Report from Language for Work Network Meeting
European Centre for Modern Languages
Graz, Austria
31 May–2 June 2017

Overview
Prof. Monika Jezak (ILOB/OLBI, UOttawa) and Prof. Jeff Bale (OISE, UToronto) attended a workshop of the Language for Work (LfW) network from 31 May to 2 June at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz, Austria. The workshop is part of a new funding cycle provided by the ECML to support multiple projects working on the theme, *Languages at the Heart of Learning.*

LfW's organizing committee established three goals for this round of funding:

1. to collate a compendium of approaches of workplace-based language learning for adult immigrants used across EU member states;
2. to create a professional development framework with which various actors involved with workplace-based language learning can engage to best support the learning of their employees and their organization; and
3. to create a "quick guide" that communicates clearly and succinctly the goals and best practices of workplace-based language learning to a variety of audiences. This guide is to be translated into the languages of EU member states.

The workshop took as its starting point the expertise of the attendees, and built upwards from that practice to inform the compendium, PD framework, and quick guide. Prior to the network meeting, the participants were asked to submit a specific approach to workplace-based language learning that they use in their specific context; the vast majority of the workshop's agenda was designed in reference to these approaches as a concrete reference point for our conversations. It is important to stress that the goal of this workshop was not create and complete these materials (i.e., the compendium, PD framework, and quick guide); rather, the intent was to draw from participants' expertise to understand the scope, dimensions, and challenges of creating such materials (in the case of the quick guide, a draft already exists, for which we provided feedback). The finished products will be available at the final network meeting in this round of ECML funding, scheduled for next year. An additional goal was to strengthen the coherence and familiarity of the network by providing an extended opportunity for network members (i.e., participants of this workshop) to exchange experiences and insights and to socialize over group meals.

During the workshop itself, participants collaborated in small groups to analyze these approaches with an eye towards a categorization or organizing scheme that might be used to collate them into a searchable compendium. From there, and again working in various combinations of small groups, we identified the multiple actors that are (or should be) involved in providing high-quality workplace-based language learning opportunities, and then considered what knowledge, skills, and dispositions these actors would need. The purpose of this discussion was to begin outlining a framework for how these actors would be best supported in developing these knowledge, skills, and dispositions, although there was considerable debate over what precisely we mean by a "professional development

framework." As an example, what role do we have (or should we have) in telling HR staff or managers what skills and knowledge they need in order to do their job well? Finally, and as an organic outgrowth of the two-day conversation, we considered what sort of vision or values should be explicitly stated and attached to the materials that the LfW network are creating. The workshop closed with a poster session, in which several participants shared their experiences with and insights into workplace-based language learning. To support our conversation, we used a Padlet board, to which we posted resources, notes from group discussions, and organizing materials for the workshop itself (please see https://padlet.com/alex76/lfw2017).

Participants

In total, there were over 30 participants at the workshop: the organizing team (Matilde Grünhage-Monetti, Germany; Alex Braddel, UK; Kerstin Sjösvärd, Sweden; and Christophe Portefin, France); the project consultant from the ECML, Frank Heyworth; and 26 participants from 17 EU member states and Canada. To get a sense of the diversity in participants' experience, the contexts of our work ranged from:

- directors of or instructors in university-based language learning programs for staff to develop greater proficiency in the respective national/official language;
- directors or researchers of or instructors in workplace-based language learning programs for recently arrived migrants/refugees, funded and organized jointly by the federal government, municipal government, job centre, and the workplace;
- directors of or instructors in privately run, non-profit language schools, whose target audience are recently arrived migrants/refugees; and
- consultants hired by local or federal governments to provide professional development or to create frameworks for workplace-based language learning.

Our contribution to the meeting

Prof. Jezak and Prof. Bale have distinct expertise with respect to the topics of the meeting. As such, our contributions were different. Prof. Jezak shared Canadian experiences, expertise, and resources in adult migrant workplace training, with a specific focus on the Essential SKills (Human Resources Canada) and the Canadian Language Benchmarks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks) frameworks. An important point that Prof. Jezak stressed was that the Canadian professional development framework was both modular and expandable, meaning that it does not function in a linear way, but rather in a cyclical or spiraling way. This allows individuals with various levels of expertise with language education for adult migrants to engage with the framework itself.

In addition, Prof. Jezak shared research from the Canadian context about workplace-based language learning, in particular the work of Prof. Tracey Derwing from Alberta. In one study, Derwing started with research on immigrants' language learning in the workplace, and assumed that pronunciation training (for the immigrants) was the most appropriate intervention. In the course of the work, however, Derwing learned that the focus needed to be as much on helping proficient English speakers to listen differently as much as needing to help immigrants to speak differently. In this way, Prof. Jezak communicated a key insight from the Canadian context, namely that integration is a two-way affair that implies responsibility and change from all involved.

Prof. Bale's expertise is with language teacher education, indeed for future school teachers, not future teachers in workplace settings. Despite this difference in context, he was able to leverage experiences from the Canadian context to contribute to the network's discussions at this workshop. Specifically, Ontario is currently the only province in Canada that requires all teacher candidates, not just future specialists in second language education, to have curricular and practical experiences with supporting English Language Learners (and French Language Learners) during their initial teacher education program. This requirement thus challenges teacher educators to be able to communicate to all school people (again, not just future ESL or FSL specialists) what dispositions, knowledge, and skills are needed to best support language learners at school. Although workplace-based programs are different in context, the challenge is very similar: how language experts communicate to other actors (e.g., managers, co-workers, HR staff, job centre staff, etc.) what they need to know about language learning to best support migrants and refugees as they learn the dominant language in their new context.

An additional insight from the Ontario context is that who "counts" as an English Language Learner is remarkably diverse (from Indigenous youth to Franco-Ontarians in Anglophone boards to refugees to international students finishing high school here and so on). This means that there can be no single intervention or program design, but rather, any language-learning intervention must account for that diversity in background. Similarly, any workplace-based intervention needs to account for the diversity in who in learning language at and through work, ranging from recently arrived migrants and refugees with high levels of formal educational attainment to those who do not yet read in any language to those who may have attended school in the local context but not have developed literacy skills, and so on.

How Canada has benefitted from the meeting
Most immediately, we have benefitted by having a clear sense of what the Language for Work network is, what its goals are, and what the potential is for this compendium of approaches and professional development framework. We are confident that, by returning next year to participate in the dissemination of and training in the final products, we will have access to remarkable tools that we can share in Canada to inform workplace-based language learning opportunities here.

In addition, there are several countries who were represented at the network meeting in Graz who already have highly developed and rich resources for workplace-based language learning. For instance, in the Dutch case, they have a website for practitioners with many of the tools and resources needed to support such learning opportunities, and in the Danish case, they have just produced a set of guidelines for better integrating vocational training and language-learning opportunities at work. Both can serve immediately as extremely helpful resources to review in connection with Canadian resources such as those pertaining to the Essential Skills and the CLBs.

Plan for following up
Short term: Prof. Jezak will prepare a short summary and report about the documents, meetings notes, and artefacts from the workshop that have been posted to the Padlet board (linked to above) that she can present to the Center for Canadian Language Benchmarks. This report can then be spread throughout networks in Canada supporting workplace-based language learning, and it could also be posted to the CCLB website and shared virtually.

Mid-term: One of the key tensions that ran through the discussions at the network meeting in Graz was that between integration and inclusion, namely: to what extent is the goal to integrate migrants into a stable, pre-existing culture and society, and to what extent does both the migrant and society change through their interaction? Profs. Jezak and Bale will prepare two papers on this topic based on the Canadian experience: one for a practitioner audience to be delivered at a TESL Ontario conference, the other for an academic audience to be published in the TESL Canada Journal. Beyond this dissemination for Canadian audience, our goal is to share this work with the LfW network at its next meeting in 2018.

Longer term: Finally, the LfW network meets again next year to disseminate the compendium, PD framework, and final version of the quick guide. Profs. Jezak and Bale will attend it to share our own work as described above, but also to gain from the final products that the LfW network will present at this meeting and bring them back to Canada.