

# A QUALITY MATRIX FOR CEFR USE: Examples of promising practices

## 1. OVERVIEW

**Project leader(s) contact:** Maria González Davies      **email(s):** [mariagd@blanquerna.url.edu](mailto:mariagd@blanquerna.url.edu)

**Country:** Spain      **Institution:** FPCEE\_Blanquerna, University Ramon Llull

**Type of context:** Classroom level, Programme/school level

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

**Main focus of your project:** Teaching Practices, Teacher Education, Student development of plurilingual competence

### SUMMARY

**Name:** The Integrated Plurilingual Approach (IPA): A Case Study in Barcelona

**Abstract:** Studies regarding plurilingual practices usually stop short at the theoretical stage and limit themselves to (vaguely) suggesting that the teachers should follow their conclusions without contributing any specific pedagogical proposals for real classroom contexts. Thus, we decided to design and implement specific plurilingual tasks as part of action-oriented reflective teaching in Primary and Secondary Education. Our general aim was to explore the implementation of an educational approach designed to support “natural plurilingual practices” in learning an additional language, such as translation, interpreting, code-switching, and “translinguistic conceptualization,” which we define as the ability to express and connect the same concepts efficiently in different languages (Corcoll and González-Davies 2015). Our project consisted in piloting new descriptor scales for “Plurilingual comprehension” and “Building on plurilingual repertoire” from the 2016 draft version of the extended CEFR illustrative descriptors. The study fitted in coherently with our own research project around the practicability of applying an Integrated Plurilingual Approach to Language Learning (González-Davies 2018).

**Stage:** Planning; Implementation; Evaluation

**Theme:** Teaching; Teacher education

**CEFR aspects targeted:** Levels, plurilingualism, mediation, descriptors, Action-oriented approach

**Main features of this example:**

- Development of both teacher and student agency regarding plurilingual competence
- Didactic sequencing in a collaborative environment as the main instructional mode
- Explicit reflection on task performance and perceptions by students and teachers
- Guided plurilingual tasks to access meaning through languages not included in the curriculum.
- Pilot study based on a sociocultural approach to research

**Quality principles demonstrated:**

Relevance, Transparency, Coherence, Inclusiveness, Sustainability

## 2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Background:

Our main aim is to help teachers implement situated informed best practices to move from teaching languages separately, with no connection to the student's real linguistic repertoire and identities, towards an integrated plurilingual approach (IPA) to language learning through "natural plurilingual practices". In this context, the students' linguistic repertoires are treated as interconnected entities. Typically, a classroom implementation of the IPA includes translanguaging practices through reflective action, in our case: Use of L1, TOLC (Translation for Other Learning Contexts, i.e. not directly related to professional translator training), LIT (Literary Identity Texts), and PBCS (Pedagogically-based Code-switching). In this pilot study, the focus is on TOLC, where translation is implemented as an interactive and efficient planned and unplanned scaffolding skill and strategy to advance plurilingual communicative competence. The pedagogical framework is based on collaborative learning and on didactic sequences that help the students move from the model texts to their own texts through meaningful related plurilingual tasks.

The project team had already worked on the theoretical, pedagogical and research framework from 2013-2015 and is carrying out a project to gauge the impact of plurilingual tasks on the students' plurilingual and intercultural competences at Primary and Secondary Education schools (2015-2019).

### Stated aims:

- To emphasise that language diversity and plurilingualism are part of the European identity
- To favour the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence by integrating them in the translation tasks while working collaboratively on reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as on vocabulary and grammar.
- To develop student agency by recording and analysing the students' perceptions and performance regarding the plurilingual mediation tasks.
- To develop teacher agency by gathering and analysing the teachers' perceptions and performance regarding the plurilingual mediation tasks and their potential inclusion in the general subject curriculum.
- To design an informed mediation-based syllabus by means of two guiding actions:
  - A didactic model for Plurilingual Education that helps teachers inform their practices.
  - A formative intervention model that helps teachers appropriate the didactic model in a meaningful way (building on their agency) through an adjustment of perceptions, and that helps researchers gather meaningful data of the appropriation process.

### Research questions:

These three questions that guided our actions to relate both projects:

1. Can effective learning material be designed to foster the students' plurilingual and pluricultural competence based on the CEFR descriptors?
2. Are the CEFR descriptors useful to foster an Integrated Plurilingual Approach (IPA) to language learning?
3. Do the CEFR descriptors help make the students' PL/PC competence visible for syllabus design and assessment?

### Steps/stages:

1. **Design: September-October 2017.** The IPA team designed the plurilingual activities and the implementation plan, based on the theoretical, pedagogical and research framework from 2013-2015 and is carrying out a project to gauge the impact of plurilingual tasks on the students' plurilingual and intercultural competences at Primary and Secondary Education schools (2015-2019).

## THE PLURILINGUAL TASK: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

- Create a real life communicative situation in which two or three students collaborate to solve an issue. The situation should be sufficiently rich and well planned so that they use all their linguistic resources (linguistic repertoire and non-verbal communication).
- TASK: The task is a consensus task. A text in two languages (different from the foreign language they are studying and the official school languages) is given out. The subject of the text for primary is the Barcelona zoo, whereas the subject for secondary is Paris. Both texts give information about various events and services (e.g. food), including prices. Students are also given a map of the zoo (primary) or Paris (secondary) respectively. The task is to plan a day at the zoo or in Paris on a very restricted budget.

Collaboration phase: Students are asked to undertake the task by explaining their thinking process aloud (in any language(s) that they choose) while they write their plan down jointly.

Exchange & discussion phase: Afterwards, they explain to another team the day that they have planned in English (the foreign language, in our case).

## TASK MATERIALS

### PRIMARY EDUCATION

**You are going to the zoo and you want to see many animals and do many activities. You also need to have lunch and a drink. You have 10 euros each and a map.**

Bienvenus au zoo de Barcelone! Vous voulez voir beaucoup des animaux et vous amuser bien? Alors, il faut s'organiser parce qu'il y a beaucoup de choses à faire. On va visiter les animaux de la ferme. Elle est ouverte de 12.00 à 13.30. Ensuite, on va connaître les pingouins et on va leur donner à manger. Ils sont là de 11 a 13.30. Vous pouvez voire comment les éléphants font du sport le matin (de 10 à 12).

Es ist Zeit, aufhören zu essen. In der Cafeteria können wir ein Sandwich für 5 Euro, ein paar Kartoffeln für 3 Euro und eine Flasche Wasser für 2 Euro kaufen. Wir können auch Eis für 3 Euro bekommen. Wir bekommen die Löwen und Tiger zu sehen, wo sind sie?

### SECONDARY EDUCATION

**You must organise a day in Paris. You have 20 euros each and a map. You do not have internet access on your phone or WIFI. From 9am to 7pm. It's Sunday.**

Willkommen in Paris!! Wir haben viele Freizeitaktivitäten für junge Leute!! Paris ist die Stadt der Liebe und der Kunst, Kultur und Gastronomie. Die Seine ist der Fluss, der die Stadt durchquert, und ist eines der Nervenzentren der Stadt. Bateau Bus ist ein Boot, das die Seine entlang fährt. Jedes Ticket kostet vier Euro. Vom Boot aus können Sie einige der Sehenswürdigkeiten von Paris wie den Eiffelturm genießen (wir empfehlen, mit dem Aufzug auf den Turm zu fahren; das kostet 25 €, aber die Aussicht ist unvergesslich; eine weitere Option ist, die 704 Treppenstufen hoch zu laufen; das würde eine halbe Stunde dauern, aber Sie würden dabei 20€ sparen) oder Notre Dame (der Eintritt kostet 3€; ab 18.00 Uhr ist es aber kostenlos). Wenn Sie Kunst mögen, können Sie auf den Berg von Montmartre steigen und die Werke der Künstler genießen, die dort ihre Werke ausstellen.

Cosa c'è di meglio che mangiare una baguette con brie (7euro) seduti sulla scalinata di Montmartre. Potrete anche mangiare un kebab (10 euro) vicino al quartiere Rouge. Il Museo del Louvre è una visita d'obbligo. L'entrata per i minori di 15 anni costa 18 euro, ma ci si può andare anche nel pomeriggio, dall'1 alle 6. L'entrata normale costa 25 euro. Il venerdì sera e la domenica pomeriggio si organizzano gruppi di pattinaggio per Parigi, per 25 euro. Se amate la cucina potete partecipare a

un workshop vicino a Montparnasse; costa 15 euro, compresa la visita al mercato. Ed infine potete andare allo Stade France, a Sant Denis a vedere il campo di football del Paris Sanit Germain, per 15 euro, o le Catacombe in Place Denfert, per 18 euro.

The tasks were created by Cristina Corcoll, Jane Mitchell-Smith, David Soler, and Caterina Sugranyes, members of the CILCEAL Research Group.

**2. Implementation: October-November 2017.** Each teacher carried out the implementation plan in their schools. Permissions to use and release the material were requested and granted by parents and the school. This was the only activity carried out in each classroom with specific focus placed on 4 pairs of students: 3 schools, 4 classrooms, different linguistic levels. The students carried out the plurilingual task, they were recorded on task and a focus group of student-participants was also recorded at two of the schools (one for Primary and one for Secondary).

These were the CEFR descriptors that the students used when carrying out the tasks related to Research Question 2 (2016 Provisional versions of descriptors for consultation and piloting):

<b>PLURILINGUAL COMPREHENSION</b>	
A2	Can understand short, clearly written messages and instructions by piecing together what he/she understands from the versions in different languages.
A2	Can exploit easily identifiable vocabulary (e.g. international expressions, words with roots common to different languages – like ‘bank’ or ‘music’) in order to form a hypothesis as to the meaning of a text.
B1+	Can recognize similarities and contrasts between the way concepts are expressed in different languages, in order to distinguish between identical uses of the same word root and ‘false friends’.
B1+	Can exploit his/her knowledge of contrasting grammatical structures and functional expressions of languages in his/her plurilingual repertoire in order to support comprehension.
<b>BUILDING ON PLURILINGUAL REPERTOIRE</b>	
A2	Can use words and phrases from different languages in his/her plurilingual repertoire to conduct a simple, practical transaction or information exchange.
<b>TRANSLATING A WRITTEN TEXT IN SPEECH</b>	
A2	Can use simple language to provide an approximate translation of very short texts on familiar and everyday themes that contain the highest frequency vocabulary; despite errors, the translation remains comprehensible.
B1	Can provide an approximate spoken translation of clear, well-structured informational texts on subjects that are familiar or of personal interest, although his/her lexical limitations cause difficulty with formulation at times.
B1+	Can translate straightforward, factual texts that are written in uncomplicated, standard language, although a tendency to adhere to both the structure and the formulations of the source text results in passages that may read awkwardly.
<b>FACILITATING COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION WITH PEERS</b>	
B1	Can collaborate in simple, shared tasks and work towards a common goal in a group by asking and answering straightforward questions.
B1+	Can collaborate on a shared task, for example formulating and responding to suggestions, asking whether people agree, and proposing alternative approaches.

The video recordings of the two focus groups are shown below. Click on the link to view.

<b>FOCUS GROUP PRIMARY EDUCATION</b>	<b>FOCUS GROUP SECONDARY EDUCATION</b>
<a href="#">link</a>	<a href="#">link</a>

The teachers filled in a feedback questionnaire provided by the Education Policy Division of the Council of Europe for the piloting process.

3. **Analysis: December-March 2017.** The task results were analysed from the students' and teachers' perspectives. *Instruments:* recordings and analysis of the recordings through CEFR, informal focus group discussions held afterwards, and teachers' comments. Following a sociocultural approach to research, unexpected descriptors that had not been contemplated in the CEFR and formed part of the IPA project were added after the analysis.

#### **ADDITIONAL DESCRIPTORS ADDED DURING THE ANALYSIS:**

These were considered to be crucial by the teachers in order to design a syllabus that includes explicit work on the learning process and ensures quality of performance. They are mostly metacognitive and socio-affective skills and strategies:

##### **MEDIATING A TEXT (CEFR 2016)**

- Translation and paraphrasing prevailed during the task
- Breaking down complicated information
- Visually representing information
- Linking to previous knowledge
- Summarising

##### **I.P.A. DESCRIPTORS TO GAUGE THE USE OF NATURAL PLURILINGUAL PRACTICES:**

- Silent reading previous to task
- Noticing descriptors (i.e. *PL & PC awareness* or *connecting moments*)
- Increased self-confidence voiced for problem-solving
- Reflective learning: expressions of difficulty, enjoyment, perceptions of progress and distributed learning.

#### **Timeline:**

2013-2015: Development of the theoretical, pedagogical and research framework.

2015-2019: IPA project to gauge the impact of plurilingual tasks on the students' plurilingual and intercultural competences at Primary and Secondary Education schools.

- Design: September-October 2017
- Implementation: October-November 2017
- Analysis: December-March 2017

#### **People/roles:**

##### *Researchers.*

The IPA team comprised six researchers, four of which are also school teachers. They all belong to the research group CILCEAL (Plurilingual and Intercultural Competence in Language Teaching and Learning), <http://recerca.blanquerna.edu/plurilingual-translation-learning/?lang=en>. The research group has been working on the topic and has received grants for some years now. The project was agreed upon jointly and the final implementation was carried out mainly by three members and overseen by the other three members.

##### *Teacher-researchers*

The four teachers are also researchers and are carrying out doctoral studies or have already obtained their PhD. They combine professional and academic interests and projects, thus providing valuable assessment grounded on everyday practice to the research group projects.

### *Materials producers*

The tasks were created by Cristina Corcoll, Jane Mitchell-Smith, David Soler, and Caterina Sugranyes, members of the CILCEAL Research Group.

### *School principals*

The involvement of the school principals was a key issue for the project to be carried out effectively. We strongly believe that without an informed and cooperative participation of school leaders it is extremely problematic to carry out any meaningful research that may lead to the general improvement of pedagogical issues (Soler et al 2016).

### **Quality Assurance procedures employed:**

The project was reviewed and revised by the other three members of the wider research group to guarantee the quality of the results. This form of working in concentric circles in this way is an established feature of a 'community of practice.'

### **Publications that have been used or produced related to this example:**

#### *Publications used:*

Note: The 2016 preliminary, consultation versions of the following three documents were those actually used in the project.

- Council of Europe (2018). *Common European framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume with new descriptors*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/home>
- PRIMARY: Szabo, Tunde (Ed.) (2018). *Collated representative samples of Descriptors of Language Competences Developed for Young Learners. Resource for Educators. Volume 1: 7 – 10 years*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/bank-of-supplementary-descriptors>
- SECONDARY: Szabo, Tunde (Ed.) (2018). *Collated Representative Samples of Descriptors for Language Competences Developed for Young Learner. Resource for Educators. Volume 1: 11-15 years*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/bank-of-supplementary-descriptors>

#### *Publications produced:*

The project was presented and discussed at the Langscape-EPILA Conference held in April 2018:

<http://recerca.blanquerna.edu/plurilingual-translation-learning/ii-langscape-symposium/?lang=en>

- Corcoll, C. and González Davies, M. (2015). "Switching Codes in the Additional Language Classroom". *ELT Journal*, Vol. 70/1. Doi: [doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccv056](https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccv056)
- González Davies, M. (2018). "The Use of Translation in an Integrated Plurilingual Approach to Language Learning: Teacher Strategies and Good Practices". *Journal of Spanish Language Teaching*, (4)2, 124-135.
- Soler, D.; González-Davies, M.; and Iñesta, A. (2016). "What makes CLIL leadership effective? A case study". *ELT Journal*. 71(4), 478–490. doi: 10.1093/elt/ccw093.
- González Davies, M. (forthcoming). "Developing mediation skills through an integrated plurilingual approach to language learning. Focusing on translation". In Laviosa, S. and González Davies, M. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Education*. London & New York: Routledge.

### 3. RESULTS

#### What was achieved:

These are the most relevant aspects related to **teacher agency** taken from the feedback questionnaire and focus group that indicate the key aspects that helped the teachers progress towards appreciating the potential and benefits of a plurilingual approach:

1. **Planning:** This was a joint activity. The teachers met and selected the descriptors from the Plurilingual and Pluricultural competence and focused on the CEFR descriptors of (1) plurilingual comprehension and (2) Building on plurilingual repertoire. When doing the activity, they took notes of the way it was carried out using the mentioned descriptors. Students were recorded (audiovisual) and, once the activity was finished, they watched the videos again to check whether the notes they took when doing the activity were coherent.
2. **Reflective action:** Reflecting on and piloting the descriptors contributed to raising their own and their learners' awareness of the concepts being addressed in those descriptors. Also, the list of descriptors helped them to become aware of, identify and, finally, assess the students' plurilingual competence: "The descriptors contributed to design better activities as the teacher could establish learning aims according to the different descriptors. Therefore, the assessment criteria were very coherent/explicit and, as a result, the way to promote the plurilingual competence became clearer. The descriptors will be useful to plan further activities."
3. **Shifting beliefs:** The students' plurilingual competence became gradually self-evident as the task developed and unexpected thoughts and actions surfaced. In one teacher's words: "Students are expected to use English with English-speaking teachers on an everyday basis, so for them it was a novelty to be given space to talk in another language in my presence. Given that not all students have a similar L1 they initially had to negotiate which language they would use to carry out the activity, on occasions this was in English. Initially they were concerned when confronted by languages which they knew little of (French and German), but all found that they were able to identify some words which they recognised as similar to other more familiar languages to build meaning and to help them complete the task. In all cases the activity lent itself to collaborative working with students pooling knowledge to negotiate meaning. Although they recognised that they did not understand the complete texts, by the end of the activity they were confident enough to use elements of all the texts. Following the exercise most students expressed satisfaction with the activity and found it motivating (and in some cases surprising) to realise that they were able to extract meaning from texts based upon their ability to identify similar words and structures and context."

In terms of the research questions addressed:

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION 1: Learning Material.**

The sensitising activities were effective and presented the following characteristics: all final performance was carried out in English (FL). Collaborative and distributed learning were clearly crucial for success as they allowed for an active use of previous knowledge and for the creation of a ludic motivational atmosphere. Problem-solving revolved around a real-life situation, a point highly valued by the students. The reflection sessions were beneficial to fostering student agency.

Proficiency and age did not affect performance regarding plurilingual and pluricultural competence.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION 2: CEFR descriptors related to an Integrated Plurilingual Approach (IPA).**

The descriptors could be integrated ecologically into the IPA syllabus and favoured a change in mindset, as this transcription from the teachers' feedback indicates:

*“External influences have always made them think that they should be thinking in the language of the class and not mixing languages (...). What I found most striking was the fact that they seemed to be pleasantly surprised at their own plurilingual and pluricultural competences, despite the fact that they appear to use them on a daily basis.”*

### **RESEARCH QUESTION 3: CEFR descriptors for syllabus design and assessment**

The CEFR descriptors were deemed useful for planning, teaching, identifying and assessing the students' plurilingual competence. The descriptors proved to be very coherent and explicit as assessment criteria and, as a result, the way to promote the plurilingual competence became clearer. The descriptors were considered to be useful to plan further activities and to be included in the school curricula for all languages.

#### **Impact:**

*The students:* Increased self-confidence for problem-solving. Self-awareness of progress and the path followed: from a perceived challenge to enjoyment and success. Effective implementation of collaborative and distributed learning allowed the students to work fruitfully on mediation skills.

*The teachers:* All teachers stated that they would include this kind of task and approach in their syllabus, not just in the English classroom but for all the language classes.

## **4 ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNT:**

- Plan for the students' maturity level.
- The participation of school principals is crucial.
- Descriptors for social and affective skills and strategies are crucial at these educational levels and should be included explicitly.
- Most teachers need time to move from the monolingual to the plurilingual approach to language learning. To be effective, the process takes time and needs gentle guidance – it is not about leading a couple of workshop sessions, but about opening a whole new approach. On the other hand, many teachers were appreciative of our explicit intervention because they could finally name and speak frankly about what they had been doing intuitively (and successfully) in their classes with little or no institutional support.