

WORKSHEET B

Title	Existential competence (savoir-être) and the users'/learners' mental context	
Objective(s)	Reflecting about the relationship between learners' mental context and communication	
Keywords	Savoir-être – mental context – competence	
Ref to the Guide I.3, III intro, III.1	Ref to the CEFR 4 intro, 4.1.4, 4.1.5, 5.1.3	

Task A

Step 1 (†)

Refer back to worksheet A and consider the following extracts:

“[...] theoretical coherence was relatively easy to identify in times when the communicative approach monopolised discussions of language learning and teaching. the single label of ‘communication’ was one which could be applied with reference to relevant theories of language, to aims of learning, to classroom methodology and to a more limited extent to learning theory. In post-communicative times, however, recognising theoretical coherence requires us to cast our net more widely to harvest relevant theories and resulting principles” (Newby, 2006: 112)

“Post-communicative developments, while in no way dispensing with the importance of communicative competence, have embedded this competence in what the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* terms savoir-être or ‘existential competence’” (Newby, 2006: 113)

The mental context is [...] not limited to reducing the information content of the immediately observable external context. line of thought may be more powerfully influenced by memory, stored knowledge, imagination and other internal cognitive (and emotive) processes. In that case the language produced is only marginally related to the observable external context. [...]

External conditions and constraints are also relevant mainly in so far as the user/learner recognises, accepts and adjusts to them (or fails to do so). this is very much a matter of the individual's interpretation of the situation in the light of his or her general competences (see section 5.1) such as prior knowledge, values and beliefs.

[...]

The need for communication presupposes a ‘communication gap’, which can however be bridged because of the overlap, or partial congruence, between the mental context of the user in focus and the mental context of the interlocutor(s). in face to face



reasons given above their observation and interpretation of the context differ. The effect [...] of a communicative act is to increase the area of congruence in the understanding of the situation in the interest of effective communication so as to serve the purposes of the participants. (CEFR, 4.1.4., 4.1.5., pp. 50-51)

Step 2 (†)

Now try and answer the following two questions adapted from the CEFR (p 51 and p. 106):

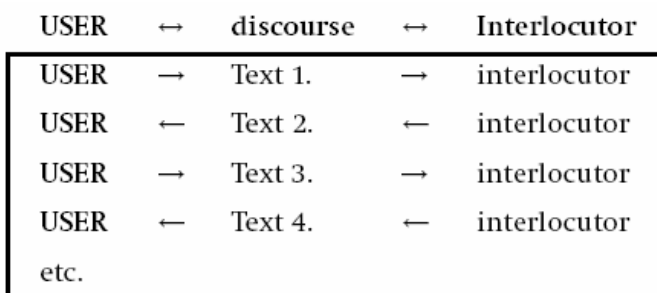
1. In what ways do the mental characteristics of the learner condition and constrain communication?
2. Do you consider that the learner personal characteristics are generally taken into account in provisions for language learning, teaching and assessment, and - if yes - how?

Step 3 († † †)

Share and discuss your answers.

Task B († †)

Bearing in mind the diagram 3 (interactive communicative language activities) prepare a task aiming at developing oral interaction among learners.



While preparing your task, consider the different factors the CEFR links to the existential competence (5.1.3.), i.e. attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles, personality factors. You may find useful to jot down notes in a grid first.

name of task	attitudes	motivations	values	beliefs	cognitive styles	personality factors

