A QUALITY MATRIX FOR CEFR USE: Examples of promising practices

1. OVERVIEW

Project leader(s) contact: Enrica Piccardo

Country: Toronto, Canada   **Institution**: OISE/University of Toronto

Type of context: Classroom level

Educational sector: Primary**,** Lower Secondary**,** Upper Secondary**,** Tertiary**,** Adult

Main focus of your project: Teaching Practices**,** Learning/Self-Assessment**,** Teacher Education**,** Portfolio Use

SUMMARY

Name: LINguistic and Cultural DIversity REinvented (LINCDIRE): Integrating western and indigenous perspectives to redefine language education practices

Abstract: LINCDIRE is a digital environment to provide teachers with scenarios for action-oriented task/projects at different levels and to help learners navigate their plurilingual trajectories. A bank of online tasks is accompanied by descriptor checklists and a user-friendly tool for learners: Language Integration Through E-portfolio (LITE). The project facilitates a paradigm shift towards an action-oriented, plurilingual vision through practical applications of the theory of plurilingualism.

Stage: Planning; Implementation; Evaluation

Theme: Curriculum, Materials, Teacher education, Assessment

CEFR aspects targeted: Descriptors (Including the plurilingual/pluricultural dimension and mediation), Action-oriented authentic tasks, Self-assessment, Assessment with defined criteria, Plurilingualism, European Language Portfolio

Main features of this example:
- Online tool to support classroom language learning
- Training teachers in CEFR terminology and implementation
- Holistic and inclusive language pedagogy
- Maintenance and revitalization of Indigenous and heritage languages

Quality principles demonstrated: Relevance, Transparency, Validity, Inclusiveness

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background:
Canada and the United States are linguistically and culturally diverse, but the rapid disappearance of indigenous languages and the decline in use of heritage languages are a major concern. In Canada there are more than 65 indigenous languages but their use has steadily declined across generations and many face the possibility of extinction, a trend often attributed to attitudes and teaching practices that devalue and discourage minority languages. In addition, minority languages tend to be taught with out-dated methodologies. Pedagogical change is therefore needed to maintain and foster language and cultural plurality. Research has shown that linguistic and cultural diversity is as crucial to humankind as biodiversity is for the planet. One way to protect and promote such diversity is plurilingual education, supported by the theory of plurilingualism. Although this theoretical framework has been developed, its practical application is still challenging. There is a need for a dynamic and flexible tool for language learners to understand and ultimately embrace the value of plurilingual practices.

LINCDIRE is an international collaboration of language education researchers, language teachers, and graduate students who share concerns over the fate of aboriginal and minority languages in North America. The project is funded by the Canadian Social Science Research Council (SSHRC). The LINCDIRE project integrates four key concepts: plurilingualism, the 'Medicine Wheel', the action-oriented approach, and digitally-mediated collaboration. LINCDIRE supports a free e-portfolio tool called LITE based on an action-oriented, task-based approach which fuses Western-plurilingual & Indigenous approaches to language education in order to foster lifelong language learning.

Stated aims:
- Synthesise Western and indigenous epistemologies
- Promote a new holistic view of languages
- Provide a web-based set of action-oriented reslources for teachers
- Design and implement a digital environment (LITE) for learners
- Formalize and solidify an international network of collaboration

Steps/stages:

1. ***Creation of a descriptor bank:***
   'Can-do' descriptors and descriptors for linguistic competence, sociolinguistic/pragmatic competence and plurilingual/pluricultural competence were selected from the descriptors in the CEFR Companion volume (consultation version) or developed from scratch in an iterative process, inspired by the CEFR. These descriptors were organised in structured lists for each levels and are the source material for the design of both teaching scenarios and self-assessment and goal-setting tools.

2. ***Development of a scenario template for task/projects***:
   Following the template, scenarios include:
   - the communicative objectives met in the task/project – expressed with can-do' descriptors from the CEFR Companion Volume (for aspects of reception, production, interaction, mediation)
   - a description of the culminating task to be accomplished, including the precise mission and the relevant constraints
   - descriptors of qualitative aspects of language use – also from the CEFR and Companion Volume, plus descriptors for plurilingual and pluricultural aspects
   - a suggested route through preparatory activities to the culminating task

3. ***Development of the action-oriented task/projects***
   Using the template and the descriptor bank, a network of researchers produced a series of action-oriented tasks, awareness-raising activities, reflections, artifacts, and resources in each of the five main target languages: English, French, German, Ojibwe, and Italian.

4. *Development of LITE master template*
The master template is the overarching section of LITE that connects and allows navigation of all the contents in all the languages. This language-neutral template relies on iconic representations, with virtually no use of words, which is consistent with indigenous epistemologies and avoids privileging any particular language. Users are granted the freedom to mix languages, which is in line with the plurilingual framework adopted. The template is based upon the concept of the 'medicine wheel', a key teaching and worldview in many indigenous cultures. The wheel has four coloured segments representing the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual domains of life. The centre of the wheel represents a 360° perspective, where all learning converges in a holistic view of oneself and the world around. Each segment represents a particular learning strategy:
   - Spirit (yellow): Learning is connected to the learner's community, culture and environment.
   - Emotion (red): Learning occurs through the use of imagery, symbols and stories.
   - Body (black): Learning occurs through hands-on experience and collaborative work.
   - Mind (white): Learning is about holistically mapping out the learning process, with planning action and reflection.

5. *Development of LITE*
An online tool - LITE – has been developed by the team and has been made available to participating educators and students. This technical process closely follows the conceptual development of the LINCDIRE project. The draft of LITE content is being informed by the input of participating teachers, who are working closely with the researchers, and their students. Contact with participating teachers includes feedback via wiki/email/Skype; two semi-structured interviews; classroom observations, and an online survey (twice, at T1 and T2) with secondary and adult students. In addition, 10 focus groups with a total of approximately 160 language learners are being consulted.

6. *Expansion and improvement:*
LINCDIRE is starting to get a very positive echo as it is presented. As a result we are recruiting 20-30 more teachers who will pilot LITE with their language students. We plan to conduct 1 focus group with all the teachers (28-40 teachers) to get more feedback on LITE, undertake another online survey (twice, at T1 and T2) with secondary and adult students, and finally, conduct 40 focus groups (with approximately 10 language learners each).
LINCDIRE is an open project and interested teachers or institutions are invited to contact the principal investigator.

Timeline:

2015 - 2016:	Documentary research and development of the concept for LITE
	Development of LITE content (online tool, descriptors, scenarios, resources)
2016 - 2017:	Technical development of LITE
	Continued development of LITE content
	Recruitment of piloting teachers
2017 - 2018:	Data collection from piloting teachers
	Improvement of LITE from piloting teachers' and students' feedback
2019:	Expansion

People/roles:

Principal Investigator:	Enrica Piccardo
Co-Investigators:	Aline Germain-Rutherford, Geoffrey Lawrence
Collaborators:	Alan Corbiere, Alana Johns, Anette Guse, Coralie Payre-Ficout, Giuliana Salvato, Mary-Ann Corbiere, Nicola Townend, Norman Sieweke, Tim Goodier
Research Assistants:	Angelica Galante, Banafsheh Karamifar, Faith Marcel, Giacomo Folinazzo, Jayson Moore, Kimberly Cho, Michael Koslowski, Newton Ranaweera Kalu Arachchige, Sara Potkonjak
LITE Developers:	Dennis Zheng, Peter Lou

Quality Assurance procedures employed:

LINCDIRE includes a cyclical process of designing, evaluating, and piloting LITE. This process aligns with a design-based research paradigm, which focuses on investigating educational issues by combining empirical research with theory-driven design, through the development of instructional tools and the collaboration between researchers and practitioners (Design-Based Research Collective, 2003; Van den Akker, Gravemeijer, McKenney, & Nieveen, 2006, Anderson, & Shattuck, 2012).

More specifically, it follows a Type 1 developmental research, which involves the development of a technology-based product, the evaluation of the product created, including an examination of how learners interact with the newly designed product (Richey, Klein, & Nelson, 2003). That is, the inquiry of our research is precisely the design, development, and evaluation process of the technological product, in this case the LITE tool. Essentially, in Type 1 developmental research the design and development procedures are as important as the product itself, with primarily qualitative data collection that includes instruments such as documentary research, interviews and observations (Richey, Klein, & Nelson, 2003).

Rather than following a prescriptive, top-down approach, the development of LITE is be highly dependent on practitioners' input and shaped by the articulated needs of teachers, students and communities. Therefore, LITE is informed by and contributes to sustainable innovation of language pedagogy across educational settings, as well as language education theories that are contextually based. By producing a meaningful tool for the progress of both theory and practice, the LINCDIRE project is contributing to deepen the relationship between academic research and educational realities.

Publications that have been used or produced related to this example:
- Piccardo, E. (2014). Assessment as recognition: An e-portfolio for valuing North America's linguistic diversity. In *Language assessment for multilingualism. Proceedings of the ALTE Paris Conference*, p. 156-181.
- Piccardo, E., Payre-Ficout, C., Germain-Rutherford, A., Townend, N. (in press). LINCDIRE: une approche actionnelle pour des compétences plurilingues et pluriculturelles. *Les Langues moderners.*
- Cho, K., Piccardo, E., Lawrence, G., Germain-Rutherford, A. (2018). LINguistic and Cultural DIversity REinvented (LINCDIRE): Integrating Western and Indigenous perspectives to redefine language education practices. *The Language Educator*, 13(2), p. 44-48.

3. RESULTS

What was achieved:

As of April 2018, all main functionalities of LITE are complete.

- Scenario Development: Various scenarios were designed for different levels of proficiency across different languages. The result of this scenario development is displayed on the "All Tasks" page on LITE that shows all scenarios ordered by CEFR proficiency level.
- My Plurilingual Profile: The social media aspect of LITE is also functional and has been piloted by a number of classrooms. On this page, students can upload profile pictures, banners and describe their linguistic and cultural encounters. They can also make posts, 'follow' their friends, comment on posts and upload media to share.
- My Reflections: Students can also take thematic quizzes based on the four quadrants of the Medicine Wheel. After each quiz, students are presented with a visual of their development/progress in each quadrant. This serves as an awareness-raising activity to encourage students to focus on certain aspects of their learning.
- Level Check: After the culminating task of scenario is complete, students can go to the "Do a Level

check" page and complete a Can-Do quiz. After the quiz, students are presented with a visual of their language learning in a radar chart. This radar chart encompasses all CEFR-described dimensions of learning and can superimpose the students' known languages to represent a plurilingual representation of their language learning.

Pilot Phase: As of April 2018, we are currently working in various piloting sites.
- 13+ sites in Canada, US, France
- 7+ languages (English, French, German, Ojibwe, Italian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian)
- 14+ teachers (university, college, secondary, elementary, private language schools)

Preliminary Findings from Pilot:
- The developed scenarios encouraged students to make connections to home languages/cultures but they are still often hesitant to use these in the final product/culminating task.
- Students enjoyed how the tasks involved "real life" language use.
- The developed scenarios are adaptable and can be tailored to specific contexts.

Impact:
- The developed scenarios have engaged students' critical thinking, awareness of stereotypes. The scenarios also give the teacher the opportunity to focus on intersectionality (discussing race, gender, sexuality, class, etc).
- The scenarios help students build awareness of the linguistic and cultural diversity in the communities and classrooms.

Resources on this theme:
Website of the project: https://www.lincdireproject.org/
Direct link to LITE (LITE is also accessible from the project t website**):**   https://lite.lincdireproject.org/oj/

4 ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNT:
Indigenous Perspective: Continue to expand collaborative approaches.
- Some project members have organized workshops in indigenous communities about the project/plurilingual framework. This gives us the opportunity to be open to collaboration and communication with Indigenous partners/perspectives while building concepts of plurilingualism/pedagogical innovation.
- Some teachers and students have voiced their concerns about their own inadequate knowledge about Indigenous perspectives and are sometimes uncomfortable with engaging with it due to fear of misrepresentation.

Scenarios: Resolve the tension between adaptability and usability.
- Scenarios were intentionally designed to be a sort of 'skeleton' to present the core learning features in a way that would be adaptable to various contexts and learners. However many teachers have expressed their desires for more detailed lesson plans. On the other hand, in some cases the scenarios have been too liberally revised, thereby significantly changing the intended aspects of the scenario.

Plurilingualism: Transforming deep-rooted negative/monolingual perceptions.
- Despite the piloting teachers' openness to the project, many students seem to have very traditional views of language learning. Other languages can "take away from the learning of the target language" and some students (and teachers) find it difficult to situate a plurilingual approach within a perspective of traditional learning and assessment.

CEFR terminology: Simplifying overwhelming and abstract language.
- There is some confusion on terms that teachers may not be familiar with (plurilingualism, mediation etc). One teacher also commented on 'Can-do statements'("Can do... but how?").

Action-oriented approach: Roles of the teacher and students in the language classroom
- There is still the assumption held by both teachers and students that the teacher should know everything beforehand and act as the 'lecturer' or 'source of knowledge' rather than in a facilitative, supportive role as outlined in the action-oriented approach. This limits the opportunities for autonomous learning and co-exploration between the teacher and students. In one pilot site for example, the teacher pre-taught all of the language before implementing the scenario instead of teaching the language throughout the scenario.