

# **Bergen ‘Can Do’ project**

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**European Centre for Modern Languages**

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*Angela Hasselgreen  
Bergen, 23 June 2003*



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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This book presents the aims, procedures and findings of a research and development project, the Bergen 'Can Do' project, which began as a local activity in the Bergen district in Norway, grew into an ECML Nordic-Baltic project and culminated with a pan European workshop. Inspired by the development of a set of classroom assessment material for 11-12-year-old English learners in Norway, and aware of the potential and growing importance of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), the project set out to produce material for use in an ELP-compatible assessment portfolio for lower secondary school language learners. An essential demand placed on the material was that it would be truly reflective of what these learners actually do in their foreign or second languages. In order to achieve this, extensive research was carried out within the project. The way this research was conducted, its findings and how these findings were used in compiling material, are systematically presented here.

The book is accompanied by a CD-Rom with all the material developed in the project. The material is grouped according largely to skill (spoken interaction, reading, writing), and contains elements for both pupils and teachers. Most of the pupils' material is available for using on computer as well as with paper and pencil.

The book itself is intended for those interested in using the material, or in going through a similar process in developing or adapting classroom assessment portfolios, based on the underlying concepts and philosophy of the ELP. It may also be of interest to anyone who is in the process of implementing an ELP in their language class or institution, particularly where younger learners are concerned. Through the research carried out by the project, a glimpse is offered into the actual 'world' of younger language learners; moreover concrete suggestions are made for adapting and supplementing an ELP, and for gently introducing its ideas to the classroom.

In Chapter One, the project itself and the people involved are introduced, along with the aims and principles which underlay it, the procedures followed, the outcome of the work, as well as directions for future co-operation. Chapters Two, Three and Four present detailed accounts of the way particular aspects of language ability were worked with, looking at spoken interaction, reading and writing respectively. Chapter Five takes a look at what might be considered the climatic 'event' of the project, when our work was put to the test before a pan-European group at the Central Workshop in Graz, and suggestions for adaptations and plans for future work were made. Chapter Six shows an approach to assessing cultural 'know-how', which was a major theme at the workshop. Chapter Seven is contributed by a participant teacher, experienced in ELP-work in Finland, who is concerned with the **way** this kind of material is introduced to pupils, and the importance of reflection in the classroom. Finally, in Chapter Eight, the word is taken over by some of the Nordic-Baltic group who took part in the project. Their experience as practitioners is, as always, well worth sharing and taking note of.

## 1.1 The project – who, what, where and when

The Bergen ‘Can Do’ Project was largely conceived as a result of work on the earlier National EVA (Evaluation of English in Norwegian Schools) project (see KUF; 1996, 1999), co-ordinated from the University of Bergen English Department. In the EVA project, testing was in focus, but as the work progressed it became clear that there was a need for means of assessing pupils’ language ability in an ongoing way in the language classroom. It also emerged that the supplementary material, in the form of pupils’ self-assessment and teacher observation and ‘profile’ schemes, both using concrete, positive criteria, worked well and were transferable to most classroom performance.

The project began, in 2000, with a group of 9 teachers in the local county of Hordaland who shared the view that this type of ongoing assessment material was worth developing. However, it was taken up at an early stage by the *European Centre for Modern Languages* (ECML) as part of their medium-term programme of activities, and from 2001 involved co-operation with partners in all the Nordic and Baltic countries. A workshop in Bergen in December 2001 brought this group together with the local teachers. This resulted in a dramatic surge forward in the actual development work, as well as in the forging of long lasting friendships – a major contribution to the smooth running of the project!

The Nordic-Baltic partners who joined the project in 2001 were largely teachers, although teacher trainers and Ministry of Education officials were also represented. Experience with ELP work in schools varied among the group, but all shared the instinctive belief that any ELP to be introduced with younger learners needed to be tailor made with the interests of this group in mind. The project was co-ordinated by myself, with animators from one Baltic and one Nordic land.

The Nordic-Baltic network group was composed as follows:

- Per Blomqvist (Sweden)
- Merete Erichsen (from the original local teacher group) (Norway)
- Anne-Marie Grahn-Saarinen (Finland)
- Anne Kraubner (Estonia)
- Lena Lidbjerg (Denmark)
- Stasé Skapienė (Lithuania)
- Halla Thorlacius (Iceland)
- Iveta Vitola (Latvia)
  
- Co-ordinator: Angela Hasselgreen (Norway)
- Animators: Violeta Kaledaitė (Lithuania) and Signe Holm-Larsen (Denmark).

In December 2002, a workshop in Graz opened up the project to all member states of the ECML and contributed valuably to the final form of the material which had been developed during the project. Although an important underlying principle was the application of the material to any foreign or second language, the trialling took place with respect to English only, as it happened. English was also, rather naturally, the working language of the group. The material shown, as extracts in the appendix and accessible in full on the CD-Rom, is therefore in English, and may consequently be most relevant to teachers of English. However, the work carried out at the project workshop in Graz showed the high degree of compatibility of the material to other foreign and second languages.

## **1.2 Project aims: the role of the ELP**

### **Primary aim**

In the light of the EVA project experience, the primary aim of the current project was to develop a set of material for systematic ongoing classroom assessment/portfolio assessment in lower secondary school that:

1. incorporates self-assessment (including reflection on learning processes)
2. provides concrete, positive criteria for assessing
3. considers communicative and linguistic aspects of performance
4. provides means of documenting ability, for pupil and teacher
5. allows learners to see progress
6. encourages learners to take more responsibility for learning
7. is usable with any FL/SL
8. is computer-usable.

### **The European Language Portfolio (ELP)**

It was clear that many of the aims listed, were shared by those engaged the development of the *European Language Portfolio* (ELP) (see Little & Perclová, 2001). The ELP builds on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEF) (Council of Europe 2001), specifically the CEF scales whereby language ability in a range of subskills is described at six levels.

As Figure 1 shows, the ELP consists of three main sections: a language passport, presenting an overview of the learner's proficiency and experiences across all second or foreign languages; a biography, documenting aims and progress made in any

language, based on series of individual ‘I Can Do’ statements for each level of the scales; and a dossier where work is collected as ‘evidence’ of ability. There is no **one** ELP; it is developed for a particular educational context, using guidelines, and in order to be recognised as an official ELP, any version must be validated by the Council of Europe.

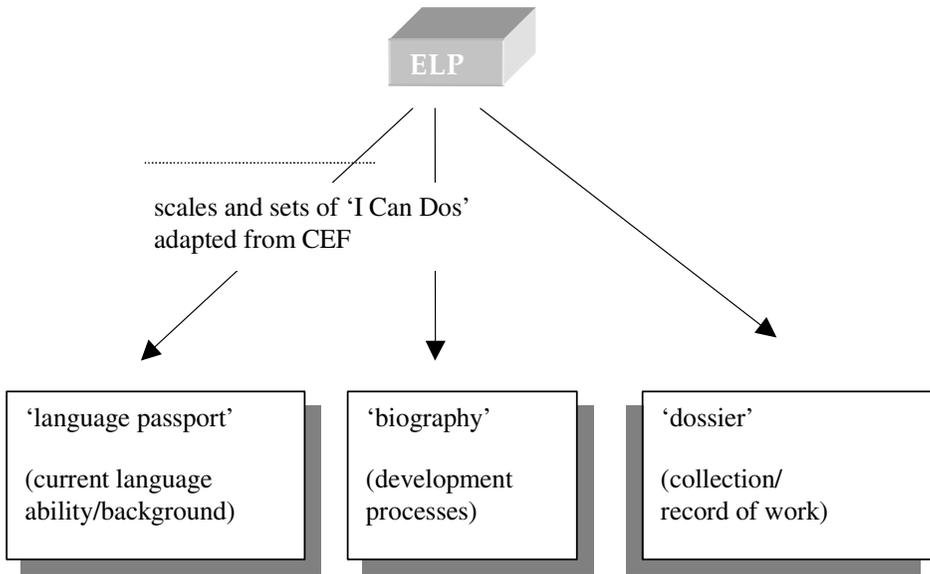


Figure 1: The European Language Portfolio (ELP)

As the ELP has undoubted potential as a model for assessment, regardless of the official position of the ELP in the countries concerned, it was decided that the task of the project should be to exploit the potential of the ELP, adapting and supplementing it to meet the primary aims of the project, while keeping within the spirit and essential parameters of the ELP.

### 1.3 Tasks

The project was thus faced with two distinct tasks: adapting the basic ELP to the context of language learning in the lower secondary school, and supplementing it to fully meet the aims of the project.

Adapting the ELP involved considering:

- levels on the CEF scales: *which of the six levels should be included/subdivided?*

- ‘Can Dos’: *how can these be made appropriate to this age group, taking into account the conditions under which they might use foreign/second languages?*
- the language used in levels and ‘Can Dos’: *how might this be adapted to the pupils, and which languages should be used (target or mother tongue)?*

Supplementing the ELP involved deciding:

- how to ensure really *continual* assessment (on a day-to-day basis)
- how to include assessment of linguistic aspects (as well as communicative aspects, which are in focus in the ELP)
- how to include systematic reflection of learning processes, as well as actual performance
- how to give more responsibility for learning to pupils
- how to involve teachers in the assessment process, providing them with their own methods for documenting pupils’ ability.

## **1.4 Procedures followed**

The work in adapting the ELP scales and ‘Can Dos’ to the lower secondary school contexts in the countries concerned has followed a basic set of procedures for each of the ‘skills’: spoken interaction, reading and writing. These procedures can be summed up as:

- carrying out a teacher survey of the range of levels among their pupils
- carrying out a pupil survey of what they actually do when they use English
- combining the information from these surveys with CEF material to produce draft levels and ‘Can Dos’
- trialling of the level and ‘Can Dos’ among pupils, data analysis and adaptation.

The procedure followed for supplementing the ELP material entailed:

- drafting of self-assessment forms for regular use, with linguistic and learning elements
- trialling, analysis and adaptation of these and linking them to levels
- (for writing and spoken interaction) drafting of teacher forms – profile and observation – as well as self-help guidelines for assessing language use
- (for reading) development of a reading record form
- identifying elements to include in the eventual assessment of ICC.

The work was directed largely through the website and e-mail, with teachers downloading material, using it with their classes, and giving feedback. Workshops and meetings were held at regular intervals as an essential part of the process.

## **1.5 Outcomes**

As a result of these procedures, sets of material for the portfolio assessment of spoken interaction, reading and writing were developed, both in paper and electronic versions. The material is accessible on the accompanying CD-Rom, and is exemplified in the appendix, and has the following principal components for pupils' portfolios:

- language-learner background
- scales of levels
- 'Can Do' checklists
- self-assessment form
- reading record form.

Additionally, there is a range of material for teachers.

## **1.6 Towards further developments**

As it was a matter of concern that the material developed had been largely tailored to English as a foreign language, and that it did not include a component for assessing intercultural communicative competence (ICC), the ECML-supported workshop in Graz, December 2002, worked on overcoming these shortcomings.

Prior to the workshop, an essay competition was announced on the website, asking pupils to write what they felt should be told to a youngster coming to their country for the first time. This was to enable us to establish categories of intercultural know-how that seems relevant to pupils, with the ultimate aim of working out a self-assessment form for ICC. The contents of the essays were analysed and worked on by a group of participants at the workshop and an initial framework was made for the assessment of ICC.

Other groups did preliminary work on ways in which the material may be adapted for foreign and second languages other than English. The outcome of the workshop is expected to lead to further co-operative work, which should supplement the current material.

## Chapter 2: Assessing spoken interaction

The spoken language is notoriously elusive when it comes to assessment and documentation. Tests are logistically demanding, and the record left by a piece of writing is absent in the case of speaking; largely because of this, criteria for assessing speaking are not as accessible as those for assessing writing. For these reasons, it was tempting to begin the project by trying to develop material for the ongoing, or portfolio assessment of spoken interaction. In this chapter, the procedure undergone in this quest, and the resulting material are presented. The adaptation of ELP-type levels and ‘Can Dos’ will be considered first, followed by an account of the way the material was supplemented.

Since spoken interaction was the first ‘skill’ to be worked with, the process followed was largely experimental. Although I myself had experience, from the EVA project, in testing spoken interaction, and to some extent in providing material for self-assessment, and teacher assessment and observation in the classroom, I had virtually no experience in working with CEF levels or ‘Can Do’ statements. However, I was sufficiently familiar with the CEF and DIALANG level scales for adults to be aware that these bore little resemblance to the lives of lower secondary school pupils, and the areas of their foreign language use. A struggle, with the help of on-line dictionaries, through a variety of portfolios made for use in schools, such as the German and Dutch, let me see that it was possible to make ‘Can Dos’ that seem to take regard to pupils’ age and everyday lives. Thus, the biggest challenge that confronted us was to ensure that not only were scales and ‘Can Dos’ worded in a way that seemed pupil friendly, but that the ‘Can Do’ statements should actually match what pupils *do* do when speaking in other languages than their own. Importantly, the essential levels, as represented in the CEF must not be ‘lost’ in the process.

### 2.1 Adapting the ELP: developing pupil-friendly levels and ‘Can Dos’ for spoken interaction

The aim in this stage of the work was to take the CEF scale of spoken interaction, and build a revised scale for pupils together with a series of individual ‘Can Do’ statements which could be associated with the levels. Pupils would eventually be able to place themselves on a scale, and have a set of associated ‘Can Dos’, which could be marked as objectives or achievements, in order to track their progress.

The development process had the following stages:

1. Define which CEF levels, in principle, are salient for pupils of this age, which, if any, should be subdivided

2. Carry out a survey among pupils on where they use their language (in this case English), who with, why, and what they talk about.
3. Incorporate the information from the survey into a set of reworded levels, and a series of 'Can Do' statements across these levels
4. Collect and analyse data (student self-assessment and teacher judgement) in an effort to link these 'Can Dos' with levels
5. Produce a set of 'Can Do' checklists, with a means of indicating aims and achievements, and make a form to document the placing of pupils at levels.

### **Defining which levels are salient for pupils of this age, which, if any, should be subdivided**

The original scale was unsuitable in two respects. Firstly, the pupils concerned were not expected to cover the whole range of levels, but rather cluster round a certain area. Not only did this mean that certain levels would not be used, but also that others would contain too many pupils, and would not differentiate between pupils; moreover, individual pupils would not be able to notice their own progress inside these broad levels. Secondly, both the language used and many of the actual concepts referred to in the original scales were explicitly geared towards working adults, and were assumed to be inappropriate for pupils of 14-15 years of age.

The first task was to decide on which levels to include, and which to split or collapse. A survey was carried out among all the teachers in the group, who were sent the CEF scale for spoken interaction. A questionnaire accompanied this, to investigate the teachers' views on the appropriateness of the CEF levels for their own pupils' levels. The results, from six teachers, indicated that most pupils were in the region of A2/B1, and that C2 was not feasible for pupils this age. It was thus decided to subdivide levels A2 and B1 and to drop C2.

### **Survey among pupils on where they use their language (in this case English), who with, why, and what they talk about**

The pupils were given a questionnaire (Appendix 1), asking them when they spoke English, who with, and what they normally 'do' with their spoken English. Forms were received from 208 pupils in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade (approx. 13-15 year olds), and indicated that pupils do quite different things and for different reasons than are indicated in the original adult scales.

The findings from this survey are summarised below, in terms of: situations/interlocutors/purposes, types of language, functions, conditions that affect the speech and perceived measure of success.

## ***1 Situations/interlocutors/purposes***

### *In class – to teacher and other pupils:*

- answer/ask questions
- perform role-play
- take part in projects – use English while working in groups
- give results in English to whole class – minitalk, learnt by heart, read aloud
- chat/discuss things with other pupils
- talk to teacher about what going to do, tasks
- take part in classroom routines – say ‘good morning’, etc.

### *When I'm out:*

- help strangers, e.g. with directions, explaining or interpreting
- making friends using English as common language
- chatting to non-Norwegian-speaking friends
- chatting in English for fun to Norwegian-speaking friends
- in a queue (e.g. toilet)

### *At home – family or friends:*

- for fun with family or friends, or to use a “code”
- in connection with homework, with family
- to non-Norwegian-speaking visitors/relatives of different ages
- talking to self, pets, etc.
- singing
- using the phone
- coping with unexpected visitors e.g. doorsellers

### *On holiday:*

- to perform routine transactions – shop, order food or drink, give personal details
- to ask for help/directions
- to mix socially with people of same age, e.g. with sports team
- to cope with living among people with English as the common language

- to talk to people in unusual situations, e.g. bodyguard
- on the plane, when hostess doesn't speak Norwegian

*Other:*

- to cope with living/going to school, etc. among English native speakers
- to attend lessons, e.g. tennis, dance, or dentist, etc. where English is used
- looking after/playing with younger children
- taking part in Internet chats, sending messages

## **2 *Type of language***

- simple predictable routine exchange, e.g. buying, directions, classroom talk
- short conversations/chats about restricted topics of common interest
- giving minitalk on prepared topic
- sustained conversations – chatting freely and moving from topic to topic
- responding to unexpected situations, e.g. giving help, explanations etc.
- having to give non-complying response
- establishing and building on friendship
- explaining how to do something , e.g. fish
- selling (flowers)

## **3 *Recurrent themes***

- basic personal: name, age, where live, hobbies
- directions
- boys (by girls!)
- pets

## **4 *Functions***

- asking for and giving information, explanations, help and instructions
- exchanging attitudes
- carrying out transactions

- socialising
- overcoming potential communication problems

### **5 *Conditions that affect the speech***

- proficiency of the other speakers
- predictability of what is said
- age/common interest
- familiarity of topic
- whether on phone or face to face

### **6 *Perceived measure of success/proficiency***

- how well the others understood
- how freely they talked
- how long they could keep going
- how voluntarily they used English

## **Incorporating the information from the survey into a set of reworded levels, and a series of ‘Can Do’ statements across these levels**

The next stage in the process was to decide what should go into the new level descriptors. The CEF scale was used as the basic guide to what characterized a level, but considerable guidance was also found in the scale for overall spoken interaction taking from the Illustrative Scales of Descriptors, in the CEF (2001, Appendix B). This scale divides each of levels A2 to B2 into 2 parts. For our purposes, we left B2 as a single level, but otherwise used the descriptors from A1 to C1, with A2 and B1 divided (e.g. A2:1, A2:2), as a model on which to base the new descriptors. This meant maintaining the basic competence suggested in the adult version, but couching these in terms which reflected the ideas suggested by the pupils and a language more suitable to the age group. The resulting scale for spoken interaction, after minor adjustments *en route*, is shown in Appendix 2.

Next a set of individual ‘Can Dos’, 48 in all, partly taken directly from the scale, but partly brought in as a means of providing further concrete realisations of what is ‘done’ at the different levels.

## **Collection and analysis of data (student self-assessment and teacher judgement) in an effort to link these ‘Can Dos’ with levels**

These ‘Can Dos’ were ordered roughly, according to degree of ability required, and sent out to teachers together with the new scale. Teachers were asked to familiarise themselves with the scale, and think of pupils typically associated with each level. They were asked to decide on the lowest band of pupils that could be expected to manage the things suggested by the statements. The labelled statements were returned, by a joint group of three teachers, as well as two individual teachers.

In many cases there was total agreement between the teachers, and rarely was there more than one band separating the decisions of different teachers. In some cases the teachers’ consensus placed a statement at a lower or higher level than expected. Where this happened, the statement was provisionally relabelled at the level set by the teachers, provided it did not seem to conflict directly with the basic level set in the CEF scale. Where this was the case, the wording of the statement was adjusted. The result was a set of ‘Can Dos’ sorted into sets, reflecting the progress from A1 to C1, although without a one-to-one correspondence at this stage between sets and scale bands (there were six sets and seven scale bands).

The next stage of the work involved asking pupils to place themselves on the scale and tick the ‘Can Dos’ they could manage. ‘Can Dos’ and levels were translated into Norwegian, both out of fairness to weaker pupils, and because the material was eventually to be used for a range of foreign languages (however the final versions were to be retranslated to English, for use alongside the Norwegian).

The data was analysed by cross-tabulating the yes/no replies for each ‘Can Do’ with the levels pupils had put themselves at, and looking for signs of the sudden emergence of a ‘Can Do’ around the level it was intended for. When this happened a ‘Can Do’ was regarded as ‘good’. This is exemplified in Table 2.1 for the ‘Can Do’ *I can give detailed practical instructions about things I know well, e.g. fishing*. This was intended as around level B1:2.

Level	No	Yes	total
A1	6	1	7
A2:1	1	0	1
A2:2	11	9	20
B1:1	18	28	46
B1:2	12	37	49
B2	5	16	21
C1	1	2	3
TOTAL	62	92	154

*Table 2.1: Pupils data for I can give detailed practical instructions about things I know well, e.g. fishing*

Here it can be seen that this ‘Can Do’ begins to emerge as a ‘norm’ (i.e. more than half the pupils say ‘yes’ around B1:2, and gains in strength, until by B2, it is accepted by the vast majority of pupils.

In all, 28 ‘Can Dos’ behaved ‘well’, 9 fairly well, 9 badly and 2 were hardly chosen, being at a higher level than the pupils attained (only two pupils opting to be at C1). These results were encouraging, yet showed that a lot of work remained. In the case of those ‘Can Dos’ functioning less well, it seemed that these were generally too vague, e.g. *I can say a few things on the telephone*. Rather than lose ‘Can Dos’, it was decided to rewrite these weak ones in a much more concrete and restricted way, e.g. *I can handle routine telephone calls with people I know well*. It was also found to be necessary to keep a strict eye on the original CEF scale. As this gradually became more familiar, the ‘core’ of the levels became more apparent, and it was easier to write ‘Can Dos’ that both captured the pupils’ world, and at the same time preserve the level intended.

### **Production of a set of ‘Can Do’ checklists, with a means of indicating aims and achievements, and make a form to document the placing of pupils at levels**

The levels for spoken interaction, together with a set of ‘Can Do’ checklists (illustrated by Appendix 3) are produced, both for use on paper and computer, and accessible on the CD-Rom. These allow the student to set aims, and to express degrees of certainty regarding their ability to ‘do’ the ‘Can Do’. They are also given guidance as to what ‘counts’ as evidence of being at a level. Pupils and teachers are expected to be jointly involved in deciding when the pupil has reached a new level or sublevel.

While it was not possible to re-do the survey with the ‘improved’ set of ‘Can Dos’, it seems reasonable to claim that these do, on the whole, satisfy the demands made of them. Feedback on their use has been positive. On hindsight, however, it may have been wiser not to have subdivided levels, as there is no doubt that this increases the difficulty in placing ‘Can Dos’. This can be illustrated by considering Table 2.1, and posing the question – does this ‘Can Do’ ‘emerge’ at B1:1 or B1:2?

For this reason, the material produced for the other skills have ‘Can Dos’ for ‘whole’ levels only. Pupils are encouraged to place themselves at a stage ‘halfway between’ levels, in order to perceive progress, but this is done on the basis of a quantitative rather than qualitative improvement in performance. For example, if 80% of ‘Can Dos’ are regarded as evidence of being ‘at’ a level, then 40% can be regarded as evidence of being halfway to a level. The material for spoken interaction, in the CD-Rom however, remains in the original form with subdivisions at A2 and B1. Users who would prefer to have a common system may decide to remove the subdivisions, e.g. by using the upper divisions of A2 and B1 only (i.e. deleting A2:1 and B1:1).

## **2.2 Supplementing the ELP: developing materials for pupils and teachers to use in ongoing classroom assessment of spoken interaction**

The material developed to supplement the levels and ‘Can Dos’ are intended to be used in class by both teachers and pupils to assess oral performance on any occasion. The documentation of the language skills involved, based on appropriate criteria, is made possible through a self-assessment form (Appendix 4) for pupils and an observation form (Appendix 5) for teachers. The careful use of this material allows a tangible record to be built up, which shows pupils’ strengths and weaknesses, and allows progress to be visible.

The form begins with a statement of *what I did*, followed by a general assessment of task achievement: *I managed to say what I wanted*. The subsequent elements assessed are based on current perceptions of what goes into communicative language ability (see Bachman, 1990), and more specifically, spoken interaction (see Hasselgreen 1999).

‘Microlinguistic’ ability can be considered to be represented principally by the statements:

*I knew how to pronounce words*

*I knew the right words & phrases*

*I knew enough grammar*

‘Sociolinguistic’ or ‘pragmatic’ ability is represented principally by the statement:  
*I knew the right words & phrases.*

'Textual' (and possibly 'strategic') ability is represented principally by the statement: *I managed to 'keep the talk going'*.

'Strategic' ability might be considered to be reflected in the statement: *I managed not to mix languages*.

Moreover, understanding (involving a full range of abilities) is included, through the statement: *I understood the others*.

Pupils are also asked other questions relating to the activity, and are encouraged to reflect on their performance and learning needs, through the statements: *Things I managed to do well*, *Examples of words or phrases I learnt*, *Things I still need to work on*. As pupils (and teachers) may be unused to self-assessment of their speaking, a set of 'self-help' guidelines is also provided. Pupils are finally encouraged to express the task as an example of a 'Can Do' in their portfolio.

The teacher observation form is designed to assess the same elements as the pupils' form, although the language is more 'adult' and slightly more detailed. However, the format of the form is such that it can be speedily used in a busy classroom situation. To provide teachers with rather fuller means of recording performance, e.g. under oral test conditions, a profile form is composed. This form contains statements relating to the aspects of spoken language ability referred to here, grouped at three levels of ability (Appendix 6). Teachers can match a pupil's performance with these statements, thus giving a fairly detailed profile of their ability.

Teachers can use the profile form as a basis for systematic feedback on pupils' speaking; the positive nature of the statements, even at the lowest level, as well as the inclusion of a 'bonus' for communication means that something good can virtually always be said about the performance!

While it would not be desirable to continually fill in forms after speaking activities, the fact that these forms are available, and used from time to time is in itself valuable, as they provide criteria for assessing spoken interaction in any situation, which are gradually 'internalised' by pupils and teachers.

The material described in this section was largely developed during the EVA project (see Hasselgreen 1999), where it was designed for pupils of 11-12 years of age. In the current project, it was adapted for slightly older pupils and refined through rounds of trialling and teacher feedback, based partly on pupils' own comments. The workshop in Bergen, 2001, further took up this refining work, especially regarding the self-assessment forms and laid down the essentials of the final material.

## 2.3 General guidelines for assessing oral language ability

As it is felt that teachers frequently lack confidence and training in this area of assessment, a short set of guidelines for assessing oral language ability was included in the material, and is reproduced below.

In the assessment of communicative language ability it is important that the pupil gets the chance to show his/her 'whole' ability. In the case of speaking, this does not only involve vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation/intonation but also:

- 'fluency' – keeping the talk going smoothly and linking what is said both inside and across turns
- socio-cultural skills – having a sense for the most appropriate language for the situation
- strategies – coping with gaps/possible misunderstandings due to language limitations.
- last but not least, message/social intention – does this really get across?

Moreover, it involves showing that s/he can use the language for different functions and purposes: exchanging feelings/attitudes as well as factual information, getting things done, and being sociable/friendly (which is often the main purpose of language).

This assessment of whole ability implies:

1. that we give a range of tasks that give the pupil a chance to use this ability
2. that we describe the ability in terms of its different aspects.

The material developed in this project are designed to describe 'whole' speaking ability. However, it is up to the teacher to ensure that the *tasks* given in the classroom are varied in the following ways:

- pupils perform a range of different functions
- they are expected to take part in short turn conversations and also to 'hold the floor' (e.g. in presentation)
- they take on different roles in a variety of situations, using different mediums, e.g. phone (e.g. through role-play, or slight adaptations of tasks with a partner)
- they are encouraged to cope with tasks where they do not necessarily have all the vocabulary (as often happens in real life).

### Testing

If an oral test is given, it can be better to give a few short tasks, to vary these factors, than one long one that will test a limited range of ability. It can be a good idea to use

pairs/groups as more genuine communication can take place, with information gaps and using some role-play.

However, if using pairs, make sure that one partner is not allowed to dominate or to cause the task to fail for the other partner in any way. Put pupils together who get on well, and make sure each one is allowed to really show what s/he can do.

The profile form is well suited to using with an oral test, but the observation form may be quicker to use at the time, with the profile filled in later. Pupils will benefit from doing a self-assessment after the test, but may not want this taken into account if a grade is being given.



## Chapter 3: Assessing reading

Reading was a tricky, but, as it turned out, fascinating skill to work with. Before any meaningful statements could be made, in ‘Can Dos’ or levels, we had to know what pupils read in their foreign language (again, in our case English), and why. And when making a self-assessment form, we had to know something about the way pupils read, and how they may judge success. And it is widely acknowledged, e.g. in Alderson, 2000, as well as among teachers themselves, that it is often *how much* pupils read, rather than what or how, that is most salient to their success, not only as readers but as language users generally. For this reason, it was decided that reading quantity must also be documented, in a way that motivated pupils to read a lot.

The work during this stage of the project was greatly enhanced by the fact that a new, and very active group of participants – the Nordic-Baltic group – joined the project early in this work, and a productive workshop with all the participants took place in Bergen, 2001.

### 3.1. Adapting the ELP: research-based levels and ‘Can Dos’ that really match pupils’ reading

As in the case of spoken interaction, the CEF levels formed the cornerstone of the levels to be formulated in the project, and existing ELPs as well as the *Illustrative descriptors* in the CEF, provided a starting point for ‘Can Dos’. Moreover, the question of which levels to include – A1 to C1, with a possible division of A2 and B1 – had already been addressed. However, pupils’ reading habits were something of a closed book to us, and it was decided at the outset that whatever we produced must be built on a deeper knowledge of these. The development had the following stages:

1. Survey 1: pupils’ reading habits
2. Workshop: defining ‘reading areas’ and what pupils manage within these
3. Survey 2: pupils’ self-assessment on levels and on ‘Can Dos’ within reading areas
4. Incorporation of survey findings into levels and ‘Can Do’ checklists.

#### Survey 1: pupils’ reading habits

In order to establish pupils’ reading habits, the Survey 1 form (Appendix 7) was produced and sent out to the classes of the Norwegian teachers. This was accompanied by a working draft of a reading levels scale, reformulated in co-operation with the local teachers, and with the same subdivisions as in the case for spoken interaction. Pupils were asked to place themselves on the scale and to answer questions – mainly of the

closed question type – on where, why and what kind of texts they read, as well as special likes, how much is read and how long is spent on reading (both in English and mother tongue). 155 pupils filled in the form, and some very interesting data was compiled.

The full data set from this survey, as an excel file, is accessible on the CD-Rom, together with some graphically depicted results (see Appendix 8). However, the main findings can be summed up as follows. A striking find was the increase in variety of what pupils read as their levels increased. At the lower levels, the reading was dominated by school coursebook and e-reading – mainly Internet but also computer games and e-mails. Songs were also reasonably well represented at lower levels – a lot of ‘singing along’ seems to be going on here! Around the B1 level, songs were growing in importance, with poems (surprisingly?), magazines and instructions gaining in currency. The e-reading remained fairly constant throughout the levels. What was perhaps most interesting, and significant, was that ‘story books’ only emerged to any significant extent at the upper B2/C1 stage, where it suddenly became a major component of pupils’ reading. However, the better readers also read more widely, with magazines, instructions and songs competing well with e-reading.

The amount of free-time reading reported also increased predictably with level, with averages of less than half an hour a week, and fewer than 10 pages at the A1/A2 levels to around an hour and a half, and over 30 pages at the upper B2/C1 levels. The reasons for reading also told their own tale. At the lower end (in fact up to lower B2) *to learn English* and *because my teacher tells me to* were the only notable reasons for reading. However, at the highest levels, the overwhelming majority gave *because I like reading* as a reason, and half gave *to find things out*. It is a sad fact that few pupils from lower B2 downwards found reading English either enjoyable or useful, other than as a means of learning English! This is something that teachers, curriculum designers and publishers need to take on board. With a world market packed with young English learners, where are the stories and magazines that they can cope with and that really interest them?

### **Workshop: Defining ‘reading areas’ and what pupils manage within these**

This survey gave much food for thought at the Nordic-Baltic workshop in Bergen, November 2001. Here, the new participants, from seven countries, were brought together with those who had been working locally on the project for over a year. All the participants were presented with the survey findings prior to the workshop, and were asked to bring with them texts that they felt were representative of what pupils read, across a wide range of areas. Armed with these, we set ourselves the task of laying the foundation for a preliminary set of ‘Can Dos’ covering what appeared to be pupils’ principal reading areas, as well as a refined set of reading level descriptors reflecting pupils’ actual reading.

As a first step these reading areas had to be defined. Largely on the basis of the survey findings, 7 areas were established:

- Reading for general purposes
- Reading to find out something specific
- Coping with the Internet
- Reading personal communication
- Following instructions
- Reading stories
- Reading songs/poems.

Participants were first put into 7 groups, one for each reading area, and given texts within that area, across a range of levels. The task of each group was to try to decide what ‘weak’, ‘average’ and ‘strong’ pupils could manage within this area. After the findings of each group was presented, new groups were made, this time on the basis of differing levels of pupils’ ability. Each group then had to consider what might be said about the reading of pupils at the particular level, taking all reading areas into account. The work was very demanding, and at times seemed almost impossible. However, progress was made, and each group was able to contribute substantially, through oral feedback, hand-scribbled notes and overheads, to the work in the weeks following the workshop, spent compiling material for the second reading survey, this time to be a Nordic-Baltic one.

## **Survey 2: Pupils’ self-assessment on levels, and on ‘Can Dos’ within reading areas**

The Survey 2 form contained sets of ‘Can Dos’ within each of the seven reading areas. The ‘Can Dos’ were ordered according to difficulty, but varied in number from five to seven, so as to prevent pupils from habitually choosing a particular ranking. Pupils were asked to tick off all the ‘Can Dos’ they felt that they could normally do, when reading in English. They were also given a revised set of level descriptors, this time only showing descriptors of the ‘whole’ levels, A1, A2, B1, B2 and C1, with boxes for pupils to cross in-between levels, if this seemed appropriate.

Data was received from 259 pupils in Norway (3 schools), Iceland, Finland and Estonia. Data was also collected from teachers on whether they felt pupils had under- or overrated themselves on the scale (and how seriously). Not surprisingly perhaps, as many as 69 pupils (over a quarter) were out of line with their teachers (and of course, it could be argued that the pupils know best!), but very few ‘serious’ discrepancies were reported. Of these pupils, the vast majority (51) had overrated themselves, while only 18 underrated themselves. It was also interesting to note that the pupils who had worked for some time with ELP-type levels were rather less inclined to be out of line

with their teachers. While this was noted, the data was left as it was for the analysis – it was assumed that a pupil overrating him/herself on the levels may correspondingly overrate on the ‘Can Dos’, thus balancing things out. It also had to be assumed that, in some cases, the teacher may have got it wrong!

In analysing the data, each ‘Can Do’ was marked with the percentage of pupils at each level who had responded positively to this ‘Can Do’. An example is given in Table 3.1, showing the responses to a ‘Can Do’ in the area reading for general purposes: *I can understand ‘typical’ texts that tell facts about things I know well, e.g. short match reports, factsheets, interviews with stars.*

A1	A1-A2	A2	A2-B1	B1	B1-B2	B2	B2-C1	C1
–	14%	68%	53%	88%	88%	96%	100%	100%

*Table 3.1: Example of response from second reading survey*

This ‘Can Do’ was expected to be around B1, and the response confirmed this. When using the data to set levels on the ‘Can Dos’, the following rule of thumb was observed. When somewhere between 70% and 80% of pupils at a particular level said ‘yes’ to a ‘Can Do’, it was regarded as ‘doable’ at that level. However, ‘jumps’ were also looked for, which happened quite frequently, e.g. as happened in the case of the ‘Can Do’ above, where a jump from 14% to 68% occurred at A2. This suggested that the ‘Can Do’ was perhaps interpreted by some readers as easier than it was meant to be. In this case, ‘short magazine articles’ was added as an example in the rewording, to anchor the ‘Can Do’ more firmly at the B1 level.

In fact, the progression of ‘Can Dos’ within the sets was always in the direction predicted. The pupils’ responses were allowed to decide the level of an item, unless it was felt that it should be slightly higher or lower in order to maintain the essence of the CEF scale. In these cases, it was sufficient to make minor adjustments, e.g. as described above, by adding more concrete examples, or by inserting qualifiers such as ‘longer’ or ‘most’ before ‘texts’, where the ‘Can Do’ was proving to be slightly too easy or difficult.

### **Incorporation of survey findings into levels and ‘Can Do’ checklists**

Whether it was due to experience with working with ‘Can Dos’ and scales, or because the research had been more thorough and controlled, it is a fact that this research produced much more clear-cut and positive results than that for spoken interaction. Only slight adjustments were necessary, before the ‘Can Dos’ could be regrouped at levels, with each level containing at least one ‘Can Do’ per reading area. The level descriptors were also given a fine-tuning.

The result of the work was thus the production of forms with level descriptors and ‘Can Do’ checklists as in the case of spoken interaction; the main difference was that, for reading, only ‘whole’ levels are explicitly described, with associated ‘Can Dos’.

### **3.2 Supplementing the ELP: developing materials for pupils and teachers to use in ongoing classroom assessment of reading**

The form for self-assessing spoken interaction proved to be very limited as a model for self-assessing reading. While the spoken interaction questions reflected recognisable ‘subskills’ of speaking, reading ability does not lend itself so well to this kind of description. The kind of subskills typically listed in the literature (e.g. in Urquhart & Weir, 1988: 90-93) are not feasible to confront pupils with. It was therefore felt that a different approach was needed; the purpose of the self-assessment would be principally one of awareness-raising, so that pupils would be better equipped to judge the success of their own reading, evaluate texts in terms of difficulty, and adopt strategies to assist and improve their reading.

Current literature on teaching and assessing FL reading was consulted. The discussion below, explaining the rationale behind the reading self-assessment form, is largely based on Alderson, 2000, Grabe & Stoller, 2002 and Nuttall, 1996. It was decided that the following aspects be central in the reading self-assessment form:

- Purpose of reading
- Factors causing reading difficulty
- Strategies for tackling difficulties.

Judging the success of reading depends very much on the purpose of the reading. Thus an important first task was to establish that purpose; here the reasons for reading covered in Survey 1 were able to provide the following selection of answers to the question *Why did you read this?*

- for pleasure
- because it looked interesting
- to learn language
- to communicate with other people
- to learn about something
- to learn how to do something
- to quickly find some information
- something else ...

Having established the purpose, pupils should be in a better position to answer the next question, i.e. whether they managed to get what they wanted from the text. This encourages pupils to judge their reading in a way relevant to the purpose of the reading. What's more, a list of this kind implicitly covers what are typically identified as basic 'types' of reading, such as skimming, *search reading*, *scanning*, *careful reading* and *browsing* (Urquhart and Weir, 1988: 103-104). Alderson, 2000, points out that '... the reason you read a text will influence the way you read it, the skills you acquire or use, and the ultimate understanding and recall you have of that text' (2000: 50). By placing the options for purpose at the beginning of the form sends a signal that reading can be a lot of different things, and that our learners should be sampling these widely.

Next, the pupils were asked whether the text was easy or difficult, and this was followed by a selection of possible answers to the question: *If it was difficult, was this because...*, based largely on Alderson, 2000 and Nuttall, 1996:

- I have never read about this theme before
- the type of text (e.g. layout) was new to me
- a lot of the words and phrases were new to me
- the sentences were complicated
- the ideas were complicated
- something else

These questions are felt to be sufficiently concrete for pupils to cope with, and have value in to both pupil and teacher in considering why a text may be difficult and what sort of help, or scaffolding, a teacher should offer (see Nuttall, 1996: 32-39, for a discussion on wrong and right kinds of help!). These question may, moreover, be the basis of, or part of, an assessment task, such as a test, whereby the teacher needs to know what pupils can manage in relation to specific texts; they can give more useful information than is acquired simply by asking comprehension question on the text.

The next aspect to be considered was strategies for helping reading. Much has been written on this subject, and lists are many and varied. However, certain core strategies reappear, and might be summed up in the following options, in response to the question: *How did you help yourself to read this?*

- by getting clues from pictures, etc.
- by guessing more or less what it would be about, e.g. from the title, or what you knew about the subject
- by looking at some given words in advance
- by guessing what new words and phrases meant
- by trying to keep going even if it was difficult at times

- by using a dictionary in extreme cases
- something else

Again, these options can be valuable to the individual pupil in suggesting ways to help cope with texts; but their value may also lie in providing the teacher with a systematic way of building up reading strategies with a class. It should also be borne in mind that the metacognitive awareness associated with answering the questions on the form is already present to a large extent through L1 reading. As Grabe & Stoller, 2002, point out: ‘...while we do not believe that all L1 reading strategies can be transferred automatically to L2 reading contexts, it is still far easier to raise learner awareness of, and practice with strategies that have been productive for them in L1 situations than would be the case with strategies that have never been used before by learners.’ (2002: 46).

As in the case of spoken interaction, the pupil is finally encouraged to consider what language has been learnt in the course of the reading, and invited to comment on the text. They are also encouraged to express the task as an example of a ‘Can Do’ in their portfolio.

An early version of the form was trialled with pupils Norway and Estonia. The pupils’ responses showed that they selected widely from the options; these were therefore left as they were in the draft. The form is presented in Appendix 9. However, the comment was made from the teachers involved in the trialling that pupils were not as enthusiastic about this form as with the self-assessment for spoken interaction. This is perhaps natural, as the pupils did not end up with a clear profile of what they are good or less good at. However, I believe this form, if used cautiously – on occasions, e.g. as part of a test, or as a basis for discussion after a reading session – has value both in raising the awareness of pupils and their teachers into how to assess and improve reading.

A more readily understandable and warmly received form is the reading record form. Here the principal was to make visible how much a pupil has read over a given period of time. Pupils are simply given the task to cross the boxes (paper version) or shade in spaces (computer version) to show how much of a range of reading types they have engaged in. The types of reading are largely those to have emerged from the first reading survey and are:

- Internet visits
- e-mails/SMS messages
- letters/notes
- songs/poems
- books (number of pages)
- short texts from course books
- short texts from magazines, newspapers, etc.
- other things? (e.g. information, instructions ...)

For each entry pupils are invited to add examples or comments, but this is not obligatory, and is kept rather 'low key' on the form. We are aware that the joy of reading can be killed if pupils feel obliged to write about everything they read as a matter of routine. Pupils do, however, seem to take pleasure in notching up (and in bright colours on the computer version) how much they have read, and, for once, no stigma is attached to the sometimes dubious quality of what they have read. Again, this form was trialled by a number of classes, but was not found to need more than cosmetic adjusting; it is shown in Appendix 10.

No separate material for assessing reading has been worked out for teachers. Most will have their own way of keeping a record of what their pupils have read. Given that reading is an activity that goes on largely inside the head of the pupil, it seems natural that the pupil is in the best position to judge how well s/he is managing. Thus the pupils' forms, both of the ELP adapted type described in the previous section and the supplementary material described here are regarded as central to the assessment of reading. Indirectly, this material is as much for the teacher as the pupils. It provides a framework for assessing and developing reading in the classroom which many teachers otherwise would not have access to. Moreover, the teacher can benefit directly from the information provided through the forms, and can use this information in interpreting any other evidence of reading ability, such as test results, that s/he is in a position to collect.

## Chapter 4: Assessing writing

The work on developing material for the assessment of writing differed from that of spoken interaction and reading mainly in that it took place over a shorter period – during the last few months of our activity. It did not involve large-scale pupil surveys or trialling. However, we were able to exploit the fact that teachers are perhaps more familiar with their pupils' writing habits than their other language practices, and were able to provide us with information that largely made up for the lack of direct pupil involvement. Moreover, the work on writing had the benefit of being worked on during two meeting/workshops – the first involving the Nordic Baltic group in May 2002 and the second being the pan-European central workshop in December 2002. In addition, I myself had become gradually more adept at reformulating levels and shaping 'Can Dos' that captured the essence of these levels.

As in the previous two skills, the work concerned both adapting ELP-type material and supplementing this with material for everyday use.

### 4.1 Adapting the ELP: arriving at levels and 'Can Dos' for writing

The first step, of reformulating the CEF levels to capture pupils' writing was more complex than for the other skills. This was because of an instinctive perception among the group that, in the case of writing, *I can* (e.g. *write a postcard*) is not enough. *How* the postcard is written is also significant, and needs to be addressed. For this reason, besides the CEF scale for *writing*, the scales for *general linguistic range*, *grammatical accuracy* and *vocabulary range and accuracy* were also consulted, and their key concepts were incorporated into the new scale for writing. This was further adapted in order to capture the type of writing most typically done at this age group. The scale was drafted in discussion with the participant teachers. While the CEF scales for accuracy make explicit reference to error, we preferred not to build a degree of error into the scale, but went for a more positive wording, such as that for level A2:

I can make simple sentences and phrases and join these up, e.g. with *and* and *then*, in postcards, short letters, e-mails, notes, short poems and short tasks in class. I can fill in basic information in tables or charts. I can ask simple questions and tell straightforward things about people and things I know very well, even though I am not sure if the words and grammar are correct.

As in the case of reading, only whole levels were described.

In order to investigate just what pupils actually do write, either at school or at home, a small survey was carried out among the project group. As teachers themselves are heavily involved in school writing, it was considered sufficient that the teachers

provided the information on this. As for the writing performed out of school, teachers were asked to discuss this with their pupils and send in a summary of the situation among their pupils.

The survey form is shown as Appendix 11. Teachers were asked to list a variety of ‘types’ of writing carried out by their pupils, both in and out of school, indicating what percentage of the pupils did this, and at which levels. The form was filled in by four of the participants, from Finland, Iceland, Estonia and Norway, and the results of the survey are shown in Table 4.1.

Type of writing	Very few	Less than half	About half	More than half	Almost all	B2+	B1+	A2+	At any level
<b>At school</b>									
Narrative essays				1	3		2	1	1
Argumentative essays	1	1	1			2	1		
Descriptive essays				2	2		2		2
Informal letters					4				4
Forms					2				2
Reports			1	1	1	1	2		
Project texts		1	1		2		1	1	2
Comic captions				1	1		1		1
Postcards					1				1
Stories					1				1
CVs				1		1			
Overhead keywords					1			1	
Posters					1				1
Poems		1							1
Notes					3				3
<b>Out-of-school</b>									
Letters to penfriends	1	1		1	1	1			3
Postcards	1	1	1		1		1		2

Chatroom	1		2			1	2		1
More formal letters	2		1			2			1
Forms			1	1			1		1
E-mails	1		1	1		1	2		
SMS messages	1		1	1		1	2		
Songs	2						2		
Notes	2					1	1		
PC games		1		1			2		
Letters to relatives	1								1
Internet work				1			1		

*Table 4.1: Results of survey of pupils' writing, from four teachers*

The data shows the proportion of pupils doing a type of writing, as well as the levels of pupils normally engaged in this activity (B1+ indicating at a level at or over B1).

Although the data was taken from a small group of teachers, some patterns are distinguishable. Firstly, there are great differences between what is written in and out of school. In school, a greater variety of text types are produced, notably including essays, project texts, comic captions and reports as well as personal communication. Moreover, the writing in school is not noticeably restricted to pupils at higher levels, apart from a small group of text types – argumentative essays, reports and overhead keywords. Out of school, the writing is less varied and dominated by personal communication, often of the e-type. While a small group of types – letters to penfriends and relatives, postcards, chatrooms, more formal letters, and forms – are produced irrespective of level, most of the out-of-school writing seems to be produced by pupils of B1 and over, suggesting a parallel with reading.

This information was extremely helpful in providing examples for 'Can Dos', and associating these with levels on the scale. As a result, a preliminary set of 'Can Dos' for each level on the scale was formulated.

In order to validate these 'Can Dos', in the absence of the kind of pupil surveying undertaken for the other skills, a new method of validation was employed, taking advantage of the availability of a group of 'experts', namely the participants at the central workshop in Graz, December 2002.

The method was inspired by North, 1997, and roughly involves getting a number of teachers or other experts to place descriptors of an ability, cut into confetti-like strips, on a level of the scale they are supposed to be associated with. If the consensus among

the experts is that a particular descriptor does not belong to the level it was intended, then the descriptor should be rejected or revised.

This procedure was adapted for use in the workshop. A total of 56 ‘Can Do’ ‘strips’ were given to the participants, who were placed in five groups for the exercise, with roughly eight participants per group. The groups had the task of deciding between them which of five levels, A1 to C1, each strip belonged. The strips were placed on coloured pages – one for each level – then finally taped to produce sets of ‘Can Dos’ for each level. The only help that was given was the number of intended ‘Can Dos’ at each level was written on the coloured page. A session of roughly two hours was devoted to this activity, and then the groups met in plenum with their taped sets.

The participants were then shown the way ‘Can Dos’ were intended to be placed at levels, and for each ‘Can Do’, each group reported back on whether or not they had placed the ‘Can Do’ at the ‘right’ level. Where this was not the case, they discussed why they had placed the ‘Can Do’ above or below the level.

Number of placings at intended level	five	four	three	two	one	none	total
Level A1	5	2	2	0	0	1	10
Level A2	1	7	3	1	1	0	13
Level B1	4	2	2	1	0	1	11
Level B2	0	5	3	2	1	0	11
Level C1	5	2	0	1	3	0	11
Total	20	22	13	7	6	2	56

*Table 4.2: Results of placing ‘Can Dos’ at levels: from 5 groups*

The results, while indicating that the ‘Can Dos’ did not all work entirely as they were intended, were, nevertheless, very encouraging. 42 of them (75%) were placed ‘correctly’ (i.e. at the intended level) by at least 4 out of the five groups, and around half of the remainder were placed ‘correctly’ by three of the five groups. Predictably, the extreme levels proved easiest to match with ‘Can Dos’, but even at the mid levels, well over half the ‘Can Dos’ were placed as intended by at least three of the five groups.

This only left a small number of ‘Can Dos’ that seriously needed working with, and these were discussed in plenum, so that decisions were taken on how to improve on these. In some cases, they were too demanding, and needed softening (e.g. at B1 *can organise* (longer) texts in paragraphs was altered to *using* paragraphs), some were too vague and some too easy. A revision was made of the weak items (those placed as

intended by fewer than three of the groups) and these revisions were presented to the assembly the next day.

The concrete result of this work was a set of revised 'Can Dos' associated with the scale of levels for writing. A less tangible result was also achieved, i.e. that the exercise itself had been valuable in initiating the participants in the 'Can Do'/levels way of thinking. This was beneficial for the activities in the remainder of the workshop.

## **4.2. Supplementing the ELP: developing materials for pupils and teachers to use in ongoing classroom assessment of writing**

The material developed for the ongoing assessment of writing, was, in principle, similar to that for spoken interaction. A self-assessment form, reflecting the components of communicative language ability referred to in Chapter 2, was developed with a similar format to that for spoken interaction. For teachers, a profile form, also reflecting these components, was developed, again closely resembling that for assessing spoken interaction. No observation form was developed. This was not felt to be necessary, as it was felt that teachers are able to collect evidence of writing in a way that is not possible for speaking, which requires quick ways of capturing and documenting the essence of a performance.

The self-assessment form was largely worked out at the project meeting of the Nordic-Baltic participants in May 2002. Here, the Norwegian representative, a practising teacher, presented the self-assessment form she herself had developed and was using successfully in class.

A 'writing subgroup' of the participants worked with and adapted this form, producing a draft which brought it in line with the self-assessment form for spoken interaction (which, incidentally was in turn adjusted in line with the writing form). This form was tried out by the teachers, and further adjusted, producing the final version of the form.

The elements on the form can be summed up as follows.

- Firstly a statement of *what I did in the task*, followed by an assessment of task achievement:

*I managed to say what I wanted and I made a text that suited the task.*

- 'Microlinguistic' ability can be considered to be represented principally by the statements relating to vocabulary and grammar:

*I used words & phrases typical of texts like these*

*I knew enough grammar.*

- ‘Sociolinguistic’ or ‘pragmatic’ ability is reflected in the wording of the statement:  
*I used words & phrases typical of texts like these.*
- ‘Textual’ ability is represented principally by the statements:  
*I made a text with a thread running through it.*  
*My paragraphs each covered a main point.*
- ‘Strategic’ ability can be considered to be represented principally by the statements:  
*I checked for spelling, punctuation, ‘endings’, etc.*  
*I got help from (dictionary, Internet, etc.).*
- As in the case of spoken interaction, examples are asked of:  
*Things I managed to do well,*  
*Examples of words or phrases I learnt,*  
*Things I still need to work on.*

As in the case of all self-assessment forms, pupils are encouraged to express the task as an example of a ‘Can Do’ in their portfolio.

The teacher profile form for writing, like that for speaking, collected statements about performance at three levels (high, medium and low). It is based on that worked out in the EVA project for assessing the writing of 11-12 year olds. The statements reflect the components of ability referred to above, and are given the following headings:

- Content
- Organisation
- Sentencing
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Spelling

With a ‘bonus’ for communication.

Both the pupils’ self-assessment forms and the teachers’ profile forms are well suited to use with most written tasks. Pupils can be helped to improve their own work by using the form to check writing before handing to the teacher, thus taking more responsibility for the quality of their own work. Teachers can use the profile form as a basis for systematic feedback on pupils’ writing; as in the case of speaking, an analysis of the

performance can be given in positive terms, with the focus on what the pupil could, rather than could not, manage.



## Chapter 5: The central workshop, Graz 2002

Starting as a local West-of-Norway project, and soon becoming an ECML Nordic-Baltic project, we had developed and trialled a large amount of material, based initially on pupils' own responses on what they can (and do) do with their language – mainly English as a foreign language in lower secondary schools – in our countries by mid 2002.

The real test of the relevance of our material in a European context, however, was to come at the workshop of 4-7 December 2002 at the ECML, Graz. Here we presented our work and findings to a group representing almost all the Council of Europe countries. We were very concerned to see if what we had produced seemed relevant to those involved in language education in school systems remote from our own. We also needed to know if our material was workable with languages other than English as a first foreign language. We wanted ideas on how to adapt the material so that it would be relevant to other foreign or second languages (i.e. learnt in the country where the language is spoken), and for younger learners in the 10-12 age range, who we had neglected somewhat. We also needed help to get started on formulating material for the assessment of intercultural competence (ICC), armed with ideas from around 50 essays sent in from pupils in four countries. And we needed to see how our writing 'Can Dos' 'worked' with a group of experts, and whether we could get started on listening. We were also very curious to find out whether those who had experience with ELPs in national use would see any benefit in applying our ideas and findings to their situations.

Prior to the workshop, participants were sent a questionnaire, asking them which of the following groups they would be interested in joining at the workshop:

1. Other foreign language than English
2. Second languages
3. Younger learners
4. Intercultural competence.

The result showed *Intercultural competence* to be a clear favourite amongst the participants.

*Other foreign language than English* and *Younger learners* were well represented, while only a handful chose *Second languages*. However, we decided to proceed with all four groups; it was felt that 'Can Dos' for second language learners were so necessary that this area should at least be considered at the workshop, however small the group should be. Additionally, *listening* was added as a specialist topic, subdivided into two groups according to learner age. Thus each participant was placed in one of six groups for much of the workshop, although the work on writing, as described in

Chapter 4, was carried out partly in plenum and partly in randomly chosen groups. The activity was organised as follows:

*Day 1 (plenum):*

- In-depth presentation of the ‘Can Do’ material and methods developed so far.

*Day 2 and first half day 3 (participants grouped according to chosen language category):*

- Groupwork towards recommended adaptations and additions to existing material and methods
- Specific work on writing ‘Can Dos’.

*Second half day 3 (plenum):*

- Principal findings presented.

*Day 4 (plenum/groups):*

- Discussions of procedures following on from workshop.
- Plans for disseminating material/methods
- Suggested aims for a continuation project.

The work actually carried out exceeded our highest expectations. The participants worked hard and with great enthusiasm for four days and gave us the benefit of their expertise as language specialists, and their experience in a wide range of educational systems and levels.

The ‘Can Dos’ and levels (and in some cases the self assessment forms) already available for English as foreign language, were scrutinised from the point of view of the other language/learner ‘categories’, and adaptations were suggested where necessary. The cultural know-how elements, taken from the essay submitted in the competition were further worked on and the basis was laid for a new study in this important area (see Chapter 6 for more detail on this).

The results of the workshop are both short and long term. In the short term, we now have a revised set of writing ‘Can Dos’, and the start of listening material for two age groups. We have adaptations for the existing ‘Can Do’ and self-assessment material for younger learners and ‘other’ foreign language learners, as well as second language learners (despite the fact that, owing to an absence of SL specialism among the participants, this group worked under difficult circumstances, not being able to draw on their own experience in this area). We also have the comforting confirmation that our material is largely usable, with only small adjustments, for several of the learner categories considered. Moreover, the participants themselves reported on a wide range

of ways in which they intended to implement and disseminate what they had learnt during the workshop, at classroom, local and national levels.

The longer-term aims attracted a good deal of discussion, and groundwork was laid for potential follow-on projects in the areas of teacher training, research-and-development (particularly regarding intercultural competence) and awareness-raising.

The writing 'Can Dos', resulting from the validation procedure at the workshop, have been incorporated into a set of 'Can Do' material for writing, in line with reading and speaking, and can be found on the CD-Rom. The remaining set of documents resulting from the workshop, have been placed intact on the CD-Rom. These can be used as a basis for the production of new material. While most of the 'Can Dos' are only slightly adapted from the original material, listening, as a skill, was addressed separately here for the first time. This was considered both for younger learners and lower secondary pupils, at the lower end of the scale. The listening 'Can Dos' worked out for young learners are shown in Appendix 12.

The following workshop documents can be found on the CD-Rom:

- *Young learner speaking 'Can Dos'*
- *Young learner speaking self-assessment*
- *Young learner reading 'Can Dos'*
- *Young learner reading self-assessment*
- *Second language speaking 'Can Dos'*
- *Second language reading 'Can Dos'*
- *Listening 'Can Dos' for young learners*
- *Listening 'Can Dos' for lower secondary (A1 and A2)*
- *Cultural know how survey results*

For an 'insider' account of the workshop, see Blomqvist, Chapter 8.



## Chapter 6: Towards the assessment of intercultural competence (ICC)

Angela Hasselgreen and Signe Holm-Larsen

As the work of the project progressed, it was felt to be a ‘minus’ that we had made no effort to develop material for the assessment of intercultural competence (ICC). ICC is unquestionably ‘there’ in spirit in the CEF, being analysed in some detail under the heading of General competences: *sociocultural knowledge, intercultural awareness, savoir-faire, savoir-être*. However no scale for ICC is found in the CEF, and it is not as a rule made systematic provision for in the ELP, (see Little & Perclovà, 2001), although pupils are encouraged to document intercultural learning experiences in the language passport part of the ELP.

Given that ICC, unlike communicative language ability, does not seem to be acquired in any predictable universal order, but rather accumulates as through the individual learner’s or group’s direct or indirect contact with a culture, this is not surprising.

However, to omit ICC in a portfolio sends a signal that it is unimportant. During the last year, therefore it was decided to lay the groundwork for the eventual development of material for the assessment and documentation of ICC, or *Cultural know-how*, as we called it. This work had its beginnings at the workshop in Bergen, December 2001, when the theme was introduced, with a presentation of the Objectives in English in Brøndby Kommune, Denmark, which include socio-cultural skills across 4 phases of schooling (see Appendix 13).

This material was able to demonstrate that some logical progression can be identified in two respects: 1) the kind of *topics* a pupil will normally learn about a culture (home, school life, traditions), and 2) the degree to which they are able to *demonstrate or apply* their awareness or knowledge (giving examples of differences, debating issues, joining in a culture specific activity, etc.). While certain norms may be agreed on with respect to topic, these will inevitably vary, e.g. according to the school curriculum or the pupil’s own interests and personal relationship with the culture. However, the other respect, concerning degrees of demonstrating or applying awareness or knowledge does seem to have potential for establishing some kind of universal order.

## 6.1 Preliminary work

At the project meeting in May, 2002, it was decided to begin work that might culminate in a systematic way of assessing ICC. A subgroup was formed to work specifically on this. On the basis of the study of the Brøndy objectives, and on the CEF's analysis of the various elements that make up ICC, the basis for an approach to analysing intercultural competence, was worked out.

A framework was agreed on, shown in Table 6.1, whereby for four principal areas of cultural know-how, adapted from the CEF (coping with daily life and traditions, dealing with social conventions, using non-verbal language and confidence in values and norms), were defined and were to be exemplified. Each of these was to be assessed in terms of a progressive know-how: awareness – passive knowledge of – active knowledge of – ability to use. It was decided that the actual assessment document should follow the format of the self-assessment form for the other skills, whereby pupils could rate themselves on a four-point scale reflecting the degrees suggested above. However, the form would not be used as documentation of single 'performances' but would be kept as a record, with rating being upgraded over time, to show gradual progress.

	Awareness of cultural difference (I think)	Passive knowledge (I know)	Active knowledge (I can tell about)	Implementing knowledge (I can do / take part)
daily life and traditions examples: 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 .....				
social conventions				
non-verbal language				
values and norms				

*Table 6.1: Early Framework for assessing ICC*

This framework was discussed in plenum and a major conclusion was that the language used and the exemplifying concepts, based on the CEF, were too remote from the lives

and concerns of secondary school pupils. It was therefore decided, in keeping with the procedures in other components of the project, to invite pupils to suggest what is meaningful to them in the areas of intercultural ability defined. An essay-writing competition, in co-operation with the ECML, was found to be the most promising way of ascertaining this, and this was planned to be carried out during the summer and early autumn 2002. The findings were to be analysed and form the basis of part of the work in the December workshop.

In the essay, writing competition, pupils were invited to write an essay on cultural know-how, defined as having four basic aspects:

1. daily life activities and traditions
2. *social conventions* (e.g. 'good manners', normal ways of behaving, dressing, meeting and visiting people, etc.)
3. *values, beliefs and attitudes* (e.g. what people are proud of, talk about, worry about, find funny, etc.)
4. *non-verbal language* (e.g. body language and contact, hand movements, facial expressions, etc.).

Before writing, pupils were told to think a bit about what they have noticed is different in other cultures, considering all these aspects. They were asked to try to write about 300-500 words on each of the aspects.

Around 40 essays were received in all, from Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and Iceland. 10 prizes (ECML t-shirts) were awarded to the best essays (most informative) across a range of age classes, and the winning essays were displayed in the website. All contributors received diplomas for their excellent work in helping us. The essays were closely analysed for all examples that were given within the categories, and the data was taken to the workshop in Graz for further analysis.

## **6.2 The Graz workshop results**

The essays – analysed for all the items they mentioned – formed the basis of the further work. The items were supplemented and regrouped on the basis of the categories in the CEF, as indicated below.

# **1 Ability of coping with daily life activities, traditions and living conditions (e.g. in home, school, at festivals, etc.)**

## *Everyday family life:*

- Meals, varieties of food
- Daily routine, housing, family size, housework
- Pets and other animals
- TV, Internet

## *School:*

- System, class size, grades
- Routines, meals, breaks, uniforms
- Social needs

## *Leisure time:*

- Going out with friends
- Sport, keeping fit
- Holidays

## *Festivities (focus on food and rituals, occasionally costume):*

- Christmas, birthdays
- National festivals and feast days
- Other international feast days
- Youth festivals

## *Country generally – living conditions:*

- Location, demography, occupations, farming activities
- Nature, geography, climate, language
- Urban-rural communities, regional differences
- Social classes

## **2 Ability to deal with social conventions (e.g. ‘good manners’, dressing, meeting people)**

### *Roles and relationships:*

- Boys – girls, men – women
- Younger – older generation
- Family – society
- Family circles and cohesion
- Women’s working situation
- Helping each other

### *Visiting – hospitality:*

- Punctuality, introductions
- Sharing, gifts
- Washing hands, taking off shoes
- Sitting down
- Leaving early

### *Social occasions:*

- Funerals
- Weddings

### *Expressing emotions:*

- Degree of noise, excitability, flamboyance

### *Going out:*

- Smoking and drinking etiquette and habits
- Restaurant culture
- Table manners

### *Clothes:*

- Dress code – general – formal – for going out

### **3 Confidence with the values, beliefs and attitudes of the foreign language users (e.g. what you are proud of, worry about, find funny)**

#### *Concerned with:*

- Family life, friends, school success
- Economy, prices, unemployment
- Sport, keeping fit, diseases
- Pollution, housing problems, gossip

#### *Characterisation:*

- Friendly, simple, polite
- Sincere, caring, open-minded, tolerant
- Rude, bad-tempered, hypocritical
- Conservative

#### *Religion:*

- Church-going

#### *Beliefs:*

- Superstitions
- Physical appearance, skin – hair colour

#### *Cultural heritage:*

- National history and independence
- Country, nature, population
- National heroes, athletes, sportsmen, singers

#### *National stereotypes and reality:*

- Ethnic identities and conflicts
- War, terrorism, emigration

*Sense of humour:*

- Direct humour, irony
- Telling jokes about other people and nations
- Own and others' misfortune

#### **4 Ability to use verbal communication means (e.g. greeting, apologising, expressing gratitude, embarrassment, love)**

*Addressing people:*

- Degrees of politeness and distance
- Greetings
- Apologising

*Striking up conversation:*

- Talking to friends and strangers
- Being noisy, quiet, turn-taking, interrupting
- Talking to small children – adults
- Using thank you, please

*Sayings, proverbs:*

- Animal references (i.e. as stupid as ...)

*Emotions – feelings:*

- Expressing love, impulsiveness, shyness, embarrassment, taboos

#### **5 Ability to use non-verbal language (e.g. body language, facial expressions)**

*Body language:*

- Shaking hands
- Kissing
- Hugging
- Nodding
- Gesticulating – hand signals

*Body contact:*

- Touching
- Standing too close, too far

*Facial expression:*

- Eye contact
- Winking
- Smiling
- Crying
- Showing anger.

## **Basics of a self-assessment tool for intercultural language learning**

The next step was to try to develop a self-assessment tool for intercultural awareness and competence for 15-year-old pupils. An example of how this may look is shown in Table 6.2:

1. Daily life activities and traditions	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I am familiar with daily life topics like family, school, sport, music, film, media, hobbies, spare time activities, holidays, festivals, traditions				
I can express myself on daily life topics				
I know about differences and similarities in daily life situations between my own country and countries where the foreign language is used				
I can express myself on topics of personal interest like education and job situation, as well as social and cultural issues, environmental and minority questions and human rights in own country to countries where the foreign language is used				

2. Social conventions	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I am aware of ways of behaving in daily life situations concerning meals, dress code and taboos, etc.				
I can manage traditional ways of behaving when meeting and visiting people.				
I can accept and show politeness and hospitality in meeting persons from countries where the foreign language is used				
I have learned more about myself and my country when meeting persons from countries where the foreign language is used				

3. Values, beliefs and attitudes	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I am aware of basic features of religion, traditions, national identity and minorities of the country of the foreign language.				
I can use what I know about topics as arts and politics of the country of the foreign language to learn more.				
I can use what I know about politics, traditions, national identity and minorities of the country of the foreign language to adjust what I say and do				
I can compare the culture of the foreign language to my own country's and get to a personal standing point.				
I can enjoy the culture of the foreign language and benefit personally and in a broader social context.				

4. Verbal communication	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I can greet other persons in formal as well as informal situations.				
I can express myself when it is adequate to be polite, friendly or caring.				
I can excuse myself when I have made mistakes.				
I can make a short speech at celebrations.				

5. Non-verbal communication	Very well	Well	Quite well	Badly
I am aware of how mimics and body language can facilitate my understanding of daily life situations in the foreign language.				
I can make myself better understood by using gestures like pointing and shaking hands and body language.				
I can understand the humour in the foreign language and use a humorous issue as a means of communication.				

*Table 6.2: Example of a self-assessment tool, with some ‘Can Dos’ for intercultural awareness and competence for 15 years old pupils.*

## **Making socio-cultural statements**

Below is an example of an exercise for working further on these ideas:

*Formulate within each of the five groups a couple of simple statements suitable for 15-year-old pupils. You might find the following expressions useful:*

- I have some idea of ...
- I recognize and understand ...
- I know about ...
- I can tell about ...
- I can use what I know about ... to adjust what I say or do ...

- I can compare this with the same conditions in my own country.
- I can make a presentation ...
- I can participate in a discussion on ...
- I can enjoy ...

The framework worked out in the workshop, we believe, has great potential for further study. At the time of writing, a project proposal has been submitted to the ECML for the next programme of activities, under the leadership of Manfred Overmann, one of the workshop participants.



## **Chapter 7: Self-assessment, reflection and ‘Can Do’ statements**

**Anne-Marie Grahn-Saarinen, Tesoma school, Finland**

The Finnish ELP pilot project started in 1998. We were about twenty teachers from lower- and upper secondary schools. I am one of the teachers from a lower secondary school and I teach English and Swedish. This article is based on my experience (based on diaries and field notes) and the shared experience in our group about self-assessment and ‘Can Do’ statements.

The ELP consists of three parts: the passport, the language biography and the dossier. To make this work in your everyday teaching you can also look at it in terms of pedagogic function (learning process) and reporting function (learning outcomes). When we started to think about concrete ways of how to work with the students, three of the key objectives of the national piloting project became very important in the classroom work development:

1. to promote self-directed and socially responsible language learning
2. to develop reflective learning and self-assessment, emphasising ‘learning to learn’ in foreign language education
3. to promote language teachers’ professional growth as an essential component of the language portfolio research and development work.

Our goal was to develop learner autonomy. Kohonen 2000, says the following about learner autonomy:

Promoting learner autonomy suggests an approach whereby teachers guide their students to enhance their learning, development and awareness in three inter-related areas.

- 1) Personal awareness: personal identity, realistic self-esteem, self-direction and responsible autonomy.
- 2) Process and situational awareness: management of the learning process towards increasingly self-organised learning and self-assessment; acquiring the necessary strategic and metacognitive knowledge and skills.
- 3) Task awareness: knowledge of language and intercultural communication; the meta-knowledge of language at the various levels of linguistic description.

We had all been working with portfolio and self-assessment earlier but now we noticed that we had to find a new dimension and make the learning process more visible.

Before we did anything with the students we started to write reflective diaries about our daily work and how we saw ourselves as teachers, in order to know how to teach this to the students.

Soon we noticed that the students at lower secondary school found self-assessment and reflective learning more difficult than the students at upper secondary. They seemed to expect the teacher to do the assessment for them. It seemed that reaching learner autonomy had to be taught step-by-step.

## **7.1 Self-assessment and reflection**

I was used to the fact that through self-assessment you instruct the students to assess their own improvement and to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses as a learner. That meant that the aims for a course and self-assessment went hand in hand. In the beginning of a course, the students and I, together, looked at what we were going to work with, what to learn and what were the aims for the group during this period. The students wrote down their own aims and how they were going to reach them. Then at the end of the course we looked at how they had done. The next step was to assess their pieces of work for the dossier part and to put themselves on the self-assessment grid. This meant that we needed to find new ways for the student to understand their learning process. We started to use reflection. In brief, you could say that self-assessment answers the question “Have I reached my goal?” and reflection answers the question “How have I reached my goals”.

Before we started with reflection, we had long discussions about how to teach it and how to make it a natural part of our teaching, because the work had to be systematic. It must also be seen as a long ongoing process. And it should not be an end in itself.

In my classes we started with group discussions. The students looked at each other’s work and looked at the best things in them. What do you think is best, most interesting or original in this work? How could you have made it better? These discussions gave the students a lot of new information about their work. They also got new ideas from each other and they learned to see that there are many ways to do the same thing. They also learned to understand the assessment process better.

We noticed that the students needed even more teacher guidance in reflection. So we gave them questions to answer regularly as part of their course work so they would have to think about different aspects of language learning. This was done both in the classroom and given as homework. The students wrote their answers in a notebook where they also kept a diary about their learning process. They could answer in their mother tongue because it can be very difficult to write about one’s own feelings in a foreign language. We started with short, clear questions and discussed some of these questions in smaller groups. A lot of support and time was needed in starting this. It is

very important for the teacher to consider what the aims of the questions are. One of our aims was to make reflection a habit of the mind.

***Questions we used:***

1. *How I see myself*

- a. What is important for you as a person?
- b. Why are you important as a person?
- c. What kind of language learner are you?
- d. These are three things I value in myself as a language learner.
- e. What do you want your work to tell about you?

2. *Social skills*

- a. What do you feel about working in a group?
- b. What kind of a person do you like working with?
- c. Why are friends important to you?
- d. Are you ready to help slower learners?
- e. What do you expect from your language teacher?

3. *Attitude to studies*

- a. Why do you go to school?
- b. Is studying nice/boring/ok?
- c. Are you ready to work to reach your goal?
- d. Are you satisfied with your marks? Why/why not?
- e. Is it useful to know foreign languages? Justify!

4. *Motivation*

- a. Do you study in order to get good marks?
- b. Do you study because you have to, or is studying fun?
- c. Is encouragement important to you?
- d. Is it difficult for you to learn foreign languages? Why?
- e. Do you study just for exams?

## 5. *Self guidance*

- a. Who is responsible for your studies?
- b. Do you look up information if you don't know something?
- c. Are you ready to assess your own products?
- d. Have you set goals for your studies?
- e. What do you learn when you assess your own works?

Seeing options, making choices, reflecting on the consequences and making new action plans are important things to reflect on in the learning process.

- What aims do you wish to set for this course/week?
- In what ways are you going to reach your aims?
- What has helped you to complete your work?
- What difficulties have you met in your work?
- Have you been able to solve them?
- What have you realised about the ways you work?
- How well have you done, in relation to the effort you made?

## 7.2 'Can Dos'

The European Language Portfolio is connected with the Common European Framework developed within the Council of Europe (CEF 2001). The framework allows students to self-assess their language skills.

Before taking this criteria based framework into the classroom we teachers had to go through a long process in understanding the difference between our national assessment and the criteria-based framework. We found out that it is not easy for anyone to become reflective about his or her learning.

We needed many discussions and examples to help our students to understand the difference between national scale assessment and the ELP descriptive framework. Many of the students seemed to think that learning languages is just something you do in the language classroom, and your grades show your language skills. And it was a difficult and complex task for the students to self-assess their skills using the criterion-referenced level descriptors.

Many of the students in grades 7 – 9 overestimated their skills. This shows how difficult it was to understand the descriptors, which are written in an abstract language.

Secondly the students didn't have an understanding of the kind of linguistic knowledge they still lacked.

After this experience we started to use the 'Can Do' statements. The students seem to have a good understanding of what they could do with their language in different situations and contexts. The mistake we made in the beginning was using the 'Can Dos' too often. The students couldn't see the point in it and the changes in their language growth were not so fast. Today we take one area at a time, depending on what we have been working with during the ongoing period. The students like filling in the 'Can Do' statements, and they are a good help when writing down aims for the next period. But you can still see that groups which are not used to self-assessment have difficulties with this task too.

I have tried out the 'Can Dos' we have made in this project and I think the best thing about them is that they bring in the student's real-life contexts – e.g. Internet, mass media, fiction.

### **7.3 Learning atmosphere and the changing role of the teacher**

For some students it was easy and natural to be reflective about their approach to study and their lives. Then again, for others it was difficult, and only when there was a good and trustworthy atmosphere did they started to open up. You need to proceed with caution. At the same time the learning atmosphere should also be very supportive. For all this we have used small co-operative groups, teaching social skills through all grades.

Having come so far, we teachers had all gone through a deep, ongoing process. There had been a change in the teacher's role. Now we were more and more acting like facilitators of learning. We created a learning atmosphere and learning space. When tutoring the students' portfolios, a lot of time was needed for designing and guiding the work. We had to make decisions about the ground rules and deadlines. There were a lot of students and practical questions to be answered. There were more student documents that had to be read and we gave more feedback about student work than earlier. I am glad that in the beginning I had a group around me so we could share our ideas and experiences and reflect on our professional role and identity as educators.

All changes take time and teachers should give themselves time. Moreover, they should be given time to get acquainted with new educational changes as we have done, acquiring new dimensions in our work.



## **Chapter 8: Participants' perspectives on the 'Can Do' project**

### **8.1 The 'Can Do' project: my first – and later – impressions**

**Halla Thorlacius, Iceland**

When I was asked by the Ministry of Education in Iceland to take part in a workshop on the ELP in Bergen in November 2001, I said “yes, why not?” But I must admit, when I read the introduction for the workshop, I had second thoughts and the first thing that came into mind was “what on earth is ELP?”. Instead of doing the obvious, which was to call the Ministry’s office, (I mean, being a professional EFL teacher, you can’t admit not knowing what ELP is, can you?), I tried the Internet and – guess what? I got 30 websites for Emerson, Lake and Palmer! (and who under the age of forty remembers them!?). So I went to Bergen, having read the papers from Angela at least 20 times thinking “I hope I won’t make a complete fool of myself and I’m sure this workshop will satisfy my curiosity.” And it did, I soon found out what ELP is about and that it had inspired Angela and her co-workers to adapt it and make it more practical for foreign language teachers in Norway. I returned home all the wiser after the workshop.

A few weeks later, I tried out the levels of reading that we had been working on in Bergen, with a selective class of 14-year-old pupils. Before I gave them the scales of levels I wondered about the best way of introducing them. Should I just throw them into the deep end, or should I prepare them in some way? I knew there were phrases they might not be familiar with, but the main problem was that they weren’t used to thinking about nor reflecting on their knowledge in a foreign language. So I handed out the scales of levels and explained the activity and translated unfamiliar words and phrases. I also told them that this was a new means for them to assess themselves and make them think about what they believed they could master in written English. As they read through the scales they “graded” themselves and gave examples of the type of texts each level indicated.

This was something totally new to them, most of them had never heard of portfolio work, but all of them, (even the two lazy ones), tried to do their best. There was a lot of discussions, like:

What is the inner meaning of this word?

Have I read something that can be categorised at this or that level?

And there were also comments like: How low can you go! Of course this is a kind of text I can read and understand.

Thinking back I can see 26 faces of eager pupils, who, maybe for the first time, reflected on and thought about their reading ability in English. And believe it or not, I could almost hear their brain cells working. After they had handed in their papers, I read them through and got the feeling that a few of them had overestimated themselves a little bit. Of course this is open to debate and that is why it is vital that the pupils give examples of what kind of text they are referring to. Because then the pupil and teacher can discuss questions like:

What do you mean by you can read newspapers?

What kind of newspapers did you have in mind (The Sun or The Times)?

Can you understand every word or most of them?

and so on.

At the end of the school year I gave the list of ‘Can Dos’ in reading to a mixed ability class of 13-year-olds. I experienced the same as in the other class, all the pupils took an active part in assessing themselves and they really liked doing so; they were realistic and honest in doing the ‘Can Dos’.

I soon saw that I needed to sit by the weakest pupils and help them through the ‘Can Dos’ but that was something we actually enjoyed, because it was an opportunity for closeness and leading them through speculations and discussions on their ability in a foreign language, which is something they had hardly ever experienced before.

In my experience, the scales of levels and the ‘Can Dos’ are a good and practical tool for raising the pupils’ awareness. It also gives them a chance to set learning targets for themselves with the help of the teacher, because they start to think about what they can do themselves in order to improve their skills, it helps them to take the initiative, and also gives an opportunity to go through the pupils’ language strategies. I believe that time spent on this kind of work is time well spent.

## **8.2 ‘Can Do’ in class, from a teacher’s point of view**

**Merete Erichsen, Hop Ungdomsskole, Bergen, Norway**

As a member of the group of teachers from Hordaland who joined the project from the very beginning I started to try out the material on my pupils in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in the autumn 2001. From Angela Hasselgreen, the project leader, I got the levels and sets of ‘Can Dos’ for speaking and I must admit that the loads of paper confused me and I didn’t know where and how to start. Anyway I presented the levels to my pupils and asked them to try to identify their level by using the ‘Can Do’ checklists. The pupils found this very difficult and they didn’t see the point of doing this. The main reason of course was that this way of thinking was unfamiliar to them. They were not used to

reflecting on the learning process and found this both strange and a bit frightening, I think.

The attitude in general among most pupils was that languages are school subjects and they were not aware that learning a language is something you do all the time. This is very much the fact with Norwegian pupils, for whom English has become a natural part of daily life. They watch English programmes on TV, work with their computer games, and listen to songs and many pupils also read texts on the Internet and even books if they are at a certain level. The situation for other languages like German and French is different though, since they seldom hear these languages outside school.

As a result of this experience, I decided to start working with the 'Can Dos' from a different angle. First thing was to teach the pupils to look upon their learning process from outside. The pupils needed to learn how to talk about their own learning process. I put away the levels for speaking and concentrated on talking about how we learn different things. I also introduced the self-assessment form for speaking. It is essential at this stage to create an atmosphere for a good learning situation in the classroom. Pupils must feel safe when talking about what they can do – what they are good at and what they need to concentrate on without being afraid of making a fool of themselves. They must be aware of their part in the learning process: "Teachers teach, but only learners can learn. In the end you are responsible for your own progress." I found this quote in a pamphlet from the ECML and showing it to my pupils led to a wonderful discussion.

## **Speaking**

Before Christmas 2001 my pupils were having an oral test on a topic we had been working with for a while. When we started to prepare for this test, the pupils got the self-assessment form and they were told that this showed them the criteria for their oral performance. This way they knew what to concentrate on in their preparations. The test was organised as a discussion between the two pupils who had been working together, and the teacher. After the oral test the pupils filled in their forms and I filled in an observation form. When I compared my observations with what the pupils had written in their forms, I found that most of the pupils were good at assessing their achievements. Of course some were too hard on themselves but not a single pupil regarded their performance as unrealistically good. I noticed an interesting point, though: the clever girls seemed to have less self-confidence than the clever boys. They assessed their performances lower than I did. This observation led to many interesting discussions and gradually they started to understand why it is so important to know and be able to express what you are good at. If you do not know what you can do well, how can you know what you need to improve?

In the spring term of 2002 we decided to assess another kind of oral performance, this time an individual mini-talk in class. The pupils looked at their self-assessment form from last time and decided what to concentrate on in order to improve their

performance. After having filled in the new form it was interesting to notice how they compared their achievements and were able to talk about what had happened. Working this way with the oral use of languages in the classroom has proved to be particularly useful. It is not easy to document the oral use of languages. The use of the self-assessment forms gives both the teacher and the pupils a good opportunity to discuss their oral work and plan how to proceed further.

In the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade I decided to look at the levels for speaking again. This time it felt more natural and it was much easier for the pupils to identify their level. When they were asked to fill in the 'Can Do' sheets for their level, it was done without much difficulty. As part of the preparation for another oral pair task they were asked to set one or two aims they would try to reach.

When you work with 'Can Do' in school it is very important not to overdo the use of sheets: checklists, levels, assessment forms. We must take care that pupils do not get tired of filling in forms. The main thing is to focus on the learning process and to discuss this with the pupils. I think it is sufficient to assess two oral tests each term to let the pupil see progress. Of course we work with the oral use of the language all the time without using self-assessment forms. But I feel that when pupils have been used to this way of working, they automatically change focus and know what to concentrate on.

The 'Can Do' material is available both in paper version and computer version. When working with the self-assessment forms I wanted to try out both versions and asked pupils to fill in the form on the classroom computer. At our school there is a computer in every classroom. Two pupils in each class are appointed 'computer monitors'. Each pupil has his file to save documents and the computer monitors are asked to help pupils who are unfamiliar with the use of computers. I had put the electronic self-assessment form in the computer and the pupils who wanted to could fill in the form and save it in their file. If anyone had problems, the computer monitors were at hand. In this way the teacher doesn't have to take care of practical problems with the computer. This is a good way of using the pupils and it is something I want to develop further when the project period is over and I can start using this method on my new pupils next autumn.

## **Reading**

In autumn 2002, my pupils focused on reading for four weeks. This gave me the opportunity to try out different parts of the reading portfolio. We discussed in class the importance of reading not only books but all kinds of texts. We agreed that the most obvious reason for reading a lot is to extend our vocabulary. Pupils who read a lot know more words. The important thing is *that* we read not *what* we read.

So we decided to keep a reading record for this period of four weeks. The pupils got the reading record form from the portfolio and were told to fill in everything they read both at home and at school. During this period we spent one or two lessons a week on reading.

The good thing with the reading record form is that it focuses on all kinds of texts and this makes it more interesting, perhaps especially for the weaker pupils who don't normally opt to read books, but are very keen on the computer and the Internet. In this way everyone could easily show that they were reading English texts. In fact it showed that nearly all the pupils were reading English texts at home in addition to texts in their course books. After the first week we were all surprised to see how much we actually were reading in English.

After two weeks I presented the levels in the reading portfolio. This time the pupils were able to decide their level fairly quickly by using the checklists and discussing with the teacher. They also set clear aims for how much to read.

It was pretty obvious to everybody that the best way to reach the next level was to read more. Many pupils found it motivating to fill in the reading record while others forgot it and had to be reminded, but again the most important thing was to get the reading process started. One of our aims in this reading period was to get all the pupils to read at least one book at their level and to present it orally to the rest of the class. The presentation showed a variety of levels and topics and it motivated some pupils to read more.

I think it is sufficient to look at the levels for reading once a term. It takes some time to reach the next level and it is important for the pupil to see progress. To keep a reading record over a period is not only motivating for the reading process, but it is also a good way to get documentation of what pupils actually read in a foreign language.

## **Writing**

The writing part of language learning has a long tradition of assessment, at least from the teacher's point of view. The 'Can Do' project has developed a self-assessment form for the pupils similar to the speaking form. This gives the pupils the possibility to look upon their writing in a different way. The self-assessment form shows the criteria for writing a good text and it reminds the pupil of what element in the writing process to work on in particular.

When working with writing we have used 'response groups' in Norwegian schools for some years. It is not easy for a pupil to give a good response to a fellow pupil without knowing exactly what to look for. For this purpose the criteria on the self-assessment form are a good guide for the response group. My colleagues found this self-assessment form so useful that we immediately translated it into Norwegian to use it when writing texts in our mother tongue.

The last three questions in the form make the pupil aware of what they have done well in this task, what new words and phrases they have learned and what they still need to work on. It is very important for a pupil to be able to write what he/she thinks has been successful in working with a particular task. This seems easy, but is by no means

obvious, due to the fact that showing what you are good at has not been encouraged in our school culture.

Working with levels and self-assessment in class is a good way to focus on the learning process not only on the results. By strengthening the self-awareness of how we learn, we make the pupils recognise what they are good at and what they have to work on to improve their results. Furthermore, we make the pupils understand that each of us learns differently, but that we can all make progress by knowing what to focus on.

This way of thinking not only changes the role of the teacher, who must adjust his/her teaching to the needs of the different pupils, but it changes the attitude in the classroom. The pupils learn to accept that we are individuals and that comparing results with others is not as important as focusing on our own progress.

The 'Can Do' material gives the teacher and the pupils tools to build up documentation on different parts of language learning. It is good for a pupil's self-confidence to be able to show that he/she is a good speaker and a keen reader. Your writing products are no longer the only documentation of your knowledge of a foreign language.

Being a part of the project group has been a good experience, and I look forward to starting with a new class using the portfolio from the beginning, knowing that I have tools that have been tested out on pupils, and that work.

### **8.3 The 'Can Do' workshop and implications ...**

**Per Blomqvist, Stockholms Fria Gymnasium, Stockholm, Sweden**

In December of 2002 the third large workshop within the 'Can Do' project was held and, in contrast to the previous two where only the Nordic and Baltic countries took part, this project included a large number of European states. For four days the project's material was presented to the new participants, new material was drawn up and discussions were held on what form an expansion of the project should take. Angela Hasselgreen, project leader and active at the University of Bergen in Norway, describes the workshop in Graz as "the big week – the climax of the project in many ways".

#### **On the 'Can Do' project**

The 'Can Do' project began in the Spring of 2001 as a local project in Western Norway, but quickly developed into a Nordic-Baltic collaboration. A group of about 10 people, myself included, needed a little over a year to complete a large amount of material for students' self-assessment of their language learning. The common denominator of all the material is that it is based on students' impressions on what they themselves "can do" in languages. This makes for a positive approach with the student

as a benchmark. Importantly, 'Can Do' is not another instrument for the teacher to judge students' knowledge and skills without a tool by which the student can become conscious of him/herself as a learner. Thus the project builds upon the very basis of the portfolio concept.

### **About the workshop**

The Graz workshop in December meant that the 'Can Do' project was presented to a large group of European language educators. The European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) was launched in 1994, when it consisted of eight member states. Today that figure has quadrupled. There is no doubt that the European Language Portfolio has had a strong breakthrough in Europe. The 'Can Do' project is following in its footsteps and representatives from almost 30 countries took part in the workshop.

In connection with the workshop's opening the main question was whether our material would be relevant to the other countries' representatives, and, if so, whether the material could even be used for other languages (so far we have above all concentrated on English as a second language) and for other target groups than those which we had grown especially accustomed to (thirteen- to fifteen-year-olds). The response was entirely positive. The project's generally concrete outlook allowed the new participants to take in the material quickly and see extensive possible ways of using it.

During the following days we organised ourselves in groups of various sizes to study the assessment scales which were in existence before the workshop as well as to formulate scales for the outstanding components: written communication and intercultural competence. To help us with the latter we had with us around 50 essays written by students from the Nordic and Baltic states where they themselves describe what is important to know about one's own culture. Naturally, the access to language specialists from all around Europe was of great help when processing material and drawing up new 'Can Dos'. The work was quickly done with great intensity.

The workshop in Graz showed that the 'Can Do' material can be used in working with the European Language Portfolio. Furthermore, the group found that 'Can Dos' can be used just as well when learning other languages as when learning English and that even younger learners can make use of them. It should be pointed out that the material developed in the project should not be seen as 'finished' material. The scales will all the time need to be restructured; such is the very nature of language and language learning.

### **About the portfolio in language teaching and about 'Can Do's' usefulness**

The introduction of the language portfolio in teaching is not always without complications. Students look upon this tool with the same natural scepticism with which they look upon most others: what is the ulterior motive? It is most important that the portfolio does not simply serve as a storage place for student texts later to be judged

by the teacher. The portfolio is meant to be a tool which is useful to the student otherwise we have lost the very concept.

How then does one explain to the students what a portfolio is? How does one introduce the portfolio in class? My advice is to start with reflection, at the metacognitive level. In most cases let the student formulate him/herself around his or her method of learning and what he or she knows; the student must be allowed to use his or her own words to describe him- or herself and language intake. Initially therefore, no comparison with any criteria or scale of any kind takes place. That comes later. The student must be prepared for the structure of the language portfolio and its assessment scales in a proper way. Research from both Finland and Norway show that an introduction of the language portfolio without prior preparation of the students in metacognitive thinking is doomed to failure.

Conceptwise there should be a distinction here between reflection and assessment and, as teachers, we should make this clear to our students. I see reflection as quite free consideration around what can and should be learnt. The analysis builds on comparison between products: What is better or less good and why do I think that is? What do I know now which I didn't know a few weeks ago? What do I need to improve? In reflection, we use general concepts and wording is descriptive. In contrast, assessment is something which always must be made in relation to a certain kind of criteria. (The criteria do not, however, need to be exam related, though examinations require them to be.) Self-assessment scales from e.g. 'Can Dos' belong to the latter and, as such, implies that the student measures him- or herself against already set criteria. If students are not allowed to get to know themselves as learners, and to acquire a language to describe themselves, work with portfolios and 'Can Dos' can be useless or even damaging.

Thus it is necessary for the student over a longer period of time to be trained to reflect around him- or herself and his or her learning before being introduced to the language portfolio. The activities can only be meaningful given the insight into self-assessment as a criterion for intellectual learning. To assess your knowledge you have to have understood why you did the exercise. A student regularly formulating him- or herself around what he or she has to learn doesn't only increase his or her knowledge on how he or she learns, but also takes your knowledge as a teacher to a new level, and allows you to make your teaching planning better and more directly suitable to the students.

The transition from reflection and metacognitive description to a portfolio and assessment happens gradually and without allowing any of the activities to dominate. 'Can Dos' are supportive to the students' metacognitive development, but should not be used without preparation. To teach oneself to use a portfolio takes time. This is emphasised by, among others, Anne-Marie Grahn-Saarinen from Tampere, Finland. She has since spent a long time working with the European Language Portfolio in her teaching and warns against using too much time establishing levels of knowledge and skill. ESP and 'Can Dos' are supposed to be a starting point and stepping stone for the work which we use from time to time, and nothing else. Neither can self-assessment

replace any other parts of language teaching and should be limited to a supporting role to other work.

Merete Erichsen from Bergen, Norway, has also been working actively with both language portfolios and 'Can Dos' for a longer period of time. She points out that if students are trained to judge themselves they will become very good at it. If, however, they are only allowed to test once they will fail. She goes on to emphasise that a new style of teaching is required and she stresses the importance of the teacher intervening to help students with their self-assessment. Students must be forced to be concrete when they assess themselves. As a teacher, impress upon the students to thoroughly describe what their opinion is. Otherwise the judging itself is quite ineffective. Descriptiveness is not something that happens automatically, but must be practiced. Erichsen goes on to claim that words like "good" or "interesting" are in this context largely meaningless. She shows some examples of what students wrote when they were asked to describe and judge their work during the week. One student writes "I have practised some interesting words and phrases, and I have read a good book, some pages. It was cool!" while another writes "I have learnt words from sport, food and clothes, over fifty new words and expressions, but I still have some left. I can use these words in dialogues when I talk to others in the class and I included some of the words in the letter I wrote to my mate in Newcastle". We can see a clear discrepancy in specificity between these two students. The lack of concreteness in the first student shows a paucity of reflectiveness and gives a poor basis for measuring progress a few weeks later. To work with a portfolio is to see directions in one's work and to learn something from it. The use of too general terms gets us nowhere. The language portfolio must not be a structure where no one thinks anything at all.

Knowledge is something to be acquired and not something to be passively fed via somebody else. Every individual learns in his or her own way and it is all about getting out of oneself and seeing what one is doing, how one is doing it and how often. Learning itself is never linear. Neither is language something which is learnt through a continuously increasing progression. As a teacher you must not believe or get your students to believe that it is only a matter of climbing from one level to the next. There must also be time for a certain stagnation, even regression; that is when a lot of the most thorough learning takes place. Some things take a long time to learn, others require less time. Progression alone is inhuman.

### **Following 'Can Do'?**

The 'Can Do' project was about developing useful tools to allow for better work with the language portfolio. We have received responses to the effect that the material is very useful, 'Can Dos' are spreading across Europe. Among the Nordic countries there is a great desire to go together in a project in order to develop a training programme in a portfolio/language portfolio which may be used in teacher education. This training programme would among other things build on material from the 'Can Do' project. Education in portfolio activity must not become a theoretical course unless the teacher

trainers themselves use a portfolio and do not merely talk about them. In order to use the portfolio, it is necessary to have used it personally.

## **8.4 The ‘Can Do’ material in Lithuanian contexts**

**Violeta Kaledaitė, Vytautas Magnus University, Department of English Philology, Kaunas, Lithuania**

In Lithuania, state education institutions providing obligatory general education follow a number of state documents. In 2002 two new documents were prepared and presented: Strategic Guidelines for Education Development and the new version of the Law of Education. Based on the relevant documents of the European Union, they determine, among other things, the objectives, content and methods of secondary education. One of the most important aspects highlighted in the documents is the introduction of the European dimension into secondary education. In these contexts teaching, learning and self-assessment of foreign languages becomes a vital issue.

Foreign languages are compulsory subjects in Lithuanian schools. According to the latest statistics, the most popular foreign languages are English, French, German, and Russian (in this order). The number of schoolchildren who learn one foreign language is about 500 000; among these over 270 000 learn two foreign languages and about 5 000 children take a third language. It is therefore with great interest and due support that the officials at the Ministry of Education and Science backed my own involvement in the current project.

Of necessity, my activities covered several areas, the most important of which was organising the process of trying out the project materials. A group of foreign language teachers was formed who carried out actual trialling of the materials, developed for the Norwegian classroom, in the Lithuanian environments. The local group, covering 7 schools in Kaunas, consisted of 10 teachers of English (5), German (3), and French (2) with the total number of 168 lower-secondary school-children taking part in the project.

The process of trying out the materials in Lithuanian classrooms provided an opportunity not only to evaluate the situation of foreign language teaching and learning strategies (at least in one geographical region of Lithuania), but it also disclosed some country-specific features. At the moment, the accumulated material and data are being put to good use for student research at Vytautas Magnus University; however, some important aspects of country-specific behaviour can be mentioned right away. Specifically, reading is still considered by most schoolchildren to be the main strategy of learning a foreign language (148 answers). This might be a reflection of the social situation in Lithuania, on the one hand, and the heritage of the pre-independence political reality, on the other, such as the lack of contacts with people from other countries, limited possibilities of travelling, etc. In spite of the statement made above, very few schoolchildren (15 out of 168) read because they like it. Another important

finding for teacher and textbook developer alike is the tendency on the part of learners (demonstrated by the data analysis) to evaluate their level of speaking lower, when compared to reading skills, by at least one level, or by two or three levels at times. Thus, a A2:1 level speaker can be a B1:2 reader, and this tendency was very common. This fact might point to several problematic areas in foreign language learning and teaching such as the lack of contacts with foreign-language speakers in everyday life, the lack of self-assessment skills, preference on the part of the teacher to give reading tasks at the cost of developing speaking skills, or the use of textbooks that are unbalanced in skill development.

Crucial for developing multicultural competence is paying due attention to socio-cultural aspects of foreign language learning. The essay competition on 'Cultural know-how' was very popular among Lithuanian schoolchildren, yielding 5 prize-winners out of about 40 participants from at least 6 European countries.

One important impact of the project at national level is the fact that the Ministry of Education and Science has recognized the value of the final product of the project for the joint efforts of relating the conscious process of foreign language learning to national and international policies aimed at preparing young people for study, training, work and mobility in democratic and multicultural Europe.

At the moment, intensive work at national level is being carried out by a group of experts who, making good use of all the materials designed in this project, are developing a Lithuanian variant of the European Language Portfolio to be tried out and introduced in the nearest future.

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# Appendix 1: Pupils' questionnaire

## Talking English

Think over the last year, and all the times you have talked English – e.g. in class, outside, at home with family or friends or on holiday.

Put a cross if you've talked English in these situations and give examples of who you've talked to.

Where?		Who to?
In class		
When I'm out (e.g. in town)		
At home with family or friends		
On holiday		
Other situations (say what)		

For each of the different situations, try to remember some of the things you have managed to do, e.g. ask questions or tell (about what?), or just chat (about what sort of things?), or help people (to do what?) or explain something, etc.

Write down as many things as you can think of (use both sides of the page).

If any of these were things you couldn't do a year ago, put a cross beside them.

## Appendix 2: Levels for spoken interaction

<p><b>C1</b> I can use this language to express all the things I would normally express in my own language. I can join in most lively discussions. I can choose the most suitable way of saying things. I can give a presentation and hardly think about my language. I rarely search for a word or phrase, and am always understood by people who know the language reasonably well – and I more or less always manage to understand them.</p>	<p>date you teacher</p>
<p><b>B2</b> I can switch over to this language for long periods. I can talk freely and in detail about things that interest me. I can follow discussions about things that are topical and argue for my point of view. I can give a presentation without sticking to a careful plan. Even though I must sometimes search for the best word or phrase, I am nearly always understood by people who know the language well, and I normally understand them.</p>	<p>date you teacher</p>
<p><b>B1:2</b> I can usually say what I want to. I can help clear up any misunderstandings with the people I talk to, so that we normally understand each other in the end. I can take part in most conversations, if the topic is something I know about. I can talk about abstract things like how music affects me. I can give a presentation if it follows a careful plan. I can cope with most situations, even when I would not expect to use this language.</p>	<p>date you teacher</p>
<p><b>B1:1</b> I can usually get people to understand my main points, and can understand the main points of what they say to me, with some effort from both sides. I can talk a while with someone who shares my interests. I can give a short planned talk on something I know about well without practising word for word. I can cope with most ordinary situations where I would expect to use this language.</p>	<p>date you teacher</p>
<p><b>A2:2</b> I can take part in short conversations about familiar things, if I can get help when I need it. I can tell about things I'm interested in, and about things I do and have done. I can discuss everyday things in a simple way. I can give a short talk on something I know about well, if I have practised it word for word.</p>	<p>date you teacher</p>
<p><b>A2:1</b> I can use language I've practised to say a bit in a number of ordinary situations. I can tell a little bit about myself and things I know about well. The people I talk to must be patient and willing to help so that we understand each other.</p>	<p>date you teacher</p>

<p><b>A1</b> I can use and understand some words and phrases I have learnt. I can ask and answer some very usual questions, as long as the other person speaks slowly and clearly and is very helpful.</p>	<p>Date you teacher</p>
--	---------------------------------

### Appendix 3: Spoken interaction checklist: level A2:2

Can you <u>usually</u> do these things? Use these symbols: column 1    √ = I think I can    √√ = I know I can column 2    √ = I aim to do this soon column 3    write the date when you've done an example of this		yes	my aim	example
1	I can understand what is said to me about everyday things if the other person speaks slowly and clearly and is helpful.			
2	I can show that I am following what people say, and can get help if I can't understand.			
3	I can say some things to be friendly when I meet or leave someone.			
4	I can do simple ask-and-answer tasks with a partner in class, using expressions we have learnt.			
5	I can ask or tell the teacher about things we are doing in class.			
6	I can say what I like or don't like.			
7	I can give very simple descriptions of people, things and places I know well.			
8	I can give or follow simple instructions with the help of a map or plan.			
9	I can make simple plans with people, e.g. what to do, where to go, and when to meet.			
10	I can use some simple expressions to tackle ordinary tourist situations, such as in shops or cafés.			
11	I can give a very short talk, about something I know very well, if I get help with the language.			
12	I can have short chats on the Internet/e-mail to be friendly and make contact with people.			
	Anything else?			

*If you know you can usually do 10 of these you are at least at level A2:1. Try the next set.*

I have been working with these 'Can Dos' and have reached level A2:1

Date ..... signed (you) ..... (your teacher) .....

Level **A2:2**

## Appendix 4: Speaking self-assessment

**What I did in this task:**

**How true are these? Ring round the best number**

(4= true, 3 = more or less true, 2 = partly true , 1 = not true)

I managed to say what I wanted	4	3	2	1
I understood the others	4	3	2	1
I managed to 'keep the talk going'	4	3	2	1
I knew how to pronounce words	4	3	2	1
I knew enough words & phrases	4	3	2	1
I knew enough grammar	4	3	2	1
I managed not to mix languages	4	3	2	1
I liked doing this	4	3	2	1

**Things I managed to do well:**

**Examples of words or phrases I learnt:**

**Things I still need to work on:**

This is an example of 'Can Do' number level

*Please write any comments (from you or your teacher) over the page.*

## Appendix 5: Speaking observation form

Pupil ..... class ..... date ..... task .....

### Did the pupil

#### manage to say what s/he wanted?

easily                       with some help                       with a lot of help                       no

#### seem to understand the English that the others used?

easily                       with some help                       with a lot of help                       no

#### manage to keep the talk going smoothly?

yes                       on the whole                       it was rather broken up                       it was very broken up

#### pronounce well enough to be understood?

yes, always                       on the whole                       not really                       no

#### use suitable words and phrases?

yes                       on the whole                       not really                       no

#### manage the necessary grammar?

yes                       on the whole                       not really                       no

#### manage to clear up problems/misunderstandings without mixing languages?

yes                       on the whole                       not really                       no

#### Did this task give evidence of his/her level on the speaking scale?

no                       yes                      →  A1                       A2:1                       A2:2  
 B1:1                       B1:2                       B2  
 C1

#### Were there any obvious learning needs?

#### Other comments?

## Appendix 6: Speaking profile

<b>Bonus</b>	<b>some- times</b>	<b>usually</b>	
communica- tiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	is willing to use what language s/he has to fully take part in the communication
strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	when problems arise in communication, works with the other speaker to clear these up without mixing languages

### advanced communicator

message/ manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	gets the message across fully, in an interesting way with a suitable manner and tone
flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	is able to keep going both within and across turns, for quite long stretches at reasonable speed; links/binds speech with the help of a variety of 'discourse markers' like <i>well, sort of, just, you see, I mean ...</i>
vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	is able to select the most appropriate and idiomatic words and phrases to suit the topic and the tone
grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	has good control over the basic grammatical structures, with few systematic errors
understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	is able to understand more or less whatever is said to him/her in good English, and able to clear up any misunderstandings
pronunciation/ intonation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	is able to pronounce almost all words and phrases used, with intonation supporting the message/tone

**basic communicator**

message/ manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can get across the main content of the message, with an acceptable manner and tone
flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can keep going within and across turns at a slower speed, with the 'meaning' not too broken up by pausing; some use of discourse markers, e.g. just, I mean
vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can produce the words and phrase necessary to express ideas in a basic but understandable way
grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	has enough control over basic structures to put ideas together in an understandable way, despite errors
understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	is able to understand the main points of predictable messages expressed in an uncomplicated way
pronunciation/ intonation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	pronounces most words and phrases understandably; intonation does not normally interfere with the message

**limited communicator**

message/ manner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can express simple ideas related to familiar themes, with help and patience from the other speaker
flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can manage short 'strings' of a few words, and can take part in very short exchanges, e.g. question-answer
vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can use some simple phrases and words relating to most familiar themes
grammar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can use some basic structures to express simple ideas
understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	can understand essential points made by a clear speaker who makes great allowances and is very helpful
pronunciation/ intonation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	is able to pronounce familiar words and phrases in such a way that they can be understood.

# Appendix 7: Reading survey 1

Name ..... class .....

## 1 Where do you read English?

.....

## 2 Why do you read English?

- to learn English
- because I like reading
- because my teacher tells me to
- to find out things that interest me
- to keep contact with people

other reasons:

.....

## 3 What kind of texts do you read?

- texts in your coursebook / from your teacher
- story books
- fact books
- songs
- poems
- newspapers
- magazines
- instructions
- Internet pages
- computer games
- e-mails
- others .....

**4** What do you **like** reading best?

Give **names/examples** of different things you have read recently (as many as you can; say if it was difficult or easy)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**5** How much **time** do you think you spend reading in a normal week **in your free time** (i.e. not counting classwork or homework)

**English**

- hardly any     about 30 mins     about an hour     2-3 hours     more

**Norwegian / your own language**

- hardly any     about 30 mins     about an hour     2-3 hours     more

**6** How many **pages** do you think you read in a normal week **in your free time**?

**English**

- none     1-5     6-10     10-20     20-50     50-100     more

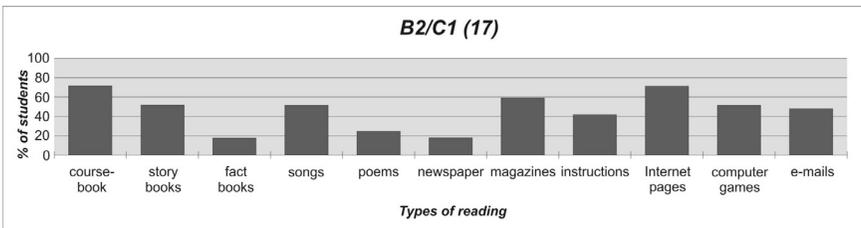
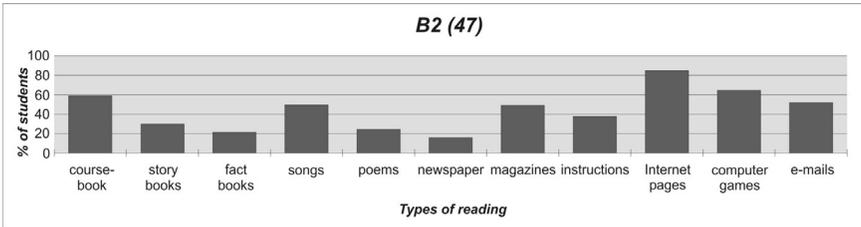
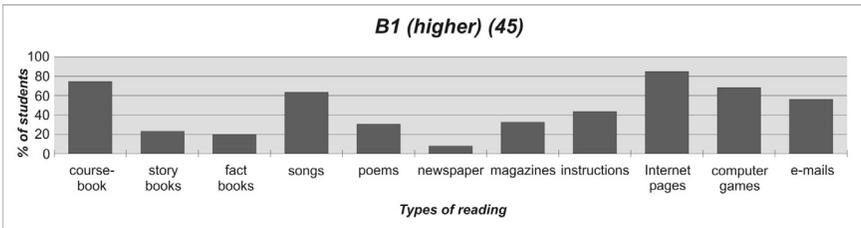
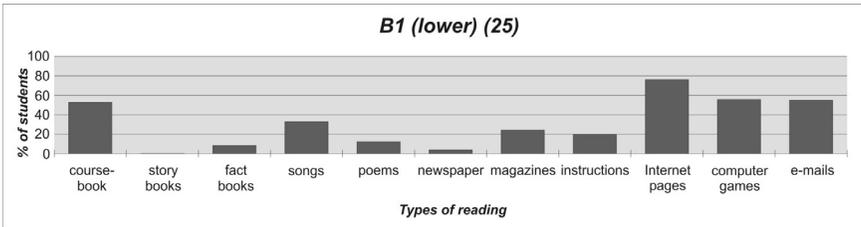
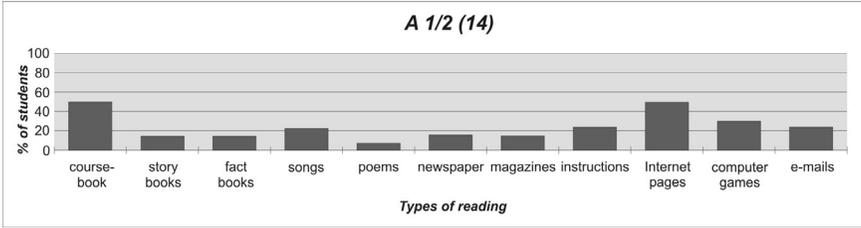
**Norwegian / your own language**

- none     1-5     6-10     10-20     20-50     50-100     more

7 Look at the levels below: **which level** is right for you? .....

- C1** I can read and manage to understand all the texts and books I need or want to, even if the language is rather ‘special’ and the ideas are rather complicated.
- B2** I can read and manage to understand texts about most topics, as long as the language is not too ‘special’ and the ideas are not complicated. I can read most books that interest me without real difficulty.
- B1:2** I can understand the main ideas and arguments in longer straight-forward texts, if they are about familiar topics. I can read books if I am very motivated, as long as they use a type of language I am used to.
- B1:1** I can understand the main ideas in short straight-forward texts, if they deal with concrete facts or events, and are about familiar topics. I can read personal letters.
- A2:2** I can understand short, simple texts about familiar things, if they use common words, or words and phrases that are typically used in this topic (e.g. programmes, brochures). I can read simple personal letters.
- A2:1** I can understand short, simple texts if they use very common words or words that are easy to guess (e.g. postcards, timetables).
- A1** I can understand some words and phrases if I have learnt them or if it is very easy to guess what they mean (e.g. adverts, signs).

## Appendix 8: Types of reading: based on survey 1



# Appendix 9: Reading self-assessment

name of text/book/etc. ....  
(Cross as many boxes as you need to)

## 1 Why did you read this?

- for pleasure
- because it looked interesting
- to learn language
- to communicate with other people
- to learn about something
- to learn how to do something
- to quickly find some information
- something else .....

## 2 Did you manage to get what you wanted from the text?

- yes                       more or less
- not really               not at all

## 3 Was it easy for you?

- yes                       quite easy
- not really               no

## 4 If it was difficult, was this because:

- I have never read about this theme before
- the type of text (e.g. layout) was new to me
- a lot of the words and phrases were new to me
- the sentences were complicated
- the ideas were complicated
- something else .....

**5 How did you help yourself to read this?**

- by getting clues from pictures, etc.
- by guessing more or less what it would be about, e.g. from the title, or what you knew about the subject
- by looking at some given words in advance
- by guessing what new words and phrases meant
- by trying to keep going even if it was difficult at times
- by using a dictionary in extreme case
- something else .....

**6 Did you learn any language (e.g. new words)?**

.....

.....

.....

**7 Any comments on the text?**

.....

.....

.....





# Appendix 11: Writing survey form

## 1 What types of writing in this language do your pupils normally do *in school or for homework*?

(e.g. narrative essays, argumentative essays, descriptive essays, letters, forms, notes, reports, project texts, overhead key words, comic captions, etc.)

*Please indicate roughly what proportion of your pupils you would expect to be able to do this, and at which levels these pupils tend to be.*

proportion: 1 = very few, 2 = less than half, 3 = about half, 4 = more than half,  
5 = almost all

levels: B2+ (only the strongest), B1+ (average upwards), all levels

<i>type</i>	<i>proportion</i>			<i>levels</i>				
	B2+	B1+	all	1	2	3	4	5
1				<input type="checkbox"/>				

## 2 What types of writing in this language do your pupils normally do *outside school (i.e. unconnected with school or homework)*?

(e.g. letters to penfriends/relatives, postcards, chatroom messages, e-mails, SMS messages, songs, notes, forms, more formal letters, etc.)

*Please show roughly what proportion of your pupils say that they do this, and at which levels these pupils tend to be.*

proportion: 1 = very few, 2 = less than half, 3 = about half, 4 = more than half,  
5 = almost all

levels: B2+ (only the strongest), B1+ (average upwards), all levels

<i>type</i>	<i>proportion</i>			<i>levels</i>				
	B2+	B1+	all	1	2	3	4	5
1				<input type="checkbox"/>				

## Appendix 12: Workshop suggestions

### Young learners' 'Can Do' checklists: listening

#### Level A1

1. I can understand simple greetings, like *hello, goodbye, good morning*, etc.
2. I can understand simple words and phrases, like *excuse me, sorry, thank you*, etc.
3. I can understand simple classroom instructions, like *stand up, come here, open the book*, etc.
4. I can understand simple questions about myself and my family when people speak slowly and clearly, like *What's your name? How old are you? How are you?* etc.
5. I can understand very simple sentences about things around me, like *this is a chair, this is my school*, etc.
6. I can understand some words and phrases in songs I hear on the radio or TV.
7. I can understand very short dialogues when people speak slowly and clearly.

#### Level A2

1. I can understand what people say to me about everyday things if they speak slowly and clearly and are helpful.
2. I can understand and follow instructions, like how to do something.
3. I can understand and follow directions, like how to get somewhere.
4. I can understand phrases and expressions about myself and people and things around me, like home, school, friends, pets, hobbies, etc.
5. I can understand questions about topics I have learned in class.
6. I can understand people making plans if they speak slowly and clearly.
7. I can understand everyday dialogues in a shop, at the station, in the street, etc.
8. I can understand short, clear and simple messages I can hear at the airport / railway station, etc., like *The train to London leaves at 4:30*.
9. I can understand people talking about other people, places and things I know well and that interest me.
10. I can understand some parts of songs I listen to on the radio or TV.

11. I can get the general idea of films and videos that the teacher shows in class.
12. I can understand rhymes and chants the teacher uses in class.

## Appendix 13: Extract from Objectives in English in Brøndby kommune, Denmark

By Aase Brick-Hansen, consultant of modern languages in Brøndby  
Translated by Signe Holm-Larsen

### Cultural-social skills 1 – Comparative topic-related grouping of progression

1. phase	2. phase	3. phase	4. phase
	The pupil has a basic knowledge of youth culture in English speaking countries, for instance from work with song texts, magazines, movies and TV.	The pupil has, from literature and media, acquired a basic knowledge of values and norms in several English-speaking countries.	The pupil has from literature, factual texts and media acquired a basic knowledge of values and norms in English speaking countries.
The pupil knows examples of the culture and ways of life in the UK and USA, for instance regarding topics like family, house, food, shopping, school, animals, hobbies, spare time activities, holidays and festivals.	The pupil knows examples of cultural conditions and ways of life in English speaking countries, a.o. from the work with English literature.	The pupil can relate English texts to texts from other English speaking countries and to his/her culture, for instance in topics such as school, ways of life, consumerism, leisure time and working life situation, environmental and topical social questions.	The pupil can relate English texts to texts from other English speaking countries and to his/her culture, for instance in topics such as education, job situation, social and cultural issues, environmental and minority questions as well as human rights.

		The pupil can use information from English sources in a new framework.	The pupil can use information from English sources in a new framework.
--	--	--	--

## **Cultural-social skills 2 – Comparative topic-related grouping of progression**

1. phase	2. phase	3. phase	4. phase
The pupil can give simple examples of cultural differences between English and his/her situation.	The pupil can compare foreign and his/her culture, for instance regarding festivals and geographic or historical aspects.	The pupil is able to describe an issue seen from several aspects, for instance in relation to a presentation or a debate.	The pupil is able to describe an issue seen from several aspects, for instance in relation to a presentation or a debate.
The pupil knows examples of English children's culture, for example songs, rhymes, plays, dances, games and stories.	The pupil can give examples of situations, where s/he has used English as an international means of communication, for instance connected to school contacts, guest teachers and pen friends.	The pupil is to some extent experienced in using English as an international means of communication, for instance in connection with guest teachers, school contacts or pen friends.	The pupil is to some extent experienced in using English as an international means of communication, for instance in connection with guest teachers, school contacts or pen friends.

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