

Case Study 4 – Evaluation, testing and assessment

“May I help you, madam?” – English for office communication in an adult education centre

The use of current evaluation, assessment and testing instruments in a VOLL course

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1. Introduction

Within the context of the February 2009 workshop, a sub-group dealt with evaluation, assessment and testing, basing its work on some of the tools referred to and made available by the animator. The group took as its point of departure the situation of one of the workshop participants, who was in the process of setting up a (VOLL) English language course for employees in her organisation. The group members explored the different assessment systems available to decide on their potential for language testing and assessment procedures for the envisaged target group. They then set up a step-by-step system for evaluating the proficiency of course participants from entry level to achievement of course objectives.

By documenting the steps taken, they hope to give colleagues working in VOLL a practical introduction to available tools which they found useful for testing, assessment and evaluation, and guidelines as to how and when to deploy those tools.

2. The setting

The language department of the Viennese Adult Education Association (Wiener Volkshochschulen) had decided to set up and offer a new English course for employees in the administration of its 16+ member institutes throughout the city. The course was to address the needs of those operatives, all native speakers of German, who had contact with potential learners/customers in face-to-face or telephone settings. A blended learning approach was to be adopted, as staff members are spread over a fairly wide geographic area. This would mean a combination of contact classes in a group (face to face) and various online activities (Skype, e-mail, etc.).

The motivation for (potential) course participants was quite clear. A survey had shown that an increasing number of potential learners/customers for adult education courses were not speakers of German, but that English was used by the majority of this target group as a lingua franca.

In order to enable reception personnel to interact adequately with enquiries, an in-house language training course, “Can I help you, madam? – English for office communication in an adult education centre”, was to be designed and offered in the winter term of 2009/10. The target level of proficiency – concentrating on oral/aural skills – was set at level B1 on the scales of attainment defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The teachers assigned to these courses were to receive specific training in assessment procedures to ensure that common standards were defined and adhered to.

3. Course description

The wording of the planned announcement of the course in the programme of the Wiener Volkshochschulen (in German) was to be as follows:

“Can I help you, madam?” is a blended-learning course covering 40.5 units. It comprises a weekly self-study unit and online collaboration with fellow learners and the teacher/tutor of two hours per week (= 22.5 hours online) and nine face-to-face (f2f) sessions of two hours.

In each online unit, learners will have to work individually (approximately two hours per week, depending on previous knowledge and online experience) and/or collaborate with their colleagues. There will be joint tasks where they will communicate with one another in a forum, a chatroom or via Skype.

The nine f2f sessions will offer learners the opportunity to meet one another in person, to exchange experience and practise speaking English.

Each of these nine meetings will last for two hours.

Sub-groups of participants will work together on a final mini-project which will give them the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned. The mini-projects will be presented in the final f2f session of the course.

Learners will also be required to set up individual portfolios where they are to upload the tasks they have completed.

4. Setting the aims of the course

The communicative and linguistic aims of the course were defined in terms of “can do” statements adapted from those listed in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe 2001; cf. www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre_en.asp) and related to common communicative situations encountered by the operatives in everyday customer contacts. The CEFR provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally

comparable manner. “Relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) – A manual” and “Illustrations of levels of language proficiency” were particularly helpful in helping the group to define the objectives of the course.

4.1 VOLL-specific descriptors

However, for the purposes of defining the skills specific to the needs of the target group, the general descriptors needed further refinement, so the group examined a number of documents developed to aid authors, course designers and test experts to adapt the CEFR descriptors to VOLL situations. They are described here by way of exemplification, but by no means represent an exhaustive list of possible sources of material of this nature.¹³

The resources examined which were best known to the members of the group were EVoQs – the “European Vocational Qualifications”, a set of specifications based upon the CEFR and elaborated within the context of ROSLOTRAIN (www.icc-languages.eu/roslotrain.php), a European project conducted under the aegis of the LEONARDO programme of the European Union – and the descriptors of the “KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat” a system of vocationally oriented language certification developed for vocational schools in Germany.

4.1.1 EVoQs (www.icc-languages.eu/evoqs.php)

The EVoQs were developed by the ICC International Language Network (www.icc-languages.eu) and provide a system for assessment and certification (www.icc-languages.eu/certification.php). They can also be used to design courses and set clear learning/training aims. They can be used for benchmarking, for job descriptions and are thus of great value independent of training programmes. No examinations are involved in the achievement of an EVoQ. EVoQs candidates carry out work-related assessment activities – usually during normal course time – until they have covered all requirements.

There are six levels, corresponding to those of the CEFR, and four units – speaking (including interaction), listening, reading and writing. The five CEFR skills are thus all included. Levels and skills can be awarded across the board; for example, Reading Level B2 with Speaking Level B1. Thus, the current level of the candidate’s competence as well as his/her work-related needs can be accounted for and clearly expressed in a candidate profile. Overall descriptors are available for English, French, German, Italian, Romanian, and Slovak, and descriptors for levels A1-A2 are available in Estonian, Finnish and Spanish.

13 See, for example, the work of CILT, the National Centre for Languages (UK), at www.cilt.org.uk/workplace.aspx, or ALTE, the Association of Language Testers in Europe, at www.alte.org/projects/eelp.php.

Structure of an EVoQs unit

<p>I Page 1:</p> <p>Title</p> <p>... informs about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level (A1 to C2) ▪ Area of competence (speaking, listening, reading, writing) ▪ Types of communicative activity 	<p>II Page 2:</p> <p>Common European Framework of Reference for Languages</p> <p>Orientation aid showing how the selected types of activity are defined at the respective level of general use of language</p>	<p>III Page 3:</p> <p>Range of situations and content</p> <p>... shows which factors influence or hinder the types of activity; helps to devise assessment activities (simulations) or to judge the suitability of natural (authentic) evidence offered for assessment</p>
<p>IV Pages 4 and 5:</p> <p>Examples of typical work-related performance</p> <p>... provides specific examples of types of communicative activities, at the respective level, which can occur in the work situation; can be used as reference for selecting natural evidence or for devising assessment activities</p> <p>Comprises:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ type of activity (job-related) ▪ key descriptor ▪ (3) job-related examples for typical performance 	<p>V Last pages:</p> <p>Assessment and certification (Checklist for actual assessment procedure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Type and range of performance evidence to be provided ▪ Activity type with key indicators for assessment purposes ▪ Assessment criteria to be ticked off <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> as appropriate 	

4.1.2 The KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat

The KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat (Foreign Language Certificate of the Standing Conference of the Ministers for Education and Culture of the *Länder*) system provides a standardised framework for the evaluation of VOLL competence in vocational education throughout Germany. It is the only system of testing within the German school system which has been approved and ratified by 15 of the 16 German states (*Länder*), whose ministries of education/culture are responsible for the school system within their own particular state. The system is relevant for all languages, but, to date, there are only descriptive grids for English, French, German, Russian and Spanish. An overview of the grids can be found at: (http://archive.ecml.at/projects/voll/evolution/graz_2009/testing/index_kmk_grids.htm). The KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat descriptors are also based upon the specifications of the CEFR and provide the basic structure for the vocation-specific test materials developed at a national and regional level.

AREAS OF COMPETENCE

Note: The following descriptions are based on the Council of Europe's
 "A Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment" (CEFR)

	Level I (CEFR A2)	Level II (CEFR B1)	Level III (CEFR B2)
Reception	The candidate can grasp common items of information from simply structured and job-related texts, using aids such as dictionaries and illustrations. He/she can understand the content of short messages related to everyday working life if these are spoken clearly and slowly and there is an opportunity to listen to them more than once.	The candidate can quickly grasp the details contained in texts that are in frequent use in his/her field of work, using aids such as dictionaries and illustrations. He/she can understand virtually all the content of messages spoken clearly and at an appropriate, natural speed if the items of information are noticeably separated and there is an opportunity to listen to the message more than once.	The candidate can comprehend fairly complex texts in his/her field of work and recognise their implicit meaning, using works of reference if necessary. He/she can follow messages spoken at a natural speed and detect and record the main ideas even if these are spoken with a slight regional accent.
Production	The candidate can fill in forms used in everyday working life and form short sentences. He/she can successfully produce longer, guided messages, using aids such as dictionaries and/or text modules. The candidate has sufficient command of the language in order to convey the most commonly used, job-related factual information (even if the language employed is not always completely correct).	The candidate can produce standard texts that are typical of his/her field of work in the foreign language to a relatively high degree of accuracy, acting on instructions and using works of reference. He/she can express factual information concerning his/her field of work comprehensibly in the foreign language despite a limited range of vocabulary.	The candidate can phrase texts that are typical of his/her field of work to a high degree of language and stylistic accuracy and appropriacy of form, without necessarily resorting to text modules.
Mediation	The candidate can render simple, job-related facts provided in the foreign language in German. He/she can also convey simple job-related facts given in German, in his/her own words in the foreign language, using works of reference.	The candidate can render job-related facts provided in the foreign language in German or convey the message in the foreign language facts provided in German, using works of reference. Of primary concern is appropriacy of content, not accuracy of language and suitability of style.	The candidate can either render fairly complex job-related information provided in the foreign language in German or convey fairly complex job-related information given in German in his/her own words in the foreign language, using works of reference. He/she considers stylistic appropriacy.
Interaction	The candidate can cope with simple conversational situations in the foreign language dealing with the exchange of information in his/her field of work, making use of the help provided by the person to whom he/she is talking. He/she is aware of cultural differences existing between the speakers of the two languages. He/she is able to react to very frequently used messages using basic language. Pronunciation, choice of vocabulary and use of structures may still be strongly influenced by his/her mother tongue.	The candidate can cope with conversational situations in the foreign language that arise frequently in his/her field of work, on occasion making use of the help provided by the person to whom he/she is talking. He/she can react to messages, and express or explain his/her own opinions or plans, considering major cultural differences. Pronunciation, choice of vocabulary and use of structures may still be influenced by his/her mother tongue.	The candidate can cope confidently with conversational situations in the foreign language that relate to his/her field of work. In the process, he/she can also take the initiative and adapt to the needs and wishes of the other person. He/she can react to fairly complex contributions within the situation. He/she can explain facts in detail and defend his/her position. In this context, he/she is able to pay appropriate attention to the intercultural differences existing in the occupational environment of the speakers of the two languages. Although the influence of his/her mother tongue may still be recognisable with regard to pronunciation, choice of vocabulary and use of structures, he/she has an appropriate command of idiomatic expressions.

The four levels of the Foreign Language Certificate issued by "The Standing Conference of Ministers for Education and Culture of the Länder" (KMK) can be categorised according to the Euro-Levels as follows:

A Basic User		B Independent User		C Proficient User	
↙	↘	↙	↘	↙	↘
A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
KMK-Level I		KMK-Level II	KMK-Level III	KMK Level IV	

Pages 3 and 4 of the KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat feature the global descriptions of the four areas of competences tested, adapted to vocational requirements. They are “reception” (listening/reading), “production”, “mediation” and “interaction”. The descriptions are CEFR-oriented (cf. the descriptions in English, German, French, Spanish and Russian: www.ecml.at/projects/voll/evolution/graz_2009/testing/index.htm).

Documentation by Manfred Thönicke in German, “Zertifizierung von Fremdsprachenkenntnissen in der beruflichen Bildung DAS KMK-FREMDSPRACHENZERTIFIKAT – Hinweise zur Aufgabenstellung und Bewertung/Aufgabenbeispiele für Englisch” (available at www.hamburg.de/contentblob/69118/data/fremdsprachezertifikat-kmk.pdf), gives an overview of the background, the objectives, guidelines and formats of the examination system, which is administered throughout the country.

4.2 Specific aims for “May I help you, madam?”

Using the materials referred to above, the specific aims of the “May I help you, madam?” course were set as follows:

4.2.1 Listening and understanding

Of the types of communicative activities commonly occurring at this level of competence, understanding during interaction was considered to have the highest priority, leading to the following overall aim:

- can understand the main points of clear, standard speech, if clearly articulated and spoken with a familiar accent, on familiar matters regularly encountered in work situations related to customer enquiries.

Range of work-related interaction:

The following factors influence the specific form of the respective type of interaction at this level; these factors must be taken into account in the production of assessment and training activities:

- location and situation: workplace and places directly related to workplace (training/educational courses, congresses, talks, airports, railway stations, etc.);
- topics and content: facts and data from own area of work; simple topical and political themes, weather, etc;
- media: direct (face-to-face) communication; telephone.

Conditions and restrictions

1. Understanding occurs in simple one-way situations or in short listening and audiovisual texts related to work-related routine situations.
2. For the most important listening comprehension descriptors for this level, see “interaction” below. It is important in this connection that the other persons adapt (without being asked to) to the speaker’s level of competence when this proves necessary.
3. As a rule, only standard accents or dialects are understood well.
4. Background noise cannot be too loud so that it drowns out the information; good listening conditions must prevail.
5. Visual aids are useful (brochures, handouts, etc.).
6. In the case of audiovisual recordings, there should be a clear connection between sound and the supporting pictures.
7. Listening strategies are mainly top-down, although bottom-up strategies are used for more demanding texts, where meaning is reconstructed on the basis of isolated words.
8. Understanding gist is possible in most cases as well as understanding selected details; subordinate units of meaning can be understood in their entirety

Typical performance in selected work-related activities:

(NB please remember that this level also includes all descriptors listed at lower levels.

- Obtaining information (announcements live and via PA)
 - *Can extract selected data (or details) and facts from all listening texts related to own routine area of work and can also understand extended units of meaning or complete texts in their entirety.*
 - Can understand simple routine messages on own or others’ answering machines (“Hello, it’s John Smith speaking. Please phone me back. I need to know when the German course at Level A2 begins next month. I’m travelling all day today, so could you please leave a message on ...? Thank you”).

Understanding during communicative interaction:

See descriptors for speaking/interaction below

Range of situation and content

- The samples of evidence provided for the purposes of assessment must cover at least one example from each of the following aspects of situation and content:

Location and situation

- Workplace and places directly related to workplace

Themes and content

- Facts and data from own area of work
- All kinds of announcements
- Simple current everyday topics (weather, etc.)

Media

- Telephone, answering machine
- Direct communication (face to face) with one other person

4.2.2 Speaking/interaction and oral production

Types of communicative activities commonly occurring at this level:

- information exchange and goal-oriented co-operation;
- transactions: exchanges involving obtaining and providing services;
- conversation (social contacts).

General level of language competence for the activities chosen

Exchange of information and goal-oriented co-operation:

- can – without difficulty – exchange more comprehensive routine information in his/her own job area;
- can follow most exchanges, but must occasionally ask for repetition or explanation if the interlocutor is speaking too quickly or if utterances are too complex;

- can recount in English the contents of short work-related German texts (course descriptions, conditions of participation, pricing, etc.) and express his/her opinion on the subject matter;
- can describe problems; can explain what is to be done; can compare alternatives;
- can give exact instructions and follow detailed instructions.

Transactions: exchanges involving obtaining and providing goods and services:

- can make a reservation for a course;
- can cope with non-routine situations during customer contact; can respond to complaints;
- can tell someone the way with detailed directions.

Conversation – social contact:

- can participate in conversations on known topics without preparation;
- can conduct everyday conversations when interlocutors speak clearly, but must ask for repetition from time to time;
- can maintain a conversation or discussion; sometimes expresses him/herself unclearly;
- can express emotions like surprise, pleasure, sadness, interest and indifference and can react appropriately to similar expressions of feeling.

Formal and informal meetings and discussions:

- can participate in exchanges on topics from his/her own area of work if the interlocutors speak clearly and adapt to his/her level of language;
- can participate in routine, formal discussions, exchanging factual information on familiar topics;
- can discuss solutions to practical problems if interlocutors speak clearly using standard language;
- can express his/her own opinion, agreement or disagreement, but has difficulties in more complex discussions.

Arguing a case:

- can express arguments sufficiently clearly for the interlocutors to follow them effortlessly;
- can explain and justify views, plans or actions.

Speaking to a group:

- can give a short, prepared presentation on a topic related to his/her own area of work and can explain opinions, plans and actions;
- can answer straightforward questions;
- can read out a short, prepared statement.

4.2.2 Reading

Reading of English texts for work-related purposes is not considered necessary for this course. However, there is a clear need for participants to be able to mediate between German texts and clients in oral mode.

4.2.3 Writing

Writing in English for work-related purposes is not considered necessary for this course.

5. Entry level

After examining and agreeing on the descriptors which were most appropriate to describe the target level of competence to be achieved – which corresponded roughly to Level B1 of the CEFR, but with a specific profile of skills (see above) – an entry level was defined. In order to ensure that learners in the planned course have an appropriate level of mastery of English to benefit from the course in its envisaged form, it was decided that they should have an overall level of competence which corresponds to Level A2 on the CEFR levels of attainment scale.

5.1 Online and computer-aided testing materials

The group then proceeded to examine the instruments available in electronic form for online assessment to help establish a person's general level of competence. The following websites

provided online tests which were considered suitable for a preliminary guide to overall language competence and which learners could use themselves without recourse to teaching staff.

5.1.2 Dialang

(www.lancs.ac.uk/researchenterprise/dialang/about)

DIALANG is a free, online language diagnosis system developed by a number of European higher education institutions. It reports a person's level of skill against the CEFR for language learning. The skills tested are reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary for Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Icelandic, Irish-Gaelic, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish. Instructions and tests are available in all the aforementioned languages.

5.1.3 Itembanker

(http://archive.ecml.at/projects/voll/evollution/graz_2009/testing/index_itembanker.htm)

The CAT (the Computer Adaptive Test of ITEM BANKER), a commercially available computer-based testing system available for English, German, French and Spanish that exploits a bank of 1 000 items per language, is also a suitable tool for initial placement. The items in the bank each have known difficulty values which have been established by trialling conducted with approximately 5 000 learners for each language concerned. All the items are calibrated on the same scale, so that the results of tests using all three ITEM BANKER programs report onto the Eurocentres Scale of Language Proficiency or the CEFR.

The CAT is a test on a computer which takes about 15-20 minutes to report the candidate's level. It adapts the difficulty of the questions it presents to the apparent ability of the user. If you get a question right, you are given a more difficult question; if you get a question wrong, you are asked an easier one. Normally, the program requires about 20 questions in order to give an evaluation. Answers are matched to a "network" which generates the acceptable answers.

The development of ITEM BANKER was supervised by Brian North, who was closely involved in the definition of the descriptors of the CEFR.

ITEM BANKER can be used to quickly and effectively verify a learner's language level, if supplemented by some form of self-assessment or interview conducted by a language professional.

Use of this tool would imply that the teaching organisation purchase it in advance.

5.1.4 Corporate English

(www.ce-world.com/html/e_home.htm)

Corporate English is a commercial, web-based system providing personalised training solutions for learners of business English. It has a comprehensive testing system and is mentioned here as an example of how a CAT can be used to place learners in suitable groups according to their level of competence, and assign designated tasks to compensate for established weaknesses. The relevance of this particular material is that it addresses the needs of those wishing to learn business English, so many of the scenarios, speech intentions and topics dealt with are of direct relevance to the needs of the identified target group.

Use of this tool would imply that the teaching organisation purchase it in advance, and the investment in such a comprehensive system would only be meaningful if the other elements of the program were used in the institution.

All the above, and especially ITEM BANKER and Corporate English, can, of course, also be used during the course to track progress in the acquisition of structures, vocabulary, collocations, etc. – the “knowledge” element in language learning.

5.2 Self-assessment to establish present level of competence

In addition to the above-mentioned testing devices, it is wise to ask potential course participants to gauge their own level of competence in the skills considered relevant to the objectives of the course. Again, there are a number of instruments freely available to help learners and teachers to establish whether the applicants have an adequate command of the language to be admitted to the course.

5.2.1 EVoQs as an aid to establishing present level of competence

This cover page of a unit in the EVoQs specifications indicates the language skill under scrutiny together with the level of competence described.

**European Vocational Qualifications
(Languages)
Standards**

Speaking A2

**SPEAKING –
INTERACTION AND ORAL PRODUCTION**

TYPES OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES COMMONLY
OCCURRING AT THIS LEVEL

- Information exchange
- Goal-oriented cooperation
- Transactions: exchanges involving obtaining and providing services
 - Conversation (social contacts)
 - Meetings

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← Skill and level

← Sub-skill

← Communicative activities covered

Allgemeinsprachliches Niveau **Sprechen A2** für die ausgewählten Aktivitäten (Orientierungshilfe)

▪ Informationsaustausch:

- Kann sich ohne größere Mühe in Routinesituationen verständigen, in denen einfache und sachlich geläufige Informationen ausgetauscht werden.
- Kann fragen, was jemand bei der Arbeit und in der Freizeit macht oder früher getan hat; kann entsprechende Fragen beantworten.
- Kann persönliche Informationen geben und erfragen.

▪ Zielorientierte Kooperation:

- Kann genug verstehen, um ohne größere Mühe mit einfachen Routineaufgaben zurechtzukommen.
- Kann um Wiederholung einer Äußerung bitten, wenn er/sie etwas nicht versteht.
- Kann aushandeln, was man als Nächstes tun sollte, kann Vorschläge machen und auf Vorschläge reagieren, kann um Anweisungen bitten und Anweisungen geben.
- Kann die wichtigen Details von Äußerungen verstehen, wenn sich die Gesprächspartner Mühe geben, sich ihm / ihr verständlich zu machen; kann zeigen, ob er / sie etwas verstanden hat oder nicht.

▪ Transaktionen: Dienstleistungsgespräche

- Kommt mit gängigen Alltagssituationen wie Unterkunft, Reisen, Einkaufen und Essen zurecht, z.B.:
- Kann in einem Hotel die wichtigsten An- und Abreiseformalitäten erledigen.
- Kann sich einfache Reiseinformationen beschaffen und öffentliche Verkehrsmittel wie Bus, Zug, Taxi benutzen, Fahrkarten kaufen.
- Kann visuell gestützte Wegerklärungen geben und verstehen.
- Kann in Geschäften, Postämtern, Banken nach etwas fragen und einfache Erledigungen machen.
- Kann Informationen über Mengen, Anzahl, Preise usw. geben und verstehen.
- Kann bei Einkäufen sagen, was er / sie sucht und nach dem Preis fragen.
- Kann eine Mahlzeit bestellen.

▪ Konversation:

- Kann sehr kurze Kontaktgespräche führen, vor allem, wenn die Gesprächspartner sich auf sein / ihr Sprachniveau einstellen; versteht aber oft nicht genug, um das Gespräch selbst in Gang zu halten.
- Kann im Allgemeinen verstehen, wenn in deutlich artikulierter Standardsprache über bekannte Dinge gesprochen wird, vorausgesetzt, er / sie kann ab und zu darum bitten, etwas zu wiederholen oder anders auszudrücken.
- Kann in Routinesituationen an kurzen Gesprächen über geläufige Themen teilnehmen
- Kann in einfachen Worten sagen, wie es ihm / ihr geht.
- Kann mit einfachen, alltäglichen Höflichkeitsformeln jemanden grüßen / ansprechen.
- Kann jemanden einladen und auf Einladungen reagieren.
- Kann um Entschuldigung bitten und auf Entschuldigungen reagieren.
- Kann sagen, was er / sie gerne hat und was nicht.

▪ Besprechungen

- Kann im Allgemeinen in Besprechungen im Rahmen des eigenen Fachgebiets wechselnden Themen folgen, wenn langsam und deutlich gesprochen wird.
- Kann relevante Informationen austauschen und, wenn direkt danach gefragt wird, die eigene Meinung zu einem konkreten Sachverhalt äußern, wenn er / sie Hilfe beim Formulieren erhält und wenn nötig darum bitten kann, dass wichtige Punkte wiederholt werden.

(adaptiert aus: Gemeinsamer europäischer Referenzrahmen)

Those wishing to join the course should tick off the “Can do” statements in the list opposite with or without the aid of a language professional.

The list presented here is the German version of the descriptors for speaking at Level A2, adapted from the CEFR¹⁴.

For the English version, see below.

<p>General level of language competence for the activities chosen (For orientation)</p>	<p>S / IntA2</p>
<p>■ EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can make him / herself understood with little effort in routine situations in which simple information related to familiar matters is exchanged. - Can ask someone what he / she does or did at work and in his / her free time; can reply to corresponding questions. - Can ask and respond to questions about personal information. 	
<p>■ GOAL-ORIENTED COOPERATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can understand enough to be able to master simple, routine tasks without great effort. - Can ask for something to be repeated if he / she did not understand something. - Can negotiate what is to be done next, can make and respond to suggestions, can ask for and give instructions. - Can understand the important details in utterances if the interlocutor takes care to make them clear; can show if he / she has understood something or not. 	
<p>■ TRANSACTIONS: EXCHANGES INVOLVING OBTAINING AND PROVIDING GOODS AND SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can cope with common everyday situations related to accommodation, travel, shopping and food, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - complete the most important registration and departure formalities while staying at a hotel. - gather simple travel information and purchase tickets for public transport like bus, train, taxi. - give and understand instructions on how to get somewhere (with visual support). - pose questions and conduct simple transactions in shops, post offices, and banks. - give and understand information about quantities, number, prices etc. - explain when shopping what he / she is looking for and ask about prices. - order a meal. 	
<p>■ CONVERSATION – SOCIAL CONTACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can handle very short social exchanges, above all when the interlocutors adapt their language to his / her level; but often does not understand enough to keep the conversation going him-/herself. - Can generally understand when addressed in clearly articulated, standard language about familiar matters, provided that he / she is able from time to time to ask for repetition or for something to be expressed differently. - Can participate in short exchanges in routine situations concerned with familiar topics. - Can say in simple words how he / she feels using simple expressions. - Can address or greet someone with simple, everyday, polite expressions. - Can extend and react to invitations. - Can extend and react to apologies. - Can say what he / she would (not) like. 	
<p>■ MEETINGS / DISCUSSIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can, in general, follow the contents of a meeting within one's own area of job activity if participants speak slowly and clearly. - Can exchange relevant information and, if asked directly, express his / her own opinion concerning a concrete matter if he / she receives help with formulation and, if necessary, can ask for important points to be repeated. 	
<p><i>(adapted from: Common European Framework)</i></p>	

14 A snapshot of the German version is presented here to encourage teachers of German as well as German-speaking teachers of languages other than English to visit and use this resource.

This page shows the English version of the “can do” statements for “spoken interaction” at Level A2.

Obviously, at this level of language competence it would be necessary to make the statements available in the native language (here: German – see above).

Together with a test of the nature described in 5.1 ff., above, it should be relatively easy to establish whether an individual candidate has a sufficient command of the language to participate fruitfully in the envisaged course.

As mentioned above, those wishing to join the planned course should master all of the language functions listed opposite to be admitted to the course.

The above materials could, of course, be made available online, so that interested parties need not travel to a central place to complete the form, but an interview with potential course participants is considered highly advisable.

5.2.2 DiLaPort: an online electronic portfolio for VOLL learners (www.dilaport.utu.fi)

An alternative to the above can be seen in DiLaPort. DiLaPort (Digital Language Portfolio), hosted at the University of Turku, Finland, was developed for VOLL teachers and learners.

From the teacher’s point of view, DiLaPort should help them to:


- introduce modern media (computers, Internet, video, voice recordings, etc.) into their teaching, step by step;
- make efficient use of the new media for planning the teaching and learning process and for recording progress in language competence;
- empower their learners to work more independently and to take charge of their learning;
- provide learners with instruments to explore and make use of authentic, "real world" materials and settings to support the learning process;
- change their role from that of "sage on the stage" to "the guide at the side", releasing them for more productive use of their time;
- become familiar with new concepts in foreign language learning and teaching.

For learners it is a practical, free and easy-to-use tool to help them focus their attention on important aspects of their foreign language competence and its further development.

In the digital language portfolio, learners can collect and record their best work and present it as evidence of their language skills.

DiLaPort has three components:

- A “Language Passport” revealing the person’s "linguistic identity", where they record their achievements and assess their competence in relation to the CEFR.

Language Passport						
Profile of Language Skills						
Name:						
Language:						
	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Understanding / Listening	X					
Reading						
Speaking / Spoken interaction						
Spoken production						
Writing						


[Read Common European Framework \(CEF\) self-assessment scales](#)

Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

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- A “Biography” where they set their language learning aims.

My language learning aims



Name: _____


Language: _____

1. Describe everyday working life situations where you need this language.
2. What purposes do you need the language for?
 - a. I need reading skills for...
 - b. I need listening skills for...
 - c. I need speaking skills for...
 - d. I need writing skills for...
3. What do you want to learn for these situations you describe above?
4. What skills do you want to improve?

Write below. Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

- ... and where they record how, when and where they have learned the language.

My language learning history 1



Name: _____

Language: _____

Describe your exposure to language as a child:

Fill in the courses you have taken:

Institution:	Year:	Length:

Fill in the exams you have taken:



Name of exam:	Institution:	Year:

Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

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Here, they update the biography as they collect more learning experiences, thus helping them to review their progress.

- Self-assessment forms also form an integral part of the portfolio.

A2 Speaking					
Language:					
Date:					
! = yes, not completely !! = yes, fairly well !!! = yes, very well					
I can:		Yes			Target
		!	!!	!!!	
1.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities.	X			!!
2.	I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.				
3.	I can cope with common everyday situations related to accommodation, travel, shopping and food.				
4.					
5.					

Click EDIT to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

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- A “Dossier”, which acts as a “digital showcase” where learners keep samples of their best work and which provides realistic evidence of their language skills.



The **Dossier** is your digital showcase. It is where you keep the samples of your best work. It is realistic evidence of your language skills.

The **Resource Kit** contains useful information you have collected during your studies.

This is not an active page. As your Dossier can be in different places, for example on your hard disk, memory stick or the server of your school, you cannot jump directly from these links to your Dossier, but use this page as your notepad for the addresses needed.

My private dossier is stored in

My public dossier is stored in
<https://wm.utu.fi/Public/TKK/Anmatillinen/Dilaport/1.Students/1.Language%20Portfolio/3.Dossier/>

My resource kit is stored in

Click COPY/CHANGE to make changes in the form. Click SAVE to save the changes.

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6. Formative assessment

The group felt strongly that the envisaged course should integrate forms of ongoing assessment to help students take control of their own learning and to encourage a dialogue between teacher and learners to ensure that learner needs were being met. With this in mind, they explored the potential of the EVoQs and systems referred to above and the possibilities which electronic language portfolios offer, using DiLaPort as an example.

6.1 DiLaPort as a tool for formative/ongoing assessment

An e-portfolio like DiLaPort seems an ideal tool for learners to map their progress and become increasingly conscious of their language needs and progress. In the digital language portfolio, they can collect and record their best work and present it as evidence of their language skills. If they afford their teacher access to the portfolio, he/she can provide ongoing

feedback. The teacher may also gain insights into where further instruction/intervention is necessary for the course as a whole.

One of the obvious advantages of an e-portfolio is that it is immediately available to all who have been given access to it, once the learner has created/updated it, independent of time or geographical constraints. In an adult education course of the nature of the one envisaged, it represents an invaluable tool to provide a sense of community and to encourage exchange beyond the infrequent face-to-face meetings.

6.2 EVoQs and formative/ongoing assessment

The EVoQs system can also be used by learners to map their progress, ticking off the descriptors of language skills acquired as their learning progresses and providing evidence of these in the form of, for example, recordings using Skype or other recording facilities. The envisaged online co-operation between participants should provide ample opportunities for work-related role-plays of this nature. The simulation described below provides an example of how this may be done.

7. Summative evaluation

Whilst formative assessment is considered assessment for learning, summative assessment is characterised as assessment of learning. Summative assessment most often sets out to provide information on the product's efficacy, that is, its ability to do what it was designed to do.

However, within the context of "May I help you, madam?", the initiator wishes to know if, after the course, its staff are able to perform adequately in English to be able to provide the necessary service to its (potential) clients.

With this in mind, and mindful of the fact that one of the aims of "May I help you, madam?" is to provide teachers with models and guidelines for assessment, the project team decided to set up a simulation to test the oral performance of a candidate at the defined level of competence in the key skills defined above in 4.2.2.

7.1 A sample task

Listening and speaking (oral interaction) task:

Level B1 simulation

Situation: a customer calls your adult education centre and would like to book a German course. You should show the examiner that you are able to do the following:

- answer the phone politely;
- ask the customer to hold the line;
- offer him/her a variety of German courses, telling him/her the day, time, venue and costs of the course;
- deal with simple, predictable questions from a customer;
- provide some information about the teacher and the materials used in the course, if the customer asks for it;
- deal with routine enquiries from customers;
- take down factual information needed from the customer to enrol (name, address, bank account, etc.);
- end the telephone conversation politely.

7.2 A (recorded) simulation demonstrating application of evaluation criteria

To be able to illustrate and evaluate different systems of assessment of language learners' skills, a simulation of a test situation, based upon the above descriptors, was set up, using Skype and its recording facility "Pamela". The actors were a native speaker of English, acting as a potential customer, and a Polish German-speaking colleague from the E-VOLLution workshop acting as a member of staff of the adult education language institute.

7.3 Evaluation criteria

The E-VOLLution working group on evaluation, assessment and testing used two sets of standardised criteria to evaluate the "candidate's" performance and recorded their decisions for future reference and discussion by interested colleagues. After listening to the conversation described above, they exchanged views on the various interpretations of the terminology of the CEFR and assessment tools which were applied to find out whether the different tools applied would achieve more or less identical results – or not.

7.3.1 EVoQs evaluation criteria

One group used a slightly adapted version of the EVoQs evaluation criteria established for oral performance at level B1, based upon the choice of descriptors chosen above (c.f. 4.1.2 and 4.1.3) for the particular language functions the chosen target group would need to master to perform adequately in English at their workplace. The following table shows the overall criteria used in the EVoQs system.

Speaking B1

<i>Activity Type</i>	<i>Assessment Criteria</i> The performance evidence must fulfil at least 12 of the following criteria:
<p>1 Information exchange and goal-orientated co-operation ☞ Competence is demonstrated in a broad range of routine activities in which mainly factual information is obtained and provided.</p> <p>2 Transactions: Exchanges involving obtaining and providing goods and services ☞ Competence is demonstrated in routine activities in which services or goods are provided or obtained.</p> <p>3 Conversation ☞ Competence is demonstrated in conversation on common day-to-day topics.</p> <p>4 Formal / informal discussions and meetings ☞ Competence is demonstrated in discussions about job-related, routine activities and processes.</p> <p>5 Job interviews ☞ Competence is demonstrated in simple job interviews involving routine activities.</p> <p>6 Arguing a case ☞ Competence is demonstrated in delivering clearly structured, short statements (explanations, reasons, summaries, accounts etc.) in routine job-related events and meetings.</p> <p>7 Speaking to an audience ☞ Competence is demonstrated in delivering simple, prepared talks (presentation, toast, announcement).</p>	<p>The candidate ...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <input type="checkbox"/> uses appropriate interrogative forms to successfully acquire information; understands all questions asked 2. <input type="checkbox"/> uses technical words and phrases related to his / her work in an appropriate way to provide routine work-related information 3. <input type="checkbox"/> uses appropriate expressions to ensure understanding (repair strategies) 4. <input type="checkbox"/> uses pronunciation, intonation and pace of speech so that he / she can be understood without undue effort 5. <input type="checkbox"/> uses polite verbal conventions appropriate to social context showing awareness of intercultural difference where necessary 6. <input type="checkbox"/> summarises routine agreements and arrangements 7. <input type="checkbox"/> uses appropriate forms of greetings and leave-taking 8. <input type="checkbox"/> offers help, expresses thanks 9. <input type="checkbox"/> recommends goods / services; advises customers, discusses prices 10. <input type="checkbox"/> provides (and understands) information on prices, quantity / number, size, colour, quality, etc. 11. <input type="checkbox"/> expresses simply a wide range of feelings and views 12. <input type="checkbox"/> expresses agreement or polite disagreement 13. <input type="checkbox"/> intervenes, requests / grants permission to speak 14. <input type="checkbox"/> contradicts politely / appropriately 15. <input type="checkbox"/> explains, gives reasons in simple terms 16. <input type="checkbox"/> reports on events in simple but clearly structured language 17. <input type="checkbox"/> apologises appropriately; expresses regret

7.3.2 KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat evaluation criteria

Page 53 ff. of the document describing the KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat www.hamburg.de/contentblob/69118/data/fremdsprachezertifikat-kmk.pdf) referred to above provides descriptors for the evaluation of oral performance in test situations in German.

BEWERTUNG INTERAKTIVER LEISTUNGEN (STUFE III, B2)			
Globalbeschreibung: Der Prüfling kann berufsrelevante Gesprächssituationen sicher in der Fremdsprache bewältigen. Er kann dabei auch die Gesprächsinitiative ergreifen und auf den Gesprächspartner gezielt eingehen. Er kann auf [...] Mitteilungen komplexer Art situationsadäquat reagieren. Er kann [...] Sachverhalte ausführlich erläutern und Standpunkte verteidigen. Er ist dabei fähig, landestypische Unterschiede in der jeweiligen Berufs- und Arbeitswelt angemessen zu berücksichtigen. In Aussprache, Wortwahl und Strukturengebrauch ist die Muttersprache ggf. noch erkennbar. Er verfügt jedoch über ein angemessenes idiomatisches Ausdrucksvermögen.			
Punkte	Interaktive Kompetenz und Aufgabenbewältigung	Punkte	Sprachbeherrschung <i>Accuracy, fluency, range, adequacy, comprehensibility</i>
15 - 14	Die Situation wird durch häufiges Ergreifen der Gesprächsinitiative und wiederholtem, gezielten und geschickten Einbezug des Gesprächspartners vollständig bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird differenziert bearbeitet und effektiv gelöst.	15 - 14	Aussprache und Strukturengebrauch sind weitgehend korrekt; Wortwahl und Redewendungen sind dem Anlass gemäß gewählt und weitgehend idiomatisch verwendet. Die Äußerungen sind spontan, flüssig, verständlich und eindeutig.
13,5 - 12	Die Situation wird durch Ergreifen der Gesprächsinitiative und gezielten Einbezug des Gesprächspartners weitgehend bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird systematisch bearbeitet und fast durchgehend gelöst.	13,5 -12	Aussprache und Strukturengebrauch sind überwiegend korrekt; Wortwahl und Redewendungen sind dem Anlass gemäß gewählt und weitgehend idiomatisch verwendet. Die Äußerungen sind nahezu spontan, fast durchgehend flüssig, verständlich und klar.
11,5 - 10	Die Situation wird durch gelegentliches Ergreifen der Gesprächsinitiative und Einbezug des Gesprächspartners überwiegend bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird weitgehend bearbeitet und zufriedenstellend gelöst.	11,5 -10	Aussprache und Strukturengebrauch sind überwiegend korrekt, der Redefluss wird gelegentlich durch Fehler unterbrochen, aber diese behindern das sofortige Verständnis nur geringfügig. Ein Bemühen um situationsangemessene und idiomatische Ausdrucksweise wird deutlich.
9,5 - 7,5	Die Situation wird unter gelegentlichen Einbezug und häufiger Mithilfe des Gesprächspartners noch überwiegend bewältigt. Die Aufgabe wird noch ausreichend bearbeitet und im Wesentlichen gelöst.	9,5 - 7,5	Aussprache, Strukturen- und Wortgebrauch sind nicht fehlerfrei, erfordern jedoch nur wenig Rekonstruktionsleistung vom Zuhörer. Ansätze zu situationsangemessener idiomatischer Ausdrucksweise sind erkennbar.
7 - 4,5	Die Situation wird nicht mehr ausreichend bewältigt. Der Gesprächspartner wird kaum einbezogen. Trotz Mithilfe des Gesprächspartners wird die Aufgabe nur stellenweise erfüllt.	7 - 4,5	Die Aussagen enthalten entweder sinnstörende Fehler und / oder nicht den Sinn störende Fehler sind derart häufig, dass sie das Verständnis unangenehm behindern. Ansätze zu situationsangemessener idiomatischer Ausdrucksweise sind kaum zu erkennen.
4 - 0	Die Situation wird nicht bewältigt. Der Gesprächspartner wird nur ansatzweise einbezogen. Trotz Mithilfe des Gesprächspartners wird die Aufgabe nur ansatzweise oder gar nicht erfüllt.	4 - 0	Eine verbal wie strukturell stark von der Muttersprache geprägte unidiomatische Ausdrucksweise behindert das Verständnis erheblich. Das Gemeinte ist an etlichen Stellen nicht verständlich und / oder muss vom Zuhörer mühsam rekonstruiert werden.

The grids have two columns with the headings “Task achievement/management” and “Quality of the language applied”. The table has six horizontal rows, following the German marking scheme, ranging from “excellent” to “unsatisfactory”. The bold line below the fourth row indicates the pass mark. Each field contains descriptors and the range of score. Both columns are of equal importance, that is, if the total score of an assignment is 30 (as it is for oral examinations), the maximum score is 15 in each column. The pass mark is 7.5, etc. The description fitting best is marked in each column, and the scores are summed up.

7.3.3 Results of the simulation

While the working group was listening to the simulation described above, the different testing tools were applied by the members of the working group, working in two different sub-groups using the criteria listed in 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 respectively, at the same time. After the mutual comparison of the individual results, the working group came to the conclusion that both testing tools applied in the workshop had led to very similar results – an outcome that had not been expected. It was also agreed that the tools of the KMK-Fremdsprachenzertifikat, which had been completely new for some members of the working group, had served their purpose very well.

8. Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to give an overview of some of the tools available for testing and assessment in VOLL contexts based upon the specific need of a colleague in the group in the Graz workshop. As the envisaged course was relatively limited in scope and required only a narrow selection of descriptors, it makes no pretence at being comprehensive. We are quite aware that assessment, testing and evaluation encompasses far more than what has been described here, but hope that this contribution will encourage colleagues to explore the tools mentioned and to go beyond and explore the full range of materials now available, and to follow the rapid development of new approaches and instruments in this area.

There is no doubt that Web 2.0 and other new tools offer better and more efficient possibilities for assessment procedures than was previously possible, but new forms of assessment for the new modes of communication which are evolving are sorely needed.

In addition, we have observed that there is a great need for training in assessment procedures amongst VOLL teachers. The optimistic assumption that the use of ICT media in online or computerised testing will automatically lead to improvement in foreign language skills is not shared by the group, if such tools are the only means of assessment. We firmly believe that appropriate and effective evaluation, assessment and testing in foreign language learning and teaching requires a considerable amount of learning time and effort with all parties involved and cannot be left simply to the application of e-learning components. However, we do

believe that if we embed assessment and testing procedures in a principled, didactic approach, and implement them by drawing on known and well-tried pedagogical practice, the use of ICT will certainly lead to better linguistic profiling and an overall improvement in competence and performance on the part of VOLL learners. And, finally, we would like to add a word of caution with regard to the CEFR and the European Language Portfolio. This chapter has been concerned with evaluation, assessment and testing, but we would like to emphasise that the CEFR and ELF should not be seen simply as tools for testing/evaluating language proficiency. One of the principal tasks of these materials is to provide instruments to initiate discussion and debate on common terminology and descriptors for describing language proficiency in Europe – something which has been sorely missing to date.

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