the use of non-formal education methods in the development of transversal skills, the teaching staff of UCV relates to the use of

simulations and experiments, while the ones in Bifröst deal with simulations, experiments and role play and the teachers of Nesna implement simulations and experiments, role play and alternative educational settings.

5. Questions regarding the assessment of transversal skills

The self-assessment of the acquired transversal skills is fostered by means of discussions according to the teaching staff of the University of Craiova and Nesna, and through peer assessment according to the teachers at Bifröst.

As for the inclusion of transversal skills in the students' final mark, the answers of the teaching staff have resulted in the following ranking:

- UCV: Development of critical and creative thinking, followed by Communication in the mother tongue and Learning to learn;
- Bifröst: Development of critical and creative thinking, followed by Learnng to learn and Involvement in research;
- Nesna: Development of critical and creative thinking, followed by Cultural awareness and Learning to learn.

6. Some conclusive remarks

To sum up, the findings of the questionnaire definitely helped to focus the project members' efforts towards the proposal of new tools for developing transversal skills in modern teaching practice. The convergence in the answers provided by the teaching staff of the three institutions (very different in terms of cultural background, educational resources and mentality) proved that the TRANSMOD project and its primary outcome (the hereby Good Practice Guide) should respond to a unitary set of needs. Moreover, the respondents appreciated that the questionnaire was useful because they had the opportunity to find out more about a topic as important as transversal skills. The extended lists of transversal competences provided across the questionnaire helped them acquire a better understanding of the issue.

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ABSTRACT

A detailed questionnaire was proposed to around 200 academics in order to gain an accurate insight on how transversal skills are actually viewed and implemented in the three higher education institutions involved in the *TRANSMOD* project (the University of Craiova, Nesna University College and Bifröst University).

This questionnaire included 32 questions, dealing with aspects such as the respondent's academic background, the respondent's background on transversal skills, the general and specific development of transversal skills and the assessment of such skills. The answers highlighted both convergences between the Romanian university and the Nordic universities – for instance, the development of critical and creative thinking is prioritized in all institutions; most teachers in all HEIs award a degree of autonomy of 31-60% to their students; the use of genuine examples in teaching is preferred in the three HEIs – as well as significant differences in teaching paradigms – a higher mportance awarded to the development of academic content in Craiova; compulsory titles and bibliographies for projects, compulsory methods of analysis in Craiova, while such aspects are left at the students' choice in Bifröst and Nesna, etc. All in all, the findings of the questionnaire helped to focus the project members' efforts towards the proposal of new tools for developing transversal skills in modern teaching practice.

Transversal Skills and Bifröst University. Practice vs Statements

JÓN FREYR JOHANSSÓN *

1. The history of Bifröst University

The history of Bifröst University began in 1918, when the Cooperative College (Samvinnuskólinn) was founded in Reykjavík (Bifröst University, 2012). In August 1918, the board of the Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies (SÍS) resolved to establish a school for members of the movement.

The Cooperative College changed its name to the Cooperative University in 1988, to the Bifröst School of Business in 2000, and finally to Bifröst University in 2006. These many changes reflect the tremendous growth and development of the Icelandic higher educational system over the last few decades.

The school's original mission (in 1918) was the training of leaders, using Ruskin College at Oxford as a model, the curriculum and teaching methods based on the writings of the American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer John Dewey[1].

The school was mainly for leaders for Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies. This training required emphasis on the development of transversal skills. Later, when the school's status was

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[1] For further information: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey

upgraded to a university status, the focus shifted towards academic theory. However, the emphasis on practical approaches was maintained, and some of them represent what is nowadays termed as transversal skills.

Following the dissolution of the Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies, Bifröst has been an independent institution that attracts students from all sectors of Icelandic society. Formerly, Bifröst offered a secondary-level programme of study lasting only a few months. Today, Bifröst's strongest enrolments are for its three-year bachelor's degrees. In keeping with its tradition as an educator of leaders, Bifröst also continues to offer preparatory studies at a secondary level, aimed at mature students who have gained experience in the working world but lack an Icelandic matriculation examination. Since 2003, Bifröst offers master's degree programmes as well.

Business education and social affairs have been the school's focus from the beginning, and Bifröst has always been progressive and innovative – sometimes, even controversial – in its educational methods.

In recent years, Bifröst has continued to be an "early adopter" among Icelandic universities by reducing class sizes, focusing on practical assignments rather than exams, and increasing the use of computers and online communication in teaching and learning.

Bifröst is a campus university, though most of the university's students are distance learning students requiring innovative methods in teaching.

2. Bifröst University's mission statements on transversal skills

One way of successfully implementing the development of students' transversal skills is by clearly incorporating them in the school's strategy documents.

So, what can be deduced on the concept of transversal skills, from Bifröst University's Mission Statements?

The words "transversal skills" cannot be found as such, since this term is not used in Iceland and there is no single phrase that can be translated as "transversal skills". The only way to find relations to transversal skills is by analysing the text and trying to match the concepts with the definition of transversal skills. We will take a look at

documents relating to Bifröst's mission/vision and teaching policy, so that we may find references to transversal skills.

2.1 Mission statement

Although transversal skills are not explicitly included in Bifröst's Mission Statement, Role and Vision, various references to them can be found. In the following you will read some excerpts from the mission documents of Bifröst (Bifröst University 2012)[2]:

> Role:
> Bifröst is a university that educates socially responsible *leaders*.
>
> Vision:
> Bifröst will be on the *cutting edge in its course offerings and methods of instruction*, which are shaped by the University's emphasis on *social responsibility and sustainability*. Bifröst will develop and evolve as:
> • A knowledge centre with an emphasis on the *interplay between individuals, the economy and society*
> • A convergence point *for personal development and social participation where critical, creative thinking and strong environmental awareness are nurtured*
> • […]
> • A symbol of *foresight, courage and radicality in teaching and studies*
>
> Core values:
> • The University strives to *train its students* for participation in specialised career fields and carrying out scholarly analysis, *informed with a sense of the complex interplay of work, development, research and society*. […]
>
> Cooperation that aims at:
> • *Training* students *in group and team work*
> • Fostering *new and differing points of view through multi-disciplinary activities*
> • Encouraging *interaction and participation in a socially* thriving university village (campus)
> • *Working with and serving the local community*

[2] *Italics* added by the author, for more emphasis.

Initiative that involves:
- *Innovation* in all University activities
- *Independent work habits* and the courage to blaze one's own trail
- *Active student participation in teaching and research* within the University's walls

Responsibility that emerges in:
- A systematic emphasis on *social responsibility in course content*
- High aspirations and *professional work methods and procedures in teaching and research*
- […]
- *Respect for the environment and the community, guided by the ethos of sustainability*

2.2 Teaching policy

More direct reference to transversal skills can be found in Bifröst's Teaching Policy. In the following we have selected some excerpts from the policy (Bifröst University 2014)[3]:

On Bifröst University's teaching policy in general:

It is the University's policy to offer outstanding education, which enables students to acquire extensive knowledge in their field of study, enhances their *broadmindedness, and strengthens their creativity*. Stress is laid on promoting students' *ability to adopt and exercise professional work methods, to apply theories and concepts in assignment solutions*, and strengthening their *ability to resolve practical challenges*. This way the University aims at providing students with *the best possible preparation for participating in democratic society and economy,* or for further studies.
[…]

Teaching methods and organisation of teaching:

Teaching at Bifröst University consists of *diverse teaching methods which emphasise independent student work* and comprehensive theoretical instructor support. This implies that the University *attaches great importance to project work, which demands both student initiative and responsibility as well as the ability to cooperate in the case of group projects.*
[…]

[3] *Italics* added by the author, for more emphasis.

The students at Bifröst University *use class hours for assignment work or discussions about course topics*, as applicable, but watch instructors' video lectures on the University's intranet.
Emphasis is placed on giving students the opportunity of work related studies, both in undergraduate and graduate programmes.
For years Bifröst University has offered hybrid studies, i.e. a mixture of distance and on-campus learning, *using the best possible IT technology at each time*. The methods which have been developed at the University in connection with hybrid studies have proved to be *useful in all kinds of teaching settings*.
Instructors:
Bifröst University endeavours to hire competent instructors with a sound theoretical background, good organisational skills, which allow them to prepare and plan teaching with outstanding results, and who have the necessary desire and competence to share their knowledge in a systematic way which *stimulates a positive and creative environment.*
Instructors at Bifröst University take the initiative to *innovate and develop teaching methods in new directions.*
[…]

Teaching and relations with economy and society:

Special emphasis is placed on establishing a *connection between project works on the one hand and economy and society on the other.* The University aims at providing students with opportunities to *work on concrete real-life assignments*, either for companies, public agencies, NGOs or municipalities. This will prepare students all the *better for participation in the various economic sectors* after the completion of their studies.
[…]

Teaching and international collaboration:

Student and staff exchange is an integral part of the University's operations, giving students an opportunity to take a part of their studies at a foreign university.
[…]
Teaching facilities and accommodation for instructors and students
Bifröst University endeavours to provide good accommodation for learning and teaching, especially with regard to housing, *technology, service*, and learning management systems. The University makes an effort to provide instructors and students with good services which support teaching and learning.

3. Courses designed for transversal skills

Courses are taught at Bifröst University with a special focus on subjects that would be defined as transversal skills. Having a clear definition of courses like that will significantly help develop such skills.

The information in this section is based on the curricula definition from "Undergraduate Studies in Business Administration: Curriculum for BS degree program" (Bifröst University 2014).

In addition to the courses below, transversal skills are covered as a part of other courses and training sessions, sometimes clearly defined in course descriptions, sometimes just depending on the teaching methods used in a particular course.

Table 1: Transversal skills presented in specific courses

Information technology	4 ECTS
Research methods	6 ECTS
Assertiveness & effective communication	2 ECTS
Applied mathematics for business	6 ECTS
Statistics	6 ECTS
Term projects / group research projects	16 ECTS
Project management	4 ECTS
Sustainability and social responsibility	6 ECTS
Total ECTS credits	50 ECTS

Internship and exchange programmes also promote transversal skills. Many courses include topics such as digital competence, critical and analytical thinking and ethics as a part of the course description or learning outcomes.

In the following we shall present some excerpts from the description of courses dedicated to transversal skills, along with some additional information collected from informal interviews[4] with some of the teachers of the courses.

3.1 *Applied mathematics for business 6 ECTS* and *Statistics for social sciences 6 ECTS*

The content of the courses Applied Mathematics for business and Statistics for social sciences is more general than what the titles suggest, and the contents of both would be categorized as transversal skills.

[4] Not recorded or documented.

3.2 *Research Methods 6 ECTS*

This methodology course consists of teaching students how to apply standard research methodology. The skills covered in this course could be categorised as transversal skills.

Students become acquainted with different research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, as well as academic project work and analysis of available data. Students receive training in creating questionnaires and preparing interviews and in the basics concerning case studies and the various types of field observations, as well as the completion of academic assignments.

Particular stress is placed on student awareness concerning ethical issues in research, such as copyright, anonymity, handling and protection of personally identifiable information, limitations of research methods (their nature and when such methods are to be used in collecting data), internal and external validity and research reliability, as well as the activities of the Icelandic Data Protection Authority and the National Bioethics Committee.

Students also learn how to draw up an academic paper with a formal structure and the right use of bibliographic references. They also learn of the structure of written work, study skills, organisation and work procedures for carrying out larger projects such as term projects.

The technical methods for handling bibliographic references are usually also taught in the IT course; students learn to use bibliographic handling in both Microsoft Word and Zotero.

3.3 *Project management 4 ECTS* and *Term projects 16 ECTS*

The concepts of project management have until recently been taught as an individual course, but have now been included in the Term projects course. Each student is supposed to take part in two of those projects, each of them resulting in 8 ECTS, of which 2 ECTS for Project management skills. The degree certificate will include those 4 ECTS units (two for each term project) as Project management credits.

Term projects are a good way of putting to test theories and methods with skills that have already been acquired, whether transversal or not. Not less importantly, they also foster the formal and informal learning of transversal skills.

Since term projects mostly are practical real life projects, students get to apply the methods of project management. They will apply both

the very formal methods of detailed planning, work breakdown structures, managing resources, and "soft" skills such as team management, resolution of conflicts, formal project meetings often including stakeholders from outside the school. Moreover, the students have to document the processes and keep timesheets of their work, which they will have to produce for the assessment of the course. The plans made during the projects and all the changes thereto are also documented. After the completion of the two term project, each student will be equipped with documentation for having performed a fairly detailed and complex projects.

Different topics of Project management are covered in alternate years, so that the same process should not be repeated and so that the same methods should not be applied in the two term projects completed by each student. Of the formal methods introduced and used for this course, we can mention Prince2[5] (PRoject management IN Controlled environment) and also methods referred to as Agile[6] methods of project management (the label "Agile" does not contradict their status as formal methods).

The assessment of term projects consists of several elements. One is that the students have to present their project under very formal circumstances and a strict agenda. Even though the "defence" is a very formal procedure, the group also has the possibility to present their project in their own way; some use videos, mini-seminars or other innovative presentation methods. Their videos often are some kind of a video documentary of their work, but some use this media in other ways.

The term project groups have no guarantees that the outside parties they want to involve will take part in the way they want it to; they have to negotiate with them, usually without the university acting as an intermediary party. They have to find ways of negotiating. Sometimes, some of the group members have the necessary skills for that; however, if they do not, they will get valuable experience, acquiring valuable transversal skills.

[5] For further information: https://www.prince2.com/what-is-prince2
[6] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agile_management

3.4 Information technology 4 ECTS

An Information technology course is mandatory for all the students at Bifröst and is taught at the beginning of the first semester.

The course consists of training general digital skills and competences. Students get extensive training using standard software such as Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint. The focus lies on craftsmanship, on making them power users of such programmes, so that they may actually use them for relatively complex works. Students also get acquainted with software for online meetings and webinars. They do have to rely on such software, as many of them are distance learning students and the on campus students are often working in mixed group of campus students and distant learning ones. They mostly use software such as Skype, Lync and Adobe Connect.

A very important topic in the IT course is the acquisition of skills for creating multimedia content. This is important since more and more projects and assignments either require or benefit greatly from being presented as a multimedia, but it is also useful for making teaching material for peer-to-peer (P2P) teaching.

Let us look at examples of assignments in the IT course, as some of them might be an inspiration for others. As a topic for the first multimedia project, titles like "Who am I?", "Where am I going?", "Where do I come from?", "Me, my life – looking back xx years from now" were suggested. Since the students will have no difficulty with the content, as it is their own story they are talking about, they will focus on the skills needed to create the multimedia.

These are assignments for individual students; however, as their technical skills may vary hugely, they can make their multimedia content in any format they feel comfortable with, some using simple, timed, automatically running PowerPoint slide shows, while other ambitiously use complex video making techniques and tools.

The students are encouraged to help each other at this stage and they often organize their own workshop sessions where more skilled students train the others and help them in many ways.

The students get a short training session in using screen capturing software, such as Camtasia Studio[7] (the software teachers at Bifröst use

[7] https://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html

for recording and editing online lectures) and some other free versions of screen capturing and editing software.

Another assignment is to make a multimedia content that will tell something important to the students who will enrol next fall – something important concerning topics of the first semester in the broadest sense of the concept, anything will do. This is a topic that they tend to take very seriously, and are often quite innovative in their subject and approach.

Yet another assignment is for the students (3-6 students in a group) to tell a story, cover some topic from another course and also open topics of their choosing, but instead of covering them in any details, they have to "Make a 'trailer'" for the selected project. That makes the project doable within reasonable time limits, but still telling most of the story or study material. Students are required to draw up a manuscript or story-board representation of their intended work, which compels them to analyse and discuss methods both technical and analytically. They are free to assign tasks of the project as they like within the group, but they may not use more outside help than just consulting and coaching from someone more experienced.

In some cases, students attending the mandatory first year IT course form teams that help with tasks in some other courses, which require the use of video and audio recordings and editing. For example they have formed MultiMedia teams for recording speeches in the "Assertiveness & effective communication" course and have helped with staging mock-up television and radio interviews.

3.5 Assertiveness & effective communication 2 ECTS – also called *Confident Communication*

The concept for this applied course is rooted in the so-called Bifröst spirit: for decades, students of Bifröst University have graduated to become business leaders and social advocates. Many of these distinguished graduates have stated that the training they received at Bifröst, including speaking experience and social activities, has proved exceptionally valuable for them.

The following are covered in this course:

- General communication skills
- Expressing oneself with confidence
- Making a good impression in public speaking, giving talks and speeches

- Conduct during radio and TV interviews
- Teaching (Peer-2-Peer)
- Meeting "business" people with a relevant and solid agenda
- Making videos (often with the help of students from the IT course)

4. Methods for teaching and training transversal skills

Teaching methods at Bifröst University are diverse and build on the tradition of project-based learning. They are mostly defined by established teaching methods, but, however, it is up to individual teachers to decide how they conduct their teaching. Moreover, there is a general requirement that all lectures and information on assignments and projects should be available in audio/video format in the university's learning management system.

Transversal skills are very often taught within diverse courses without being mentioned specially in the curriculum or the course descriptions.

Here are some of the approaches to teaching used by teachers at Bifröst University.

4.1 Flipped classroom

In most cases teaching is based on the concept of flipped classroom.[8, 9, 10] Lectures and guidance from the instructor are provided with audio and video through the University's learning management system (LMS). This flipped teaching gives the opportunity to dwell on practical assignments and discuss in depth some of the topics at hand. This also frees up time in classroom, so that there is more time for also training the transversal skills that the topics give opportunity for.

The teachers and students do not have to worry whether they cover all the topics on the agenda in class. All the information is available online in the LMS, so that they may use the valuable face-to-face time for constructive and productive work. The students can then carry out their research and reading at home and use the online material for support.

[8] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flipped_classroom
[9] https://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/eli7081.pdf
[10] http://ctl.utexas.edu/teaching/flipping-a-class

4.2 Learning by developing

Bifröst University has been working with Laurea University of Applied Sciences[11] (Laurea UAS) in Finland on some projects and one of them has been getting help from Laurea UAS on applying in some aspects their method "Learning by Developing" (Raij 2014, Raij 2007).

Laurea's Learning by Developing (LbD) operating model fits well within the teaching methods used at Bifröst and its emphasis on students working relatively independent in groups on practical and often real projects. The LbD operating model is defined as working life-oriented. The teachers, students, experts and clients work together in real working life related research and development projects (Raij 2014).

Students work (relatively) independently on projects and accumulate useful experience. The key element is that the students lead the way as much as possible. They have to work with instructors and outside parties depending on the nature of the project. This should enhance their critical thinking and problem solving skills. In projects like that, formal project management is essential. This combination requires that the students (and teachers) use their many transversal skills and get to know and train such skills to a higher extent.

LbD is currently deployed in some way in term projects (covered in the previous section). There have been other experiments on LbD in 2012 and 2013, when three courses were used for an LbD-like project: Project management, Marketing and Service management. The course topics indicated the aspects the students' projects should focus on and project management acted as a "back bone" in the process. This was a successful experiment although the students where at first sceptic or probably afraid of this new approach. A similar experiment was done in 2013, but only with two courses, and with no emphasis on project management.

4.3 Peer-to-peer teaching

A widely used method at Bifröst University for engaging students in the topics to be covered is peer-to-peer teaching. Students usually are assigned different topics and have set dates when they are to give their presentation or training for the other students. They may be assigned these tasks as individuals, but it seems to be better to have a pair or

[11] https://www.laurea.fi/en/

group of three students preparing each topic. That engages them in useful dialogue and usually leads to better presentations or training.

There have been some experiments on peer evaluation, where the students give their fellow students grades. This is usually done on group projects and one of the reason for doing this is to identify the free-riders, who often manage to get through teamwork with little effort. There is some work going on now on procedures for this peer review, including the creation of a grading software, since the situation gets complicated in the case of many students and complex group allocation. Hopefully, more information will be reported later.

5. Final remarks

At some later stage in the collaboration with the University of Craiova and Nesna University College, some other formal and informal methods for the teaching and training of transversal skills will hopefully be documented on behalf of Bifröst University.

At Bifröst University, teachers use a lot of formal and informal methods of teaching and methods to engage the students in constructive, creative and critical thinking, such as role playing, setting up focus groups, negotiation role playing, UN meeting model, formal debates, brain storming, "the fish tank", the use of case studies and many more. The student-run Innovation Centre would also fit into this category.

One could say that transversal skills at Bifröst University are defined both at a macro level in mission statements and teaching policy, and then on a micro level in course descriptions and formal and informal teaching methods.

One of the problems with transversal skills for scholars in Iceland is that there is no single word or a phrase that covers the concept of transversal skills. The analysis of definitions in the mission statements and teaching policy may vary from the somewhat official definition provided by some EU bodies. But even though the definition may not be fully correct, the process of analysing statements, policies, course descriptions and teaching methods is highly important, since it casts some light on this topic and can help the further development of teaching methods and strategies.

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ABSTRACT

Bifröst University is known for its emphasis on combining theory and practice, through case studies, group work and applying theory to real-life situations.

The school´s original (1918) mission was the training of leaders, using Ruskin College at Oxford as a model mainly for leaders for Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies. This training required emphasis on developing transversal skills. Later when upgrading the school's status as a university the focus of course shifted towards more academic theory.

As most students at Bifröst University are enrolled in distance learning programmes, innovation is needed to meet the emphasis on group work and how to combine theory and practice. In applying theory to practical situations all students must acquire relevant transversal skills. The paper focuses on three sides of the concept of Transversal Skills, with the main focus on the last one listed: 1. What can be deduced from Bifröst University's Mission statements on the concept of Transversal Skills. 2. What can be deduced from Bifröst University's course descriptions on the concept of Transversal Skills. 3. Examples and best practices of developing Transversal skills based on interviews with several of Bifröst University's teachers and what importance they place on transversal skills.

Problem Based Learning and Transversal Skills: Decoding an Authentic Text Through Visualization

PATRICK MURPHY *

Pragmatic and practically oriented at heart, the author of this article claims the communication process of a text may be summed up as follows: If you can draw or construct the contents of a text, you understand the text.

Traditional classroom learning has seen learner input and output as consigned not only within the four walls of the classroom, but also compartmentalized according to subject. This article uses a practical example of how one may combine an authentic text, problem based learning, and focus on encoding and decoding a text for communicative competence. The learners are faced with the challenge of visualizing and graphically reproducing a police report of an automobile accident. Solving the challenge of decoding and graphically encoding, as well as the follow-up tasks, brings in elements of both logical/strategic nature, also developing the learner's creative side that goes beyond traditional compartmentalized subject learning. Schemata is challenged for both teacher and learner, as this article takes the learner from textbook and

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classroom to location based learning in the world beyond the classroom walls, where transversal skills come naturally.

Another aspect of teaching material design considered essential to many leading language researchers today is that such materials promote task-based learning. Task-based learning is an overall approach to language learning that views the tasks that learners do as central to the learning process. The learning process is seen as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to curricular goals.

1. Introduction

Transversal skills are not new; they have been a part of life and development through all ages. It is within the field of education that focus now is placed on these skills and competencies. Traditional classroom teaching and learning has seen learner input and output as consigned not only within the four walls of the classroom, but also compartmentalized according to subject, and within the subject itself. It is precisely the constraints of the classroom walls and compartmentalization of subjects that need to be overcome in order for education to mirror and prepare the learners for the transversal skills needed in the world beyond the classroom.

In the quest for a suitable platform to both break down the walls and subject boundaries, problem based learning will be an intuitive and reasonable starting point. Problem based learning in academia has become widespread since the pioneering days of Howard Barrows and his colleagues at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in the late 1960s (Neville 2009), and has since been adopted by other studies, such as language learning. Francom and Gardner (2013) show how there may be some confusion between the terms Problem Based Learning (PBL) and Task Centred Learning (TCL). However, the discussion of the distinction between the two is not the focus of this article. The activity that is discussed in this article has elements of both pure PBL and TCL. Firstly, TCL activities are based on solving real world challenges, and as we will see, the following Police Report activity deals with showing, practising and demonstrating communicative competence based on an authentic text.

Challenges in language learning have often been an exposure issue, where exposure to and practice of the target language have at times been lacking or totally absent. There may be a wide range of

reasons for this. Today's globalization and free flow of information have greatly reduced the challenges of exposure and practice. In schools, globalization expressed through increased migration and the integration of multi-cultural learners in the classroom is an additional challenge for the local English teacher. Not only does he or she need to be a role model of English to fellow countrymen, but increasingly the mixed ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the young learners are a challenge when it comes to the individual schemata based on cultural platform and life experience.

Motivation as the prime driving force for learning is founded on a need-to-know basis, and this is commonly expressed by especially older learners by questioning new material presented: "Is this exam relevant?" Here the need-to-know triggers both intrinsic motivation in the need to learn the applicable material to satisfy one's aspirations, and extrinsic motivation of being judged at the exam table. The first Norwegian national curriculum, the M74 (Kirke og Undervisningsdepartementet 1974), has twenty-two pages for the subject English, and eighteen of these are a list of grammar components and a vocabulary of roughly 2,000 words the pupils should know at the end of the then nine-year compulsory education. One may question the motivation such a list instils on the teacher or learner. Though pupils have not changed as such the past forty odd years, we have since come to terms with e.g. Howard Gardner pointing out and summing up the distribution of differing intelligences (Gardner 1983) in the individual, and thus placing a focus on the need for learner centred curriculums, and consequently a raised awareness of the development of and catering for differing learning styles and approaches to teaching.

As near as all foreign language learning activities in schools are inextricably connected to the mother tongue and schemata of the learner. In state run schools, this would in practice mean that the L1 is that of the school's geographical location. Using a common L1 as a platform for a learning context and tool to support L2 learning, has created a learning environment the learners can relate to. The increased migration and mixed ethnic backgrounds of learners in schools today are a challenge to the teacher as well as the learners, as there at times will be a lack of a common frame of reference, and the individual schemata may influence the understanding of given tasks and how they may be addressed. In

practice, the lack of a common L1 as a reference language may be initially regarded as the nearest challenge at hand.

In the traditional schooling context, there has been a tendency to see the learners as receivers of knowledge – as opposed to developing skills and competence – that is implemented from the outside world, and is to be reproduced with the teacher as primary recipient and target audience. This type of isolated knowledge and in-classroom competence may be seen as the conveyance of knowledge decided by others than the learner. Languages being a communicative tool, what vocabulary will the *learners* need in order to communicate successfully? True, the various national curriculums and text books widely used are thoughtfully produced to anticipate what vocabulary is needed by the end of the period of learning a foreign language. These books and material attempt at covering a range of interests the learner might have, at the same time as giving the learner the tools to communicate with others in the target language. Though attempting to address these important issues, the text books at times struggle to trigger an interest and spark intrinsic motivation for the learner.

Motivation being the prime factor and driving force in obtaining new knowledge and developing new skills, it is important to consider the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The traditional learning process in schools, where one would read, study, and practice in order to be graded by the teacher, may well entail a fair bit of intrinsic motivation among the already motivated learners. However, we are all in all dealing with a system primarily focused on gratifying the teacher; the one who is responsible for the evaluation of the pupil's work, and needs to be satisfied in order to hand out the marks for performance. The vocabulary sought taught and learned will reflect this situation.

When it comes to PBL, the task at hand will dictate the needed vocabulary, and thus create an increased intrinsic motivation to find, develop and practice vocabulary (rather than read a text and learn by heart for the next dictation test); though the final product will necessarily still be the object for teacher evaluation. The bottom line may well prove to be that as long as there is formal/informal feedback at the end of a process, the extrinsic motivation will be there; it is important for as many of the learners as possible to have their *intrinsic* motivation triggered in the process of reaching the goals to be evaluated.

In teaching and learning activities, there will be a span of focal points ranging from those of the theoretical pedagogue to those of the practitioner. The foundation of this article is a task based learning exercise, where the concept of task based learning is broken down into the following elements:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.

2. The introduction of the authentic texts into the learning situation.

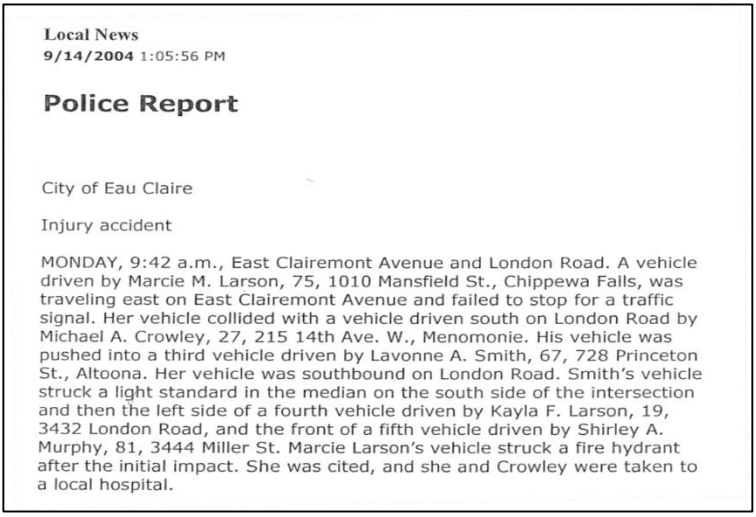
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus not only on language, but also on the learning process itself.

4. The learner will need to draw on a variety of intelligences and competences in order to complete the task.

5. An enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

6. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

2. The task



Local News
9/14/2004 1:05:56 PM

Police Report

City of Eau Claire

Injury accident

MONDAY, 9:42 a.m., East Clairemont Avenue and London Road. A vehicle driven by Marcie M. Larson, 75, 1010 Mansfield St., Chippewa Falls, was traveling east on East Clairemont Avenue and failed to stop for a traffic signal. Her vehicle collided with a vehicle driven south on London Road by Michael A. Crowley, 27, 215 14th Ave. W., Menomonie. His vehicle was pushed into a third vehicle driven by Lavonne A. Smith, 67, 728 Princeton St., Altoona. Her vehicle was southbound on London Road. Smith's vehicle struck a light standard in the median on the south side of the intersection and then the left side of a fourth vehicle driven by Kayla F. Larson, 19, 3432 London Road, and the front of a fifth vehicle driven by Shirley A. Murphy, 81, 3444 Miller St. Marcie Larson's vehicle struck a fire hydrant after the initial impact. She was cited, and she and Crowley were taken to a local hospital.

The task that has simply been named the Police Report will in its basic form address communicative competence, and the addition of follow-up tasks may be adjusted and adapted to meet the needs and goals for different age groups and targeting the combination of transversal skills. For practical reasons, the task will be divided into two sections, where the first one deals with communicative competence and strategic/logical challenges, and the second part deals with tasks that may be added to target specific learning and competence goals and transversal or basic skills.

The responses and commentary to this task are based on usage and observation over a period of five years, and as such, the events and responses are actual, as opposed to the more hypothetical style of the theory-based form of article. Furthermore, to increase the challenge, the task is solved in groups of three to four learners. The reason for this is the desired focus on cooperative learning, especially as there will hypothetically be a greater chance of various ways to reach the goal with more than two learners working together.

Faced with the question of whether the learners are able to understand a short piece of text, the police report is read out aloud. Though the text is short, even before the reading is completed, there are reactions in line of head-shaking and obvious lack of understanding. When the learners are asked to make a brief summary of the text, more often than not, the response goes something like "a number of cars collided". The learners are then asked to consider how trustworthy would their understanding of the event be, if they were a witness in a possible court case; how accurate would their description of the accident scene be? A general response is "it is hard to visualize, we were not there". This leads us into the communicative process, where, in the case of a written text, one deals with the process of encoding and decoding an observed incident. The physical observations are encoded into letters and sentences, and the reader will decode the letters and sentences into a mental image of what has taken place. The learners admit they are not able to clearly and accurately see the picture in their mind, which shows that while they are perfectly capable of decoding the actual text and understanding the individual words, they are not able to get the whole picture, as one would put it in a more colloquial phrase. In Norwegian, we have a phrase used when one is a little irritated with somebody who has a hard time of understanding a message or a concept: "skjønner du

tegningen?" (literally: "do you understand the drawing?"). It is precisely the point of *getting* or *seeing* the picture that leads to the statement that this task will be able to substantiate or support: if you can draw it, you can understand it. The first part of this task might initially appear relatively easy, as drawing a textually described scene can surely not be that complicated. Here the learners from the start have to deal with different aspects that make this task challenging: the linguistic aspect and the strategic aspect.

Depending on age and context, the text will provide some new vocabulary, and there are several ways in which the groups acquire the meaning of the unfamiliar words. The task is to be solved by drawing by hand on paper; a requirement which sets the mode for the group process, as the paper may be easily turned through 360 degrees, and all learners have equal visual and tactile access to the product at any one time. Among the 100+ groups that have worked with this task over the last five years, the vast majority have not mixed the hands-on drawing activity with the use of the computer as a source for finding the meaning of unfamiliar words. Though not a major point in this article, it is interesting to observe how learners who during their day have become dependent on Internet access, will solve the challenges of this task without using their mobile phones or laptops that are readily available by their side. Though some groups have used a dictionary in book form, most groups seem to rely on pen, paper and their collective wits. This brings in a strong element of cooperative learning, where one or more of the group members may know and share the correct meaning and usage of the given terms; or ultimately, the group will find the meaning working as a team. As a generalization, the groups show a low threshold for asking the author the meaning of the word or term, as the learners' prime objective is to solve the task by way of a concrete product, rather than focusing on the process. Guiding the groups, the author will not translate or directly explain the meaning of the unfamiliar word or term, but rather coach the learners to arrive at the answer by combining their previous knowledge and strategic thinking – bringing all skills and competences into the equation. An example of this would typically be the word "median". The learners are quick to think in terms of direct translation, and even though the word does exist in Norwegian – albeit as derived from Latin – this does interestingly not spring to mind. How then to coax

the learners on? It is all about form and function, where the object is to a) associate with similar sounding words, and b) to look at the physical function of the word. *Median* will be able to be compared to the words *middle* and *midt* (Norwegian), and the function as the use with a map or globe. The learners will through these associations arrive at the meaning of the term, and thus this will contribute to the understanding of the text and the visual realization thereof. The correct understanding and function of *median* is detrimental to the understanding of how the task may be solved. Other terms or combination of words where the individual words are known, may not that clearly be associated with meaning and function; an example of this being *light standard*.

This exercise clearly demonstrates the shift between transversal skills and competence, as the groups need to discuss orally among themselves and with the teacher based on a limited provided amount of text and vocabulary, and then sum up the oral discussion and process into writing again, with logical skills being part of the process.

Strategic skills and competence may be seen as transversal skills that transcend all education subjects. The strategic challenges of the police report immediately manifest themselves. The learners are instructed to draw the scene on an A4 sheet of paper. The groups will without other information draw the intersection as a standard four-way intersection. The majority of groups will draw the intersection in the centre of the sheet, and dimension it too small for the purpose. The groups have a tendency to work out an over-all plan of the scene by skimming the text in order to lay out the scene. In terms of achieving a general overview, this is the correct thing to do, but they do not take into account the details that become clear when applying close reading. Logically, one would skim a text to achieve an overview prior to a close reading for detail. In this case it is impossible to get an overview of the location of the accident before the details are in place.

There is one physical feature that is vital for the understanding of the scene: there is more than one lane in each direction. This information is not given in the text, and only becomes apparent when the groups attempt to place the vehicles in the correct positions. Logical and strategic competence is important in order to solve the task at hand, and as a rule, the groups perceive the task of illustration as being equal to two-dimensional (2D) drawing. Pencil and paper seems to restrict the groups' options to a 2D illustration, rather than a three-dimensional (3D)

one. The groups will invariably start by drawing the positions of the cars following the chronological order of the information supplied in the text. The result is less than desirable. Pencilling in the cars leads to excessive use of an eraser and following frustration. The next stage is to guide the groups to use movable 2D or 3D objects to represent the vehicles in a way that the learners themselves arrive at this strategic move. This quickly solves the issues with a compartmentalized skill of reading and static illustration. The groups now implement a strategic competence that incorporates other basic skills. The way the groups meet the challenge of movable vehicle varies from roughly torn strips of paper with the names of drivers, via objects as LEGO bricks, to elaborate 3D paper models of the involved cars.

The learners are at this stage so preoccupied with the physical layout of the scene that they forget to contextualize it. This is a consequence of compartmentalized thinking; the learners believe they need to show (only) linguistic competence to be able to illustrate the scene of the accident. The contextual understanding is essential to be able to solve the task, and the most obvious and most overlooked piece of information is in which geographical context the accident takes place. There is little variation among the groups – not age related, interestingly enough – as to what side of the road the cars drive. When asked why the groups place the cars on the right side of the road, they will tend to quickly swap them to the left side. During debriefing, the learners are asked why they do so, and the answers are all in the line of "when you [the author] ask us a question like that, we assume it is to check whether we are able to see our own mistake, and thus swap sides". When asked why the cars would drive on the left side of the road, the answer is invariably "because we are in England". Upon asking why we are in England, the answer is "because of London Road". Pointing out to Norwegian students that just the fact that one of our nearest towns has a street named Fairbanksveien (Fairbanks road) does not mean that we are in Alaska makes the groups see that there may well be an option to their initial assumption. So, where are we? The groups are asked to make a qualified decision based on the information given in the text, which implies more close reading with a purpose, and their general understanding of the world. The groups invariably take note of the place names, and see that French (Eau Claire, Clairmont), English (London

Road, as well as the language of the police report), and Native American (Menomonie, Chippewa Falls) indicate that we are in North America, possibly Canada. This is near enough, as the authentic text is taken from the Leader-Telegram of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Once the geographical context is decided on, it is now possible to physically solve the task. We have on a few occasions quietly observed that groups that place cars as driving on the left side of the road run into serious problems when trying to recreate the scene. We have for the most avoided doing this, as one important goal is to be able to have a contextualized textual comprehension.

Working together, the members of the groups will sit around a table, and thus at any given time, the illustration will not be viewed from the norm, which is north up and south down. It is for many a learner difficult at best of times to perceive something from a different or unusual perspective, and this issue is solved by either rotating the drawing periodically to facilitate explanations, or by labelling the paper with the four directions of the compass. Roughly 50% of the groups will intuitively add the points of the compass to their illustration, and among these about half will label in Norwegian. This again, is an indication of compartmentalized thinking, where the primary goal is to decode and illustrate an accident scene – not necessarily the language the product is to be presented in.

3. The exception

The Police Report has been used for teaching communication and strategic competence for five years, and once – only once – has a group of own initiative combined digital tools and digital competence to solve the challenge of illustrating the accident. A group of learners in their first year at high school combined the need for linguistic and contextual understanding with their digital competence, and quickly and accurately solved the challenge of visualization by using Google Maps. Here, the group used the city and street names as search parameters, and quickly found the location of the accident; thus solving the question of location and on what side of the road the cars were driving. By switching to Street View, and seeing the intersection from the perspective of the involved drivers, the events became clearer. To further rationalize their work, the learners used one laptop each, viewing the intersection from all four

directions. The group then drew the scene of the accident on the supplied sheet of paper, and placed 3D paper cars to show where they ended up.

Once the other groups realized how this one group met the challenge, there were cries of "that's cheating". The concept of cheating when it comes to testing learning goals, typically in tests where one correct answer is expected, may well be an issue; but when it comes to competence, cheating is hardly a term readily used. The main point of a task-based exercise like the Police Report is to arrive at the desired product using the means that best serve the purpose, and as there is no key to this task available to be copied, it is the ingenuity of the group that provides the process and product. The groups accusing the one group of cheating may be seen as representing learners doing what is expected of them based on unconscious boundaries and compartmentalization of the subject and task. No detailed instructions are given for the task, other than that the groups are to illustrate the scene of the text on an A4 sheet of paper. A purposeful lack of rigid subject framework opens up for other skills and strategies, addressing both strategic competence and triggering various learning styles. In addition, the learners will experience first-hand the important transversal skill of seeing the connection between different competencies. The groups in this session in question all solved the task in a satisfactory manner, where the one group had a greater focus on digital competence, while the others relied on other means and strategies to solving the task.

4. Follow-up tasks

Initially, this task was devised to achieve and demonstrate competence in decoding and encoding a text using different tools (letters vs illustration). The article does in addition to being a pure language and communicative exercise, without exception spark a discussion of a social science and ethical nature: Publishing full names, age and home address in a police report in the newspaper. Though the pros and cons of this discussion is beyond the scope of this article, it may be concluded that the discussions have been carried forth by interesting and relevant input from the fields of social science and psychology, in addition to oral competence in English. The session with the group using Street View is especially interesting, as a discussion on ethics and privacy also took the turn towards Google in general, and Street View as a ready at hand

example. During the reasoning process and ensuing discussion, the students also touched the issue of detailed satellite images and the question of stalking and criminal offences such as terrorism. The initiative of the group using Street View and the following session made the author acutely aware of the logic of and the learner's inherent need to use transversal skills once learning is task-based, and not too rigidly confined to meet specific goals in a specific subject. It is the triggering of the learner's need to know in a subject open environment that leads to the further development of transversal competence.

In contrast to learner initiated follow-up work, there is the option of pre-planned follow-up tasks; phrased more colloquially, the sky is the limit. Solving the presented task is an activity that may stand alone, but it would be a shame to make the most of a learner acquired ownership to a product, and the motivational potential that lies within. The author has in this article focused on the basic skill of writing, which transverses all educational subjects, and indeed most areas of the world outside the classroom.

Creativity is an important factor for developing learning strategies and subject competence. Creativity is the formation of new ideas and concepts, and is invariably based on prior knowledge and experience. This previous knowledge and experience is not limited to any one specific subject, or indeed walk of life; the combination of knowledge and experience is extracted from all subjects and life experience. Bringing in these elements from the school subjects and life lived is a true implementation of transversal skills and competence.

One may often hear "but I am not a creative person". Creativity comes natural to some, and regardless of what comes natural, creativity can be learned and developed through practice, just like any other skill. The first criterion for writing any text, regardless of the subject, is having something to write about, "I don't know what to write" being an expression readily heard in the classroom. A task-based exercise like the Police Report will through its process and product inextricably tie the learner to both process and product, forming a sense of ownership to both process and product. This ownership and relation to the product ensures that each learner indeed has something to write about.

Creativity and writing may encompass all subjects, and the follow-up task opens up for this:

Create a character gallery and actions, where the group members select one of the involved persons. This character gallery should at least include:

- character description: both physical and inner qualities;

- what type of car s/he is driving, and why; illustrate the vehicle

- what s/he is doing at the place and time of the accident.

The response to the task is often "how are we supposed to know?" This question addresses an important point: the learners seek to find the answer that is expected of them, attempting to meet the teacher's assumed expectations. An initial learner response in this direction may be seen as an indication of compartmentalization and subject-topic boundaries. Breaking down these boundaries by giving the learner creative freedom will see him or her pull in resources from beyond any one given subject, and pool them together to develop a product that is both unique and displays elements of transversal thinking.

Admittedly, some of the groups did struggle a little more than others to get started on this task. The "I am not a creative person" approach was expected, but it is in follow-up conversation with the groups that struggled to get started that the author could note an interesting point. For some it was not the creativity that was the challenge, but rather that some of the learners had unconsciously started to form views on the character during their process of decoding and encoding the scene of the accident; and the reason for the slow start was that they were not able to agree on who to write about.

Back to the learners claiming "how are we to know?". They need to be coached by the instructor to draw on resources beyond the actual text. There are numerous ways of triggering creativity in responding to the task, and to initiate the process, the author would introduce the car driven by of the characters; typically that of Marcie Larson: "Marcie has for years been under her husband's thumb, and she has never been allowed to touch his 1964 Cadillac Eldorado – his pride and joy. Her husband has finally died, and she finally gets the chance to take the Caddy for a spin". The learners will be able to draw on previously watched movies, TV series and travel in the USA to conjure up stereotypical images and behaviour of the people involved. Where the character and vehicle description is based on prior knowledge, experience and stereotypization, the reason for being at the scene of the accident at

the given time has indeed caused a challenge of a different nature. Character and vehicle visualization is based on physical appearance, while presence is built on reasoning, showing competence in yet another transversal skill. There is nothing in the text that may serve as a hint on how to attack this part of the task, and the author has had to drop few hints to keep the momentum going. The groups are at this stage requested to find the scene of accident on Google Maps, and here they will be able to search the vicinity for businesses and institutions in the area to give a clue to the question of reason for whereabouts. The response to the reason for Marcie being at the location of the accident could typically be "she was on her way to celebrate her freedom at Ole's Southside Tavern on South Hastings way, and was looking forward to the town's best Bloody Mary, and was not attentive enough behind the wheel of the Caddy". This line of action sparked a host of ideas, and one group of younger learners took this a step further. They found the home of Lavonne Smith in Street View, and became obsessed by the wheel chair ramp leading to her front door. Was she injured in the accident (a potential discussion on Americans suing each other), or has she become sick or having age related problems since the accident (a potential discussion on health care)?

5. Conclusive remarks

The Police Report is in its initial form an activity developed as a hands-on task based activity for learning English as a foreign language, and has gradually developed into a portal for working with and developing a range of skills and competencies. Some of these follow-up activities are author initiated, while others are in response of learner quests and questions. It is precisely this mutualistic symbiosis between teacher- and learner-driven activities that demonstrates the natural place of transversal skills in the classroom.

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ABSTRACT

Pragmatic and practically oriented at heart, the author of this article claims the communication process of a text may be summed up as follows: If you can draw or construct the contents of a text, you understand the text.

Traditional classroom learning has seen learner input and output as consigned not only within the four walls of the classroom, but also compartmentalized according to subject. This article uses a practical example of how one may combine an authentic text, problem based learning, and focus on encoding and decoding a text for communicative competence. The learners are faced with the challenge of visualizing and graphically reproducing a police report of an automobile accident. Solving the challenge of decoding and graphically encoding, as well as the follow-up tasks, brings in elements of both logical/strategic nature, as well as developing the learner's creative side that goes beyond traditional compartmentalized subject learning. Schemata is challenged for both teacher and learner, as this article takes the learner from textbook and classroom to location based learning in the world beyond the classroom walls, where transversal skills come natural.

A Teaching Approach on the Need to Develop Transversal Skills in Finance Students

MARIAN SIMINICĂ *
ANCA BĂNDOI **

The necessity to mitigate the effects of the financial crisis that affected Europe during the last decade resulted in a European Economic Recovery Plan being drawn up by the Commission. This helped launch an outstanding European initiative in the field of employment, promoting employment and the professional reintegration of dismissed workers, with the help of actions aimed at activating, recycling and improving their skills.

In the words of Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner responsible for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, "Improved skills and qualifications are key to boosting Europe's productivity and competitiveness" (European Commission 2012). This opinion is not one of a kind; on the contrary, it is generally thought that the economic recovery of Europe depends, *inter alia*, on the improvement of skills, both in the short and in the long run.

The dynamism of the labour market, generated by the diversity of business activities at a micro and macro level, imposes an adjustment of

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teaching and knowledge assessment methods across the educational system, so as to successfully promote the skills acquired throughout the learning process. Thus, the purpose is to obtain a workforce that is easily adaptable to changes, able to quickly bridge the gap between theory and practice in a climate where equal opportunities are fostered. The required skills profile and the distribution of employment across industries vary from one member state to another and from one region to another, depending on the economic development and the state of transition to knowledge-based economy, especially in the context of widespread information technology, communications and nanotechnologies.

1. The need to match teaching and learning methods to the required acquisition of transversal skills

The need for the teaching methods provided to Finance students to match the acquisition of a range of skills that are required for specific professions is suggested by the Final Report of the European Commission on the transferability of skills (2011), by the National Qualification Framework in Higher Education (CNCIS), and by the methodologies for the quality assessment of Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes drawn up by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

At a European level, the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, released towards the end of 2008, states that the best prospects of job creation up to 2015 are expected in business services (such as IT, insurance or consultancy), health care and social work, distribution, personal services and catering (Commission of the European Communities 2008).

The main consequence of such an evolution is the clear tendency to extend the range of skills required at all professional levels, due to the appearance of "unexpected" tasks. It has been proven that ICT professionals also need marketing or management skills. On the other hand, the staff in the field of services of any kind, but especially financial services should acquire customer orientation skills and IT skills. Moreover, management skills coexist with specialised scientific skills in knowledge intensive sectors. An additional enhancement of skills is

required in the social field and in education, in order to improve the quality of services.

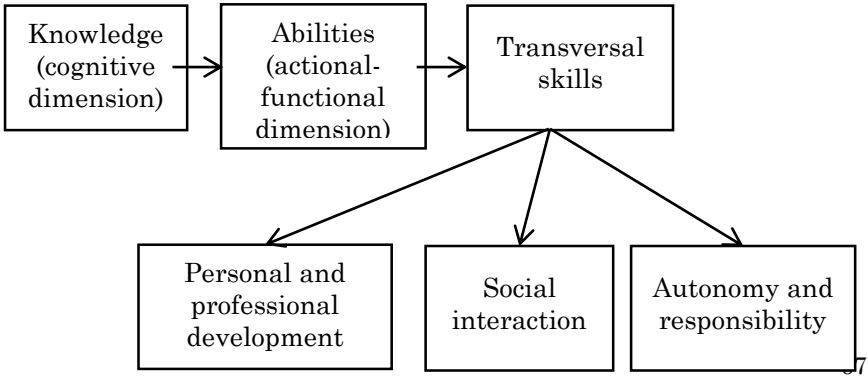
This reflects the employers' increasing demand for key transversal skills, such as problem solving and analytical skills, self-management and communication skills, language skills and, more generally, "soft skills".

It is obvious that education plays a significant part in all the phases of this process. The envisaged skills cover two components: professional (general and specific) skills and transversal skills.

According to the definition coined by the assessments of the European Commission and the methodology for drawing up the National Qualification Framework in Higher Education in Romania, *"transversal skills are abilities transcending a certain field, respectively a certain study programme, and having a cross-disciplinary nature. They consist of team work skills, oral and written communication skills in one's native/foreign language, the use of information and communication technology – ICT, problem solving and decision making, recognition and respect for diversity and multiculturality, learning autonomy, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, openness towards lifelong learning, respect for and development of professional ethics and values, etc."* (our translation) (National Qualifications Authority of Romania 2008).

Transversal skills complement the knowledge and abilities defining professional skills and are expressed through autonomy and responsibility, social interaction and personal and professional development.

Figure 1: Learning outcomes



At a national level, the National Qualification Framework in Higher Education (Romanian acronym: CNCIS) was drawn up based on the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area, adopted in Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007). This represents a unique description, at a national level or at the level of an educational system, of all the qualifications and other acquisitions obtained during the learning/training process and their consistent correlation.

CNCIS aims at being a single tool, establishing the structure of qualifications and ensuring national recognition, as well as the international compatibility of the qualifications acquired within the higher education system. Moreover, it facilitates the recognition, measurement and matching of all learning outcomes acquired within the higher education system and ensures the consistency of qualifications and certified degrees.

CNCIS has the following specificities:

- *The CNCIS matrix*, integrating professional skills and transversal skills, detailed by level descriptors, across qualification levels and depending on generic descriptors.
- *Grid 1* represents a device for the analysis, description and assessment of a qualification obtained through a Bachelor, Master or PhD programme. The assessment of professional skills implies the establishment of minimum performance standards. Transversal skills are mainly assessed based on quality. They usually require a holistic approach of the various social and group contexts in the exercise of a profession, as well as personal and professional development.
- *Grid 2* helps identify how professional skills are matched to transversal skills and content areas. Grid 2 is based on Grid 1 and helps identify how professional skills are matched to transversal skills, content areas, subjects and related credits.

The conceptual and methodological model describing higher education qualifications implies a unitary and complementary use of the CNCIS matrix and the two tools, Grid 1 and Grid 2.

2. Skills assessment models in Europe

As previously outlined, transversal skills are abilities transcending a certain field, respectively a certain study programme, and having a cross-disciplinary nature. They consist of team work skills, oral and written communication skills in one's native/foreign language, the use of information and communication technology – ICT, problem solving and decision making, recognition and respect for diversity and multiculturality, learning autonomy, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, openness towards lifelong learning, respect for and development of professional ethics and values, etc.

The identification and assessment of transversal skills at a European level have revealed good practices that may be classified as benchmarks for the educational system.

We are mostly talking of the development and deployment of national vocational qualifications systems, correlated to the European Qualifications Framework. Two categories of competence profiles can be distinguished, depending on employment requirements.

The first category deals with competence profiles suitable for public interest fields. Thus, competence profiles such as the Competence Profile for Public Employment Services were created in EU states like Slovenia and the Czech Republic, based on similar experiences in Great Britain. The success of such a profile is due to the decrease of the gap between the skills required in the job description and the strict requirements of public activities.

Another category of competence-based systems is promoted by private organisations, in partnership with either public and education institutions, or other related industries, with a view to facilitating transfer from one field to another. A relevant example is the French model entitled "Transfer". This identifies 83 transferable skills required in the private system, correlated to job descriptions in the public system. The model was drawn up in cooperation with the Laval University of Quebec and is currently used as a single matrix at a national level.

The Dutch "4C Your Way" model is another good practice example in matching basic skills to transversal skills. It has been classified as highly interesting for the development of a transparent competence "language" facilitating the transition from one level of education to another, or from education to the labour market. "4C Your Way" has been

successfully implemented in agriculture and is funded by the "Groene Kennis Cooperatie" innovation platform.

A further example of private initiative in transferable skills is provided by the Lithuanian "City Service Model of Competences". This describes competences across three levels: general skills, leadership skills and professional skills. The utility of this model has been proven in training and assessing work teams.

The public sector of Portugal has implemented the "SHL Universal Competency Framework", developed in 2001 by a private multinational company, a global leader in talent evaluation and finding optimal workplace solutions. SHL structures the 112 competences according to eight general competence factors, resulting in 20 overarching groups. The success of this model is supported by the 403 competence profiles created in 24 different countries.

3. The need to adapt teaching methods with a view to developing transversal skills

Strictly referring to the field of Finance, the transversal skills that graduates should have upon employment can be classified in two comprehensive categories:

- transversal skills in related economic fields (management, marketing, international relations, accountancy, IT, etc.);
- transversal skills shared by all highly specialised professions (communication, ICT, foreign languages, driving license, team spirit, etc.).

The field of Finance has been clearly defined in the latest years, since the financial crisis of 2008 generated new professions, with new competences. The wide framework of Finance covers 4 areas for human resource training and development:

- Public finance;
- Private finance;
- Banking;
- Insurance.

Besides the CNCIS matrix, the Romanian higher education system also provides a range of methods and techniques for the enhancement of such skills, which have witnessed an impressive development in the last 5 years due to the POSDRU projects subsidized by EU funds. Romanian

universities have created cooperation networks in project implementation, stimulating student traineeships in a real life business environment. In this context, students both become acquainted with those requirements in their job description that are not specific to their profession, and develop suitable transversal skills. The activities envisaged by the efforts of the educational system to enhance the acquisition of such abilities mainly refer to:

- organising traineeships throughout the academic year and encouraging internships during holidays;
- organising summer/winter schools;
- encouraging students to participate in individual and team student competitions;
- developing interactive activities in student clubs;
- channelling students towards activities they are genuinely skilled for and counselling students with a view to acquiring and retaining a long-term job.

However, prior to the establishment of clear-cut transversal skills and most certainly with a view to the development of such skills, the theoretical knowledge accumulated by students should be matched and checked against the practical activities of their field of specialisation. This is a first step in the process that prepares future graduates for facing the practical requirements of the field they will work in after graduation.

The adjustment of teaching methods with a view to assimilating a range of transversal skills implies the promotion of an educational system likely to:

- activate and enhance the flexibility and compatibility of the acquired theoretical knowledge with the requirements and needs of future practice;
- optimize the relationships between the academic environment and the practical environment;
- channel students towards activities they are really skilled for and counsel them for the achievement of a long term job;
- foster professional and competitive traineeships, by organizing courses, cross-national exchanges, summer schools and internships with domestic and foreign partners.

4. Identifying transversal skills for Finance students

A poll was addressed to a sample of 20 major employers in the region of Oltenia and at the level of the Dolj County Employment Agency. The information resulting from the poll revealed the main characteristics of the most relevant professions in the field of finance and banking. The conclusions are presented in the following:

Table 1: Identifying Transversal Skills in the Field of Finance

Relevant professions in the field of FINANCE	***Auditor, Treasurer, Finance & banking expert, Finance & banking analyst, Liquidator, Insurance inspector, Finance inspector, Tax expert, Tax consultant, Budget consultant, Real estate placement consultant, Financial analyst, Credit manager, Insurance specialist, Insurance system specialist***	
General activities	Data or information analysis	Identifying the principles, reasons and realities of information, by separating the data or information.
	Obtaining information	Observing, receiving and obtaining the required information from various sources.
	Use of computers	Using computers or computer systems (hardware and software included) in order to program, design programmes, set up functions, input data or process information.
	Data processing	Compiling, encoding, classifying, calculating, tabling, evaluating or checking data or information.
Required specialised knowledge	Economics and accounting	Knowledge of accounting principles

		and practices, of financial markets and the banking system; analysis and reporting of financial data and information.
Fields where transversal skills are found	Mother tongue	Knowledge of the structure and content of the mother tongue, including the meaning and orthography of words, rules of composition and grammar.
	Mathematics	Knowledge and application of arithmetic, algebra, geometry, statistics.
	Computers and electronics	Knowledge on circuits, processors, chips, electronic equipment, hardware and software computer equipment, including programmes and programming.
Job requirements, except those which are strictly professional	Care for details	Care for details and comprehensiveness in completing job-related tasks
	Stress resilience	Accepting criticism and calmly and seriously dealing with highly stressful situations
	Meeting commitments	being someone the others may rely on, a honest person who meets his/her commitments
	Persistence	persistence in front of obstacles
Occupational interests	Conventional (factual) interests	Following procedures and routines, working

		with data and details more than ideas, observing a hierarchical structure
	Investigational interests	Working with ideas, rigorous thinking, investigating facts and solving problems with the help of reason.
	Entrepreneurial interests	starting, organising, leading or coordinating projects, making decisions and managing people, undertaking risks and setting up business.

The analysis helped identify the competences required for the finance field, as well as draw up pertinent conclusions, likely to result in the adjustment of higher education teaching methods, with a view to increasing the prevalence of transversal skills for the graduates of such field.

As the obtained data were processed, the following transversal skills specific to the Finance field were revealed:

- Applying the principles, guidelines and values of professional ethics with a view to ensuring rigour, efficiency and professional responsibility;
- Identifying roles and responsibilities in a multi-specialised team and applying efficient relational and professional techniques within the team;
- Identifying opportunities for continuous training and an efficient use of learning resources and techniques, with a view to personal development.

5. Conclusions

Due to the necessity to adapt to a dynamic and flexible labour market, the educational system must constantly reconsider its teaching and assessment methods and techniques, so as to enhance the knowledge

and skills acquired in previous learning phases. The primary variable of this process, which has to be permanently improved, is the adaptability of potential workforce to the needs of employers, as imposed by economic reality. One may even say that this is a priority of the national education system, since its efficiency is measured in the labour market absorption rate of young graduates. In terms of the quality of skills that may be acquired in the financial sector, the focus lies on the supply of minimum financial qualifications required in all the fields of the business environment. The diversification of occupations in this field implies consistently matching professional training methods to the increased importance of transversal skills. In the latest decade, Romanian economy has witnessed a development of small enterprises, both in terms of number and significance for the economy, so that the proper adaptation of workforce with financial training becomes a crucial issue.

Now, more than ever, education should allow its beneficiaries to choose a horizontal career, as required by the swift increase in workforce mobility.

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ABSTRACT

Given the recent economic and financial crisis, but also the obvious need for reform in most educational systems across Europe, the identification of new tools meant to provide support in developing transversal skills for students currently enrolled in Business and/or Economics Bachelor degrees has become a very important issue. A certain set of skills is required to work with both private and public finance and transversal skills seem to gain a more and more important share as time passes. The professional level of employees becomes increasingly complex, as they are not only required to possess specific financial knowledge, but also IT skills, communication skills, foreign language mastery, to name but a few. At a certain hierarchical level, such skills make the difference between good employees and great employees. This study has been triggered by such practical needs and aims at providing good practice proposals for the efficient development of transversal skills in finance students.

The Development of Management and Marketing-Related Transversal Skills in Entrepreneurial Education in Romania

CĂTĂLIN BARBU *
LIVIU CRĂCIUN **

Competences and competence management represent a significant factor of competitive advantage for any company. Starting from an analysis of the ratio between the competence offer and demand on the labour market, a few conclusions were drawn, of which the most important deals with the necessity to undertake a strategic approach focusing on extended competences, considering behavioural features such as "knowing to learn" and "knowing to be", rather than traditional competences including purely professional or technical skills. In our opinion, competences should be approached according to corporate strategies and should be integrated in a strategic platform.

The content of a company's resources determines the sources of competitive advantage and the company's power to distinguish itself from others. Thus, new concepts were coined, such as *the core competencies of a corporation* (mentioned by Hamel & Prahald 1990) and *dynamic capabilities* (Teece 1997), which help enhance the idea of intangible

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resources. If a resource can be considered a finite complex of assets that may circulate on the market, competences cannot be clearly delimited, cannot circulate on the market and lie at the basis of competitive advantage. Therefore, competences represent a rather complex level of analysis within a company.

When dealing with corporate competence, the individual and professional competences included therein should automatically be taken into account. Most authors dealing with strategy do not approach the issue of individual competences, though the two concepts are very close. The concept of *professional competence* suggests the content of the resources an individual possesses in order to exert his/her work, whereas *individual competence* is a person's capacity to perform a task, starting from his/her qualification.

1. The development of competence as a concept

The emergence of competence as a concept is contemporary to the changes undergone by the educative and the productive system.

The educative system of European countries has experienced significant upheavals in the last fifteen years, which were seen on the one hand in an enhancement of educational offers, resulting in a very varied number of degrees and an improvement in accordance to the needs of the manufacturing industry and, on the other hand, in an unprecedented increase in the number of students. Even though the participants in today's labour market are better prepared, easier to integrate in companies and even adaptable to the labour processes within organisations, they instead have higher claims from the company, especially in terms of employment (a management able to develop their competences and ensure their permanent attractiveness on the labour market) and professional evolution.

As for the competence demand, companies are facing the need to react, to provide high quality services and to improve their competitiveness; therefore, they will always demand an outstanding professionalism from their employees. Companies demand more than a simple capability to occupy a work position and they try to transfer to their employees a part of their own competitive responsibilities. Several phenomena are to be found:

- over-dimensioned standards, i.e. "higher and higher" performance and quality, by "shorter and shorter" deadlines;
- an increased attention to the non-technical and non-material components of individual qualification, that prove to be ever more indispensable in the manufacturing process: initiative, autonomy, adaptability, reaction, capacity to diagnose, to interpret information, to face unpredictable and risky situations;
- a desire for the continuous evolution of competences, depending on technical and organisational changes;
- each individual being invited to involve himself/herself, to use his/her knowledge in professional situations, to actually be responsible for the outcomes.

Thus, competence is a notion that allows employers to establish their expectations depending on the proposed salaries.

2. Professional skills – the traditional approach of competence

Traditionally, competence in companies is managed based on the notion of *professional competence*, i.e. based on the competences required for the operational performance of daily tasks in all the fields of the company: production, management, trading, accounting, human resources. Each task the company has to perform is defined and the competences required for such fulfilment are identified. Recruitment, training, secondment, remuneration, etc. are organised according to such professional competences.

Some of these features are easily identifiable: the ability to do (the science of doing), i.e. an individual's capacity to properly perform a certain number of activities; knowledge, i.e. what an individual knows on a given subject. On the other hand, other features of human beings are strictly intrinsic: social role, public image, what people think is important; self-image; character, motivations and preferences.

The more complex the professional field, the more important it is to understand such "hidden" features. In many cases, the best sellers or engineers are promoted to management positions and fail in short time. Their knowledge and abilities as sellers or engineers helped them attain outstanding performance; however, these skills are no longer basic for a manager.

The competence-based approach helps establish a competence profile that takes the highest performance into account. This scheme guides recruitment, and helps decide on salary policies, as well as implement systems that will facilitate the performers' progress, draw up suitably adapted training courses, manage careers, etc.

The nature of the market(s) approached by the company, the company's strategy and its relevant structure should be taken into account for a proper definition of a competence profile. The skills defined in this manner will include several categories, established according to the concerned company; the categories are focused on professional knowledge, but they may also refer to elements such as communication, management, international opening. A category may be assessed as crucial, significant or marginal for the exercise of each position, with the category of professional or technical knowledge always being thought of as crucial.

These approaches helped many companies improve their human resource procedures and optimize recruitment, training, remuneration, etc., compelling them to a rigorous and detailed description of the qualifications to be ensured and to the construction of sometimes extremely complex competence profiles.

The need to manage competence in the long run resulted in complementary tools, such as succession plans and high potential staff management, aimed at providing the company with the skills which are most difficult to predict. Thus, extremely formalized succession plans appeared in complex companies with a matrix structure; they generally stipulate that two high level successors might quickly replace a manager or an official holding a critical position. Polyvalence is also envisaged, with the same purpose of ensuring competence perenniality at all the company's levels; for instance, back-ups for some professions are established, so that competences should not be lost when an employee leaves.

During periods of swift evolution of professional competence, traditional approaches are more difficult to adapt. They fail to provide the company's chief executive officer and human resource manager with answers to strategic questions such as: The skills we now recruit for the performance of a job can also satisfy other jobs? Does the company hold competences suitable to its strategy at this moment? What about in the

future? Do we have a clear idea of the recruitment profile, so that we may satisfy our needs in the short, medium and long run? Are we prepared to create new jobs, that we cannot define today? How will we manage the required changes in activities, technologies and work organisation if we have staff with long-standing professional experience?

3. Transversal skills – the strategic approach of competence

Strategic approaches pay less attention to professional or technical skills, focusing on extended skills, which take into account behavioural or management features.

Such approaches start from the principle that these professional or technical skills become obsolete in close to no time and they must be replaced on an almost permanent basis. Technical skills correspond to a requirement that is necessary, but insufficient for professional success, since problems arise again and again in terms of market evolution, company operations, changes in clients, accelerated decision making, exchange globalisation, market volatility, changes in accounting guidelines, etc. It is estimated that the knowledge available to humanity doubles every seven years; by 2050, this amount of knowledge will double every 72 days.

For this reason, a new approach implies the identification of skills likely to facilitate permanent learning and uncertainty management. Thus, a company's employees have to work in another way and have to be in touch with the extremely changing environment: nowadays, many companies tend to organise themselves in networks, doing away with pyramidal hierarchical structures that have become inadaptable. In conclusion, external and internal relations are to be fostered, so that the company may operate in a framework where authority does not depend on status, but on competencies.

The objective of competence management also changes accordingly: one no longer talks of defining a function that integrates in the organisation and facilitates wage management, but we are dealing with the definition of extended skills, giving due consideration to the company's strategy, the dynamics of professions, the need for mobility, the necessity to work in a network.

However, extended skills are much more difficult to define; they actually consider behavioural features such as "how to learn" and "how to be", which are completely different from traditional skills, i.e.

professional and technical skills. They are hard to acquire in a traditional training framework. Moreover, most companies focus on degrees excessively and pay no attention to identifying the management abilities of a job applicant.

Extended skills, instead, do not become obsolete at the same rate; they are constant, persist and tend to develop in time. At the same time, they may be fostered through a properly organised professional evolution within the company. The management of extended skills facilitates a better adjustment to the company's strategy and the maintenance of competences through better career management.

Strategic skill management cannot ignore the transfer of competences that takes place with the implementation of technologies considerably amending traditional processes and providing multiple experience transfer possibilities by means of various forms of e-learning systems, knowledge management tools, e-collaboration methods, thematic fora, etc.

Companies deploy such training methods in order to promptly meet their competence requirements. The proposed e-solutions differ from traditional ones in terms of speed of dissemination and application, but especially in terms of their capacity of reaching any geographical area the employee might be located in.

These new management methods will provide the members of a project or a community with a reserved area, where they may match their jobs and communicate, exchange documents, etc. Such community areas are multiplied due to the intranet networks implemented by large groups, helping create functional communities (finance, procurement, etc.), enlarge the group, channel resources towards certain objectives (e-business for instance) and provide a tool package facilitating project management. Collaborative work also represents the driving force of knowledge supply and dissemination, the leverage of competence development.

The previously described approaches should take into account the company's ever increasing need to adapt to a changing and unstable business environment. The implementation of mechanisms helping improve the company's reactivity is a logical response to such instability. One of these mechanisms is the strategic platform, defined by the Boston Consulting Group as a coherent complex of professional skills and

organisational capacities which may lie at the basis of various corporate activities and ensure long-term competitiveness. Thus, companies may perform activities with a sustainable success, based on growth and profitability, if they are able to define, develop and operate a strategic platform.

4. Conclusions

It can be said that the constant evolution of professional skills demands for new organisational capacities, able to foster their full development and valuable use. The optimal management of such organisational capacities may be a significant source of competitive advantage. These capacities vary according to the economic and competitive features of the industry: growth rates, concentration of actors, and intensity of competition. Critical capacities include the capacity to anticipate and react, the capacity to quickly respond to the market, the capacity to understand markets with different sensitivity, the capacity to ensure pertinent recruitment and the loyalty of the company's best collaborators, the capacity to ensure teamwork and knowledge dissemination, the capacity to drive a process based on quality criteria, the capacity to ensure regularity and constancy to service supply and, especially, the capacity to learn, which is far more important than all others.

Now, more than ever, education should allow its beneficiaries to choose a horizontal career, as required by the swift increase in workforce mobility.

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship has become a very challenging issue in Romania's actual economy and the training of students in this field requires the development of a wide range of skills. In the latest years, the development of transversal skills has been a real target at both a macro-level (the educational system) and a micro-level (teachers) in Romania, but a genuine focus on practical, effective tools has been missing. Our interests in the efficient creation, adjustment and implementation of such tools have resulted in the present study, which deals with the development of transversal skills in future entrepreneurs currently studying in the fields of management and marketing. The main starting point of our analysis is an assessment of the students' perceptions and needs in this respect, but also an adaptation of teaching means to the requirements of this specific area.

International Business: the Enhancement of Transversal Skills in International Contracting and Negotiation

ANCA TĂNASIE *

1. Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to point out the key orientation in developing transversal skills for international business students given a very strong correlation with reality – in terms of needs and existing features of the EU labour market, but also with the given groups of students – currently undergraduate students in International Business and Economics (entirely English-taught Bachelor programme).

Based on current literature orientations, we aim at identifying, adapting and applying the main educational instruments capable to enhance transversal skills for the above mentioned group of students.

From a structural point of view, this paper is mainly based on two essential parts: first, a literature review in order to locate the state of the art corresponding to this field, which is somehow interdisciplinary – involving both the educational area and the international business and economics field; and second, the analysis based on given theoretical and

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practical information gained from both documentation and teaching of specialised subjects to the envisaged group of students.

2. Literature review

Transversal or soft skills have been defined within a rather flexible framework, using quite a large array of theoretical instruments. This variability has been partly due to the fact that the core "skill" concept has had several approaches, with a wide of range of interpretations in terms of combining education, training or labour experience. Several authors have addressed this matter (Machin and Van Reenan 1998; Tether et al 2005; Pro Inno Europe 2007, to cite but a few of them). Such approaches have been also used by many national statistical agencies in collecting and analysing the specific labour market (Toner 2011).

A different category of studies has pointed out significant inter-country or inter-cultural approaches

> in the meaning, scope and delivery of skill, which, in turn, have implications for the capacity of the workforce to engage in innovation. For vocational or intermediate occupations it has been argued that there are important differences between the Anglo-Saxon conception of vocational skills and that in continental Europe, especially Germany, the Netherlands and France (Toner 2011: 12).

Moreover, skills as a general aspect, and transversal skills in particular have also been analysed from the perspective of work efficiency. Specialised literature on high performance work systems deals

> with the diffusion of Japanese-style organisational practices in the US and Europe and […] focuses on the diffusion of specific organisational practices and arrangements that are seen as enhancing the firm's capacity for making incremental improvements to the efficiency of its work processes and the quality of its products and services (Arundel et al 2006: 4).

3. Analysis

Reality inside the EU and its ever changing labour market should represent the central hypothesis of this brief research, with a very strong applied component.

Education, and especially higher education, has much evolved during the past decades, mainly due to the implementation of the Bologna process, but also given the stronger orientation towards student-centred teaching. Thus, the focus of this new framework no longer lies on knowledge, but rather on skills and the working processes that could be supported by acquiring such skills, given the practical, technical and scientific restrictions of each existing field.

The main skills aimed to be developed for undergraduate students, according to both the EU and Romanian frameworks, can be classified as follows:

1. Main categories
- learning to learn;
- social and civic competences;
- sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
- cultural awareness and expression;

2. Sub-skills
- critical thinking;
- creativity;
- problem solving;
- initiative and risk assessment;
- decision making;
- management of one's own feelings.

They are universal in terms of applicability for any of the existing economic and social areas of today's society and economy. However, their share in certain types of activities is different. From this point of view, analysis is directed towards more specific higher education areas and becomes particular.

With a view to achieving the desired correlation between education and the needs of the labour market, everything becomes a function of supply and demand, where the supplied product no longer is the student,

but the skills students develop as part of their lifelong training, i.e. also after they have graduated and have left the higher education system. As flexibility is never perfect, it is its degree the one that becomes crucial in defining the adaptability degree of a certain graduate following the requirements of a certain job or position. Recent evolutions in orienting higher education teaching and training point rather towards the achievement of certain categories of future employees from which companies can adapt and raise their future leaders, than towards delivering a fully flexible candidate to society. Just as manufacturing activities, education cannot deliver a universally suitable product, but rather a range of products, with a high degree of adaptability. Perfect diversity cannot be achieved with the existing restrictions.

EU figures indicate (according to Eurostat, quoted by Papavassiliou 2013) a higher need in the area of the medium-skilled labour force: for 2011 – 74 million (medium-skilled) jobs in need versus 61 million (medium-skilled) workers available. This is the true essence of real skills development, not just in the scientific specialization domain, but also in the transversal skills area. Furthermore, 40 million European workers are currently unemployed or underemployed, with a big share of highly skilled individuals from a scientific point of view. This kind of data switches the focus towards transversal skills and adaptability.

Still, 30% of EU firms reported difficulties in finding staff with required skills according to Papavassiliou (2013). This proves the gap between education and the needs of the labour market. One of the explanations is the high degree of dynamics – compared to the labour market, education is an inertial system whose at least three-year time leap must be taken into account. Thus, given this adaptability delay, several cyclic changes of the labour market demand may remain uncovered. The table below, based on EU data, presents the share and polarisation between high and low-skilled labour force for the current time interval covered by the undergoing educational cycles.

Table 1: Polarisation between low and high skilled labour force (2010-2020) (Descy 2013, quoted by Papavassiliou 2013)

	2010	2020
High skilled	32%	35%
Medium skilled	49%	48%
Low skilled	19%	17%

As the medium skilled category is still low, analysis points towards further need of strengthening both students' transversal and hard skills, but also towards the need that teaching staff should further adapt teaching methods and instruments to the requirements of the labour market. In order to customize this analysis, we shall focus on the enhancement of new teaching instruments and techniques meant to develop transversal skills for the undergraduate students in International Business and Economics of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, University of Craiova. The main features of this group are as follows:

- entirely English-taught programme;
- international students – EU and non-EU;
- economics and business training;
- varied age categories;
- varied educational levels.

This information is important as it sets the main coordinates of the analysis:

- foreign language education for most students (English is the native language of few of them);
- multicultural environment;
- different educational background specific to different areas of Europe and North Africa.

These represent essential variables for the present analysis. The main hard skills area for these students is represented by foreign trade, commercial contracting and commercial negotiation. The adaptation of existing teaching methods and instruments useful in the enhancement of transversal skills is based on identifying the key individual and business-

related skills and competencies required by employers of business graduates. Such an assessment has been achieved by means of:

- internships;
- semi-structured interviews;
- individual experience – transition from education to employment in four different areas:
  - perception of current employment;
  - reflections on higher education;
  - work-based learning;
  - possession of business focused skills and competencies;.

Beyond the identification of certain needs and the informal implementation of new educational techniques further validated by practice, this analysis is limited by factors like:

- degree comparability – skills development t the same level between different higher education institutions from different educational systems;
- homogeneity of demanded and provided skills;
- work experience;
- flexibility.

One of the main results of the present analysis is the increasing role of formal work-based learning, together with the following correlation between the different types of skills and alternative development methods:

Table 2: Development of skills

Types of skills	**Alternative methods**
Cooperation	Group work
Negotiation	Internships
Inter-cultural communication	Project work
Language skills	Business simulation
Leadership	

Many of the transversal skills highlighted here are the result of a direct interaction with the business environment during the short term

compulsory internship – 3 weeks at the end of the 4th semester, the long term optional internship – 2 months during summer vacation or the 3rd year graduation paper internship. Since 2010, the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, supported by EU funding, has developed a network of over 100 regional and multinational companies (such as Pirelli, Ford Romania, etc.) which train students during these major internships. Furthermore, the direct contact with the companies has highlighted important curriculum and course content changes aiming and focusing precisely on the development of transversal skills. On a yearly basis, such interaction generates a continuous update of the internship syllabus, but also of the course content and transversal skills enhancement tools, such as applied learning, work-based learning, real-life case studies as part of these companies, but also applied seminaries taught by specialised managers of these companies.

4. Conclusions

Practical activities with students from the International Business and Economics (entirely English-taught) Bachelor studies has pointed towards several needs in connection to the development of transversal skills. Newly identified skills also impose the application of new enhancement methods. The two sides of the present analysis – the students' view and the direct contact with the business environment – have helped us isolate a certain set of transversal skills defined as crucial to international business professionals, such as cooperation (team work), negotiation, intercultural communication, language skills or leadership, but also a new set of transversal skills enhancement tools, including applied learning, work-based learning, real-life case studies as part of these companies, as well as applied seminaries taught by specialised managers of these companies.

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ABSTRACT

International business, contracting and especially trans-cultural business negotiation provide field professionals with a great variety of challenges, from communication to inter-cultural leadership. Such challenges require both scientific and professional skills, but also transversal ones. The present research focuses on the identification and enhancement of most efficient tools employed in the development of these transversal skills for International Business and Economics students as part of English-taught bachelor and master degrees. Such a research also involves an inter-cultural and international approach, since the analysis is based on the assessment of international students coming from different cultural environments, different countries and different educational systems.

Working with Transversal Skills with Nature as the Learning Arena

ANNE-LISE WIE *

1. Introduction

The Norwegian national curriculum *Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet* (LK06) encourages Norwegian primary education to implement an activity and experience-oriented teaching; for instance, leaving the classroom and using nature and the local vicinity as a learning arena. "The local community, with its nature and industry, is itself a vital part of the school learning environment" (KD 2006).

This is not a new idea. Ellen Buaas (2002) writes about an early outdoor pedagogy in the United States in the early 1800s, where one of the starting points was criticism of classroom teaching and book-based education. Outdoor pedagogy is seen as activity directed, with authentic environment, location identity, local ties, and ecological thinking. Outdoors, children may be freer in their physical activity; they can climb higher, jump further, and run faster and longer. This was a movement that died out in the 1930s, to be resurrected in the 1960s (2002:16). Today, we find numerous schools using other learning arenas than the classroom to a lesser or greater extent; from schools with scheduled

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weekly days outdoors, to schools where the outdoors is the most important learning arena.

A number of Norwegian researchers have written about outdoor schooling, such as Jordet, who in 1998 published *Nærmiljøet som klasserom [Local Community Classrooms]* and in 2010 *Klasserommet utenfor [The Classroom Outside]*, Buaas who focuses on esthetic subjects in *Med himmelen som tak [With the Sky as a Ceiling]* (2002), and Fiskum and Husby with their *Uteskoledidaktikk [Outdoor Education Didactics]* in 2014.

However, several of them refer to the lack of research on outdoor pedagogy: Jordet claims that "there is a need for more in-depth studies that can document the impact that using learning arenas outside the classroom may have on young people's holistic learning […]" (2010: 61), and Andersen says that "no systematic study has been undertaken […] on the place of basic skills in teaching, linked to natural learning arenas" (Fiskum and Husby 2014: 85).

In Mo i Rana we find Frikultskolen, a school which has implemented nature as the main learning arena for its teaching; and I went there to learn more: *How do they work with the transversal skills, with special focus on reading and writing, when tuition takes place outdoors?*

2. Method and design

Learning is interactive and productive, and is constructed in meeting with others. Researchers must therefore enter this circle, in order to understand how learning is designed and developed (Tiller 2006:70). To learn how the individual pedagogue in Frikultskolen plans and executes his teaching, I chose to use the research interview. "The research interview is an interpersonal situation; a dialogue between two parties about a topic of common interest. During the interview, knowledge is constructed in the intersection between the views of the interviewer and the interviewed" (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:121). The process of setting up good interviews started with my acquisition of better first-hand knowledge of Frikultskolen, through a practical approach. I spent a week at Frikultskolen in the winter of 2014, where I was present

during teaching as an assistant and participating observer (Vedeler 2000: 398). Holstein and Gubrium write that this is "an implicit argument in favour of combining ethnographic observation with interviewing" (1995: 45).

Three teachers at Frikultskolen have been interviewed: Stein Evensen, Magnus Grolid, and Nils Kristian Tamnes Hansgård; and I have had additional conversations with daily manager Ove-Johnny Bustnesli. This makes up the raw data on which this article is built (Hammersley and Atkinson 2004: 8-9; Holstein and Gubrium 1995: 45).

The starting point for this article is concrete examples from the teaching at Frikultskolen. Using these examples, I describe how Frikultskolen works to ensure that the outdoor teaching is connected to subjects and goals in LK06. The focus of this article is *how does Frikultskolen work with transversal skills, with special focus on reading and writing, when tuition takes place outdoors?*

3. Frikult and Frikultskolen

The non-profit organisation Frikult is made up of Frikultskolen, nursery schools, Frikult care, and Friskog (forestry). The focus of my work is Frikultskolen, and to get the gist of it, Ove-Johnny explains:

"The starting point for the name FRIKULT were the elements I used as a foundation when I as a student worked with my Candidate in Philology Thesis in the field of outdoor life, nature, and environment at the University of Trondheim. Further development in the 1990s gave way to the following key ideas which form the acronym:

- Friluftsliv (outdoor activities)
- Realisme – Raushet (realism, generosity)
- Individualisering – Immaterialisme (individualising, immaterialism)
- Kameratskap – Kultur (camaraderie, culture)
- Ung & Gammel – Utfordringer (young and old, challenges)
- Livsglede – Lek (exuberance, play)
- Trivsel – Trygghet (well-being, safety)".

"Through Frikult, we will contribute to a global sustainable development (GSD; GBU in Norwegian) through individual action"

(Frikult 2015). There needs to be a balance between man's social needs, care for nature, and a fair global economic distribution. The term GSD/GBU was first launched by the Brundtland Commission in its report *Vår felles fremtid [Our Common Future]* in 1987 (UN 1987). The term was adopted in 1991, when Frikult was founded in 1991, and has since been used to define their vision.

For more than twenty years, Frikultskolen has been an alternative for pupils who, for various reasons, have not found themselves at home in the public school system, where one of the pedagogical approaches is based on a continuous documentation of learning, independent of what learning arena is used. Frikultskolen uses nature as a learning arena, since learning may just as well be achieved in a mountain cabin, on a farm, or on board a boat, in addition to a few traditional classrooms at their disposal. Frikultskolen seeks to achieve its goals through individual PPV mentoring (positiv personlig vekst [positive personal growt]h) aimed at both employees, learners, and parents. Regular physical activity in nature contributes to a positive development for the individual, as well as to developing a stronger love and respect for nature. "The Frikult philosophy is built on man's holistic development, both at a social and academic level. This may happen on board a boat, since constructive pedagogy is adapted to pupils' learning in a common social learning arena." (Johansen 2013).

Most of the pupils at Frikultskolen have one form of learning disability or another, and therefore have individual learning plans. Through outdoor activities and adapted teaching, the goal is to create experiences of success for the individual; experiences that s/he may use in further education or work. Teaching is constructed on a natural balance between theory and practice, between "life and learning". Ronald Hansen uses the term "lifelong learning", where he points out how important it is that learning should not only take place through academic exercises (2012).

The holistic approach is a combination of planned and situational learning; the starting point being that the relation between the pedagogue or mentor and pupil is a continuous dissemination of knowledge and competence. Some pupils have classroom teaching some

days a week, while others have all their teaching outdoors. While the contents of the teaching is collected from all school subjects, traditional textbooks are not used.

"It is my responsibility to make them (the pupils) curious", says Stein. He gives an example of how he may work, tying together various goals from the curriculum in an outdoor teaching activity:

"I hear there is a lot of fish up by Leirfossen [a waterfall], so let us drive up there and observe the salmon jumping there; a brilliant starting point for teaching nature, environment and social studies. Larger themes such as energy, social studies, geography, and nature and environment may be encompassed. There is a lot of biology involved observing the fish; from why the fish is there, salmon spawning colours, and migration, to distinguishing male from female species. 'Look! Is there a hook in his mouth?' (…) And when we are there, I ask where we get our electricity from, and we can reason from what we observe. 'Do you see the old water wheel over there?', and the pupils become engaged. While we are out in the field, it is befitting to have sausages on a stick over an open fire – having a good time is part of field work."

In the same way as any other school, the Frikultskolen pedagogue must make a year plan that is based on the national curriculum, LK06. This plan includes the various themes and topics to be taught, but not necessarily *when* they are to be taught. The plan is there rather in order to remind the pedagogue which themes and topics are to be covered during the school year, and so that he may able to stay updated on what has been covered; and where one may need to supplement. "Seize the day", could well have been an appropriate motto, as the teachers constantly need to monitor the pupils' interests, and develop teaching thereafter. This means that the Frikultskolen teacher needs to know LK06 well, and be prepared to ask questions and promote learning through hints, tying the events of the day to the curriculum.

"I knew the national curriculum in my main subjects quite well when I started at Frikult, but after having worked in this way for a while, I notice that I also have a better overview of the other subjects and their goals. In Frikultskolen, one may act rather as a typical general teacher,

as we almost always have to deal with several subjects at once, partly on an ad hoc basis", says Magnus.

Each afternoon, a teacher or mentor makes entries in a digital logbook for each pupil he is responsible for. They write about the day's activities, what worked and what did not; they note which academic topics were addressed during the day, and ask questions towards the Holistic test. The Holistic test is an individual test, where the teacher has collected questions for the past two-week period, based on topics treated more or less thoroughly.

The Holistic test is a comprehensive test, covering most of the subjects in the national curriculum, in addition to more general topics of daily life. Pupils will often struggle to remember all the topics, and in a school without regular textbooks there are no possibilities to read up before the test. In the same manner as in the regular school, they will have a review and feedback session after the test. Teacher and students go through the test question by question, preferably outdoors, where they reflect together over the individual questions and will often further discuss various topics. This session is very important to create an understanding of the subject matter. In the regular school, tests aim at checking and measuring the children's knowledge, while in Frikultskolen a partial goal of the test is to create new motivation to learn more about each topic.

4. Harvesting nature's produce as a starting point for academic work

From early times, the harvesting of berries and mushrooms, along with fishing and hunting, has been a vital part of subsistence. This is a competency that in many places has faded and become lost. Through Frikultskolen, the pupils participate in harvesting self-grown produce, as well as those that nature has to offer. This is how the pupils learn which species are edible and where every species is found; all through practical activities as harvesting potatoes at the farm at Ildgruben, picking berries and mushrooms in the forest, fishing and hunting. In the autumn hunting season, some of the pupils may participate in hunting. The young may participate in hunting training from the year they turn fourteen.

Here is how autumn hunting can be used as a starting point for teaching a number of subjects:

The pupils take part in the planning, and are not just responsible for their own gear. They have to make a budget, make a shopping list, and take part in the procurement process. Before heading for a new destination, the pupils must make themselves acquainted with its history and study maps of the area; and if taking a ferry is needed, they are responsible for checking the timetable. It is important for them to understand and acquire this practical competence.

Furthermore, Stein describes how social studies, religion and ethics are taught during the autumn hare and elk hunting: "Here we have to deal with questions of ethics, which is closely linked to our activities. We start explaining how we think, and the pupils may present their ideas and views. When we e.g. hunt hares on Dønna, they learn about greed, not being greedy, taking care of nature, and taking care of game. It is fun being such places where we can show a lot, treating the game with respect; the same way we treat others with respect."

Prior to a hunting trip, there will also be discussions on the ethics of hunting and taking a life. For the most part, it is about harvesting the produce of nature, and curbing individual species. The discussions are also about showing respect for each other's opinions, and it is to be accepted that some do not want to participate in hunting, because they do not want to take a life.

Environmental crime may be represented by a number of things, such as introducing new species to our fauna. The island of Dønna was stocked with hares in the 1960s, both Norwegian hare and field hare. Today's hares on the island are about twice the size of the Norwegian hare, reddish brown in colour and do not change colour to white in winter as the Norwegian hare does. It clearly has the closest affinity with the field hare. This is a fact that will be a good starting point for discussions about ethics and the environmental consequences of introducing new species into the Norwegian nature, as well as discussions on environmental crime on other levels.

Overnight trips open up for other academic possibilities, says Stein; "I'll bring along the good book; then we have sessions of reading

aloud in the cabins – creating an atmosphere…". This includes one of Norway's best acclaimed novelists Knut Hamsun (1859-1952); an author the pupils most probably would not have made their first choice. Through reading aloud, the pupils become acquainted with the classics. Reading aloud is a much used activity in the earlier years at school, but less used as the pupils get older. There is no reason not to use reading aloud just because the children learn to read themselves. "Reading aloud has no age limits" (Foreningen Les 2015). Reading aloud to an audience has an important value, as it is about literature as a meeting point, jointly gaining literary experiences, creating space for the meaningful literary and philosophical conversation, reading or hearing a good story and relaxing.

Following such trips, the participant pupils may present their experiences to the other pupils. This is typically done using PowerPoint and photos taken during the trip. There is also the option of writing texts based on the field trip.

Butchering and preparation of game is part of the hunting experience, and this is where the subject of food and health comes to its right. In February, the pupils planned a final dinner before the winter holidays. They started with a review of the number of guests to be invited, before they went on to discuss what kind of ingredients were needed for the served game, how to prepare the food, and how much of everything was needed according to the number of guests. This entails a fair bit of calculations. On the practical side, invitations had to be written, along with shopping for ingredients, preparation of the food, setting tables, and serving the meal.

Hunting and trapping in Norway requires knowledge of game, guns, fishing gear, humane hunting, and regulations. New hunters must obtain a hunter's license. Pupils who like to go hunting, and will continue to do so, are encouraged to get such license. In that case, Jegerprøveboka (theoretical material for the course) is the required textbook in addition to various Internet resources. Stein uses the sections he sees as covering goals in the LK06, both in natural science and in social studies. "(…) why should I use the regular text book, why should they (the pupils) read a

lot of other texts they don't care about and are not interested in? But give them the hunting license course book; that works great!"

5. Reading and writing as transversal or basic skills with nature as a learning arena

The five transversal or basic skills specified and focused on in the LK06, such as oral skills, reading, writing, digital skills, and numeracy, are to be tools of learning in all subjects. The basic skills that initially feels most natural to work with outdoors is oral skills. "If we are to bring the subjects out to the learning arenas outside the classroom, we must ensure that basic skills are included. This demands both raising awareness and new thinking" (Fiskum and Husby, 2014: 83). What opportunities are there to tie outdoor teaching to *other* basic skills, as e.g. reading and writing?

Reading and writing are not activities one connects with outdoor teaching, as it is weather dependent. How do they solve this problem in Frikultskolen? We need to consider weather conditions, and think creatively to make the most of the day. Writing outdoors for Frikultskolen's pupils has been writing logs and notes relating to the activities and projects. Another example may be to use a service manual when servicing a car or tractor in the workshop, and by using forms to log tasks performed. The pupils may read instructions and task specifications for nature trails and treasure hunts, and while orienteering they need to be able to read maps.

Planning trips involves all the basic skills: oral skills throughout the planning, writing for preparing shopping lists, numeracy for making a budget, digital competence searching for e.g. ferry timetables, and reading skills for finding information about the location to visit.

The Frikultskolen pupils have a few days a week of classroom teaching, and much of the reading and writing activities are in focus these days. But let us look at reading and writing from a different perspective; what do the terms mean, and what is reading and writing?

Reading is a process in several phases, where the pupil's reading comprehension is a result of activities in the different phases initiated by the teacher. Before beginning to read, the reader will start a preparatory

pre-reading phase. Solid work on motivation and activation of foreknowledge in the pre-reading phase contribute to building a foundation for a good learning outcome (Fiskum and Husby 2014: 99).

Preparations will differ depending on type of text to be read; one does not read a ferry timetable the same way one would a short story. Topics dealt with in teaching outdoors arise curiosity in the pupil, and thus an interest to find out more about the topic; either through the Internet or further reading in books. While reading, the thoughts will digest and work with the foreknowledge on a superior level, and reading comprehension is achieved (Allard, Rudquist and Sundblad 2003: 13-18).

As pointed out, a hunting experience may inspire the pupils to obtain a hunting license. They will then necessarily have to read Jegerprøveboka. Other books well suited to motivate pupils to read may be the theory for obtaining a moped license and boating license. A number of these books also have Internet resources that may be used for teaching. FriSkog is part of Frikult, and here pupils from primary and lower secondary school are given instruction in natural and environmental sciences and forestry. There is a fair bit of theory involved. The newspaper of the day may be a starting point for many teaching activities such as reading and discussion and debate within the field of social studies.

"When the teacher manages to make the pupils of vocational subjects understand that mathematics and English are relevant for their future jobs, the chances are greater that they complete their education", says Anne Sigrid Haugset, advisor and research presenter, Trøndelag. This is a matter of course for all teachers, but still worth including in the planning stage. Pupils at Frikultskolen select their own reading material based on their own needs or interests, where it is the reader's task and responsibility to find out how this may be used in their learning, by selecting topics from relevant books, that may also inspire them to further reading.

As with reading, work with writing may be divided into phases. Logbooks or taking notes may serve as examples of a pre-writing phase, where the text is developed in the classroom.

In response to our question on how one may work with reading and writing, Nils-Kristian responds "if there is written work to be done in the field, it is nice to use one of our cabins. My claim is that the pupils often perform better in these cosy, familiar, and safe environments; surroundings that are not connected with the classroom". This is another way of seeing the issue: What does it mean to take the teaching out of the classroom? It is not necessarily a matter of using the outdoors as a learning arena at all times, but to find other teaching arenas that also function well. The type of teaching offered in the applicable arena is controlled also by location and group of pupils.

Reading a map to find one's way in nature is used as an example of reading outdoors. In the same way, we read other sources of information, even though these do not contain text. In English, one uses the term *visual literacy* to describe the ability to read and analyse images, symbols, objects, and other elements. Reading in this manner is about observing and analysing all elements in the surrounding that may be a source for learning (Fiskum and Husby 2014: 88).

Arts and crafts at Frikultskolen takes place outdoors, and in the winter of 2014 we worked to create ice sculptures. In order to create a sculpture like the one we see in the first picture on the previous page, the pupil must acquire knowledge of the material, in this case a block of ice. S/he must plan how to use the tools in order to reveal the sculpture s/he aims at creating. S/he must "read" the ice block. The joy of creating something was great for all, students and educators. The second photograph shows the "sculpture park", the result of the day's work.

"There is a need to clarify the situations where pupils can read, write or do mathematics in the field; be it by analogue or digital tools" (Fiskum and Husby 2014: 86). Our continued task on the project is working with awareness; what is working with basic skills in the outdoor arena? Are the teachers conscious of what they are doing, and how can we develop their current methodology?

6. Other skills in focus at Frikultskolen

The idea of basic skills in Norway stems from the OECD's work determining basic skills for the post-industrialized society: competences for interaction in mixed social groups, competence for independent action, and competence in using tools for interaction. Norway choses to focus on the latter competence area of using tools for interaction, such as language, symbols, text, and technology. The term *skills* is preferred to the wider term *competence*, which also includes knowledge, attitudes, and values. This may be seen in the connection with it being easier to measure skills through national testing (Fiskum and Husby 2015: 84).

Most of us can agree that oral skills, reading, writing, digital skills, and numeracy are five important areas that need to be implemented in all subjects. Many may also agree with Hilde Traavik, who claims they might be expanded to eight skills. "Three such skills are immediately recognized as missing in the LK06 are namely basic social skills, basic aesthetic skills, and basic skills in the use of one's body" (Traavik 2009: 30). Based on this, the teachers at Frikultskolen were asked the following: "A claim is that we need to emphasize more basic skills in Norwegian schools, maybe seven or eight. What basic skills are missing? What basic skills do you emphasize in your teaching?". The answers received correspond well to Traavik's views:

- social skills;
- physical skills, being outdoors;
- arts and crafts and other day-to-day skills;
- see connections between subjects and/or areas of competence.

Frikultskolen works with pupils who have not mastered school earlier; their schooling has been characterized by a feeling of failure, and teachers have more or less "given them up". For many, this has resulted in a negative and disruptive behaviour. They need to learn how to interact with other people, before they are ready to start learning school subjects. Through outdoor activities, they learn many social skills, they learn to interact with others in a new setting. "Outdoor schooling forms (...) a physical, psychological, and social learning context that cannot be constructed in the classroom. This changes the school's established traditions of social interaction. The informal limits outside the classroom

thus create a suitable framework for working with pupils' social formation." (Jordet 2010: 160). In nature we encounter a natural environment that invites to various activities, where many pupils are testing themselves in completely new areas. Different pupils can choose the activities and challenges of their skill level. Activities and skills are less measurable in outdoor environments, which means that pupils do not so easily compare themselves with one another, but their performance is mostly measured against what they have achieved earlier (Fiskum and Husby 2014: 77). Jordet points to the connection between physical activity, cognitive abilities and school performance and believes it is scientific evidence to say that children with high physical activity levels also have better-developed cognitive functions (2010: 67).

Transfer of knowledge and culture has always been linked to family and everyday life, both in early hunter cultures and later in the farming community. Just a couple of generations ago, this was the daily life of children; they followed the adults in their daily work, where training and instruction occurred in connection with the work that was carried out (Pryser 1985: 128). At Frikultskolen, pupils learn handcrafts and how to manage tools, in addition to the theoretical knowledge they obtain. Elementary school pupils are offered instruction in forestry, as well as safety and brush cutting courses. The pupils are instructed how to correctly and safely handle a chainsaw. On the farm at Ildgruben, there are animals that need to be taken care of. Through trips and projects the pupils get the knowledge and competence they need in daily life.

Nils Kristian asked pupils what did they think was the most important? The pupils pointed to individual feedback and mentoring, as well as being seen by the teacher. They like that theory can be linked to practical work. We think it is interesting that they point to "being seen by the teacher". The general part of the LK06 states that "school should have room for all, and teachers must therefore have an eye for the individual" (KD 2006). This might sound so obvious, but is not always valid. Therefore, pupils at Frikultskolen show that they are reflective and conscious young people who thrive with the school they have been offered.

Magnus points out the ability to see connections between subjects and themes: "I have a feeling that many pupils can memorize and learn a lot in individual subjects, but they do not quite manage to see the connection between e.g. social studies and religious instruction and ethics. This is perhaps a skill one thinks mainly characterizes stronger pupils, but I think it is a basic skill as well".

Traavik writes about the three skills she thinks are missing, which "[…] are also, in addition to the others, areas where having basic skills is essential in order to live a good, full life: socially, culturally and physically" (2009: 30-31). The focus lies on a holistic development. "In our culture we want to develop the whole person, so that the adult can live a life that serves both man himself and the society in which he lives" (Juell and Norskog 2006: 35). When Frikultskolen emphasizes these skills, it is because their education is based on a holistic view of humanity.

7. Conclusive remarks

Textbooks are not followed in Frikultskolen, since LK06 is the instructional guideline here. This ensures that the teachers must know it well and be able to use the provided opportunities. At a first glance, it may be difficult to see how the basic skills fit in this pedagogy, because we look for them with the traditional school as the frame of reference. Teaching and learning in an outdoor environment is more than just bringing the books outside and do what we would do in the classroom. We need to find a methodology that suits the target learners, the location and the subject contents. (Fiskum and Husby 2014: 30).

As a teacher, it is our task to positively encourage and motivate pupils to learn, and I conclude with Stein's words: "In order to do a good job, to be a good pedagogue and mentor in this line of work, you need self-confidence. You must trust yourself, and be creative in order to seize the opportunities".

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Abstract

Frikultskolen (education based on nature and culture) in Mo i Rana has for more than twenty years been an alternative for pupils who of various reasons do not fit in with the regular school system. The pedagogy of Frikultskolen is founded on holistic human development. Nature is used as a learning arena, where learning may just as well take place in a mountain cabin, at a farm, or on board a boat; as well as in the traditional classroom. The contents of the training is taken from all the school subjects on offer.

Outdoor teaching is more than merely bringing the textbook outside, and do the same as one would do indoors. There is a need to develop teaching and learning methods that are suited to the target audience, the area, and the content. Our thesis statement is "how to work with the transversal skills, with special focus on reading and writing, when training takes place outdoors".

In order to learn more about Frikultskolen's work, the author has employed fieldwork methodology; spending time in the field, observing, and having conversations with teachers both in informal settings and in interview form.

Transversal Skills Developed through Project-Based Learning (PBL)

DANIELA DINCĂ *

1. Introduction

The University of Craiova has a long-standing tradition in the development of study programmes in Humanities[1], but the greatest challenge it has had to face in the last decade deals with an educational offer based on fostering the graduates' professional and transversal skills, with a view to a successful and effective job market insertion.

Starting from the necessity to develop the transversal skills of future French language teachers, the hereby paper aims at presenting project-based learning as an interactive teaching/learning method allowing students to choose their own learning itinerary in order to complete an activity organised as a project. The ultimate gain would be the acquisition of a strategy whereby they learn how to learn, and, particularly, to organise themselves as teams and make decisions. More precisely, the goals we aim at achieving with this paper are the following: a. a brief perspective on foreign language teaching (a competence-centred

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[1] The Pedagogical Institute of Craiova was established in 1959, and two years later it was restructured into four faculties, one of which was the Faculty of Philology.

curriculum, an action-based approach); b. a review of project-based learning; c. an illustration of this method with some good practice examples in French Civilisation courses.

Our target audience includes Bachelor students in Humanities – *Language and Literature*, future foreign language teachers. The training itinerary of a foreign language teacher in Romania includes two compulsory phases: Bachelor's degree (3 years) and Master's degree (2 years), and the optional PhD (3 years).

2. A competence-centred curriculum

In Romania, the competences of graduates in the *Language and Literature* field were classified by the former Romanian National Agency for Higher Education Qualifications and Economic and Social Partnership (ACPART) [2] as follows:

A. Professional Skills:

- Suitable use of concepts in the study of general linguistics, literary theory and universal and compared literature;
- Effective written and oral communication in the mother tongue and Romanian/modern language;
- A synchronic and diachronic description of the linguistic phenomenon of the mother tongue;
- A synthetic and analytical, aesthetic and cultural presentation of the literary phenomenon and popular native culture;
- A description of the phonetic, grammatical and lexical system of language B and its use in text production and translation and verbal interaction;
- The analysis of literary texts in language B, in the context of the literary traditions in the reference culture.

[2] ACPART was dissolved in 2010, and several changes ensued in the structure of the higher education qualifications system in Romania. However, the list of professional skills and transversal skills adopted for *Language and Literature* graduates has remained unaffected. At the present time, this field is covered by the National Qualifications Authority (*Autoritatea Națională pentru Calificări – ANC*). More information on the mission of this organisation can be found on www.anc.edu.ro.

B. Transversal Skills:

- Using the components of the language and literature field in full compliance with professional ethics.
- Team relations; interpersonal communication and undertaking specific roles.
- Organising an individual continuous training project; achievement of training goals through informative activities, team projects and participation in institutional programmes focused on personal and professional development.

According to the nationwide definition adopted in the Romanian educational system, transversal skills are abilities transcending a certain study programme: team work skills, oral and written communication skills in one's native/foreign language, the use of information and communication technology – ICT, problem solving and decision making, recognition and respect for diversity and multiculturality, learning autonomy, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit, openness towards lifelong learning, respect for and development of professional ethics and values, etc. With a view to establishing the curriculum according to the competences defining each qualification, individual study programmes have to identify correlations between competences and content areas, study subjects and the related number of credits.

3. An action-oriented approach in language teaching

The modern teaching perspective in the field of foreign languages is established by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFRL), a document promoting the action-oriented or action-based approach. *Action* is the key concept of this teaching approach and implies a redefinition of the objectives and teaching/learning methods, as well as the role of the main actors involved in the development of this process. The methodological principles defining modern language teaching are the following:

(a) A student is a language user.

Students learn a foreign language in order to use it in real communication contexts; they become users and they can be classified, in terms of competence descriptors, into: basic, independent, and proficient.

(b) A student is a social actor.

The purpose of learning correlates communicative tasks with an action performed by the user, who overcomes linguistic, affective, social and pragmatic constraints in order to achieve efficient communication within a social group:

> The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as 'social agents', i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action (CEFRL 2001:9).

(c) A student has a task to accomplish.

According to CEFRL, students should accomplish tasks "in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment". The performance of a task is an action-based approach whereby the user correlates learning strategies to the task s/he has to fulfil in a specific context. A task is characterised as follows:

- a task is *a contextualized activity*, in so far as it is organized in a genuine situation the user faces in his/her everyday life, so that its accomplishment helps achieve a goal close to real life;
- a task has *a concrete outcome*, frequently seen in a project implying the existence of a work plan arranged by the teacher.

(d) A teacher is a mediator, a guide, a tutor.

The performance of a task is an open activity, implying the teacher's intervention as a mediator, a guide or a tutor during such process, helping solve crisis situations according to the students' levels of knowledge and needs.

Teaching is a small part of a teacher's activity, who should also have professional competence (curricular, pedagogical, cultural knowledge), transversal competence (organisation of annual timelines, construction of teaching scenarios, establishing objectives, identifying teaching resources, class management, using a wide array of assessment techniques, etc.), as well as professional tact in order to adjust to the audience's level, to permanently motivate it and, especially, to manage

varied techniques and strategies in directing the learning process. All this is completed by his/her creative capacity, inventiveness and spontaneity in handling formal and non-formal methods, techniques and strategies during the competence acquisition process:

> […] the most important thing a teacher can do is provide the richest possible linguistic environment in which learning can take place without formal teaching (CEFRL 2001:39).

In other words, starting from a real knowledge of students (level of knowledge, objectives, motivation), a teacher should propose a teaching scenario where a student becomes an active person building his/her own learning path in an environment which is favourable to the acquisition of transversal skills, with the involvement of all internal resources (level of knowledge, motivation, learning strategies) and external resources (internet, maps, books of maps, travel guides, etc.) in order to act in concrete real life situations.

4. Project-based learning

Training the communicative competence is critical in foreign language teaching, but it needs a goal, a purpose that can only be a pragmatic one: the development of a project, of a communication in a given situation, not a communication outside a context. Authentic documents will not be used by the teacher in the actual teaching process, but rather in constructing the students' own learning itinerary, defined by knowledge level, motivation and purpose.

According to CEFRL, a project is a guided or purpose-oriented interactive activity:

> Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state: the tasks that learners will need/be equipped/be required to undertake in the educational domain, a) as participants in guided, goal-oriented interactions, projects, simulations, role plays, etc. (CEFRL 2001:55).

The fact that projects are associated to simulations and role plays proves that the authors of CEFRL view projects as a working tool that

involves students in a joint action, helping them fulfil various tasks, which will eventually result in the achievement of the proposed goals.

The *project-based approach* only is mentioned once, in the same context, with the purpose of emphasizing the relevance of this teaching method, primarily due to the resources and strategies mobilised for the performance of a task:

> In this sense, too, the so-called project-based approach, global simulations and various role-playing games establish what are basically transitory objectives defined in terms of tasks to be carried out but the major interest of which as far as learning is concerned resides either in the language resources and activities that such a task (or sequence of tasks) requires or in the strategies employed or applied. In other terms, although in the rationale adopted for the conception of the framework of reference plurilingual and pluricultural competence becomes apparent and is developed through the carrying out of tasks, in the approach to learning adapted, these tasks are only presented as apparent objectives or as a step towards the achievement of other objectives (CEFRL 2001:138).

Starting from the model proposed by Cătălina Ulrich (1999), project-based learning is a complex activity involving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of those engaged in the accomplishment of the final product. Therefore, it implies the development of the following steps:

1. Choosing a topic
2. Establishing the objectives
3. Activity planning:
   - allocating responsibilities within the group (for group projects);
   - identifying information sources (parents, teaches, manuals, encyclopaedias, media, results of older projects, etc.);
   - establishing a timeline of the tasks (a realistic analysis of the required time);
   - establishing the methods to be used.
4. Actual research or investigation (during a longer period)
5. Performance of end products (reports, posters, albums, portfolios, etc.)

6. Presentation/transmission of results to other peers and/or other persons (pupils in the schools, teachers, members of the community, etc.)

7. Assessment of the research/performed activities (on an individual or group basis), by the teacher or by the potential beneficiaries of the project/performed products).

5. The French civilisation course

The project we propose is organised within the French civilisation course that students attend in the 1st semester of their 1st year of Bachelor's degree. This is their first contact with French culture and civilisation, a first assessment of their knowledge on France and, moreover, a preparatory phase of the three-month mobility most students perform in France during the 2nd year, within Erasmus+ exchanges. The course is interactive, as students get involved in compared debates on culture and civilisation-related topics. Relevant and authentic images, videos and audio clips are used.

According to the competences established at a national level, the professional competences envisaged within this class are:

- Increasing the students' awareness of French culture and civilization;
- Emphasizing the interdependence between cultural acts and their historical context, through a diachronic exposition of history, everyday life, evolution of science and technology, art and literature;
- Developing the capacity to use social and cultural codes (behaviour guidelines and rules) specific to French culture;
- Developing the capacity of overcoming superficial stereotypical relations.

As for transversal skills development, the teacher takes the following into consideration:

- Stimulating a positive attitude, of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity;
- Adopting an innovative, responsive an open attitude towards other people's culture;

- Team relations; interpersonal communication and involvement in specific roles;
- Development of civic spirit.

Intercultural pedagogy also applies the methodological principles of a student-centred action-based approach. To this purpose, CEFRL focuses on developing an intercultural conscience and personality, helping the student to better understand the lifestyle, mentality and cultural heritage of the people speaking this language. In teaching French culture and civilisation, the starting point is the recipient's identity, since s/he will filter all the cultural assets s/he receives through his/her own culture. The major difficulty that may arise in this first contact between persons belonging to different cultural universes is the development of an open and tolerant attitude towards other people. Studies have shown that, in most cases, the first reflex of the one coming into contact with another culture is to generalise, to promote preconceived stereotypes or ideas, a label that is applied more or less deliberately. Through the discussions, presentations and projects the teacher proposes to students, the latter may express their viewpoints and, moreover, may validate or invalidate their prejudices, preconceptions or stereotypes regarding the French people.

The second methodological principle a teacher must take into account is the significance of the relationship between the student and the one s/he comes into contact with, in terms of national identity, so that one may say that discovering others is actually a rediscovery of oneself:

> In an intercultural approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favourable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture. (CEFRL 2001:1)

From this point of view, teaching French language and culture is not a simple transmission of information, but rather the interaction between the native culture of the one learning a foreign language and the culture of that language. Starting from an attitude of tolerance and openness towards the other people's culture, students build a real and

objective image, leading towards a personal understanding and interpretation of cultural connotations.

6. A good practice example: project-based learning

The good practice example we will present in the following is the organisation of a virtual trip to Paris within the French civilisation course. The level of the target audience is A2-B1, and the class aims at achieving goals such as:

General goals:

- simulating real life activities;
- the students' active involvement in the performance of activities, each one having his/her own properly established role;
- using imagination and creativity to build one's own learning path;
- commitment of students for the accomplishment of tasks.

Specific goals:

- motivating students to find out information on the touristic potential of France and Paris in particular;
- using methods and techniques adapted to the students' level and needs.

Both the steps defined by Ulrich (1999), and the specific methodological principles of foreign language teaching (CEFRL) have been envisaged for the organisation of this activity, so that the following steps were proposed to students[3]:

A. *The preliminary/initial phase*

The purpose of this phase is to get the students acquainted with the vocabulary required for this project, with the steps of organising a trip abroad and, especially, to assess the students' prior knowledge and experience.

[3] Annex (1) proposes a schematic presentation of the phases, objectives, methods and transversal skills implied by project-based learning.

In the initial phase, the teacher uses the method of conversation, direct interrogation, simulation and role play in order to create a proper atmosphere for the organisation of a trip abroad, to Paris in our case.

Starting from the questions *What do you know about France? Have you ever been to Paris?*, the teacher involves the students in a series of open questions, and the students answer according to their knowledge:

1. *Quels sont les deux chanteurs/chanteuses/groupes français que tu préfères ?*
2. *Quels trois monuments parisiens trouves-tu les plus impressionnants ?*
3. *Peux-tu donner le nom du politicien français que tu connais le mieux ?*
4. *Il existe plusieurs marques de voiture françaises. Tu peux en mentionner deux ?*
5. *Quelles trois villes françaises aimerais-tu visiter ?*
6. *Pourrais-tu donner les couleurs du drapeau français de gauche à droite ?*
7. *Lorsqu'on te parle d'un petit déjeuner français, sont les deux choses auxquelles tu penses?*
8. *Si on te propose de déguster deux fromages français, lesquels choisiras-tu ?*
9. *De quels auteurs français avez-vous déjà lu un livre / entendu parler ?*
10. *On dit que Paris est aussi une capitale de la mode. Connais-tu le nom de deux maisons qui vendent des produits de luxe (parfum, mode) ?*

Based on a global assessment of the students' knowledge, this step aims at training the following transversal skills: foreign language communication; self-assessment of resources, spirit of initiative and digital competence.

B. *Establishing the project*

In the previous phase, the teacher managed to arouse the students' interest for discovering France and, especially, for organising a trip to Paris. Based on the assessment of the students' internal and external resources, the teacher and the students agree on the project topic and the classroom is divided into working groups, which are assigned tasks depending on certain constraints related to time and budget (means of transport, accommodation, visits of major sights):

Task 1: *Find the best means of transport for a group of 20 students in May, for a budget of 4,000 EUR.*

Task 2: *Find accommodation in Paris for 7 days, with an estimated budget of 4,550 EUR.*

Task 3: *Establish the most important sights you will see in Paris during the trip (May 7-14). Check the visiting hours for each of them and draw up a cultural programme of the entire trip. Assess the cost of the entire cultural programme.*

Task 4: *Based on the chosen accommodation, establish what means of transport you may use to get to the major sights. Check whether there is a convenient type of ticket for the entire period.*

This phase involves additional training for the teacher, who must provide the students with all the information they will need in order to fulfil their tasks and. The digital resources needed to draw up the project should be especially indicated: the official website of Paris (http://www.paris.fr/), a map of Paris (http:// www.paris.fr/fr/asp/ carto/carto2.asp), the Yellow Pages (http://www.pagesjaunes.fr/), some monuments (http://www.monum.fr and http://www.rmn.fr), hotels (http://www.fuaj.org/), restaurants in Paris (http://www.restoaparis. com), transportation (http://www. eurolines.fr/index.html, http://www. ratp.fr, http://www. voyages-sncf.com).

The transversal skills engaged in the development of this phase are: foreign language communication, self-assessment of resources, initiative in the establishment and fulfilment of tasks. Team work will play an utmost part. This general involvement and task division motivates the students, who simulate an actual activity and discover their limits and, particularly, the possibilities to develop their skills and attitudes, becoming genuine actors of their own learning path.

C. *Drawing up the project*

This step mostly focuses on team work and on deploying the students' digital competence. Documentation and collection of the required information involve students in a choice of the best alternatives, by assessing all the offers and making the most suitable decisions for the fulfilment of the tasks agreed on with the teacher.

Team work implies an allocation of tasks within the group, depending on the knowledge and, especially, the documentation abilities of each member. Students may work in pairs in order to solve the four tasks. The use of the resources provided by the teacher may be completed by other information the students have access to and are acquainted with, particularly since every initiative in the group results in enhanced self-confidence, spirit of initiative and civic spirit. Depending on the period and the available budget, students look for the best option for transport and accommodation. The following methods are used: problematisation, team work, brainstorming, dialogue, conversation, reading.

The transversal skills fostered in this phase are: foreign language communication, initiative, digital competence and development of team work skills.

D. *The accomplishment of the project*

This phase implies objectives such as: considering all the proposed solutions, negotiating on the best solutions and accomplishing the final product. The following methods are used: brainstorming, problematisation, negotiation, argumentation.

It may be said that this phase is the one fostering the highest number of transversal skills, since students have to submit a final product authored by them, and representing the result of the team work and contribution of each of them. These transversal skills are: foreign language communication, learning to learn, initiative, digital competence, team work, development of critical thinking, development of civic competence. In fact, this phase has the highest impact on the students' commitment, since they will present their project and they will be assessed not only by the teacher, but by their peers as well.

E. *Presentation and assessment of the project*

The presentation of projects by each team implies a correlation between the established tasks and the proposals provided within each project. The assessment of each project implies an analysis of the proposed solutions and, especially, of the approaches used to find them.

The group's presentation of their project results in the development of the students' commitment and civic competence. They will have to use a foreign language for presenting a final product, which will develop their critical thinking and will help them define their role within a group that has to accomplish a task in a given context, i.e. within the parameters of an action-oriented teaching approach turning students into language users.

7. Final considerations

Designed with a view to ensure the implementation, not acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes, project-based learning is a method included in competence-centred curricula. Starting from a topic of interest for students, it is an effective working tool, since it implies the active involvement of students during the entire development of activities assessed based on a final product such as a thematic folder, a portfolio, a proposal to solve a problem, an exhibition, etc.

The advantages of project-based learning are undisputed, especially from the point of view of the student, but also for the teacher who, thus, possesses a working tool that motivates students, with a much higher rate of success than a simple presentation of new knowledge.

First and foremost, project-based learning develops the autonomy of students. Besides the acquisition of new knowledge, students develop skills and abilities to use various learning strategies with a view to successfully completing an action, on an individual or group basis. Learning to learn becomes synonymous to building a flexible and coherent learning path, allowing for the development of one's own personality.

Furthermore, students become aware of their limits and position within a group, which is a significant factor in motivating learning and the acquisition of the required skills for the accomplishment of the final product. Action is equivalent to the involvement of the entire profile of competences, skills and attitudes for documentation, defence of ideas, planning and negotiation of viewpoints.

Thirdly, students' self-assessment of their own resources and possibilities to manage team work is a significant factor in the

development of team spirit and civic competence. Students are highly motivated, since they have to work together in order to reach a joint purpose that will emphasize the role and contribution of each of them in the attainment of the best results. The collective dimension of learning is critical for the successful completion of an action.

On the other hand, the teacher is the one who has to change his/her status and role: s/he transitions from knowledge-oriented learning towards skills training. This complex activity turns him/her into a genuine mediator or tutor, prepared to provide suggestions and information to students facing difficulties in the accomplishment of their responsibilities.

Firstly, activities should be planned depending on the students' needs and difficulties, with a suitable allocation of responsibilities within the work group and, especially, with the choice of pertinent and accessible information sources. Negotiation plays a significant part in establishing an agreement between teacher and students, as a critical element in motivating students and opening a proper way of action. All this is accompanied by the assessment of the end product, and of the methods and means allowing for its accomplishment.

The permanent interaction with students, the collective efforts for the attainment of the same goals, turning the teacher into a partner to the teaching process, are mechanisms aiming at ensuring the success of this teaching approach.

In conclusion, the project method manages to motivate students, providing them with the possibility to make decisions, to work independently from the teacher, but under his/her careful supervision. The teacher is the only who can guide students, who can help them find answers to questions and new tracks to follow in order to solve some queries. Thus, s/he becomes partner in an activity that will allow students to complete their projects and, implicitly, their own learning path, developing new skills and abilities.

However, the teacher must assume some cautions in the use of this teaching tool. Therefore, the limits of this method might be:

- losing sight of the objective or the inability to process and synthesize too much information;

- lack of correlation between the tasks and the proposals provided by each project;
- conflicts within the work group because of the lack of openness and tolerance of some students who want to abusively impose their views.

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Annex (1)

PHASES	TARGETS	METHODS	TRANSVERSAL SKILLS
PRELIMINARY/ INITIAL PHASE	• Getting the students acquainted with the vocabulary and the steps of this project • Assessing the students' knowledge and prior experiences	• Conversation • Direct interrogation • Simulation • Role play	• Communication in a foreign language • Learning to learn • Sense of initiative • Digital competence
DESIGNING THE PROJECT	• Choosing the project topic • Allocating tasks within workgroups depending on certain factors (means of transport, accommodation, visits to major sights)	• Reading • Problematisation • Simulation • Dialogue • Conversation • Role play	• Communication in a foreign language • Learning to learn • Social and civic competences • Sense of initiative • Digital competence
DRAWING UP THE PROJECT	• Documentation and data collection • Assessment of all travel and accommodation offers	• Problematisation • Pair work • Brainstorming • Dialogue • Conversation • Reading	• Communication in a foreign language ▪ Learning to learn • Social and civic competences • Sense of initiative • Digital competence • Critical thinking

PERFORMING THE PROJECT	• Considering all proposed solutions • Negotiating the best solutions and accomplishing the final product • Making decisions in order to accomplish the tasks agreed with the teacher	Exposition Explanation	• Communication in a foreign language • Learning to learn • Digital competence • Social and civic competences
PROJECT PRESENTATION AND ASSESSMENT	• Correlation between the assigned tasks and the proposals performed within each project • Individual assessment of each project • Analysis of the proposed solutions and the approaches used in order to reach such solutions	Explanation Debate	• Communication in a foreign language • Learning to learn • Critical thinking

ABSTRACT

Starting from the general topic of transversal skills training in Humanities students, the hereby paper aims at presenting project-based learning as an interactive teaching and learning method implying the selection, processing and synthesis of information, the asking of questions, interactions within the group, communication of results, correlation of outputs and creation of a final product. We shall aim both at an overview of the benefits of this method for the training of future teachers of foreign languages, as well as an illustration thereof with some examples of good practices in French Civilisation courses. Students may, thus, freely choose their itinerary to complete this action, and they will acquire a strategy of learning to learn and, particularly, to organize themselves in teams and make decisions.

Literature Classes – A Way to Prepare Students for Life by Developing Transversal Competences

FLORENTINA ANGHEL *

1. Introduction

Literature has always been one of the core subjects of English major study programmes in our institution for both undergraduates and master students and has attracted many students who understand that a foreign language is a tool that opens their pathways through literary texts, among other texts, towards understanding life, developing communication skills, tolerance and other transversal competences. Despite debatable opinions related to the fictional character of literature, ranging from literature as a twisted form of reality to escapist literature which makes readers abandon everyday life for the reading period, there are more and more students who succeed in identifying a practical side of literature classes as an echo of Aristotle's and Horace's statements that literature both teaches and delights. Irrespective of whether literature is consumed for the sake of the pleasure it instils in the reader or for its documentary value, reading literature is practical and beneficial.

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Through a fictional story about the past, literature sets a truth as reliable as any other story that is retrospectively told. Readers can thus similarly learn from both a story based on real facts and a fictional one.

Students' interest in studying literature has been enhanced by using new tools in teaching it and by choosing the appropriate literary text for the audience's expectations. As regards the new tools, collaborative activities, such as project-based learning, group activities, debates, etc. stir students' imagination and interest and I will focus on such activities below. The appropriate literary text harmonized with the appropriate approach can form an incentive powerful enough to launch students into analysis and debates.

2. Teaching literature

The aim of teaching literature surpasses the common acceptance, that is of making students acquire and store information concerning literary currents, authors and their works, that of turning them into walking encyclopaedias without having any practical outcome other than a well-informed graduate who may conduct a precious conversation with pedantry. The speedy changes in technology have also resonated in literature and in approaches to literature, resulting in new expectations on behalf of the readers. Consequently, students' expectations have changed and they are responsive to more dynamic and practical teaching tools (action-based learning, project-based learning, debates, etc.) which eventually integrate and develop more skills.

Literature classes actually represent a way to shape students' personality and thinking both diachronically and synchronically, providing them with tools that may make them explore the system of systems that literature is. Without attempting a structuralist approach, the purpose is to state that authors filter and "translate" their *experience* (encompassing information about the social, historical, economic, etc. context, personal and other responses to this context, other works of art, including other literary texts) into literary texts by using the language system and adequate literary devices. The product is a form of a more or less deliberately twisted reality, due to the authority of more reflector

elements that intertwine (the author, language, technical devices – all contributing to the distortion of reality) to create fiction.

As unreliable and ungraspable as it may seem, reality is captured in the work and remains communicative for a competent reader, and often for an empirical one. The last phase, of reading, implies both delight and teaching, as readers enjoy a well written text and find out information about the author's inner and outer reality. (e.g. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* written as a manual to teach readers to manage in a similar situation; in Ian McEwan's *Atonement* the protagonist wants to teach her brother to be tidier by presenting him a play she has written).

In the examples mentioned above readers are expected to learn how to do things: to survive alone on an island, respectively to be tidy. However readers can benefit much more. First of all, reading literature means decoding language used differently from common language: a variety of synonyms, antonyms, phrases and idioms, multiple meanings of words, ambiguities, figures of speech, twisted syntax. By simply reading literary texts, students can unawares develop their vocabulary and a sense of language which will later facilitate communication and understanding.

The information in the text has to be filtered by students and goes through a process of decoding which implies a movement on both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes, comparison between two cultural worlds (the one in the work and the reader's), two or more historical times/contexts, two economical systems, two or more social contexts and/or groups, various situations, some of them similar to or echoing readers' experiences. This reading experience in itself will develop their cultural awareness and critical thinking. Guided approaches of literary texts (such as the psychoanalytic approach, structuralist approach, gender approach, etc.) can provide students with more awareness of the fictional world, of the interlacement between reality and fiction, of their context and of themselves. These approaches will facilitate a better organised and efficient understanding of the readers' own experience, as they can be also applied to the "text of life".

The complexity of literary texts provides teachers with a valuable material for their classes, yet, texts, approaches and tools have to be

carefully chosen. Due to the present life pace, students seldom have the patience to read longer literary works. Consequently, they should be lured into the "pleasure of the text" (Barthes) by being initially exposed to short texts. K.H. Campbell identified the same problem with his students:

> The participation level during discussions of longer texts was significantly less than when we were discussing short texts. When I queried students about the assigned reading in longer texts, they were candid in sharing that they had read the text but could not retain all the details, so they did not feel comfortable talking in class. And some students admitted that they had not done the reading. Students were frank about the sense of frustration they felt as they read; they were overwhelmed by the complexity of the multiple characters, settings, and plot twists. But the more common response to longer texts was an intense dislike for the text—a dislike that grew in intensity the longer we worked with the text (Campbell 2007: 8).

Therefore it would be recommended to begin the course with the study of poems and short stories before novels and plays. While studying shorter texts, students get accustomed with the tools they should use to decode or interpret a literary text, which will facilitate the exploration of longer texts. However, the acquisition of the information related to both content and devices should not be presented as the main purpose of the course, but it remains a constant at the background of the activities. It is important for students to identify, structure and use this information in various activities, instead of being provided with it. Thus they focus on the activities they have to carry out and use various skills to achieve the tasks which eventually make them learn the information by doing activities. Such methods chase away boredom and inhibition since each student can find his/her place in the group and a learning pathway.

3. The complexity of literature class activities

Literature is very complex, it hosts fictional worlds and, according to Derrida, an authoritative language:

> The writer writes in a language and in a logic whose proper systems, laws, and life his discourse by definition cannot dominate absolutely. He uses them by only letting himself, after a fashion and up to a point, be governed by the system. And the reading must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses (Derrida 1997: 158).

Consequently, the activities based on literary texts are extremely various and complex, teachers having the possibility to show their creativity and resourcefulness when they conduct their classes. Literature class activities can vary from answering questions, summarising texts and multiple choice exercises to filling in tables, thematic debates, rewritings, projects and PowerPoint presentations, etc. Traditional approaches of literary texts spin around summary, description of characters, setting, identification of themes and a biographical and moral approach. Yet, these approaches have been abandoned and teachers have ceaselessly improved their teaching methods. A combination of visual, auditory and interactive tasks sets the same pace in literature as in real life. Students are thus required to fill in tables with features of characters (moral/physical/way of speaking/ acting) or with hypostases of characters associated with different contexts and leading to multiple sides of the same character, obtained via multiple points of view or different facets of the characters in different situations, relations and interactions between characters. A structuralist approach of a literary text can be *translated* into a scheme, a system of correlated actions forming the plot, which can be drawn. Students get familiar with chronological events, analepses and prolepses or embedded actions/events. By turning the text into a system of lines and junctions, students identify the "syntagmatic relations" between actions, therefore the plot, more easily and pleasantly and by being active at the same time. The identification of themes can be combined with a debate based on argument from the literary text or based on similar situations in real life. A more complex tool is the project as group activity since more transversal skills are developed. The above mentioned activities ensure a better atmosphere, strengthen the relations between students and

develop transversal competence. The information emerging from literary texts is acquired with pleasure while doing them, yet these activities are time-consuming.

4. Class activities based on new tools – collaborative tasks

The objective of literature classes is to develop both professional and transversal competences. The curriculum for students in English is organised to gradually expose them to fundamental theories and concepts in the first and second year which are used in classes of literature and linguistics as tools. Thus classes of literature are a means to practice what students have learned in other classes, deepen their knowledge in the domain and interrelate information from different subjects. For instance, students learn about R. Jakobson's linguistic theories when they study general linguistics, R. Jakobson's theory is also analysed in relation with literary theory and the formalist current in criticism, on the one hand, and psychoanalytic criticism to interpret Freud's concepts of condensation and displacement via metaphor and metonymy. Eventually this theory is applied to literary texts showing the interrelatedness of the subjects in the curriculum and providing students with more environments to understand and acquire specific knowledge.

Since the environment is adequate enough for knowledge acquisition, the use of new tools for the development of transversal skills makes classes more dynamic and interactive, drawing them to the pace of present life. Among the most used collaborative tasks in my classes of literature are the project, sometimes combined with presentation, and the debate. According to CEFRL, the project is a teaching tool engaging students in doing together activities which imply carrying out various tasks by using language resources and different strategies.

> the so-called project-based approach, global simulations and various role-playing games establish what are basically transitory objectives defined in terms of tasks to be carried out but the major interest of which as far as learning is concerned resides either in the language resources and activities that such a task (or sequence of tasks) requires or in the strategies employed or applied (CEFRL 2001: 138).

Project-based learning is a student-centred collaborative task that implies the development of both subject competences and transversal competences through action-oriented activities. The achievement of this task covers a longer period of time during which students go through more phases each contributing to the formation of particular transversal competences. The teacher is supposed to have analysed the potential of the proposed project(s), that is, students' level of knowledge (B1-B2) and research resources.

The project we shall present below was used as a new tool during a class in Twentieth-Century Irish Fiction with students in English major. The central theme was James Joyce's short story "The Dead", therefore a short text, which had to be approached from different perspectives. We chose the situation implying minimum of involvement on behalf of the teacher, yet, ensuring enough authority to conduct and evaluate the students, to validate activities, to master the class. By using student-centred collaborative activities, the teacher seems to withdraw from the teaching/learning arena while plunging students into a fiction-reality game. R. Miklitsch, pleading for an authority position, warns against an *egalitarian logic* which he translates into *evasion of responsibility:*

> […] to attempt absolutely to renounce the pedagogic subject-position—from whatever motivation, liberal or otherwise—is not only to accede to a "bad" egalitarian logic, it is to evade our responsibility as teachers. And that responsibility—which, needless to say, is an implicitly political one—involves recognizing those structures (social, cultural, economic, and so on) that both enable *and* constrain our activities (Miklitsch 1994: 105).

Students generally play by the teacher's rules even when they are assigned tasks to be solved without the teacher's direct involvement.

Twenty students**,** boys and girls, participated in the project and they were split into 3 groups. The teams were heterogeneous, arbitrarily formed, they encompassed more and less involved students and their level of knowledge and interest varied. At first students had to communicate with one another and sometimes cross some

communication barriers and reconsider relations since they had to cooperate. By being set a common goal which is to lead to the same grade for all the members of the team, they had to find a way to solve the task correctly and also involve all the students. Such collaboration leads to the development of tolerance as a transversal competence. Students have to find a way to communicate with colleagues they generally avoid, which also develops their self-discovery and self-awareness. Besides, students of a lower level can learn from their colleagues.

Three topics were provided: *Contextualize the short story*; *Outline the relationships between the characters*; *Identify the chronotopes and the relation between them*. All the topics implied a return to concepts, theories and analyses they had been through as students in the previous years.

The students of each team had to negotiate to produce a plan for their project and organise their activities which means: communication in a foreign language, development of organisational thinking, development of social competences and of creative thinking.

The first team which was assigned the topic *Contextualize the short story* presented an initial plan which went through a debate and they eventually produced the following plan:

Meaning of the concept (contextualisation)

Possible points to follow in analysis (cultural elements/historical data/social relations/economic situation)

Reasons for which "The Dead" is an appropriate choice for such an approach

Method used:

- identification of fragments bearing a cultural mark; focus on distinctive elements which outline the national/cultural/personal identity in relation with language/food/music/jokes etc.; proper explanation; comparison with our culture if possible.

- Identification of historical/social/economic references; explanation; comparison if possible.

Conclusions.

In their initial proposal, students had omitted the introductory reference to the concept *contextualisation* and focused on fewer cultural elements which could have led to an incomprehensive work. During this phase, students were offered the opportunity to develop their ability to communicate, their critical spirit and their ability to evaluate.

Further on, students were required to organise their activities so that they could achieve the task in due time and involve all the students in the team. This phase implied communication and negotiation between the members of the team. The students tried to fairly share the tasks, as it ca be seen below, taking into account each student's skills, and this made the group function as an organism where each member could contribute. However, several tasks were assigned to all of them, which ensured the participation of the students with a lower level of knowledge and with fewer skills.

Making the plan – all students

Presenting the plan – 1 student

Setting the activities and assigning them – all students

Doing research (university library/the Internet/ former courses and materials) – all students

Exchanging notes and ideas (meetings and Facebook) – all students

Writing the project – all students

Proofreading – 2 students

Doing a PowerPoint presentation – 2 students

Presenting the project – 2 students.

The organisational moment was followed by a longer period during which students worked both individually and in group. The results of their individual work, such as the research for one of the directions announced in the plan, were shared, commented upon and eventually incorporated into the work, if considered appropriate. Each student's activity is clearly reflected by the final form of the project, as it will be shown. Among the methods they used to deal with their tasks and be connected with each other, the following can be mentioned:

Going to university library for books and electronic resources which they cannot access from home

2 meetings for discussions (actually overlapped with their breaks between classes)

Permanently in contact via Facebook accounts: asking and answering questions; sharing information; making suggestions; criticising

Writing in a foreign language

Proofreading - error correction

Doing a PowerPoint presentation – using the computer.

Students had to present their project which meant the choice of the speaker(s) who assumed the responsibility for the group and for a successful presentation. At the same time the speaker(s) had to use persuasive tools in the presentation. The choice of the speaker implied recognition on behalf of the other members for his/her qualities which leads to self-esteem and self-confidence.

After presentation, the project was evaluated by both the teacher and the students belonging to the other two groups. The result consisted of a set of strengths and one of weaknesses:

Strengths

- *Achieved goal*
- *Coherent structure*
- *Well written and presented*
- *Well documented*

Weaknesses

- *The concept 'contextualization' – initially not included in the plan, eventually poorly defined*
- *Language – as a cultural element – was not even mentioned, despite its importance in the text*
- *Did not cover all the aspects mentioned in the initial plan (e.g. economic aspects)*

The members of the evaluated team had to comment on the results and one of the students explained that part of their task had not been covered because one of the students had not actively participated and had not carried out the activities he was assigned. This situation demonstrated that the group did not succeed in integrating and

motivating the student whose transversal competences are obviously very poor. On later inquiries and comments, it was revealed the fact that the student had followed passively all the activity, but his lack of self-confidence, his awareness of his lower level of knowledge and his fear to communicate in English had been well camouflaged beyond his apparent indifference. An individual evaluation showed that the student had acquired enough information related to the topic and that, although he could not profit in terms of transversal competences, he could improve his knowledge of literature and understand how a literary work can be contextualised. The other members of the team understood how important it is to integrate everybody and make all the parts of the system function adequately. It is obvious they had not explored the reasons for which the student had not collaborated and, although they had noticed his absence, they had neither done anything to cover all the tasks, they did not communicate the situation to the teacher at a right moment. However, the student's acquisition of information demonstrates at least that he had used Facebook and practiced reading.

Project-based learning provides students with a good opportunity to know each other, strengthen the relations between them and give them the confidence that they can work together and can achieve interesting tasks by doing various activities. It is a good opportunity for students to discover what they can do and how good they are at doing certain activities, to identify their weaknesses and work to improve their skills. Literature, although apparently a pretext for the new tool used in teaching this subject, which was meant to develop transversal skills, ensured an adequate basis for research and became an interesting topic. Among the transversal skills students practiced, can be mentioned communication in foreign languages, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression, interplay between students and society, development of critical and creative thinking, involvement of students in research, personal development of students, tolerance, environmental awareness, leadership skills.

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ABSTRACT

For several years now, there has been a decline in interest for literature, and literature classes implicitly, due to an unrealistic belief that literature, seen as fiction only, cannot teach students useful aspects of life. Besides the fact that such an opinion contradicts the essence of literature as art, meant to teach/instruct and delight according to Aristotle and Horace or seen as imitation of life, the complexity of the class activities is also neglected. Consequently, our contribution aims at showing that literature can be taught via class activities based on new tools for our academic environment, such as project-based learning and other collaborative tasks, which offer the students the opportunity to better understand the content while solving the tasks and develop transversal competences: communication in foreign languages, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression, interplay between students and society, development of critical and creative thinking, involvement of students in research, personal development of students, tolerance, environmental awareness, leadership skills, etc. The paper will provide examples of collaborative activities that can be used in literature classes.

The Importance of Transversal Competences in Teaching Interpreting

SORIN CAZACU *

The necessity of inter-human collaboration and cross-linguistic communication gave birth to the profession of interpreting as a means to facilitate contacts between cultures and peoples. What started as a primordial need has now become a very complex and ubiquitous reality, connecting, on both a horizontal and a vertical axis, people and communities. The conference interpreter who works for the European Parliament or the United Nations plays his part in negotiations at the highest level. The legal interpreter, only by doing his job, offers the chance to a speaker to defend himself before the judge or to a judge to understand the extent of an offender's guilt. In a similar way, a medical interpreter can save the lives, by simply communicating vital information to the doctor. In all these situations, the interpreter makes use of his linguistic skills as well as of a plethora of other transversal skills, such as cultural mediation skills, social and emotional intelligence or critical thinking.

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1. Interpreting as a field of study

The interpreting profession has experienced a change of perception in the last 20 years, moving from an invisible language service provider to a cross-cultural mediator or a participant with agency (Angelelli 2004: 36). The interpreter has received an active role in the way that he constructs, co-constructs, mends, and supports the communication during an interpreting act (Bélanger 2003; Fowler 2003; Jacobsen 2003; Valdés, Chavez and Angelelli 2003). Research and case studies on legal interpreting (Berk-Seligson 1990), medical interpreting (Angelelli 2004), interpreting for the immigration office or the police (Wadensjö 1995 and 1998a and b) demonstrate the fact that the role of the interpreter has become more *visible* (Angelelli 2001, 2003a & b, 2004).

Even though interpreting as an activity started much earlier than translation, research on the history of interpreting in different countries has begun only recently. Despite the presence of interpreters since ancient times, they were rarely mentioned before the Renaissance, which is mainly due to the primacy of the written text over the spoken word. Margareta Bowen, in *Interpreters and the marking of history,* the only chapter dedicated to interpreting in J. Delisle & J. Woodsworth, *Translators through history* maintains that:

> The spoken word is evanescent. Our knowledge of the past performance of interpreters tends to be derived from such sources as letters, diaries, memoirs and biographies of interpreters themselves, along with a variety of other documents, many of which were only marginally or incidentally concerned with interpreting […] (1995: 245).

Admittedly, it is easier for translators to be recognized in history, as they work with the written word and leave their mark on documents or texts, than it is for interpreters who work only with the spoken word. Bowen notes that "the social status of interpreters may also account for their position in the annals of history: ethnic and cultural hybrids, often women, slaves or members of a 'subcaste'", and that "these go-betweens, notwithstanding their mediating between distant cultures, were not accorded the place they deserved in historical records" (ibid.: 245–246).

In spite of this weak representation in history, interpreters have played and continue to play an important role in various communicative and cultural contexts, as they are likely to influence the evolution of community structure and on the results of the interaction (Anderson 1976/2002: 209–210). R. Bruce W. Anderson suggested that international negotiations concerning trade agreements, peace treaties, or economic forums, constitute area of potential sociological interest in the role of the interpreter.

As a profession, interpreting gained recognition in foreign relations around 1920, after the First World War, when English admitted as an official language, on an equal basis with French, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The first techniques to be used were consecutive and whispering interpreting, but because they were interfering with the voice of the speaker (whispering interpreting) or were prolonging the meetings (consecutive interpreting), they were seen as unsatisfactory. The first patent for simultaneous interpreting equipment was attributed in 1926 to Gordon Finlay (IBM), while the first simultaneous interpreting was first tried as early as 1928 at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in the former Soviet Union. Modern simultaneous interpreting became known worldwide during the War Crimes Trial of 1945–1946 at Nuremberg (Gaiba 1998; Baigorri-Jal 1999). This technique was tested the United Nations in November 1946, to be repeated the following year in the UN's General Assembly.

In what regards the research in interpreting, the initial focus was on the mental processes and operations performed by the interpreter, particularly in the case of simultaneous interpreting (Oleron and Nanpon 1965; Barik 1969; Gile 1985; Moser-Mercer 1997). The researchers were studying interpreting in association with other disciplines, such as psychology, psycholinguistics, cognitive sciences and neurolinguistics (Pőchhacker 2004; see also Setton 1999). Nevertheless, it was the multilingualism environment of the modern world that led to the approach of interpreting from the perspective of the community setting. Recent studies on community interpreting, from sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives, reveal the exchanges present in the interpreter-mediated communication.

While simultaneous conference interpreting is mainly monologic, face-to-face community interpreting requires a different approach of the role of the linguistic mediator. This aspect is sustained by the analysis of interpreted diplomatic negotiations, where the interpreter tries to identify the intention (Benjamin 1992), the illocutionary force (Searle 1969) and the implicature (Grice 1989) of the participant's utterances, before considering the message to be conveyed. It is clear than that the interpreter plays an instrumental role in mediating between two different cultures in diverse communicative events, whether during formal meetings, informal gatherings, summit meetings, or press conferences.

2. Competences required by the interpreter's role

It is obvious that in the interpreting industry today, the role of the professional interpreter demands not only linguistic-cultural skills, but also interpersonal skills. These skills, refer but are not restricted to word processing, using the interpreting tools or the Internet. A further aspect of the interpreter's task is marketing ability since the interpreter has to deal with client management, time management, resources management, information management. At first sight, all of these skills are difficult to be taught in an undergraduate degree, but an introduction to them might turn into an advantage for future professional interpreters.

Interpreting training was and will still remain connected to the translation training. Almost all of the academic programmes available now around the world offer them in parallel, or one as support for the other. It is true that, there are numerous voices who claim that interpreting uses and develops totally distinct competences and attitudes. Nevertheless, the practice shows that a functional interpreter is almost always doubled by a proficient translator. This is maybe encouraged to the reality of the market for interpreting jobs which is rather scarce in comparison with the one for translations.

What both interpreting and translation formation relies on is first of all a good command of the relevant working languages. Then they need to possess a curious mind and be interested in what happens around

them in the world. The measure of their functionality is also defined by their ability to understand messages expressed verbally or in written and be able to overcome obstacles by taking appropriate decisions. This explains the rationale behind the syllabi of many translation or interpreting programmes, which start with basic translation training and continue with interpreting as a specialization. These systems are common with three-year syllabus translation and interpreting training programmes, in which the first stage has the following advantages:

- students learn that translation is not only a language-to-language "transcoding" process, but also a comprehension operation followed by a reformulation operation defined by communication-oriented purposes, relying on specific translation techniques;
- focusing on the translation process allows students more time than the interpreting process to find solutions to problems (hours or days, as opposed to seconds or milliseconds in interpreting);
- without the cognitive load of interpreting, students develop their knowledge of terminology and relevant extralinguistic skills, setting sights for problem resolution in terms of language quality and precise information restitution.

The job of a translator is to understand texts and reformulate them in the target language, for which he is allowed an amount of time, access to dictionaries, glossaries, other documents, other tools. In his turn, the interpreter works with speeches, which are delivered in an idiosyncratic way and in real time, without having the possibility to consult helping resources. Therefore, the interpreter finds himself in a situation in which 'intuitive' knowledge of language-specific transitional probabilities, as well as control of accents and intonation aspects are required. If in consecutive interpreting, the interaction is generally face-to-face with the speaker, with the possibility of asking clarification questions or, in the case of simultaneous interpreting, speeches may be delivered too fast, or they can pose technical or linguistic difficulties. This is where, the interpreter mastery of passive language skills are paramount.

Another aspect in which translators and interpreters differ in their skill inventory is the active language. Translators may be compared to

professional writers who rely on excellent grammatical and stylistic skills, but the fact that they are not generally constraint by time gives them the possibility to re-read and improve their outcome. On the other hand, what defines interpreting is more lenient grammatical and stylistic standards, but an innate ability to make decisions regarding the choice of words and syntactic structures, virtually without the possibility of reformulating.

In terms of cognitive abilities, translators are less constrained by time, but by deadlines which are negotiable and in accordance with the workload. Conversely, interpreters perform their jobs on-the-spot and are dependent on very high cognitive abilities. They are required to perform parallel mental operations, each of them being very consuming in terms of brain capacity. As a result, most of the mistakes in interpreting are caused by cognitive failure, due to either extreme processing capacity demands or failure in processing capacity management. Other vital skills that interpreters need to acquire are specific attention-sharing skills and socio-psychological awareness.

The above differences between translation training and interpreting training justify the need to constantly adapt the syllabus of interpreting programmes, with the main components being intensive practice in both consecutive and simultaneous. Additional benefits could be capitalized from the introduction of specialised tutorials in economics, law, international organization, parliamentary procedures, technology, research etc.

Phase one: Consecutive interpreting without note-taking

Interpreting training generally starts with several weeks of practice in consecutive interpreting in which students are not encouraged to take notes with a view to help them enhance their memory. Even if they are considered by some as unauthentic, as real life jobs would allow note-taking, these exercises may turn out beneficial in highlighting the role of memory, the mental processes required by memorizing and ways to improve them. Students will realize that if they pay attention to the content and deconstruct the message in a logical way, they have better chances to be able to recall even in the absence of cues, given by notes.

Phase two: Consecutive interpreting with note-taking

A logical continuation in the interpreting training is, of course, the full consecutive practice, in which students are required to render segments of content while being allowed and encouraged to take notes. Consecutive interpreting may be seen as a two-phase process, in which the interpreter comprehends the message before formulating a response. This is due to the fact that the linguistic form of a message fades away from memory in only a few seconds, being replaced by remaining elements of the content. Conversely, in the case of simultaneous interpreting, the practitioner can be built on verbal elements, due to the short time lag between the moment of perception and the moment of production. Simultaneous interpreting can partially work at word-identification level without deeper comprehension, which is impossible in consecutive. Note-taking during consecutive interpreting contribute immensely in that they can function as triggers of content, even though they, again, lag behind the act of speech. If the notes are taken correctly, i.e. cues consisting of symbols, names, ideas, they can support the recollection of content.

The value of consecutive interpreting during training is given by the fact that students improve their skills of analysing and reformulating the content, not to mention its high utility as a diagnostic tool. By performing consecutive interpreting, students demonstrate their comprehension and language skills, while simultaneous interpreting obscures the weaknesses or strengths as other factors may influence the output.

Phase three: Simultaneous and consecutive interpreting

Simultaneous interpreting is considered by students and trainers alike as the culmination of interpreting training. Taking into account the fact that it is studied and practiced after consecutive, students are already equipped with the essential technical skills, which helps them better assimilate the new ones. Practice shows that the transition from consecutive to simultaneous is rather difficult, as in consecutive the cognitive load is low – the interpreter is able to set his own pace and focuses only on note-taking – while in simultaneous, the cognitive load is

high – the interpreter must comply with the speaker's pace and work with two languages at virtually the same time.

3. The importance of emotional intelligence in educating interpreters

By analysing the importance of emotional intelligence we aim at recognizing and responding to the necessities of both educators and students. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to acknowledge and handle personal emotions as well as emotions of the others. The term 'emotional intelligence' was coined in 1990 by psychologists Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey (Salovey and Meyer 1990: 10) but it became known after the success of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*, published 1995. Daniel Goleman defined emotional intelligence or 'EQ' as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships" (Goleman 1998: 317).

In its traditional sense, education emphasizes the strengthening of cognitive skills such as knowledge acquisition, recalling knowledge and applying it in order to better understand the world, reason and find solution to problems. The capacity for using these skills can be measured by 'intelligence tests' that indicate to an intelligence quotient or 'IQ' score. The more proficient we are at performing these skills, the higher our IQ is expected to be, which is a major factor in measuring our educational success. However, it is what happens after school that counts? While IQ scores are indicative of how well a student performs in school, they give little insight into their post-graduate performance. Most and foremost, IQ proves to be a rather unreliable indicator as regards people's ability to relate with others, have a good performance in the work environment and be able to deal with a continually changing daily challenges (Sternberg 1985; Wagner 1997).

It has been argued that something else is absent from the human performance formula that makes it hard for us to understand why some people achieve professional success while others fail, which is totally unrelated to our level of cognitive intelligence. For almost as long as cognitive intelligence has been measured, psychologists have also trying

to identify additional predictors of various types of performance. Based on his work in the area of 'social intelligence', Edward Thorndike (1920) made one of the first attempts by psychologists to pinpoint these predictors. It should also be noted that this search for the absent component in the human performance formula was present in other fields of science, and even before the 20th century. In 1872, Charles Darwin published the first known scientific work on what is now referred to as 'emotional-social intelligence' or, simply, 'emotional intelligence' (EI), as it is more generally known today.

With respect to the theme of this paper, which focuses on educating interpreters to be emotionally intelligent, it is appropriate ask the following questions:

1. What does it mean for interpreters to be emotionally intelligent?
2. Is it important for interpreters to be emotionally intelligent?
3. Can we educate interpreters to be emotionally intelligent?

It seems obvious that people who are emotionally and socially intelligent are able to understand and express themselves more effectively, to comprehend and relate more successfully to others, and to be more able to deal with everyday demands of life. These ability turn out to be is in strong connection with the ability to be emotionally aware and constructively understand strengths and weaknesses, as well as being able to communicate feelings in a non-destructive way. Moreover, emotional and social intelligence means being aware of other people's feelings and necessities, and being able to create and foster cooperative, positive and satisfying relationships.

In the light of the emotional and cognitive complexity required by interpreting, emotionally intelligent interpreters are better prepared to manage personal, social and environmental challenges, coping with the immediate situation and solving problems of an interpersonal nature.

Emotional competence is thus complex and in the case of interpreters each skill appears to be embedded in the social context, which includes cultural values and. The eight sub-skills of emotional competence that interpreters need to develop are as follows:

- Awareness of emotional state, including the possibility of experiencing multiple emotions. At an expert level, an

awareness of not being consciously aware of emotions may be noted, which is due to selective inattention – a very valuable secondary skill in the case of interpreters as it helps them channel their attention of the job.

- Ability to discern and understand the emotions of others, relying on situational cues that have a degree of cultural convention as to their emotional meaning.
- Ability to use a certain vocabulary of emotions. At more advanced levels, this sub-competence translates into the capacity to identify cultural messages that connect emotion with social responsibilities.
- Capacity for empathic and sympathetic involvement in others' emotional experiences.
- Realization that inner emotional states do not always have an equivalent in external expression, both on individual and general level. In more advanced circumstances, practitioners are aware of the fact that their emotional-expressive behaviour may influence other people.
- Ability to cope with aversive emotions and stressful situations by using self-regulatory strategies that reduce the pressure of such emotional states and lead to effective problem-solving strategies.
- Awareness that the nature of relationships relies on the way in which emotions are communicated within a group or a relationship.
- Capacity for emotional self-efficacy, by which interpreters understand that their emotional experience is valuable and in perfect agreement with their moral beliefs.

4. Interpreters Training at the University of Craiova

As communication, in its various forms, becomes more and more instrumental in our society, linguistic and cultural barriers are the ones that need to be addressed with more diligence and openness. It is the role of professional language services to mediate the transfer of meaning

across these borders, as well as it is the responsibility of academia and the professional market to find ways in which this common goal can be achieved. Thus, there is no surprise that the formation of interpreters in Romania, is gaining more interest from training providers and beneficiaries.

However, despite the specific character of the current environment, strongly influenced by globalisation, the professional linguistic mediators – both interpreters and translators – receive their academic training in institutional contexts that are defined by political, cultural, legislative and local employment factors.

The Translation-Interpreting study programme *(French and English)* was founded in 1998, within the Faculty of Letters, offering a double specialization, in English and French.

The students' training follows a linear model, according to which the translation training precedes the interpreting training. The rationale behind this model is that the experience students gain in translation will contribute to the foundation of a terminology database and the essential linguistic instruments, as well as to the development of required competencies for interpreting.

The courses and seminars dedicated to simultaneous and consecutive interpreting are scheduled for the terminal year of the Bachelor programme – the third year of study – and are distributed equally for the two languages:

- French – 1st semester (two course hours/week + two seminar hours/week);

English – 2nd semester (two course hours/week + two seminar hours/week).

The adaptation of curriculum to the demands of interpreters aims at the maximization of chances for graduates to find jobs and perform successfully. The objectives are:

a. The alignment of academic training to the demands of the labour market, as they are reflected in the specializations related to the services sector, e.g., public/governmental, private, legal, medical and social assistance.

Figure 1: Structure of the BA programme in Translation Studies at the University of Craiova

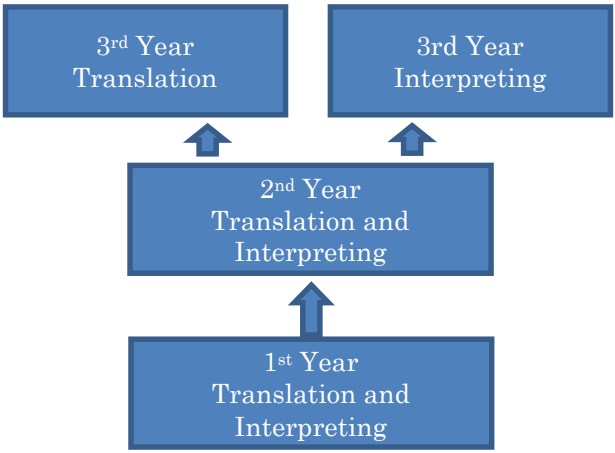
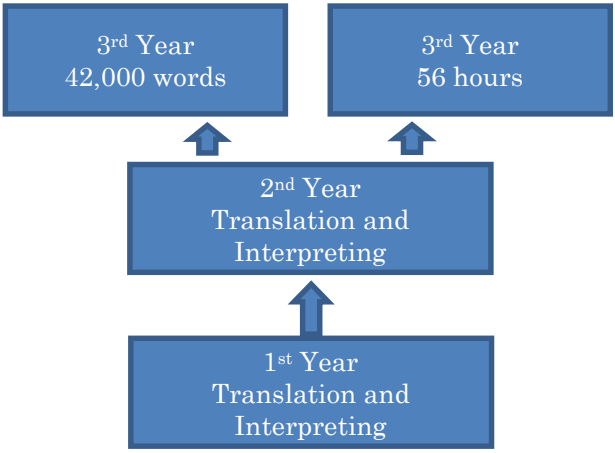


Figure 2: Number of translated words and interpreting hours in the 3rd year of the BA programme in Translation Studies at the University of Craiova



b. Better use of resources: teaching staff, existent equipment and materials, as well as the good management of time dedicated to training activities

c. The intercultural dimension of interpreters' training

d. The training of interpreters in using technology, before, during and after performing their interpreting tasks: the continually changing role of technology, with its hybrid forms, such as video-conferences, voice recognition programs, news interpreting, voice-over-ip, etc.

In order to answer these challenges, the interpreters' trainers have the following aspects in view:

- The curriculum is constantly adapted to the new economic, cultural, technological realities;
- The students' performance is constructively assessed in all the stages of their academic formation;
- The academic and institutional environment is optimized so as to enable the students' access to technology, innovation, preparation techniques and solid pedagogical competencies.

Overall, the aim of these measures is that of helping students to gain their competencies quickly and effectively.

5. Key competences developed by the translation programme

- Effective communication in two languages, English and French, in a range of professional and cultural contexts, by using appropriate registers and linguistic variation in speaking and writing (level of competence B2-C1 in both languages);
- Adequate translation and linguistic mediation techniques, both in written and oral form, from English/French into Romanian and vice-versa, in domains of general interest or semi-specialised ones;
- Adequate usage of technical resources (programmes, applications, electronic data bases, archives, etc.) for information mining, editing and proofreading;

- Linguistic and cultural negotiation and mediation in Romanian, English and French;
- Professional and institutional communication and analysis of effective communication in Romanian, English and French.

6. Transversal competences developed by the programme

- Ability to work in a team
- Ability to communicate in writing and orally in the mother or foreign tongue
- Effective use of ICT resources
- Problem-solving and decision taking abilities
- Tolerance and respect for cultural diversity.
- Autonomous learning
- Initiative and entrepreneurial spirit
- Openness to life-long-learning.

In order to test the relevance of transversal competences, a number of twenty students and graduates of the programme were invited to answer a questionnaire on skills they would like to improve, on a scale of 1 - 5. The results were as follows:

Skill	Result
Team-working	3.6
Intellectual curiosity	4.1
Emotional Intelligence	4.3
Memory and retention	4.5
Note-taking	4.5
Coping with stress	4.8

The results of this questionnaire show that students are more aware now of the importance of transversal competences in order to be better equipped for the labour market of the future. The new mix of skills required by the modern society involve higher levels of knowledge and applied skills, expertise, and creativity.

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ABSTRACT

Today's students need to be equipped with new and updated skills than previous generations, which is why the transversal competences such as self-initiative, team work and technological literacy are instrumental to succeed in higher education and modern labour market. It has thus become a priority for an academic programme in Translation and Interpreting to help students acquire, besides key competences, specific skills and knowledge that will allow them to solve the types of problems that arise in their area of work.

This paper will enlarge upon some of the transversal skills more specifically fostered by interpreting courses, such as personal development skills (e.g. multi-tasking, critical thinking, self-confidence), analytical skills (e.g. understanding and analysing, perceiving structures, data mining), and communication skills (e.g. public speaking, short-term memory skills, note-taking techniques). A closer look will be taken into how these skills can be used in community interpreting as a relevant area in the context of growing political interest for social inclusion and fair access to public services, in the light of the current increase of economic migration in some European countries. Given the face-to-face setting in which the community interpreter performs, his/her role in the exchange has to be fully acknowledged and reassessed.

Legitimizing the Subject English in a Location Based Context: Application of Cross-curricular and Transversal Skills

PATRICK MURPHY *

1. Introduction

This article is rooted in the challenges the subject of English is facing in today's school with an increased focus on cross-curricular activities and location based teaching. This article will use teaching English as a reference subject, but its principles are applicable to teaching and learning a foreign language in general. The article shows how geocaching as an activity that is not devised and designed especially for formal education may be a tool that naturally gives an integrated and meaningful interaction between classroom and location based teaching, between goals in the Norwegian National Curriculum and the world beyond the classroom walls. All in all, it is a world that encompasses local and international location based learning through the use of the intercommunicative multi modal text. The starting point of the author's field work and action research has its focus on the subject of English as a foreign language, though geocaching as tool and method may be used

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in other school subjects. This article is rooted in ongoing action-directed research and development that has a focus on the interaction between theory and practice in both compulsory schooling and teacher training.

Geocaching is an outdoor activity that is a mix between orienteering and treasure hunt, where the GPS substitutes the traditional map and compass. Participants – geocachers – navigate their way to a given set of GPS coordinates in an attempt to find the geocache (a container of variable size, hereafter termed cache). Geocaching quickly developed to a world spanning activity after President Bill Clinton in 2000 had a breakthrough for the discontinuation of the so-called Selective Availability, which in short was an interference of publically available PGPS signals (GPS.gov 2014). The term *geocaching* is a combination of the words *geo* (earth) and *cache* (a temporary hiding place). As of today, the number of caches worldwide has passed the 2.5 million mark, and with more than 6 million geocachers in pursuit of them (Geocaching.com). In order to maximize the potential of geocaching as a method, it will be necessary to take a closer look at 1) learning space, and 2) production of knowledge through intercommunicative multi modal texts.

Traditionally, the pupil's acquisition of knowledge and his or her reproduction thereof by way of learning goals remained within the confinement of the classroom's four walls, with teacher and/or peer pupils as target audience. The pupil receives knowledge that is introduced into the classroom through text books, teacher, and experiences outside the classroom in form of travel, family, friends, and the Internet. In most cases, the testing of the pupil's knowledge by way of measuring degree of reaching learning and competence goals will take place within the walls of the classroom, where the tasks are constructed to satisfy learning plans and the teacher. Put shortly, the pupil produces mainly for the teacher, with the motivation of receiving acceptance through a positive feedback and grades. The step out into the local environment outside the classroom walls and location based teaching breaks this cycle of acquisition and presentation of knowledge within the classroom walls.

The term location based learning may simply be defined as "a method to localize and use learning arenas that result in relevant and

realistic learning" (Kartiskolen.no). Experienced teachers will naturally recognize this concept, and indeed their use thereof, as this is a method they have used for years. Friluftsrådet (Friluftsrad.no) and Arne Nicolaisen Jordet (Jordet 2010) have both described the concept and are good promoters of an reinforced and systematic use of location based learning or outdoor schooling.

The national curriculum Kunnskapsløftet (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006), hereafter termed LK06, does not in itself legitimize location based learning by mention. The term is only used once in the LK06. A search on the directorate of education's web site and LK06 returns only one hit, under "Guidelines to the elective subject nature, environment and outdoor life"; and then only under the heading of "supporting material". Nevertheless, the LK06 does in itself open up for location based learning, e.g.

> Yet teachers function not only as instructors, counsellors and role models for children. They must also work with parents, other professionals, and the authorities, who together form essential elements of the school's broad educational environment. At the same time, a major task of the school is to provide a nurturing ambience for growth and learning. Good teachers are favourable towards and trained to involve parents, local firms and organizations for the benefit of the school (Utdanningsdirektoratet 2006: 26).

Location based learning aims to connect theory and knowledge acquisition of the traditional classroom with the real world outside. This is in essence a contextualization of the subjects. The definition given by Jordet (Jordet 2010) and Friluftsrådet (Friluftsrad.no) is one where location based learning is the same as the near vicinity to the school. If this definition is to be the foundation for all school's subjects, English will face challenges in finding its place in a desired contextualized learning situation. In order to reach the goal of a contextualized learning situation for English, it is necessary to expand the definition of location based learning beyond that of the school's immediate vicinity. The desired contextualization requires that "location based" is defined as one or more locations in the English speaking world.

The step out into the close vicinity is in numerous ways a positive one, but as long as it is the teacher who is to evaluate the result, the classroom walls have simply been moved to the outside world, rather than breaking through them. The learning space will definitely be expended, but the author would like to move from the pupils "communicating while interacting in the world" (Jordet 2010:84) to the pupils communicating with the world. As long as teaching and learning is with participants within the school as an institution, it is a matter of moving the classroom's participants out and into society. These participants interact with each other within the local society – but not necessarily with the local society. Knowledge acquisition is present, but not necessarily the dialogue and communication with the world beyond the classroom.

The subject English is as other languages a tool of communication, which needs to be learned and practised in order to communicate with those who do not have the mother tongue as oneself, and possesses a certain language competency in English. English in Norwegian schools is primarily learned and practised within the classroom's four walls, and has little of being a real and useful tool for the participants, as the common language of communication within this arena with the lowest threshold is Norwegian. It is when one takes the step out of the classroom and out of the school that one may speak of a real value of the language as a communicative tool. It is important to interact with and within a dynamic, international world. One clear option is for the pupils and their English teacher to break out of the classroom and address the world beyond directly, as an analogy to the theatre world's "breaking the fourth wall" (Bell 2008: 203). The theatre stage may be seen as a communicative platform where the actors are trapped in a space not unlike the traditional classroom, where the fourth wall is the window – or barrier, if one wishes – to the audience and the world outside.

Considering that cross-curricular activity is a desired aim in school today, this does indeed bring new challenges to the subject English. Cross-curricular work is by no means new in education, and English has

with varied success been a part of this. English has by some been regarded as a pure tool of translation, in the meaning that most of what the pupils produce in writing may be translated into English. With such an academic alibi for cross-curricular work, English has for a larger part had a tendency to be a participant – rather than a driving force – in cross-curricular work under the premise of other subjects. This will become more obvious when turning to location based teaching. Using the school vicinity as a learning arena, subjects as social science, history, geography, arts and crafts, and physical education are able to be contextualized, which will not be the case with English. Lacking a contextualization in location based learning, the subject will within cross curricular activities move towards the grammar-translation method, which will be a pedagogical and methodological regression. There is little or no support for the grammar-translation method among teachers today, as expressed by Richards and Rogers:

> [T]hough it may be true to say that the Grammar-Translation Method is still widely practiced, it has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory (Richard & Rogers 2001: 7).

Is pedagogical new thinking and development unconsciously and unintentionally contributing to pressing English into a context where it naturally belongs, just to fulfil the overall aims of location based learning? This is one of the challenges faced by the subject English with an increased focus on location based learning and cross-curricular activities. It is the next step from interacting in the world, to interacting with the world, which will be the focus by using geocaching as a method.

2. From knowledge consumption to knowledge production and communication

The closed learning environment of the traditional classroom makes the learners consumers of knowledge, and if one looks to Bloom and his taxonomy of learning (Bloom 1956), it is desirable that the learners shall have a broader and deeper knowledge than merely being

consumers of knowledge. It is an important point that with location based learning and the extended classroom, the learners will show their competence by becoming producers of knowledge. The author admits that by producing knowledge – as opposed to reproducing consumed knowledge – for the teacher and his response is a step in the right direction, but this still does not succeed in breaking with the closed learning environment that is a trademark of the traditional classroom. In order to qualify the learners as producers of knowledge, it is important that this knowledge becomes available outside and beyond the traditional classroom and its participants. This may for the subject English be accomplished by using the intercommunicative text; a term that is formed by the author, and not found used elsewhere.

Casting a quick glance over one's shoulder, development in didactic thinking and methods in English in Norway appears to be a development from the grammar-translation method via authentic and multi-modal texts, to problem based learning. This is a developmental trend that is general, and the subject English does not distinguish itself in any way. Authentic texts have increasingly been used in English language teaching since the 1970s, and are in their nature a taste of today's focus on the extended classroom: to utilize material and resources outside the classroom, and which are not produced with the (Norwegian) learner as the prime target. Considering the use of location based learning in Norwegian schools, the authentic text and the traditional use thereof fall short in the desire to move the classroom walls: the authentic texts have typically been brought into the classroom from a contextualized world, but have been decontextualized by remaining in the enclosed classroom.

Multi-modal texts in their simplest form are part of our literary heritage from the old, where texts to greater or lesser extent have been illustrated in various ways. Examples of this are the typically illustrated children's books, where the balance between illustrations and text changes with the child's vocabulary building and reading competence. Other forms of multi-modal texts may include illustrations to supplement a text, typically graphs. Pupils have not only been consumers of multi-modal texts, but have to a large degree been producers through

illustrated written tasks, and even through describing a primarily two-dimensional visual object. With the pupils' increased digital competency, multi-modal texts today are more often recognized by integrated sound and video files, or at least hyperlinks to such by way of URL addresses or QR codes. Using these newer digital tools in producing multi-modal texts, a contact with the outside world is established; all the time the links and integrated files are brought in from outside the classroom. This contact with the outside world is one-side, as acquisition of information and sources will function as a monologue from the world to the classroom. There are teachers and pupils that do communicate back to the world outside through various channels, but this may see challenges and obstacles by way of privacy and data protection, an issue that will not be debated here. The development of the multi-modal text will be able to reflect what may be termed the extended classroom or the location based learning arena.

What is the next step from today's multi-modal text that brings the outside world into the classroom? The author has through his own teaching at Nesna University College, Kristen Videregående Skole Nordland, as well as initiating a number of projects at local and regional schools, used a form of text that has developed from the traditional multi-modal text, and seeks to communicate with the great world beyond the classroom's four walls: the intercommunicative multi-modal text. An intercommunicative text is a text where the pupil in school through his/her text creates a desire and need for interaction between pupil and participants in the world outside the classroom. This form of multi-modal text is formed in the classroom, and also used as a tool for real communication for the world outside, by using e.g. geocaching.

"What are the characteristics of communication outside the classroom?" is a challenge of the day (Jordet 2010: 85). Jordet describes the pupils, and partly the teacher, among peers. Jordet gives a correct description of group based interaction activities outside the classroom: "They [the pupils] shall no longer communicate about the world, but communicate while acting in the world" (Jordet 2010: 84). The pupils' communication with the world is not a topic in Jordet's description of forms of communication. This is by no means a criticism of Jordet's work,

but rather an acknowledgement of his work with location based learning and outdoor schooling. The author would like to take a step further from local location based learning arena, and the natural target group for the pupils' communication is "the world beyond the school", which here is defined as also including local location based learning.

Communication within the classroom has for teaching and learning purposes often been seen in connection with conversation. In Norway, this is referred to as "den gode samtale" ("the good conversation"), which has its reference to Helge Svare' book of the same title (Svare 2006). This form of communication through conversation is synchronous, which is ideal when both teacher and pupil are in the same room at the same time. With a wish for communication between pupils and potentially the rest of the world beyond school, synchronous communication is not practical or easy to execute.

3. Geocaching

Geocaching as a method is as opposed to traditional textbooks and other material produced for learning in the classroom, not in itself developed for systematic pedagogical use. Geocaching may be divided into two main categories of activities: 1) active geocaching, and 2) passive geocaching[1]. This article will only discuss active geocaching. Roughly put, one may say that active geocaching may (partly) coincide with location based learning in the vicinity, and passive geocaching will partly coincide with the subject English – but not limited to – contextualized location based learning. This article limits its scope and focus to active geocaching.

Geocaching.com is the mother page of geocaching. Here one can register as a user, find information on all aspects of the activity, and select caches one would like to find; and also register new caches and Travel Bugs. In order to participate in geocaching, one should have reading comprehension for locating a cache. One needs to follow instructions and information on geocaching.com, read and comprehend

[1] The terms are defined and used by the author, and are not found or used elsewhere.

instructions and hints for the applicable cache, and make use of the general information on locality, if needed. The texts on geocaching.com are multi-modal in the traditional sense, by containing elements from various genres and media. In addition to the pure text, one may find photos, illustrations, graphs, logs, and mathematical challenges. One of the goals of developing teaching methods for location based learning and the extended classroom is to break down the barriers of the classroom walls, resulting in the change from the pupils being consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge. Geocaching safeguards the traditional role of the pupil as consumer of knowledge, but also especially well facilitates production of knowledge. By placing and publishing a cache (hereafter termed as *deploying*), the pupils get free reins to present a locality in the form of text and images. There may also be links to audio and video files using hyperlinks and/or QR coding.

Active geocaching is probably what first is associated with geocaching. This includes the original thinking behind the activity: here the objective is to search for, find and log caches. As geocachers gain some experience, there are many who themselves deploy and register caches. The challenge of learning to use a GPS and gaining an understanding of how to easiest navigate in different terrain is in itself a good learning activity, which includes a variety of interdisciplinary goals. In light of the scope of this article, the focus of attention will be deploying and posting caches, and the accompanying work with intercommunicative texts.

Registration as a geocacher is free, and is done through the mother site geocaching.com. Geocachers frequently avoid using their own names as their username, and find more or less fanciful names like *Team Hydra*, *Cache and Release*, *oopsan* and *Cache & Company*; *Johnny Cache* and *Cache 22* were naturally quick to be taken. Some geocachers want a degree of anonymity, while others are posting pictures of themselves, and as in other social media operate with friend lists. Empirically, geocachers are generally positive to school groups active in geocaching, and for rapid identification the class name is often used, such as 6th Grade Nesna[2].

[2] *6th Grade Nesna* was used as a geocacher name by the 6th grade at Nesna school, Nordand, Norway, when trying out geocaching as a tool in September 2011.

4. Deploying a cache

Registered geocachers can publish and record their own caches. To facilitate control of the account in a school and educational context, it is most appropriate that the teacher creates an account on the students' behalf. The criteria about what is allowed and not allowed when publishing a cache are presented. This should not be looked at in detail, but represent an important part of the process for students. There are primarily two basic requirements for posting a cache: 1) to show a historically interesting place, or 2) to show a place of geography and landmarks, including what is often referred to as beautiful or spectacular views.

Placement of a cache in itself may represent the traditional interdisciplinary work, where English will have a pure translation function. What is different here versus what has been seen as a lack of contextuality for the English subject in the area, is that the pure textual translation helps make the text intercommunicative, and thus achieve the goal of communication with the outside world that work within the classroom does not readily achieve. The intercommunicativity will primarily be of an asynchronous nature, where the pupil's text creates response from the outside world in two ways: 1) the text informs and creates a desire for physical action (to find the cache), and 2) a written feedback from geocachers in terms of signing a physical logbook and a digital logbook. Intercommunicativity is confirmed the moment a geocacher records a find. A geocacher who deploys a cache is referred to as the owner of the cache. With ownership comes responsibility; a responsibility to ensure that it is in the right place, in good condition, and renewing logbooks when needed. When selecting a location, there are certain geographical constraints, including distance from the owner of the cache. It will for example not normally be possible to register ownership of a cache on a Greek island, as long as one e.g. is a resident in Norway. The geographic catchment area for the deployment of a cache will naturally conform to what you would define as local location based, i.e. in the vicinity of school. The extent of such proximity may not be defined in number of metres or kilometres, but will give itself depending

on the social and geographical features of the intended location. Regarding the specific locality for each cache, the focus on ownership and motivation are important parameters. The easiest and most effective way to initiate ownership is to let pupils decide locality for deployment of geocaches. Pupils will select what they find important in the local community, and why they want to show off just this to geocachers. From experience, it appears that pupils select places they already know are of historical significance, and this is often the places they have learned about in school or at home, and often used in connection with location based learning. Beside the expected locations based on historic interest, perhaps the most interesting locations are those regarded as little gems by pupils and geocachers alike. These gems include descriptions as this one from the cache Haklepphåjen in Lurøy:

> The location of the coordinates is my Mjelle[3]. Here I can sit for a long time and just look at the horizon and enjoy life. Sit down, and do the same. [4]

Reasons for choice of location may also be "this is where I caught my first salmon", "this is where I received my first kiss", and "here I met my best friend for the first time". With an eye on ownership and motivation, it is timely to squint at a slogan from the property business: *location, location, location*. During a presentation of geocaching at Gjerøy school[5], pupils were miffed that the author was invited by their teacher for initially presenting geocaching and the potential for just the staff. After being shanghaied by eager primary school pupils, the staff decided to introduce them to geocaching. When they heard about the opportunity to deploy caches themselves, they practically bubbled over of ideas with regard to locality and design. This is a representative response from the

[3] This is a reference to Terje Nilsen's song *Mjelle* (1974).

[4] <http://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC3RGEM_haklepphajen-nord-solvr-rundt-2> accessed 13 November 2014.

[5] Gjerøy skole is located on the island of Gjerøy in Rødøy, Nordland, and has 16 pupils. The school was visited on 27 October 2014 as part of Nesna University College's *Forskningsdagene*, *Lån en Forsker (Research days; Borrow a researcher)*. This visit has resulted in geocaching being tried out as a tool and method at the school.

schools visited along the Helgeland coast, and it is welcoming to see the motivation that occurs even before the mission has *de facto* begun.

Location for each cache comprises a set of GPS coordinates, often referred to as ground zero or GZ. Teacher training students at Nesna in 2012 deployed caches in the vicinity of the college, where they got to try out different ideas for future use with pupils in school. One of the creative inputs, in line with some other caches around the world, is making two-fold tasks that must be solved to find the correct coordinates of GZ. This is a good way to motivate pupils to devise e.g. mathematical tasks, while the pupils through their intercommunicative text will have many an adult geocacher to have to repeat some of their perhaps forgotten skills:

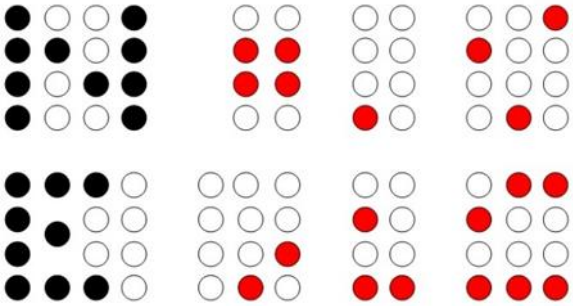
> NB! The cache is NOT located at the listed coordinates, but here:
> N 66.11.1?? E 013.01.67?
> N-coordinate: To find the two last numbers in the N-coordinate you have to find the length of the longest side in the right-angled triangle. Use only the whole number w/o decimals in the answer to fill in the missing part of the N coordinate.
> Side A= 55 and side B=37. How long is side C (the longest side)?
> E-coordinate: The last number of the E-coordinate is equal to Stine's age. When you ask Stine about her age she answers: If I had been twice my age + the half of my age + another five years, I would have been 27.5 years old. Find Stine's age and put the number you find as the last number of the E-coordinate. [6]

This task was a challenge for some of the teacher training students, while the two pupils in 7th grade at Gjerøy school solved the tasks relatively quickly. This task has been used as an example when presenting geocaching at a number of schools, and common to them all is the satisfaction and sense of mastering by solving task together.

It is a challenge for both the cache owner and geocacher being confronted by creative tasks. The task on below is another example of how stimulate creative and logical thinking by making it slightly more

[6] The geocachen *Octopus #8 Sirkula* is located at Nesna. <http://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC3M3PQ_octopus-8sirkula> accessed 13 April 2015.

challenging for geocachers to find GZ. This task must be solved to find the coordinates of the cache *Strandhogg*[7]:



The design of a cache stimulates both logical and tactile skills. Caches come in a variety of sizes and finishes, with most in the size range from a two litre ice cream box to a so-called nano cache, with a size of barely a centimetre in height and diameter. The design of the different caches can be anything from an ordinary plastic box with a lid, 35mm film canisters, fake bolts, fake pine cones and birdhouses, to "unused" mailboxes and fake water taps. Caches can be purchased or manufactured; all that is required is a container with room for minimum a small strip of paper that serves as a physical logbook. Part of the effort to deploy and publish a cache is its design; it and should perhaps be a little difficult to find? The pupils who deploy caches locally must in addition to the textual design, also adapt the location, size, design and difficulty from selected GZ. Here it is necessary to apply a practical-logical thinking beyond the traditionally required of the individual school subjects.

A cache owner deploys a cache to show off somewhere with a purpose, and the cache owner would like to show off this place in an informative way, where history and/or other peculiarities emerge. Each

[7] <http://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC31TMB_strandhogg> accessed 13 November 2014.

cache is assigned a unique website under the umbrella of geocaching.com, where the cache owner can freely write and post pictures in the form of a multi-modal text. The multi-modal text is not a requirement, and some cache owners have just described location by the minimum required parameters, such as longitude, latitude and difficulty. The best caches are not judged merely by location, but also the information in text and images published on the webpage dedicated to the individual cache. This is where the pupils may frolic in scriptwriting and illustrations. As a teacher, one has more than once received feedback as "but I have nothing to write about". As pupils themselves choose locality based by their more or conscious desire, they have indeed something to write about. The teacher may, if desired, contribute to the writing process and product, such as when adding requirements for the approximate amount of text, requirements for illustrations, find or write a poem that fits; just to name a few possibilities. For English as a subject, it would be appropriate with a traditional translation. However, as opposed to translation of Norwegian (or other native tongue) for practice purposes, the English text in a cache description will be read by non-Norwegian speakers, and provided that the target geocachers possess a certain competence in English, rely on the English text to be able to utilize the information cache owner wants to convey. Digital and online translation software is an opportunity to acquire the contents of a text, but it is beyond the scope of this article to further explore those tools, as it is primarily the pupils' text production that is the main focal point. The main objective of a good multi-modal text used for geocaching is two-fold: 1) to present a locality in a clear and informative manner, and 2) to stimulate and motivate potential geocaches to search for the cache, and simultaneously acquire new knowledge the pupils share in their intercommunicative text.

5. Conclusive comments

The moment the cache is published and made available for the world's geocachers, the text produced presenting the cache is an open invitation. As soon as a geocacher receives notice that a new cache is

deployed, or considers it as a potential cache to search for, then the first step of a real communication with the outside world is taken. Notification of a new cache may be received by geocaching.com by way of e-mail or SMS. When a geocacher logs a find, this will be duly registered on-line, and we have a real communication between the pupil and the outside world. The pupil has a real need for communication, he communicates the information about the locality, and the subsequent logging by geocachers shows an action initiated by the pupil's text. It is possible for a geocacher to write longer texts when logging electronically, and some are good at describing the context of the discovery of the cache, and a little about the weather and other experiences. It is especially when one gets a "thanks to geocaching…" feedback, that the pupil's work is experienced as appreciated by geocachers who would not have visited the location if it had not been for the pupil placing a cache precisely there.

In a quest to legitimize the place and role of English in (interdisciplinary) location based learning, the use of geocaching along with the intercommunicative text as a tool and method could prove to be an important contribution. The selection of the two tools combined here does in itself reflect the desired interaction; where geocaching is part of the world outside the classroom one wants to interact with, and where the intercommunicative text is planned and created both in the classroom and in the catchment area of location-based learning. This way of using geocaching as a both tool and channel for production and publication of the intercommunicative text, ensures that what initially may be seen as a decontextualized subject of English in location based learning, becomes a contextualization of the English text in an interaction with the world outside the classroom, rather than in the world outside the classroom.

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ABSTRACT

This article is a response to the challenges for English as a foreign language with today's increasing focus on cross-curricular activities, transversal skills, and location based learning. This article shows how geocaching as an activity not thought out as a teaching and learning tool for the classroom, may be used as a tool giving a meaningful interaction between school subjects, location based teaching, and communicative competence with the outside world. The reader is introduced to geocaching as a potentially powerful learning tool. Though the vantage point and primary focus here is that of English as a foreign language, geocaching may be used as a focal point in all school subjects. The very nature of this flexibility and potential of a real world activity lends itself to cross-curricular activities. Working with school subjects through a real world activity shows how naturally transversal skills are indeed a part of a complete education.

Creation of Electronic Linguistic Resources. The Acquisition of Transversal Skills by MA Students in Letters

CRISTIANA TEODORESCU *
MIHAELA COLHON **

1. Introduction

Vocational education and training systems should provide a wide array of competences, including digital competence, transversal skills or foreign language communication skills. According to the Decision no. 86/24 June 2008 of the Romanian National Council for Professional Adult Training, based on the recommendation of the European Parliament and the EU Council on key competences for lifelong learning (2006/962/EC), *key competences are defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes suitable for a certain context, as those skills that all individuals need, for purposes of personal empowerment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.*

In this context, we also remind the recommendations of the European Parliament and the EU Council on *key competences* from the

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perspective of lifelong learning (2006/962/EC), "[a]s globalisation continues to confront the European Union with new challenges, *each citizen* will need a wide range of *key competences* to adapt flexibly to a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world" (our emphasis) (http://eur-lex.europa.eu).

Key competences are basically transversal, and are developed though the study of several academic subjects, not only one. For this reason, study programmes should be drawn up explicitly taking this feature into consideration.

The project presented in the hereby article mainly aims at creating a trilingual linguistic resource (Romanian, French and English), and the competences we are targeting are defined as follows:

- key competence – mother tongue communication: the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions both verbally and in writing, as well as to adequately and creatively interact at a linguistic level, in a wide array of social and cultural contexts, in education and training;
- key competence – foreign language communication: generally following the same dimensions as mother tongue communication and also implying the ability of intercultural mediation and comprehension;
- transversal competence – digital competence: implying a critical and secure use of ICT at work and for communication purposes. Such competence is delivered by means of basic ICT competence: using a computer in order to recover, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, communicate and participate in online cooperation networks.

2. Goals and methodology

As unanimously recognised by the scholars in this field, the elaboration of terminographic resources involves different competences and this activity is generally developed by a cross-disciplinary team. In the words of Alain Rey (1992: 123-124), the work of a terminographer must be supported by the principles of theoretical terminology, but it should also include the contemporary evolution of logics, epistemology,

science, technology and discourse history; clearly, this can only be done by a cross-disciplinary team.

Terminological practice or terminography consists of collecting and analysing a range of terms from one or several fields and presenting them under the form of a vocabulary or dictionary. This practice implies the mastery of four significant skills, corresponding to the cross-disciplinary character of terminology: cognitive competence (a proper knowledge of the relevant specialised field), linguistic competence (the knowledge of the researched language/languages), social and functional competence (the compulsory features of the terminological work, so that it may effectively achieve its goals and target the audience) and methodological competence (an adequate knowledge of terminographic principles, in order to be able to draw up an ordered and systematic work). As the renowned terminology researcher María Teresa Cabré explains:

Multilingual works usually are more systematic. The products of this type of works usually are dictionaries or vocabularies including information on different languages. (…) Sometimes, even though information on different languages is provided, one of them has priority over the others, with the terms of the primary language being considered the main entries of the dictionary and the others being included in the corresponding dictionary article. In other cases, the data on non-priority languages are treated as secondary information. Other times, terminological works grant the same importance to all the languages, following more equitable systems of presentation, as shown in ISO Guideline 1149 (Cabré 1993:289-290).

The minimal principles that should be observed in terminological work can be summarized as follows:

- doing terminology is not doing translation;
- a term always is the association between a form and a content;
- the form and content of terms are systematic in relation to general language and in relation to the other terms of the specialised field;
- the form and content of a term are thematically specific;
- a real source always is available for terminological data;
- specialised fields are not static or closed;

- the terminology of a specialised field is not pre-existent to such field, but it is established in every work (Universitat Pompeu Fabra 2013).

With a view to the development of their transversal skills, as of the academic year 2014-2015, the students of the Master's Programme in Legal Translation and Terminology of the University of Craiova are assigned the task of contributing to a legal dictionary. This is actually a multilingual electronic dictionary currently including parallel terms for Romanian, French and English language and that will prospectively be extended for German language as well. The dictionary aims at completing the offer of specialised dictionaries, proposing an electronic resource dealing with legal terms in at least three languages and its utility can be proven by listing its envisaged target groups:

- translators and reviewers – who can use the dictionary in their daily activity;
- linguists – who can use it as a basis for compared linguistic studies in Romanian, French and English language, for word meaning analysis techniques or for the development of automated translation software;
- legal counsellors, lawyers, notaries, etc. – in their foreign language communication activities;
- students of Philology and especially Translation Studies, as well as Law students and students in other specialisations – as an auxiliary learning tool.

3. The work flow

So far, the dictionary includes 500 terminological entries compiled by the students of the Master's Programme in Legal Translation and Terminology of the University of Craiova, within the Legal Terminology and Databases courses. The creation of the dictionary implies the accomplishment of a cross-disciplinary study, combining the students' knowledge and competences in three different fields (terminology, law and computer science).

More precisely, the creation of this legal dictionary capitalizes the knowledge acquired by MA students during their higher education, their vocabulary knowledge in their mother tongue (Romanian), as well as French and English language, their ability to search, collect and exploit linguistic information. Furthermore, it stimulates skills such as the ability to search, collect and process information or the ability to access, explore and use printed materials (dictionaries, relevant books) and web services (online dictionaries, search engines, etc.).

The computer-related skills acquired by students during the compilation of the terminological entries include:

- the use of advanced technology: automated translation, terminological data management, creation of terminological databases in the legal field;
- management of terminological database usage techniques;
- general notions on internet;
- use of search engines;
- saving information;
- data processing: filling in an Excel table with data extracted from other sources;
- performing basic operations with data in an Excel sheet;
- performing calculations based on formulae using Excel functions;
- performing charts based on the available data;
- using the new Office 2007/2010 interface.

Students actually have to build terminological entries for each of the three languages in the dictionary using Microsoft Office Excel files (in the following referred to as worksheets). The values in the files may be imported from other files or may be edited directly. The best way to store the data stored in Excel files is through relational tables. Microsoft Office Access is a relational database software and it best works when the tables are properly designed, with relations complying with the relational database model. Students are also taught how to export data from a Microsoft Office Excel work register into Microsoft Office Access, in several ways:

- by copying the data from an open worksheet into an Access worksheet;

- by importing a worksheet into a new or existing table;
- by creating a link to a worksheet in a Microsoft Office Access database.

The websites most frequently accessed by students for collecting information regarding the legal terms are the following:

- for French language entries: http://dictionnaire.reverso.net (for 101 terms), http://www.larousse.fr (for 55 terms), Le Robert illustré & son dictionnaire internet 2013 (for 19 terms), http://cnrt.fr (for 25 terms), http://droit-finances.commentcamarche.net (for 9 terms), http://www.dictionnaire-juridique.com (for 6 terms), http://www.justice.gouv.fr (for 6 terms), http://dictionnaire-juridique.jurimodel.com (for 5 terms), http://terminalf.scicog.fr (for 4 terms), http://www.juritravail.com (for 3 terms), http://www.toupie.org (for 3 terms), etc.
- for Romanian language entries: http://dexonline.ro (for 81 terms), http://www.linguee.fr (for 81 terms), legeaz.net (80 terms), http://ro.wikipedia.org (for 77 terms), http://www.juridice.ro (for 8 terms), http://europa.eu (for 3 terms), http://laws.uaic.ro (for 3 terms), http://ro.bab.la (for 3 terms), http://www.cdep.ro (for 3 terms), http://www.dreptonline.ro (for 3 terms), https://e-justice.europa.eu (for 3 terms), https://ro.glosbe.com (for 3 terms), etc.
- for English language entries: http://dictionary.cambridge.com (for 117 terms), http://en.wikipedia.org (for 66 terms), http://dictionary.reference.com (for 60 terms), http://www.oxforddictionaries.com (for 46 terms), thefreedictionary.com (for 29 terms), http://www.linguee.com (for 21 terms), http://www.linguee.fr (for 13 terms), ro-en.gsp.ro (for 7 terms), http://www.lectlaw.com (for 3 terms), etc.

Admittedly, some of the above mentioned websites actually are repositories of online data or web crawlers, which in general would render them unsuitable for professional or academic terminological queries. The recommended practice for translators, reviewers and terminologists is to go further to the original source of the text in order to be able to perform an accurate assessment of its scientific reliability.

This aspect has been explained to students, so that they may apply this principle both in their subsequent work for the project and in their prospective activity as translators.

4. A work product example

The table below summarizes the fields included in the terminological entries in the three languages concerned.

Table 1: The structure of terminological entries

ID	1	1	1
Term	litige	litigiu	litigation
Part of speech	n.f.	s.n.	n.
Neologism	TRUE	TRUE	TRUE
Abbreviation	-	-	-
Antonym	accord		
Derivatives	litigieux		
Synonym	conflit		
Geographical area	France		
Code	J.		
Field	juridique		
Sub-field	droit penal		
Definition	Contestation donnant lieu à procès ou à arbitrage.	Conflict între persoane, instituţii, state etc., care poate forma obiectul unui proces, unui arbitraj etc.	1. The taking of legal action by a litigant. 2. The field of law that is concerned with all contentious matters.
Source of the definition	http://www.larousse.fr	http://dexonline.ro	Oxford Dictionary of Law
Context	Le requérant fait valoir à cet égard que la condamnation	Sentinţa irevocabilă, dată în soluţionarea unui litigiu între un	Is the proposed agreement creating a unified patent litigation system

	d'une partie à un litige à rembourser au Tribunal de la fonction publique des frais exposés par celui-ci, au titre de l'article 94 du règlement de procédure, ne saurait être fondée que sur des faits en rapport étroit avec l'affaire en cause, et non sur des comportements prétendus de la même partie dans d'autres affaires.	profesionist şi un simplu particular.	(currently called the 'European and Community Patents Court') compatible with the provisions of the Treaty establishing the European Community?
Source of the context	http://ro.linguee.com	http://www.juridice.ro	http://www.linguee.com
Technical note	Contestation d'un genre quelconque : Le litige est en voie de règlement.		
Linguistic note	-		
Phrase	-		
Latin		litigium	litigium
Author	Jianu Geanina	Jianu Geanina	Jianu Geanina

5. Conclusive remarks

The terminological work of the students in the Master's Programme in Legal Translation and Terminology of the University of Craiova, under the careful guidance of their supervisors, may open the way for future research and practical investigation. Since the format of the terminological records follows the methodology proposed by outstanding scholars such as Maria Teresa Cabré Castellví and the content of the entries will be subsequently validated by specialists of the *TradComTerm* research centre of the University of Craiova, their reliability will be ensured according to proper academic standards.

The prospects include the extension of the dictionary to at least 2,000 entries in all the three languages (Romanian, English and French) and an enrichment with parallel entries in German language. The dictionary will be then provided too all the students interested in using it for their graduation theses, MA or doctoral dissertations.

The work in this project qualifies students for all the fields where the comprehension of legal texts is required, as well as contrastive studies of such texts between the languages presented in the dictionary. Holding a focus towards foreign languages, the project prepares students for a career in fields where extensive basic knowledge of their mother tongue is required, along with foreign languages. The skills acquired through data processing, documentation and research activities are sought by many employers. As graduates of a Philology faculty, the students are specialists in working with texts. Moreover, their ability to use a computer for the storage, search and generation of statistics based on textual information ensures employment opportunities in sectors like media, culture or any other field based on language technology. Cross-disciplinary studies engage students in a flexible approach, oriented towards the mapping of information in different languages usually having a different content. Last but not least, the focus lies on the students' methodological skills, underpinning the performance of a wide array of theoretical analyses at a monolingual or plurilingual level.

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ABSTRACT

Transversal skills are key competences in teaching practice, since they are developed throughout the study of several disciplines, not only one. With a view to developing their transversal skills, as of the academic year 2014-2015, the 1st year students of the Master's Programme in Legal Translation and Terminology have received an assignment to work on a dictionary of legal terms which, so far, includes parallel terms in Romanian, French and English languages. The dictionary aims at completing the offer of specialised dictionaries and is dedicated to a wide range of target groups. The assignment does not involve only specific philological and terminological know-how, but also a significant IT-based component. The students mostly work with MS Access and MS Excel, but also become acquainted with other dedicated software. The purpose is to enhance their IT skills (digital literacy), which is, in our opinion, one of the most relevant transversal competences one should possess in today's world.

Strategies for the Development of Plurilingual Competence through the Intercomprehension Method

MIHAELA POPESCU *

1. Introduction

The hereby contribution aims at constructing an approach of transversal skills from the perspective of *intercomprehension-oriented teaching*. This includes two steps, as follows: (i) a first sequence with an introductory and argumentative purpose, aiming at defining fundamental operational concepts ('intercomprehension', 'plurilingualism'[1], 'intercomprehensive teaching strategy'), and (ii) a chapter devoted to classroom scenarios focused on the intercomprehension method, developed within the course of *Compared Grammar of Romance Languages*, taught to students in the 3rd year of

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[1] The author has debated whether to use the term 'plurilingual'/'plurilingualism' or 'multilingual'/'multilingualism' throughout this paper. Though the latter may be a valid option in many cases, we have decided to go for 'plurilingual'/'plurilingualism', based on the recommendations provided by CEFRL: "Plurilingualism differs from multilingualism, which is the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society" (CEFRL 2001: 4).

BA in Philology. The purpose of this chapter is epideictic, i.e. illustrating the means to acquire and/or improve a significant number of transversal skills (recognition and respect for diversity and multiculturality, fostering critical thinking, cultivating a reflective spirit on language and languages, etc.) in higher education, with a specific focus on plurilingual communication competence.

1.1 'Intercomprehension' – an innovative way to access plurilingualism '

Intercomprehension is a polyhedral concept, defined from a cross-disciplinary (linguistic, didactic, cultural, sociological, anthropological, etc.) perspective. Primarily seen as a (a) *cognitive process*, intercomprehension defines a speaker's or a group of speakers' capacity to understand a foreign language – usually related to their own native language – without having studied it beforehand, in a certain given context.

On the other hand, intercomprehension also refers to (b) *a communication technique* (corresponding to the concept of *performance* introduced by Noah Chomsky) through which a speaker S1 uses his/her own linguistic system when relating to a speaker S2 deploying a different linguistic system. These speakers use different linguistic codes, but each of them is able to understand the message involved in a given situation of communication and provide an answer in their own language. From this point of view, a distinction is made in scientific literature (see Chazot 2012: 8) between *interactive comprehension*, which is performed through direct dialogues, and *receptive comprehension*, mainly focusing on written cross-linguistic competence.

Developing the previously mentioned defining approach through the (simultaneous and complementary) connection to new actual teaching-oriented approaches and the linguistic policies launched at the EU level, intercomprehension also is seen as *an innovative teaching process* or, more precisely, *a complex teaching and learning method* for foreign languages (also see Chazot 2012: 7), originating in the European plurilingual and intercultural teaching trends at the beginning of the 90s. At that time, due to the transformations arisen at a social, political

and economic level, four available solutions were noticed for the concretisation of an act of communication in a multilingual environment: (a) the absence of any communication exchange, which would be non-productive and hard to imagine, or (b) the use of a single linguistic code, which would primarily result in an unequal position between speakers, or (c) the use of a third language, which may, however, affect the understanding process, or (d) the deployment of 'intercomprehension', which provides an almost maximal level in terms of message reception and, at the same time, respect for the interlocutor, through the openness towards the culture of the Other, which is why such a solution seems to be correct, at least, in terms of linguistic policies.

On balance, this method is outlined as follows: a student uses his/her experience and knowledge in his/her native language and/or one or several (related) foreign languages, in order to discover, acquire and/or improve a new language and, implicitly, a new culture. Intercomprehension is, thus, a teaching approach operating according to a "puzzle principle", since all the linguistic, cultural and didactic knowledge of a student are not isolated, but joined and interconnected, as underlined by Sanda Reinheimer-Rîpeanu in the *Introduction* to *EuroComRom 7*:

> It is enough to deploy everything one knows about their own language in order to have some orientation to enter the scope of a related language and gradually find out the differences that prevent you from understanding everything from the very beginning (Reinheimer-Rîpeanu *et al.* 2001:1) (my translation).

Intercomprehension' as a teaching approach was proposed in 1989 for the field of Romance languages – languages having the advantage of a common structure (see Iliescu 2013: 101), that is vertically dependent from the *Latin heritage* and horizontally dependent from *common innovations* and *inter-Romance influences* – through the project *EuRom4. Apprentissage simultané de quatre langues romanes*, coordinated by Claire Blanche-Benveniste from the Université Aix-en-Provence. This project opened the way for a wide range of approaches of this type, such

as *Galatea* and, later on, the *Galanet* or *IGLO* extension, *LaLiTa*, *EuRom5*, etc.[2]. As of 1999, the project *EuroComRom – Die Sieben Siebe. Romanische Sprachen sofort lesen könen. Français – català – español – italiano – português – română*, proposed by Horst G. Klein and Tilbert D. Stegmann, was successfully tested in Germany. The novelty of this project, resides, on the one hand, in the target audience of native Germanic language speakers (not native Romance language speakers, as in the previous cases) and, on the other hand, in the implementation of intercomprehensive teaching strategies for Romanian language as well. Even though it is based on the exclusive development of the competence to understand a written text, the intercomprehensive method proposed by *EuroComRom* also has the advantage of representing a (meta)didactics of intercomprehension, explicitly providing those who want to deal with such a method with all the phases they have to follow in order to detect *all the known elements in the linguistic structure of an unknown language*, in a certain given context. This pedagogical approach, defined by Meissner (2004: 15) as a "transfer-type teaching practice", being based on the "human capacity of transferring actual experiences, known significations and structures into new contexts" (Reinheimer *et al.* 2001: 5), activates "existing, but not yet deployed skills" of the students (*Ibid.*), such as *optimised deduction*.

[2] In the following we shall present a list of these projects (as quoted by Baqué/Estrada 2007) and the websites where interactive platforms for the acquisition of Romance languages through the intercomprehension method can be accessed: EuroCom (www.eurocomprehension.infoou; www.eurocomcenter.deet; www.eurocom-frankfurt.de); EU+I (www.usz.at/eui); Eurom4 (www.up.univ-mrs.fr/delic/Eurom4); Galanet (http://www.galanet.eu/autoformation/modules/M70/charte_galanet.htm); Galapro (http://www.galapro.eu); LaLiTa (www.ciid.it/lalita); IGLOProject (www.hum.uit.no/a/svenonius/lingua/index.html); ItinérairesRomans (http://dpel.unilat.org/DPEL/Creation/IR/index.fr.asp); DPELUnion Latine (http://dpel.unilat.org); ILTE: (www.lu.hiof.no/~bu/ilte/report/report_part2.html); Minerva (http://antalya.uab.es/ice/portal/recerca/llengues.htm); Euromania (www.socrates.org.pl/lingua/krakow/pd/PD20.doc); ICE (http://logatome.org/ice.htm).

1.2 Plurilingual Communication Competence

We hope we have managed to prove that intercomprehension, understood in its triple posture, but mostly from a teaching-oriented point of view, helps develop and enhance (in both quantity and quality) foreign language communication competences, thus representing a way of access to plurilingualism.

Plurilingualism, in turn, is a major and recurrent topic of the European Union's educational and cultural linguistic policies. This is favoured by the multilingualism of this social, political, administrative and economic area, where 23 languages are spoken (actually, 220 indigenous languages in 28 countries), whose origin can be classified as follows: 43% Romance languages, 37% Germanic languages, 17% Slavic languages and 3% with different origins (e.g. Greek, Albanian, Finno-Ugric languages, Basque, etc.). Due to this diversity, the European Council has adopted a policy resulting in the development of multilingual communication competence, openly stating with many occasions (see *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFRL) or the *European Language Portfolio or Eurobarometer 386*) that EU citizens *should speak at least two foreign languages, in addition to their mother tongue*. Such an attitude immediately results both in redefining the responsibility and role of foreign language teachers (in pre-university and university education as well) and, compulsorily, in cooperation and task sharing among all those involved in such a teaching process. On the other hand, the ability of EU citizens to speak and understand two or several foreign languages facilitates their job market insertion.

What does plurilingualism actually mean? The transparency of the term primarily indicates a definition such as: "plurilingualism is the use of several foreign languages (related or not) by a speaker or a group of speakers". From a static perspective, such a definition actually refers to an individual's ability to EXPRESS himself/herself in several foreign languages, with different degrees of competence. However, related to the dynamics of the European construction, understanding plurilingualism also implies a vision like the one reported by Umberto Eco, a polyglot personality himself:

> A Europe of polyglots is not a Europe of people who speak many languages fluently, but, in the best case scenario, of people who can communicate, each speaking his own language and understanding that of the other, but who, while not being able to speak it fluently, by understanding it, even with difficulty, would understand the "spirit", the cultural universe that everyone expresses when speaking the language of his ancestors and of his own tradition (Eco 1995, cf. centri.unicas.it).

In this context, CEFRL proposes a plurilingual approach and/or education for foreign language teaching and learning, stating that:

> It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop *a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place*. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence (CEFRL 2001:5) (our emphasis).

Such a perspective triggers a change both in terms of foreign language teaching, with foreign languages no longer considered dichotomous, but inter-related, and in the definition of "foreign language communication competence", with specific forms of expression. For instance, a plurilingual approach may result in the better knowledge of a language, compared to other language that has been previously acquired by the student. Moreover, communication competences may have different degrees from one language to another – for instance, very good oral communication can occur in several acquired languages, along with a lower written effectiveness in one or all studied languages, etc. However, as a whole, plurilingual communication ability – actually a complex and unitary competence – lies at the basis of the development of "[…] linguistic and communicative conscience, including metacognitive strategies that help social actors be more aware of their task management, especially in terms of communication. Moreover, this experience of plurilingualism is fostered by the pre-existing sociolinguistic and pragmatic components, improving the capacity to learn and relate to all that is different and new" (Miclăuş, online).

Four plural pedagogical pursuits/approaches have been identified by M. Chandelier in foreign language teaching (2008: 65-90, apud Miclăuş, online), helping foster plurilingual communication abilities:

- intercultural approach;
- integrated didactics of the taught languages;
- enhancing awareness for the study of foreign languages; and
- intercomprehension of related languages, whose didactic strategies will be presented in the following.

1.3 Didactic strategies of intercomprehension in related languages

A taxonomy of intercomprehensive teaching strategies in related languages may be the following (see Chazot 2012: 21-27):

- cognitive (mental) didactic strategies: *elaboration* (i.e. correlating the various communicative contexts), *summary, repetition, translation and comparison* between related MT and FL*, inference* (logical inference – deductive, inductive, analogic inference, lexical inference, etc.) *transfer*, etc.
- metacognitive didactic strategies: *self-assessment, self-suggestion, identification of issues, anticipation and planning, attention distribution (selective attention* and *directed attention*), etc.

Most of these strategies are already present in foreign language teaching methods. However, in intercomprehension, they may act simultaneously, in juxtaposition or complementarity. *Inference*, for instance, is frequently used when a student should understand a text in a foreign language s/he does not know, but which is close to his/her mother tongue or the related foreign languages s/he knows. In such cases, s/he may easily *discover transparent words, by identifying certain contextual clues* (such as: a known topic, a known grammatical structure, the cumulated meaning of transparent words – direct lexical transparency and indirect lexical transparency, etc.). Another constantly used intercomprehensive strategy is *transfer*, which consists of the transposition of linguistic, cultural knowledge from the MT to the FL.

The primary functional role of these strategies is to provide the student with an optimal knowledge of both (related) foreign languages, and the mentality and civilisation of the linguistic communities concerned. Secondly, intercomprehensive didactic strategies aim at creating a certain *autonomy in the teaching and learning* of related foreign languages, respectively at *enhancing the learner's awareness of his/her own cognitive abilities* of making connections (linguistic, cultural, sociolinguistic connections, etc.) between the languages s/he acquires.

2. Intercomprehension-centred teaching sequences in higher education

2.1. The teaching sequences we propose in the following are performed within the class of *Compared Grammar of Romance Languages* attended by students in the 3rd year of BA, 1st semester. Since they are attending their final year, students in the specialisation *French language / Foreign language and literature (English, Italian, Spanish, German) / Latin language and literature* already have advanced knowledge of general linguistics, mother tongue (Romanian), French language, classical philology, along with knowledge of a third language (Romance or Germanic, from among the ones we have mentioned above).

As a whole, the class including the teaching sequences we are about to present aims at reviewing the unity of the most prominent Romance languages (Romanian, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese) along three linguistic aspects: phonetics, morphology and syntax, and vocabulary. The similarities between these Romance languages, which are due to their shared Latin origin, along with the differences between them, are studied with a view to emphasizing the specificities of each of them within the Romance landscape. These theoretical aspects are supported by a range of examples and applied exercises, especially during practical classes. The class is interactive, comparative topics of language, culture and civilisation are debated. ICT tools are used, along with video projection of relevant images, literary excerpts, audio-visual authentic documents, etc.

The professional competences fostered during this class are:

- positioning and defining the field of *Romance linguistics* within the field of language sciences;
- assimilating theoretical and operational concepts in the field of *Romance linguistics*;
- underlining the synthetic character of Romance language, in contrast with the analytic character of the main Romance languages known;
- acquiring the grids for analysing and interpreting linguistic phenomena regarding the evolution of Latin language and the necessity of the subsequent reorganisation of the phonetics, morphology, syntax and vocabulary of Romance languages;
- developing skills of phonetic, morphological, syntactic and lexical analysis of linguistic structures, in their evolution from Latin to the analysed Romance languages;
- acquiring specific phonetic, morphological, syntactic and lexical structures of the studied Romance languages (Romanian, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese).

On the other hand, the class develops the following transversal skills:

- awareness of the role and contribution of Latin language to the formation of Romance languages and to the elaboration of a European cultural model as a whole;
- the development of logical and critical thinking through the discovery of specific elements and structures of Latin language and Romance languages, present in various fields of human knowledge and action;
- the development and enhancement of interdisciplinary analysis and interpretation skills regarding linguistic issues (metalinguistic skills), by using notions and concepts from related sciences, such as language history (Romanian language history, French language history, etc.), general linguistics, classical philology, communication sciences, history;

- the acquisition of the normative aspects of the mother tongue and/or studied Romance language and fostering correct expression;
- the development of the creative-interpretative potential of Philology students;
- encouraging personal knowledge efforts;
- developing team work spirit, cooperation-oriented approaches, with fair task division.

2.2. The teaching sequences performed during this class focus on the development of students' plurilingual competence, especially on the development of *receptive comprehension*[3] between the studied Romance languages. We are actually talking about three teaching units performed during seminars, with different addressability, classified according to the students' intercomprehension level: basic, intermediate, and advanced.

2.2.1. The first teaching unit

The first teaching unit is configured around two practical applications described in Annex 1, both with an elementary intercomprehension level. The main purpose of this teaching sequence is to get the students acquainted with certain introductory notions of phonetics and grammar of each Romance language they cannot speak, through the transfer of their linguistic, cultural and metalinguistic knowledge in their mother tongue and/or one or even several Romance languages they are familiar with, i.e. by comparing certain phonetic, morphological or syntactic structures in their mother tongue and/or one

[3] It is actually well established in intercomprehensive didactics that each intercomprehension-based teaching process should start with written comprehension (comprehension of a written text), since "this type of comprehension, favoured by the age of the young and of the less young, it a consistent basis for the subsequent development of listening comprehension competence, of oral and written communication competence. Moreover, written text competence is more and more significant as time passes by, due to the attention paid to writing. Information and decision making processes are mostly based on written documents. Even the recording and transposition of human voice by the computer becomes a written text later on, and, when asked, users will always prefer written texts, which they can swiftly peruse and thus save time" (Reinheimer *et al.* 2001: 5) (our translation).

or even several Romance languages they are familiar with, to those in the foreign language(s) they cannot speak.

The teaching methods we have implemented are (a) informative: exposition, explanation, linguistic comment, conversation, dialogue, and (b) formative: exercise, analysis, discovery, individual research.

In the first situation of Annex 1, students are required to compare five sentences and mark their lexical equivalences in a table. Several phases are included in this requirements, as follows:

- the teacher reads every example, and the students are encouraged to perform a reading exercise, practising their pronunciation in Romance languages they speak less or they do not speak at all. Thus, students have the opportunity to acquire the fundamental phonetic rules of French, Italian and/or Spanish.
- students are then divided into working groups, each of which includes a student with an advanced level of French, Italian and/or Spanish.
- each group uses transfer or inference in order to write the lexical equivalences in the table, according to the following model: [book]: (Rom.) carte, (Fr.) *livre,* (It., Sp.) *libro*, etc.
- guided by the teacher, the students learn these lexical units both by using the comparative method, and by disentangling the etymology of each word group, consulting the etymological dictionaries of such languages and/or transferring knowledge from related fields (general linguistics, Latin language, etc.). In the previously presented case, students will notice that, for the concept of [book], all studied Romance languages use the Classical Latin etymon LIBER (Abl. LIBRO) with different forms of manifestation in the signifier, depending on their specific Romance area. The only exception is the students' mother tongue, where the word *carte* (< neolat. CHARTA "paper, writing") does not relate to the same Romance etymon since, as in many other situations, some generally abstract Pan-Romance words were not

inherited by Romanian language from Latin, but they were taken later on, through inter-Romance or latin cultural influence.

- the following phase consists of establishing a minimum range of grammar rules, which is also done through deductive inference, through transfer, but also by comparing the various ways of expressing linguistic universals, such as the expression of *possession, existence* or *a position above*.

The involvement of logical and critical thinking, the cross-disciplinary interpretation of language facts, the development of students' interpretative potential, the encouraging of their personal information efforts, the development of their cooperation spirit and team work are the transversal skills automatically embedded in such an activity.

The second activity of Annex 1 is basically underpinned by the same didactic goals as the previously described case. Here, we insist on the students' acquisition of mostly morphological and syntactic information characteristic for the studied Romance languages. The teaching methods and devices are mostly similar to the ones we have previously presented. The level of intercomprehension of the target group also is elementary.

2.2.2. The second teaching unit

The second teaching unit (Annex 2) is directed to an audience with an average degree of intercomprehension. This time, the proposed activity goes beyond the sentence level and is primarily aimed at developing written comprehension across not very large multiple sentence segments. In a first step, students have to order four paragraphs written in different Romance languages (one of them in their mother tongue), in order to obtain a coherent text. Then, they must come up with a suitable title for the text, that they must translate into each of the four languages involved.

Students mostly solve the first requirement on their own, under the teacher's permanent coordination. The latter provides them with the step they should pursue. The teaching path can be summed up as follows:

- each student reads all the four paragraphs, after a model reading performed by the teacher, in order to become acquainted with the presented texts;
- the students try to discover the global significance of the paragraphs written in FL, on an individual basis. In order to achieve this goal, the teacher uses questions to guide the students with a view to applying intercomprehensive strategies that have been already acquired (transfer, inference, comparison, linguistic comment);
- conversation and dialogue are then used to explain, comment and understand, one by one, all the lexical, morphological and syntactic structures of the texts in FL; at the same time, certain graphic or linguistic particularities specific to each FL are emphasized, and a cultural discussion takes place on the mythological origin of the name of the old continent, as well as the ethnonyms *Romanian, Spanish, French, Italian.*
- students try to perform an initial translation of the three paragraphs in French, Italian and Spanish;
- the final translations of the three texts in FL are established pursuant to comparisons and analyses;
- logical deduction is used to assemble the paragraphs in the order that allows for the creation of a coherent text.

In order to fulfil the second task, the students are asked to organise themselves in work groups, so that each group includes a student with an advanced level of French, Italian and/or Spanish. Based on a summary and internal talks, each group will draw up a suggestive title for the final text, in their mother tongue. The title will then be translated into French, Italian and Spanish. The following step implies the presentation and confrontation of the solutions provided by each group, so as to establish a final title by means of discussions and comments.

Besides the general objective of developing plurilingual communication competence in 3rd year students, this teaching unit explicitly or implicitly promotes a wide array of specific professional skills (recognition and acquisition of specific linguistic structures of the

four languages involved in the activity, development of language and metalinguistic perspective, etc.), as well as transversal skills (optimizing deductive processes and critical thinking, fostering freedom of speech and expression, proof of team spirit, delegating responsibilities, recognition and respect for diversity and multiculturality, etc.).

2.2.3. *The third teaching unit*

The third teaching unit we have proposed (described in Annex 3) occupies the last position in terms of the intercomprehension level required by the target group. We are now dealing with an advanced intercomprehension level of students, who not only have to activate all the previously acquired knowledge, but should also be able to establish various types of connections, draw up an analysis and an interdisciplinary examination of language facts, by using notions and concepts from related sciences. This pre-existing set of knowledge helps solve several highly complex requirements, based on the work with four parallel texts (excerpts from "Little Red Riding Hood") in Romanian, French, Italian and Spanish. The major goal of this activity is to develop plurilingual communication abilities. Specific objectives refer to (i) establishing lexical equivalences, (ii) translating the texts written in FL, (iii) summarizing, (iv) back-translation and (v) conceptual equivalence and communication of linguistic universals in FL (such as certain forms of address). In order to fulfil all these goals, the teaching path takes the form of a complex expression of a range of methods, strategies and steps, which are basically similar to the ones described in the previous activities.

3. Final considerations

The method of intercomprehension in Romance languages is, undoubtedly, an innovative tool in foreign language teaching and learning (with foreign languages being looked at from an interdependent perspective), with a view to fostering and developing the students' plurilingual competence. The teaching sequences we have previously exposed managed to attract the attention and interest of the target audience, with the students being actively involved in all the phases of

each activity, solving the required tasks in a logical and creative manner and showing they were willing to perform similar applications.

Of the undisputed advantages of the intercomprehension method, which have been presented along our contribution, the following should be remembered: the acquisition of new communication skills by exploiting the existing linguistic competence in the mother tongue and/or a related FL, supporting and encouraging linguistic and cultural diversity, motivating and stimulating the learning of several FL. At the same time, intercomprehensive teaching strategies result in the development of transferable skills, such as the enhancement of critical thinking, learning autonomy, linguistic and communicative conscience, etc.

However, such a plural teaching approach ought to consider a wide range of aspects. Otherwise, the proper development or deployment of the intercomprehensive method may be hindered by obstacles like: a lack of inclination towards learning foreign languages, fear to interact in general or fear to interact because of an "imperfect" knowledge of an FL, fear that the acquisition of a new FL will result either in combining knowledge from one linguistic system to another, or in forgetting the other FL(s) one already knows, fear of the effort to learn in general, etc.

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CORPUS

Annex I

1. Compare the following sentences and fill in the equivalences in the table:

rom. *Cartea copilului e pe masă.*
fr. *Le livre de l'enfant est sur* la table.
it. *Il libro del bambino è sul tavolo.*
sp. *El libro del niño esta sobre la mesa.*

Language/ meaning	[book]	[child]	[be]	[on]	[table]
Rom.	*Carte*	*copil*	*e(ste)*	*pe*	*masă*
Fr.	*Livre*	*enfant*	*est*	*sur*	*table*
It.	*Libro*	*bambino*	*è*	*sul*	*tavolo*
Sp.	*Libro*	*nino*	*está*	*sobre*	*mesa*

2. Replace the blank spaces with the forms of the Romance root equivalent to the corresponding Romanian term. Indicate the etymology of the terms (apud Reinheimer-Rîpeanu 2011: 463). Write a short comment on the phonetic and morphological phenomena you have noticed, respectively use this perspective to propose a classification of the verbal forms you have studied.

rom. *Cum te cheamă? Pe mine mă cheamă Andrei. Dar pe tine?*
it. *Come ti .....i? Io mi .....o Andrei, e tu?...*
fr. *Comment t'.....es-tu? Moi, je m'.....e Andrei. Et toi?*
sp. *¿Cómo te .....as? Yo me .....o Andrei. ¿Y tú?*

Annex II

Read carefully the paragraphs below, which belong to a plurilingual text (in Romanian, French, Italian and Spanish), adapted after http://europa.eu/:

Dar în ultimii aproximativ 60 de ani, ţările de pe acest vechi continent s-au reunit, în fine, în spiritul păcii, prieteniei şi unităţii, ca să lucreze pentru o Europă şi o lume mai bune. (4)

L'Europe est un continent magnifique avec une histoire fascinante. (2)

Ha dato i natali a numerosi dei più celebri scienziati, inventori, artisti e compositori famosi in tutto il mondo, nonché a personaggi in voga del mondo dello spettacolo e a sportivi di successo. (3)

¡Vamos a explorar Europa! (1)

(a) Order the paragraphs so that they make up a coherent text.
(b) Think of a plurilingual title for the final text.

Annex III

Read carefully the paragraphs A, B, C, D below and try to answer the following requirements:

- fill in the table with the lexical equivalences for the discursive sequences [Once upon a time], [Little Red Riding Hood], [One day], [come!], [little girl], [grandmother];

- make an equivalent translation to Romanian and compare it to paragraph D;

- make a short summary (25 words) in Romanian and one or several Romance languages you are familiar with;

- discover the forms of address appearing in certain paragraphs and use equivalent structures to fill in the discursive situations when they are missing.

A. *Il était une fois une petite fille que tout le monde aimait bien, surtout sa grand-mère. Elle ne savait qu'entreprendre pour lui faire plaisir. Un jour, elle lui offrit un petit bonnet de velours rouge, qui lui allait si bien qu'elle ne voulut plus en porter d'autre. Du coup, on l'appela Chaperon Rouge. Un jour, sa mère lui dit: "Viens voir, Chaperon Rouge: voici un morceau de gâteau et une bouteille de vin. Porte-les à ta grand-mère; elle est malade et faible; elle s'en délectera; fais vite, avant qu'il ne fasse trop chaud. Et quand tu seras en chemin, sois bien sage et ne t'écarte pas de ta route, sinon tu casserais la bouteille et ta grand-mère n'aurait plus rien. Et quand tu arriveras chez elle, n'oublie pas de dire "Bonjour" et ne va pas fureter dans tous les coins.*

B. *C'era una volta una dolce bimbetta; solo a vederla le volevan tutti bene, e specialmente la nonna che non sapeva più che cosa regalarle. Una volta le regalò un cappuccetto di velluto rosso, e poiché, le donava tanto, ed ella non voleva portare altro, la chiamarono sempre Cappuccetto Rosso. Un giorno sua madre le disse: "Vieni, Cappuccetto Rosso, eccoti un pezzo di focaccia e una bottiglia di vino, portali alla nonna; è debole e malata e si ristorerà. Sii gentile, salutala per me, e va' da brava senza uscire di strada, se no cadi, rompi la bottiglia e la nonna resta a mani vuote.*

C. *Era uma vez uma doce pequena que tinha o amor de todos os que a viam; mas era a avó quem mais a amava, a ponto de não saber o que mais dar à criança. Uma vez deulhe um capucho de veludo vermelho e, como este lhe ficava tão bem que ela nunca mais quis usar outra coisa, chamaram-lhe simplesmente Capuchinho Vermelho. Um dia disse-lhe a mãe: "Vem cá, Capuchinho Vermelho, aqui tens um pedaço de bolo e uma garrafa de vinho para levares à tua avó. Ela está doente e fraca e isto há-de fortalecê-la. Põe-te ao caminho antes que se ponha quente e, quando estiveres no bosque, vai directa e não te desvies do carreiro, senão ainda cais e partes o vidro e a tua avó não recebe nada. E quando entrares no quarto dela, não te esqueças de dizer bom dia e não te vás pôr a espreitar em todos os cantos.*

D. *A fost odată o fetiță frumoasă, atât de frumoasă, încât părea un îngeraş. Era iubită de toată lumea, mai ales de către bunica ei, care îi făcuse cadou o scufiță din catifea roşie, ce i se potrivea atât de bine, încât nu mai purta nimic altceva pe căpşor. Din aceasta cauză, i se spunea Scufița Roşie. Într-o zi însorită, mama ei i-a spus: "Uite, Scufiță Roşie, ai aici niste prăjituri şi o sticlă de vin. Du-le bunicii tale, căci e tare bolnavă şi slăbită, şi îi vor face bine şi o vor înzdrăveni. Pleacă acum, înainte ca soarele să dogorească, şi mergi frumos, fără să alergi în afara cărării, ca nu cumva să cazi şi să spargi sticla, şi să nu mai ai astfel ce să îi duci bunicii. Atunci când intri în casă, nu uita să îi spui „Bună dimineața" şi nu te uita curioasă prin jur înainte să faci asta.*

E. *Once upon a time there was a sweet little girl. Everyone who saw her liked her, but most of all her grandmother, who did not know what to give the child next. Once she gave her a little cap made of red velvet. Because it suited her so well, and she wanted to wear it all the time, she came to be known as Little Red Riding Hood. One day her mother said to her: "Come Little Red Riding Hood. Here is a piece of cake and a bottle of wine. Take them to your grandmother. She is sick and weak, and they will do her well. Mind your manners and give her my greetings. Behave yourself on the way, and do not leave the path, or you might fall down and break the glass, and then there will be nothing for your sick grandmother.*

Adapted (except for the Romanian version) after Martínez, J. M. (2014).

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ABSTRACT

One way of fostering the transversal skills of students in Humanities refers to the wide range of teaching strategies applying the method of "intercomprehension" between related languages (Romance languages in our case). The proposal of such an approach in (general or specialised) classes of Romance Linguistics represents a way of access to plurilingualism, through an innovative method for foreign language teaching and learning, mainly based on the deployment of already existent linguistic skills (in one's mother tongue and/or related foreign languages).

Therefore, "intercomprehension", as defined in the policies of the European Union, illustrates the speakers' competence to understand those who speak or write a language belonging to the same family as their own, in a given context. Our contribution will first outline the general methodological and conceptual framework for the definition and operation of this method, and will then present some strategies for its application in teaching practice, supported by concrete examples.

Why Transversal Skills? Views and Opinions of a PhD Student

ANCA GABRIELA MIC *

1. Introduction

Contemporary society is defined, *inter alia*, by its continuous capacity of undergoing swift social, technological and economic changes, resulting in a constant need of update and renewal of individuals' knowledge, capacities and competences.

The impact of constant social progress is also witnessed in the Romanian educational system. This is deemed to be a rigid and excessively theoretical, mostly unidirectional system; however, the significance of creating study programmes meeting job market requirements and training graduates able to satisfy the employers' prerequisites is recognised to a wider and wider extent. The graduates of such specialisations benefit from a useful education, i.e. this education can be easily applied when entering the labour market, and they pursue a path aiming at developing certain transversal competences, also known as "soft skills" (social, interpersonal or transferable skills).

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Today's youth has access to ever more technical and specialised education. Most students come out on the labour market with a proper technical training and equipped with the hard skills giving them the premises to be good professionals. Though, the very competences likely to individualise them, to distinguish them among the wide population of students benefitting from the same mass education system, are missing.

The holders of a PhD degree are the best students of a higher education institution. At the same time, they are the ones holding the best opportunities to become the leaders of tomorrow. As for this particular group of students of which the author is currently a member, it can be certainly said that expectations are much higher, in terms of both their advanced knowledge in a specific field of activity, and their transversal competences and abilities.

To what extent can PhD studies help develop the transversal skills of young researchers? How can they properly capitalize their key competences during the doctoral programme? Such questions are critical in our times, since having a PhD degree in a certain field is not merely a scientific challenge, but a professional one as well.

A young researcher needs a consistent array of scientific competences in order to draw up his/her PhD dissertation, but these should be completed by a range of other essential skills, i.e. transversal skills, whose importance is not emphasized to the same extent. These competences are the ones allowing PhD students to easily find answers to the questions they ask themselves, to work on an independent basis or communicate effectively.

2. What are transversal skills?

Transversal skills are those capacities (acquisitions in terms of values and attitudes) transcending a certain field/study programme, with a cross-disciplinary nature and defined by descriptors such as: autonomy and responsibility, social interaction, personal and professional development. In short, transversal skills are the skills that, though developed in a particular situation, may be transferred to another situation. They are needed for an efficient activity of individuals, not only in school or at the workplace, but in life as well.

From our opinion, the hereby article is a self-reflective exercise, that will surely help us discover our transversal skills, assess our level in this respect and, at the same time, identify the skills we are missing and that we must acquire or improve, since they play a major part in our research activity.

Eight key competences have been defined at the EU level (Europa.EU 2011), representing a combination of knowledge, abilities and attitudes, and considered necessary for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment: mother tongue communication; foreign language communication; mathematical competence and basic science and technology competence; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competence; initiative and entrepreneurship; cultural awareness and expression.

Thus, we shall refer to this EU-proposed list in order to debate the topic of transversal skills from our viewpoint as a PhD student. We shall only discuss the skills that are essential in a young researcher's activity. It should be remembered that this list is not exhaustive and that the hereby self-reflective exercise will attempt at identifying other transversal skills that have not been included in the list, but which we consider to be relevant.

From our point of view, transversal skills can be acquired in two ways:

- informally, mostly throughout the practical activities undertaken during research (while drawing up the doctoral dissertation, laboratory work, interaction with other individuals, participation in conferences/meetings/seminars, etc.);
- on a formal basis, by taking part in training courses, meetings with the doctoral supervisor, traineeships, etc.

3. Mother tongue communication

Mother tongue communication is "the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts" (Europa.EU 2011).

A PhD student should be an outstanding user of his/her mother tongue, i.e. possess knowledge of vocabulary, functional grammar and language functions allowing him/her to communicate in writing or orally and correctly convey the desired message, to be able to distinguish relevant and irrelevant information, to express his/her own arguments in a persuasive and suitable manner, to use the bibliography and available resources in order to search, collect and process information allowing him/her to draw up texts (scientific articles, the dissertation), to understand and comply with the requirements of written language or text processing requirements (formal/informal texts, oral presentations, scientific articles, etc.).

Moreover, the capacity to communicate in an efficient manner, to transmit information, ideas, thoughts, etc. in a proper way should take into account the wide variety of communication situations, the context whereby the communication takes place and the audience addressed by the PhD student. For instance, an oral presentation in front of other PhD students is much more relaxed and can be considered rather informal, compared to a presentation defended within a national conference attended by both PhD students and professionals in a field.

A positive attitude of a PhD student from the perspective of mother tongue communication implies availability towards a critical and constructive dialogue, a proper appreciation of and willingness to meet aesthetic qualities, the interest to interact with others. This supposes an awareness of the impact of speech upon others, of the need to understand and use language in a positively and socially responsible way.

The author considers that she has no issues in terms of mother tongue communication at a written or oral level, but a verbal presentation of ideas is much more difficult than in writing, since a range of external factors may influence the act of communication and the transmission of information. Emotions and the fear of speaking in public are the primary factors influencing verbal communication even in one's mother tongue, and the only way to do away with them is by exercise. The more conferences a young researcher attends, the more presentations s/he has to defend in front of a new public, the better his/her capacity to communicate verbally will get.

This is also valid for written communication. A PhD student's research activity is mostly written, so that the quality of his/her texts increases with the number of scientific articles s/he has authored. The quality of a scientific text is not limited to the ideas regarding the concerned topic, but also includes the author's writing style: how the main and secondary ideas were depicted, the absence of words or the presence of other words whose meaning may or may not be known by the audience (even if, in most cases, the audience is made up by professionals in the field), the capacity of writing words correctly, of avoiding repetitions and identifying synonyms in case of need, the ability to avoid much too long sentences, to use punctuation and citation rules in a proper manner, etc.

4. Foreign language communication

Normally, the first thing the representatives of a university are looking for in a PhD student is his/her capacity to prove advanced knowledge in his/her field of interest, as well as his/her ability to undertake significant research in such field. Besides, most universities include the knowledge of a foreign language among the prerequisites for admission to doctoral studies (irrespective of the selected field of study), since s/he must be able to undertake documentation and use bibliographic sources in foreign languages.

Foreign language competence implies knowledge of vocabulary and functional grammar and an awareness of the main types of verbal interaction and language registers. Knowledge on social conventions, as well as cultural aspects and variability of languages also are important. The essential skills for foreign language communication consist of the capacity to understand spoken language, to initiate and complete a conversation, to read, understand and produce suitable texts for an individual's needs.

Regarding our research, the knowledge of at least two foreign language is a compulsory criterion for the completion of our research activity, since our doctoral dissertation actually is a trilingual study on the terminology of gastronomy. In such a context, the proficient use of English language and French language becomes a must.

One of the eloquent situations that have helped us reflect on the significance of foreign language knowledge for a young researcher was the participation in an international doctoral seminar organised by INALCO, in Paris. During the presentation delivered at this conference, a high degree of mastery of the two languages was required, since we had to switch from French to English and back and forth all the time, though, inevitably, the ideas came to mind in the mother tongue (Romanian language). As the conference was bilingual (English and French language) and the text of the MS PowerPoint presentation was written in English, the oral presentation had to be done in French. We appreciate that that was the first truly difficult moment we had to overcome, in terms of verbal expression, as it was rather difficult to speak a foreign language (French) while relating to a background presentation in another foreign language (English). However, the experience was a novelty and of real use, since we acquired invaluable experience and confidence for such an exercise.

Moreover, besides the two foreign languages we have achieved proficiency in (since our Bachelor's and Master's studies focused on them), we have some knowledge of Spanish language, which is really helpful. The more foreign languages one knows, the more one can access sources or materials that are only available in a specific language.

5. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology

According to the same list of key competences of the European Union, mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations, with the emphasis being placed on process, activity and knowledge. Basic competences in science and technology refer to the mastery, use and application of knowledge and methodologies that explain or solve a certain problem.

In the attempt to develop competences related to work with mathematical elements, the focus should lie on the process itself, on the activity, and on knowledge as well. Mathematical competence implies the capacity and availability to use types of mathematical thinking (logical

and spatial thinking) and presentation methods (formulae, models, constructs, graphs, schemes), to various degrees.

PhD students should be able to apply basic mathematical principles and processes in any context, to follow and assess chains of arguments. At the same time, they must be able to reason in a mathematical manner, to use suitable auxiliary devices and scientific data, with a view to achieving their research purposes and reaching a certain evidence-based decision or conclusion. Thus, PhD students should be able to recognise the essential features of scientific research and have the capacity to communicate the conclusions and reasoning resulting in them

Mathematical competence involves critical assessment and curiosity, interest for ethics and respect for safety and sustainability, especially in terms of technological and scientific progress. This competences addresses all researchers, irrespective of their field of study (science, literature, foreign languages, linguistics, engineering, economics, etc.). Any PhD student must be able to interpret or draw up a chart or a graph, use logical reasoning and critical thinking abilities, which represent basic competence in the development of a more sophisticated understanding of the research topic. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology are essential for all PhD students, since research is highly abstract and different cross-related issues should be coordinated.

Young researchers should understand how to design assumptions, how to identify, define and operationalize relevant variables, how to examine the relationships between variables, how to identify a proper sample of participants, how to select the suitable data analysis methods, how to collect and analyse data, how to identify relevant ethical aspects, how to interpret and discuss results.

6. Digital competence

Digital or IT competence involves the confident and critical use of information society technology (IST) for communication purposes. Computers and digital devices are an essential tool for any researchers, since they allow him/her to perform his/her daily activities, provide

access to sources of information and online databases, allow him/her to handle information, so that all PhD students should possess skills closely related to the use of a computer, of internet or the required software for the performance of research activities.

We live in the communication era, so that a young researcher cannot work without communicating by e-mail or social media, without knowledge on internet, search engines, data saving, word processing and printing, the use of pictures and tables, the creation of charts from the available data, the creation of presentations in specific software and addition of animated effects, etc.

All young researchers should be able to use computer devices in order to search, collect and process information, to use it in a systematic and critical manner, as well as in order to produce, present and understand complex information. They must be able to use the information society technology for personal and professional purposes, supporting the critical thinking, creativity and innovation they need in their research activity.

7. Learning to learn

This capacity is related to learning, to the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs.

From our point of view, PhD students should possess this competence, since it helps them become aware of their own learning processes and needs, identify the available opportunities and the capacity to overcome obstacles for successful learning. This competence implies the acquisition, production and assimilation of new knowledge and abilities, which may be use and applied in a wide range of contexts.

Irrespective of their situation, PhD students should know and understand their preferred learning strategies, the strengths and weaknesses of their skills and qualifications, they should overcome certain obstacles, reinvent themselves, but also be able to look for new available opportunities for training, of counselling and/or assistance. Therefore, they should be able to organise their own learning, to evaluate

their own work and be willing to ask for advice, information and support, when applicable.

8. Critical thinking

Critical thinking is a key competence in the knowledge and communication society, based on doubt, on questioning certain statements, accompanied by the wish to resort to reason and argumentation, to objective demonstration with a view to proving an assumption.

For PhD students, the scientific spirit of critical thinking can be seen in their willingness to look for evidence, to synthesize, compare, generalise, abstractize, etc. Critical thinking is clear, reasonable and free thinking. It is not based on the accumulation of information, but on the development of one's capacity to process information.

PhD students should be able to identify, understand and perform logical connections between their own ideas and arguments, identify reasoning mistakes in argumentations and presentations, understand the relevance and significance of ideas, determine the context and implications of an argument or an idea, identify, construct and understand the justifications behind opinions and arguments or build new arguments and ideas based on the ones s/he has accumulated so far.

Critical thinking is, hence, an essential quality, facilitating the transmission of one's own ideas and the understanding of others' ideas, which makes communication far more beneficial and effective. Moreover, it accelerates the assimilation of new information and their consequences. Any young researchers with these qualities may solve problems much more easily, may understand any text or argument in a better way, without having to retain a huge amount of information.

9. Transversal skills not included in the EU list

As explained previously, the purpose of this self-reflective exercise is to identify the transversal skills we consider relevant and critical for a young researcher. Besides the transversal skills included in the EU list, we have identified other two skills which are essential for a PhD student, i.e. time management and the capacity to problematize.

Time is a very valuable resource, and time management is the art to arrange, organise and programme someone's time, with a view to generating more efficient and productive work. The capacity to plan daily activities and to use time for research is vital for a PhD student, as it is for everyone. The most significant issue of young people nowadays, in terms of time, is that they are unable to plan their time and activities and most frequently barely manage to get their job done. Many times, this is a disadvantage, since they fail to pay proper attention to a certain task, for lack of time. How important is time management for a PhD student? Highly important, in our opinion, since today's researchers have quite scarce time available to document, to set their goals, to establish their corpus or draw up their dissertation. Therefore, every moment is important.

Some time management principles should be properly understood and used, so as to be organised and do things in due time. Thus, one must be able to set some goals or objectives and prioritize the planned activities with a view to fulfilling them. Thereafter, this planning should be complied with as much as possible, so as to properly organise our time and be efficient and motivated. A good practice is carrying a list of the significant things one must do, organised according to their priority. When a task is completed, it will be checked and then one can move on to the next one. This helps us have control of the things we have to do and the risk to overlook a major task is minimized. Time management starts, hence, from a conscious responsibility process: the better our aspirations are defined, the easier it will be for us to allocate time in order to reach our goals. Once assumed, the objectives result in higher responsibility and increase the success rate of an activity, especially since it has been proven that performance influences our satisfaction and our energy. Properly invested time is time generating progress and getting us close to performance.

Problematisation is a heuristic type of education, consisting of the deliberate creation of issues or difficulties with a view to triggering the student's independent activity, thinking and personal effort. Problem solving involves two critical aspects. Firstly, we are talking about creativity, since the identification of a solution is a novel thing; then,

critical thinking emerges whenever the student formulates his/her own working assumptions and wants to check them or find out an answer to a question implicitly including an investigated idea. The formative value of problematisation is that it can reinforce cognitive structures, stimulate the exploratory spirit, develop an active work style, cultivate autonomy and courage in undertaking a personal opinion. For a PhD student, problem solving easily attracts attention, triggers cognitive interest, ensures an intrinsic motivation of learning, develops the operational schemes of thinking and reinforces cognitive structures, enhances the operativeness of knowledge and a better mastery of knowledge and skills, prepares the young researcher for independent thinking and underpins his/her autonomy in manifesting his/her own viewpoints.

10. Conclusions

Transversal skills represent a multi-functional transferable package of knowledge, abilities and attitudes, that every PhD student needs for personal and professional fulfilment and development, social inclusion and even finding a job. Irrespective of whether we talk about mother tongue or foreign language skills, of digital competence, of time management or critical thinking, any young researcher should have, besides advanced knowledge in his/her field of interest and the ability to perform consistent research activity in that field of study, some key competences allowing him/her to develop both personally and professionally. Without these transversal skills acquired during the study programmes or an informal context (even self-taught), young researchers would not be able to develop or complete their research activity.

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ABSTRACT

Transversal skills represent a topic that may not be considered very relevant by students at first sight. When studying for a degree, most students are basically interested in getting good marks. However, when completing the Bachelor's level and beginning postgraduate studies or employment, students have to face reality: professional skills are not everything. PhD students, for instance, do not require only specific competences for the field they are preparing for; they also need to be able to do adequate research (find relevant sources, be able to extract and process ideas), to filter information through their own views (critical thinking), to come up with ideas and concepts of their own (creativity). This means that PhD students need to develop a set of skills that will allow them to go further with their knowledge and expertise in a specific field, and that will also prove to be useful while they are carrying out their own research activities. These skills are not necessarily developed within the precincts of an academic setting. Most transversals skills (e.g. computer literacy) are self-taught in an informal environment, in the students' spare time. This article focuses on identifying a set of basic transversal skills that a PhD student should possess.