

EXPLICS

Exploiting Internet Case Studies and Simulation Templates for Language Teaching and Learning

A Handbook

edited by
Johann Fischer, Maria Teresa Musacchio
and Alison Standing



The EXPLICS Project has been carried out with the support of the European Commission in the framework of the SOCRATES programme – LINGUA 2 project. Further information about the EXPLICS Project can be found at <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics>. The content of this project does not necessarily reflect the position of the European Commission, nor does it involve any responsibility on the part of the European Commission.

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Cover Photo: Courtesy of Alciro Theodoro da Silva, 2006

Cover Design: Julia Reuß

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Preface

Task-based approaches to language teaching and learning have become more and more popular recently as they are seen as an effective way of improving the learners' communicative competence. Tasks are central to the learning activity as it is believed that students will learn more effectively when they are completing them. The tasks themselves exploit a wide range of language, rather than one structure or vocabulary, and students may also be required to use different communication skills in the task cycle. At the higher levels the teacher allows the students to work independently on the initial stages of the task and acts as an observer. Later, as the final product is completed, the teacher can evaluate the work and give feedback to the students. At the lower levels more 'help' may be required at each stage of the task cycle and more models of similar language may be needed for the learners to transfer information and skills effectively.

Language case studies and global simulations are seen as two means of presenting a task-based approach to language teaching and learning. Information and material available world-wide can be integrated into the teaching and learning activities using the Internet. Internet-based language case studies and global simulation projects allow us to embed the tasks and the learning material into a virtual learning environment (VLE) that can be used both in classroom-based teaching and learning, and in blended learning programmes.

Between October 2005 and March 2009 the EXPLICS Project produced a total of 33 products: 17 internet-based case studies and 16 global simulations in the following 11 languages:

- Czech: CEFR level A
- English: CEFR levels B and C
- Finnish: CEFR level A
- French: CEFR levels B and C
- German: CEFR levels B and C
- Italian: CEFR levels B and C
- Polish: CEFR level A
- Portuguese: CEFR levels A and B
- Slovak: CEFR level A
- Spanish: CEFR levels B and C
- Swedish: CEFR levels A and B

These teaching and learning products are now freely available online (www.uni-goettingen.de/explics) and university language teachers are invited to use them in their teaching.

These products show a wide range of materials and topics, and approaches to task-based language teaching and learning, as the EXPLICS Project brought together the expertise of academics from 17 partner institutions in 12 European countries. The following 17 partner institutions have contributed to the development of the EXPLICS products:

- Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany (co-ordinating institution 2008-2009)
- Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Germany (Beneficiary, and co-ordinating institution 2005-2006)
- Universität für Bodenkultur Wien, Austria
- Česká Zemedelská Univerzita, Czech Republic
- Oulun yliopisto, Finland
- Université des Sciences Sociales – Toulouse 1, France
- Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, Germany (co-ordinating institution 2006-2008)
- University College Dublin, Ireland
- Università di Padova, Italy
- Uniwersytet Przyrodniczy we Wrocławiu, Poland
- Politechnika Wroclawska, Poland
- Instituto Politécnico da Guarda, Portugal
- Slovenská Poľnohospodárska Univerzita v Nitre, Slovakia
- Universidad de Navarra, Spain
- London School of Economics and Political Sciences, United Kingdom
- Simon Heath Services Ltd., United Kingdom
- CercleS – Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues dans l'Enseignement Supérieur

This Handbook provides an introduction to

- how to use and how to develop internet-based language case studies and global simulations,
- how to use the text material in the products and / or that developed by the learners for corpus analysis
- how to use case studies and global simulations for vocabulary building
- how to assess the oral and written products developed and presented by the learners
- how to use the products developed by the learners for benchmarking purposes.

The Handbook draws on the experiences of the EXPLICS team and invites language teachers to integrate language case studies and global simulations into their teaching by using the EXPLICS materials, applying the suggestions made, and developing the EXPLICS approach.

Although the EXPLICS case studies and global simulations are complete, teachers might find that they do not correspond exactly to their needs or those of their learners, and may wish to develop their own language case studies and/or global simulation projects. This Handbook may help them in using EXPLICS products and in developing their own material for their teaching environment.

Chapter 1 **A Task-Based Approach to Language Teaching through Global Simulations and Case Studies**

Johann Fischer (Göttingen)

1.0 Introduction

The EXPLICS project created 32 language learning products in 11 languages which can be used in secondary education, at university, in vocational training or in adult education. As the material is based on a task-based approach, it stimulates communicative competence. Instead of offering the learners traditional grammar and vocabulary exercises or simple role-plays without the necessary (authentic) context, the case studies give the learners tasks to complete which correspond to real life situations and scenarios which they might meet when travelling, meeting people from other countries, studying abroad or working in an international setting.

When following a task-based approach, the learners are given meaningful text material to work on and after a series of preparatory tasks they are asked to solve a problem or to develop a text (e.g. a report, a newspaper article or a business plan) using their own knowledge, competences and skills. Their oral and written production is meaningful and useful. There is no right or wrong answer to the task, but each learner, or each group of learners will have developed their own valid solution or product. The learners are taken seriously and become autonomous users of the language. The content of their oral and written input has become relevant and has a purpose. Notably, however, the language – which is now the vehicle for the specific activity, as in real life – is still the main aim of the activity; i.e. the language carries meaningful information and is the focus of the task.

When they are given a meaningful task and asked to use their knowledge, skills and competencies in order to solve a problem, each learner has his or her personal role and task within the group and experiences an authentic need to express themselves.

Although the learners are in a language learning situation, the authenticity of the teaching material, the tasks, and the scenarios means that they can behave as they would in similar situations in their personal lives.

1.1 Task Types used in the EXPLICS products

Depending on the aims, content and structure of the language course in which the products will be used different task based approaches can be adopted:

Global simulation:

When using a **global simulation**, the whole class is invited to create a fictitious world within a given context (e.g. an apartment block, a village, a company or a conference), to invent the characters living in this fictitious world and to make them interact. A global simulation can constitute a language course in itself at any level of competence, since it is possible to include any language items and skills in the global

simulation itself. Global simulations are particularly suited for language tasks that require: brain storming, fact-finding, exploring and problem solving.

Project work:

In **project work**¹ more emphasis is put on the product that is developed during the course of the activity, e.g. a newspaper based on the events of a summer course, a website, or a brochure on waste treatment in a student residence. Project work is usually one part of a language course focussing on a particular skill which can take up more or less time, depending on the emphasis given to it. When doing project work, the learners may be asked to research and write a text as a final product, i.e. the emphasis is initially on the product and its purpose and not on the language. Linguistic analysis and correction will form a secondary activity. Projects are particularly suited for language tasks that require exploring, ordering and sorting, comparing and explaining.

Case study:

When working with **case studies**, learners are asked to analyse a problem situation, either past or present, and to develop a solution to it. Developing fluency and critical thinking skills in an authentic context are normally the main aim of case studies but they can also be used for working on specific language points. A case study is normally composed of a number of preparatory tasks and can be designed to present and practice specific competencies which are part of a syllabus such as summarising, or functional language. Case studies are particularly suited for language tasks that require reasoning, hypothesising, decision making and problem solving.

Webquest:

Webquests², have become popular over the past few years, and can be used as part of the language work in project activities, case studies or other activities. In a Webquest the learners complete guided tasks, using a questionnaire in Internet searches. When doing a Webquest, or a LanguageQuest³, the learners are asked to search for information on a specific problem or issue and the results of the search can be used for case study activities or can be integrated into project work and global simulation activities. Webquests are particularly suitable for language tasks that require ordering and sorting, classifying, sequencing, comparing and ranking.

¹ For further information see e.g.: Ribé / Vidal 1993; Schart 2003.

² For further information on webquests see: <http://webquest.sdsu.edu/materials.htm>.

³ Information on language webquests is available at:

http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/LQuest/html/LQUEST_E_pdesc.htm, and at: www.lquest.net.

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LanguageQuest website: www.lquest.net and
http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/LQuest/html/LQUEST_E_pdesc.htm

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Chapter 2 Global Simulation Projects in Language Teaching

Johann Fischer (Göttingen)

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter we will first explain the idea of global simulations, then describe how they can successfully be used in teaching and finally how they can be created.

2.1 What is a global simulation?

Debyser defines a “*global simulation*” as follows:

Une simulation globale est un protocole ou un scénario cadre qui permet à un groupe d'apprenants pouvant aller jusqu'à une classe entière d'une trentaine d'élèves, de créer un univers de référence – un immeuble, un village, une île, un cirque, un hôtel – de l'animer de personnages en interaction et d'y simuler toutes les fonctions du langage que ce cadre, qui est à la fois un lieu-thème et un univers du discours, est susceptible de requérir.

(Debyser 1996: IV)

English translation:

A global simulation is a script or a scenario framework which allows a group of learners, up to a whole class of about 30 students, to create a universe of reference – an apartment block, a village, an island, a circus, a hotel, to animate it with characters interacting with each other and to simulate language functions which are needed within this framework, which is at the same time a thematic place and a universe of communication.

In a global simulation, the class creates a fictitious world that is slowly filled with life. The learners are given a specific framework. This can take the form of an apartment block, a village, a street, a hotel, as mentioned above, but it can also be a company or a conference. In the case of the EXPLICS Project the learners are invited to simulate e.g. a French village (French global simulation “Loupignac – un village à vivre”⁴), a carnival (Portuguese global simulation “Carnaval de Ovar”⁵), a boattrip from Sweden to Finland (Swedish global simulation “Silja Line – En båtresa från Stockholm till Helsingfors”⁶) or an NGO in Latin-America (Spanish global simulation “Una ONG en Latinoamérica”⁷).

The learners then have to describe this fictitious world and invent the people living and acting within this framework. The teacher gives them specific tasks and asks them to simulate role-plays, produce documents required within the simulated context, or describe events. The teacher can combine these tasks with specific linguistic activities, e.g. use of past tenses to describe what happened (e.g. a murder), use of question types (e.g. a policeman asking the people in the house whether they saw anything that happened), use of reported speech (e.g. the

⁴ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/france/>.

⁵ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/carnaval/>.

⁶ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/Schweden/index.html>.

⁷ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/spanish/Index.html>.

policeman writing it down in his report), or use of the imperative form (e.g. recipes, instructions). Authentic material is used both for reference and as models of particular text types and genres. In reading this authentic material our aim is not to answer questions about its content but rather to understand the meaning and be able to produce a similar document, but adapted to the new situation.

The fictitious world created by the learners is, strictly speaking, not authentic, since it is imaginary. Indeed, one might ask what difference there is between a global simulation and an ordinary role play activity. The main difference is that in time the fictitious world created in a global simulation becomes more and more real, moving away from the “illusion of the real” and leading to the “reality of the illusion” (Yaiche 1996: 13):

Comme Alan Maley, du British Council, qui s'intéresse, lui, à l'utilisation du *role-playing* dans l'enseignement de l'anglais langue étrangère, il [Debyser] préfère alors répondre à « l'illusion du réel » par « la réalité de l'illusion » et recourir à la fiction, plus réelle en fin de compte que les caricatures réductionnistes, voire hyper-réalistes des méthodes. Il est vrai que, depuis longtemps, les didactiques des langues sont confrontées au problème du réel qu'elles essaient d'intégrer dans le monde clos de la classe, sans pour autant jamais recourir aux techniques de la simulation. (Yaiche 1996: 13)

English translation:

Whereas Alan Maley, from the British Council, is mainly interested in the use of role-playing in teaching English as a foreign language, he [Debyser] prefers “the reality of the illusion” to “the illusion of the real”, and the use of fiction, more ‘real’ than the reduced, even hyper-realistic pretences of the manuals. It is true that, for a long time, methodologies of language teaching have been confronted with the problem of reality which they try to integrate into the closed world of the classroom without, however, using simulation techniques.

2.2 How to use global simulations in class?

A global simulation can be the framework of a whole course. In this case, the teacher will prepare a list of situations of communication (which will correspond to the vocabulary to be covered) and a list of grammatical aspects he or she wants to cover in class. He or she will then identify certain situations with specific grammatical aspects and from there develop a course curriculum with a logical situational and grammatical progression. The next step is to prepare tasks for each situation.

At lower levels the teacher can ask the learners to describe the place (in the case of an apartment block they will describe the building as a whole, the neighbourhood and then the individual apartments), then ask them to invent and to describe the people living in the building. Instead of describing themselves (with the risk of perpetuating certain mistakes) they are asked to transfer the competence to different situations. In order to teach the imperative form the teacher may ask the learners to draft rules for the house or to invent a recipe book for the house. For teaching or revising question types he or she may ask them to invent a crime, then ask them to simulate the arrival of a policeman who investigates the case. When the policeman writes his report he will use reported speech. Annex 1 shows examples of how certain situations can be linked to specific situations of communication and grammatical phenomena.

When dealing with absolute beginners, the teacher explains the grammar before asking the learners to use it in a concrete situation as mentioned above. At higher

levels he or she can ask the learners to draft their responses, then analyse the problematic areas and finally discuss them with the group again. At a later stage the teacher will give the learner another task where the specific linguistic phenomenon is needed in order to see whether the learners have internalised the vocabulary or grammar. By using a global simulation, linguistic phenomena are used in a wide variety of situations that are not limited to the textbook or the personal situation of the learner. This does not often happen in traditional language courses, where students are not taught to transfer competencies acquired to different, although similar situations.

During the course the teacher can vary the activities according to the learners' needs, and ask the learners:

- to simulate dialogues or situations involving a larger group of people (which may be recorded for feedback purposes or collected in written form),
- to invent stories which they will present orally and in written form,
- to prepare texts in relation to the fictitious world (e.g. company regulations).

Students acting as editors collect all the texts to be edited and published in a course brochure, in a booklet or on a website, once they have been corrected. This final product will be given to each participant, as a kind of souvenir and to motivate them to continue learning the language.

In fact, doing a global simulation in class means that the teacher starts the class by providing a framework and tasks for the learner. He or she will not arrive with a textbook or a pile of photocopies, although the learners will often need authentic models to manage a task. The text is no longer the input, but is the result of the course. Working with global simulations means adopting an output-oriented approach in teaching, which focuses on productive as well as receptive activities.

Global simulations can also be integrated into a traditional course, where the content and grammatical progress is taught by using a textbook. The teacher can then give the learners tasks referring to the topics and aspects covered in the textbook, i.e. ask them to invent a dialogue on the topic from the textbook, but transferred to the global simulation. If no textbook is used, the teacher can teach grammar and vocabulary in the traditional way and then invite the learners to simulate or invent similar situations or texts for the global simulation framework.

Languages for specific purposes

Global simulations are particularly suitable for LSP courses ("Languages for Specific Purposes"): having listed the topics to be covered during the course, the teacher can collect relevant material and develop tasks to give to the learners. If he/she teaches an LAP class ("Languages for Academic Purposes") he/she may use the simulation of an international conference as a structure for the course, and then ask the learners to agree on a conference topic. Some authentic tasks would include designing an agenda, producing a conference announcement, a poster or a flyer and designing a conference website. Students could prepare written abstracts, and go on to simulate the conference and collaborate on the minutes. In the same way, the invention and simulation of a fictitious company or the development of a business plan for a

fictitious company can also serve as a model for a global simulation in a business language course.

There are examples of this approach among the products developed by the EXPLICS team: the German global simulation “Dorferneuerung”⁸ deals with the problem of regional planning and development and suits the needs of students studying this subject. The simulation of a French vineyard (“Au château Dorothee”⁹) can be used both for general language teaching and learning and more specifically for students of agriculture or viticulture.

The new role of the teacher and the learners

When using a global simulation in class the role of the teacher is to explain the tasks and to make sure that the learners proceed with the invented story throughout the course and cover the linguistic phenomena of the syllabus in a logical order. In the production phase, the teacher acts as facilitator, moving among the individual groups and helping them when they encounter problems. Authentic texts may function as models. During presentations or oral tasks the teacher can note errors and weaknesses in preparation for feedback. The feedback session may also include a self-assessment and peer assessment phase. Global simulations are not teacher-centred. When using a global simulation the teacher takes a less dominant position, concentrating on evaluation and assessment. The responsibility for the learning, the products and the content progress of the simulation, is transferred to the learners, who become more autonomous in their learning.

2.3 Why use global simulations in teaching?

Using global simulations in class means following a holistic approach to language teaching, as grammar and vocabulary, and reading, writing, listening and speaking skills are not considered separately but required by the task. In order to complete the task e.g. the simulation of a discussion between two or more persons or the development of a poster they will need to analyse models first and acquire receptive skills as well. Vocabulary is not taught independently, but discovered when analysing spoken and written models and drafting their own work. They will also revise grammatical aspects when writing their texts or preparing role-plays or presentations.

In this way, the learners do not simply repeat dialogues from the textbook but learn how to react to the unexpected as their story progresses and how to overcome problematic linguistic situations. They will therefore acquire language learning strategies in a fairly authentic situation. The simulations take students and teachers beyond gap-fill or transformation exercises and dialogues more or less learnt by heart, and help learners to communicate, to react to somebody speaking with them and to express their own ideas.

This holistic approach, with its strong emphasis on productive tasks, can simulate authentic situations effectively and give the learners more and more confidence in their speaking and writing. This will help them to improve their language competence significantly and stimulate them to use the language and to continue learning it.

⁸ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/Dorferneuerung/>.

⁹ URL: http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/chateau_dorothee/index.html.

The considerable advantage for the teacher is that he or she can concentrate on providing support material and help, giving feedback and correction where needed. This allows the student, especially adults, to continue the learning process more independently. The initial extra work originating from the restructuring of the course and the development of new teaching material is compensated for by improvements in student motivation and classroom management as group work can be effectively introduced.

2.4 How to develop a global simulation?

When developing a global simulation the teacher has to think about a suitable framework that corresponds to the aims and objectives of the language course and to the needs of the learners. For LSP purposes the framework will correspond to a location or situation the learners might encounter in their future professional life, e.g. a company (for business language courses), a legal issue (for students of law) or a farm (for students of agriculture); for LAP courses, the simulation could be of a study abroad situation, or an international conference. This framework forms the basis of the task, e.g. the simulation of an international conference, the simulation of a study-abroad programme, or the development of a business plan for a fictitious company.

The teacher gives the learners a template e.g. of the location to invent, which they have to fill in, or gives them key facts about the framework (e.g. number of people, conference participants or employees), or ask them to make their own decisions about the content.

In the next step the teacher will ask the learners to fix the key figures and facts for their simulation project, which will later slowly be filled with life. In order to do so he or she will develop a series of build-up tasks: After considering the learners' linguistic and communicative needs the teacher will think of situations and linguistic products where specific phrases, expressions, words, grammatical phenomena or specific content are needed, and will prepare a series of models and activities which will present and practise these. Particular attention needs to be paid to the structure of the simulation and final product. This is dependent on the build-up tasks and intermediate products, the starting activities, which guarantee that the learners get attracted by the global simulation, and the final, concluding activity. In a classroom situation the teacher may adapt and change the build-up tasks in the course of teaching a specific group in order to adapt the activities to the learners' needs. However, he or she should make sure that these changes do not put at risk the final outcomes and final product of the global simulation as all the activities should always be focused towards this final product.

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Annex 1

Global simulations: examples of context and functions

- love story**
- future tense; conditional clauses (past)
 - writing: letters, speaking: phone calls
 - intercultural aspects (e.g. dinner in a restaurant)
 -
- meeting**
- preparing the invitations to the meeting; cancelling a meeting
 - speaking: booking a restaurant
 - speaking: communicating by phone
 - reading: understanding a menu
 -
- crime**
- past; conditional clauses
 - indirect speech
 - asking questions
 - writing: a report
 - speaking: discussing the case
 -
- Writing a recipe book**
- imperative form
 - reading: understanding terminology e.g. figures, measures
 - writing: ordering and sequencing
 -
- Applying for a job**
- reading: understanding job announcements
 - understanding intercultural differences in applying for a job
 - writing: filling in a job application
 - writing: preparing a CV
 - speaking: simulating a job interview
 -
- Academic life**
- simulating a conference (natural sciences, life sciences etc.)
 - simulating a presentation at an international fair (tourism, business studies)
 - setting up a company (business studies)
 - writing a business plan (business studies)
 - setting up a hospital or health services (medicine)
 -

Chapter 3 Language case studies

Johann Fischer (Göttingen)

3.1 What is a case study?

Kaiser offers the following definition for case studies:

Darstellung einer konkreten Situation aus der betrieblichen Praxis oder dem Alltagsleben, die anhand bestimmter Tatsachen, Ansichten und Meinungen dargestellt wird, auf deren Grundlagen eine Entscheidung getroffen werden muss.

(Kaiser 1983: 20)

English translation:

Presentation of a concrete situation taken from professional or everyday life, which is displayed through specific facts, attitudes and opinions, on the basis of which a decision has to be taken.

This definition comes very close to what the EXPLICS team understands by a case study, i.e.

the analysis of an (authentic) problem / dilemma in a given situation to which no single or correct solution exists.

As no single or correct solution exists, learners have to look at its various aspects and legal, financial, social or psychological implications. They then have to decide what solution they would like to adopt in order to improve the situation and develop their solution in some detail. They will finally present this e.g. at a meeting or by producing a written report.

The problem can be taken from the learners' field of study (e.g. in LSP courses) or can be of general interest. However, it should not be a very superficial issue without enough detail and documentation as in such a case, learners will rely on their own opinions and information and will not analyse the problem. It is usually more stimulating for the learners if they have to analyse a problem from a country where the target language is spoken, although in the case of English any problem can be taken both for UK interest or to investigate an international component.

The case studies developed by the EXPLICS team cover e.g. the problem whether a department store should be built in a Spanish city (Spanish case study "¿Un nuevo Corte Inglés?"¹⁰), the problem of climate change and the lack of water in Spain (Spanish case study "La batalla del agua"¹¹) and the aspect of changing tourism (Italian case study "La Cina ormai vicina"¹²). The German case study "Waldschlösschen"¹³ discusses the pros and cons of a new bridge in Dresden for the traffic and for the city's status as a UNESCO world heritage site.

¹⁰ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/eci/default.html>.

¹¹ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/BatallaAgua/>

¹² URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/cina/index.html>.

¹³ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/tedesco/index.html>.

3.2 Types of case studies

Case studies can be categorised according to their perspective, structure and media.¹⁴ These differences have an impact on how they can be used and exploited in teaching and learning.

3.2.1 Perspective: decision-making case studies and retrospective case studies

As far as the perspective is concerned, we need to distinguish between decision-making case studies and retrospective case studies.¹⁵

In a decision-making case study the learners normally have to find a solution to a current problem, i.e. there is no solution available yet. When using decision-making case studies, the learners have to develop their own solution.

Retrospective case studies deal with problems in the past, where a solution has already been found. These can be used in two ways in teaching: either the decision made is presented to the learners, and they are asked to analyse and evaluate the impact of the decision made and look for alternative solutions to the problem, or the learners have to solve the problem without knowing what solution was taken and in a second step have to compare their approach to the solution taken in reality.

Most EXPLICS case studies are decision-making case studies as dealing with current issues is normally more attractive and stimulating both for the learners and the teacher. Language teachers are often reluctant to use case studies which are dated and quickly wish to develop their own material after they have experimented with authentic language case studies.

3.2.2 Media: paper-based and internet-based case studies

Case studies can be delivered either in paper form or on the internet. Both types can be used in class (e.g. to train the learners in speaking spontaneously) or in a blended-learning context, where the learners analyse the case outside the classroom and then present their solutions during the lesson.

The internet has several advantages compared to paper-based activities:

- The structure of the case study is clear and visible for the learner, i.e. he or she can always see the menu, the sections and which parts of the case studies still need to be analysed.
- Pictures, graphs, tables etc. can easily be integrated and are easier to read.
- Audio and video material can be added (e.g. the Italian case study “Degrado a Bologna”).
- The material can be updated easily and quickly, guaranteeing that the case study is always up-to-date.
- Learners sometimes find internet-based teaching material more attractive and modern.

¹⁴ See also Fischer/Casey/Abrantes/Gigl/Lešnik 2008: 19-21.

¹⁵ See also Cain/Heath 2004: 5-6.

- Our research has shown that learners are less put off by the quantity of material when it is delivered online as they cannot see it all at once. (Fischer/Casey 2005: 181; Casey/Fischer 2005: 171; Fischer 2007a: 252).
- Learners can decide when and where to work on the case study material, i.e. internet-based case studies work well in a blended learning situation and with a Virtual Learning Environment.
- Searching for further information on the web intensifies the learning process as the learners will read and process more text material as they analyse the case.
- Designers can develop a glossary or vocabulary list to accompany the tasks.

For these reasons, the EXPLICS team concentrated on the development of internet-based teaching and learning material and has tried to encourage teachers to integrate internet-based case studies and simulations in their teaching.

3.2.3 Structure: open and closed case studies

Closed case studies present all the information the learners are supposed to analyse on the website and they all work on the same data. Open case studies, on the other hand, offer links to external sources or search activities so that they can look for further information on the web.

In the first case, the learners work on a common ground under the same conditions. They will then be assessed according to how well they analysed the case and processed the information. When using open case studies the learners are also trained in and assessed on research skills if this is an important component of the teaching and learning programme.

The EXPLICS team sees a need for both open and closed case studies and developed 11 closed case studies and 6 open case studies. However, this differentiation can only be a tentative one, as internet-based case studies always allow further research on the problem on the internet; internet-based case studies will always be somewhere between closed and open case studies.

3.3 How to use case studies in class?¹⁶

Case studies can be used in a language class covering a lesson of 90 or 120 minutes, or as a series of lessons, depending on the complexity of the case. There may be extra activities on vocabulary and grammar provided by the teacher, and there may be more detailed scrutiny of the case from a content and language point of view. A case study will not usually be used for an entire course over a whole semester, whereas global simulations normally are. If the teacher runs a case study over a whole course and integrates too many vocabulary, grammar, reading and listening exercises, both the learners and the teacher might lose sight of the overall task, the development of the solution to an authentic problem, and get lost in traditional exercises.

Case studies will normally be integrated into a larger context and embedded into a thematic unit or a linguistic topic. They can be used ideally with the learning

¹⁶ For further details see also Fischer/Casey/Abrantes/Gigl/Lešnik 2008: 29-47.

outcomes of a course module. For example, at the end of a module on copyright issues in a course on legal French, the teacher may ask the learners to work on the EXPLICS case study “Droits d’auteurs et l’industrie de la musique”¹⁷ and see whether they can manage the legal aspects and use the language covered in the course in a real-life context.

The use of case studies in language teaching has a considerable impact on the roles of the teachers and the learners as the learners take more responsibility for their learning, take their own decisions and plan their own collaboration and work. The teacher, on the other hand, has to accept that he/she must provide the correct classroom management to allow this to happen, step back from directing the class and try to facilitate the learning. The teacher will help in the research process, clarify aspects concerning the tasks or the text material, monitor the development of the presentations and written documents and finally assess the learners’ language strengths and weaknesses, and give appropriate feedback that helps them improve their language competence.

3.4 Why should language case studies be used in teaching?

Language case studies encourage the learners to take more responsibility for their learning. They take a (more) active role in the language class, and are challenged to a larger extent. They are not able to sit back and listen, but have to search, analyse, develop and produce, and are active all the time. The fact that they have to analyse an authentic problem stimulates them to search for further information on the topic and spend considerable time reading and producing texts; this intensifies the learning process and has a very positive effect on their motivation. As human beings normally try to solve problems and help in difficult situations, a problem-based approach stimulates them to develop a solution and to help those in difficulty. They do not have to carry out simple repetitive exercises, but their production suddenly has a meaning and they can contribute to the solution of the problem with their own knowledge, skills and linguistic competencies; their personalities, knowledge and skills count and they are taken seriously.

Language case studies are particularly suitable for LSP courses (Languages for Specific Purposes) as the teacher may choose a topic from the students’ field of study. When working on an LSP case study, the language teacher can consult a subject-area specialist (SAS), and develop the case study in close co-operation with the SAS or even use a team-teaching scenario, where the SAS assesses the content aspects and the language teacher assesses linguistic aspects.¹⁸

For language courses focusing on legal aspects, for example, the EXPLICS team developed case studies on copyright issues (French case study “Droits d’auteurs et l’industrie de la musique”¹⁹), on lobbying (French case study “Lobbying – une affaire européenne”²⁰) or on disability rights in the airline industry (English case study “Disability rights case study”²¹), although these case studies can also be used in general language classes but with a different outcome.

¹⁷ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/music/explics.htm>

¹⁸ See also: Fischer 2007a: 256-260; Fischer/Casey/Abrantes/Gigl/Lešnik 2008: 39-41.

¹⁹ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/music/explics.htm>.

²⁰ URL: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/lobbying/>.

²¹ URL: http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/disability_rights/index.html.

3.5 How to develop a language case study?²²

When developing a case study, the teacher first has to look at his/her own syllabus and see what context or topic could be selected that corresponds to the themes discussed in class or to the linguistic aspects covered in the syllabus. When selecting a problematic situation it is important not to choose a very general problem with which the learners are already familiar, as they would not need to research the problem any further. Ideally, the learners should have to analyse a very specific problem, which might have only local impact and which occurs in a country where the target language is spoken. In this case, the learners will have to analyse the problem and will have to read and listen to the text material made available.

It is important that the role(s) of the learners are as authentic and as credible as possible. Bachelor students are more likely to do a placement during their studies or to start at the bottom of the hierarchy in a company after they finish their degree than immediately becoming the CEO of a multinational. If the role is not authentic, the students will not work on the case study seriously, and their presentations will become superficial and exaggerated role plays.

Having chosen the problem area, the teacher prepares a description of the case and some background information.

The expected outcomes and the products should correspond to a realistic situation, but should also correspond to his/her syllabus.

The next step is to design build-up tasks which develop the learners' ability to complete the overall task. These build-up tasks need to be in a logical and chronological order, and for each task the expected output needs to be specified. The tasks should be grouped into stages, depending on the number of teaching and learning hours available. The outputs should cover both oral and written production, so that all four language skills are covered during the case study activity. The teacher will also decide how much work is done in class (depending on the technical resources available) and how much is done outside the classroom. It is likely that the learners will spend a considerable amount of time on the case in question outside the classroom, so the case description, the learners' roles and the tasks have to be absolutely clear to reduce misunderstandings and uncertainty.

²² See also: Cain/Fischer/Casey 2004; Fischer/Casey/Abrantes/Gigl/Lešnik 2008: 49-51.

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Chapter 4 Corpus Work

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4.0 Introduction

Case studies and global simulations bring together a collection of authentic texts which learners are invited to read and use in order to solve the problems the particular study poses. These texts can be put together to form a corpus. This chapter is devoted to corpus work which can become part of the overall educational process the case study sets into motion. Corpus work can be carried out both by teachers and by students (see, for example, Taylor Torsello / Ackerley / Castello 2009; Hidalgo / Quereda / Santana 2007; O’Keeffe / McCarthy / Carter 2007; Gavioli 2005; Aston / Bernardini / Stewart 2004; Sinclair 2004; Hunston 2002; Kettermann / Marko 2002; Partington 1998; Wichmann / Fligelstone / McEnery / Knowles 1997). Teachers can carry out corpus analysis to check the presence and the frequency of specific words, phrases, and structures. They can thus test hypotheses about the language, or the texts, by using the corpus. They can see how a particular word is used:

- what other word or phrase it is typically used with (collocation),
- what type of grammatical structure it fits into (colligation),
- what semantic field emerges from the word in the context (semantic preference),
- whether its use in a particular context influences the meaning of the word itself and other words entering that context: for example, certain words co-occur most typically with positively or negatively connoted words and therefore themselves take on attitudinal meaning (semantic prosody) (see, for example, Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 25-31).

The knowledge gained by the teachers in this way can feed into the teaching process, the creation of materials, and the development of tests.

There are strong pedagogical arguments for encouraging the students themselves to use a corpus to test hypotheses about the language. This makes language learning a process of independent discovery. The students themselves discover whether the word they want to use is actually used or not in a given syntactic or semantic context. A suggestion made by a peer or by the teacher can be seen as a hypothesis for the students to verify by using the corpus.

This chapter is based on the example of the English language case study “Disability Rights” [http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/disability_rights/index.html], but the intention is that it can serve as a model for corpus work based on any of the EXPLICS case studies and simulations for any of the languages. The chapter is structured into the following sections: 4.1 What is a corpus?; 4.2 Resources for corpus work; 4.3 How to build a small corpus; 4.4 Corpus analysis; 4.5 Language learning applications.

4.1 What is a corpus?

A corpus is a collection of texts, or, in some cases, of pieces of texts. These texts are chosen according to pre-specified criteria to represent, as far as possible, a language, a language variety, a genre, a discourse domain, an author or a topic (cf. Bowker and Pearson 2002). These can be seen either at a particular time or over a span of time (synchronic vs. diachronic corpus work). A language corpus is created in order to serve as a source of data for linguistic research of some kind. In order for the corpus to function easily as searchable research data, it is compiled in electronic format. The size of the corpus needed depends on purpose. To see how British English works, for example, one would want a very large corpus of British English. On the other hand, even small corpora can be very useful for educational purposes, especially when they represent a specific language domain, such as that of disability rights. When working with a small, specialized corpus, it may be interesting to compare the results for a particular lexical item or linguistic phenomenon with those resulting from investigation of a reference corpus. A reference corpus is usually a large, general corpus meant to represent a whole language or language variety. Examples are the Bank of English²³ and the British National Corpus²⁴.

4.2 Resources for corpus work

A wide range of resources are available for working with corpora.

4.2.1 Free software

The following software can be downloaded for free:

- **AntConc**, developed by Laurence Anthony of Waseda University, is a free concordancer which generates concordance lines, word frequency lists, keyword lists and word clusters.
http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/antconc_index.html
- **ConcApp**, created by Chris Greaves of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, generates concordances and frequency lists.
<http://www.edict.com.hk/PUB/concapp/>
- **TextSTAT**, developed at the Free University of Berlin, is a simple program for the analysis of texts. It generates word frequency lists and concordances. This software can also be used for corpus creation. Its web-spider reads the pages that you select from a particular website and creates a TextSTAT corpus.
<http://www.niederlandistik.fu-berlin.de/textstat/software-en.html>
- **TACT**, developed at the University of Toronto by John Bradley and others, is a DOS-based program that runs best on older versions of Windows. It generates wordlists, concordances and statistics.
<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/tact/>

²³ <http://www.collins.co.uk/books.aspx?group=140>

²⁴ <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/what/index.html>

4.2.2 Commercially available software

The following software is commercially available from Oxford University Press:

- **WordSmith Tools**, developed by Mike Scott, is a suite of programs that enables the user to create concordances and word lists. These lists allow the user to see the frequency of items, word clusters and keywords in a corpus. The program can also perform detailed statistical analyses.

http://www.oup.com/elt/catalogue/guidance_articles/ws_form?cc=global

A tutorial is available at: <http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/>

4.2.3 Other resources available online

Some corpora can be accessed and analysed online. These can give teachers practice before compiling their own corpus. They can also provide data with which you can compare your own results. The following websites give access to a range of corpora and provide concordancing tools:

- **BNC Search:** to perform simple searches of the 100 million word British National Corpus <http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html>
- **Corpus.byu.edu:** to search corpora in English, Spanish and Portuguese <http://corpus.byu.edu/>
- **Querying Internet corpora:** to search Internet corpora in Chinese, English, Finnish, German, French, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish <http://corpus.leeds.ac.uk/internet.html>
- **The Complete Lexical Tutor:** provides a large number of tools for data-driven learning <http://www.lextutor.ca/> and allows the user to search English and French corpora <http://www.lextutor.ca/concordancers/>
- **VLC Web Concordancer:** allows the user to search English, French, Chinese and Japanese corpora <http://www.edict.com.hk/concordance/>
- **TAPoR Tools:** a portal which allows the analysis and retrieval of texts <http://portal.tapor.ca/portal/portal>
- **CLAWS:** part-of-speech tagger for English <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/claws/>
- **Frequency lists (BNC):** contains frequency lists, useful for keyword analysis etc. <http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/ucrel/bncfreq/flists.html>
- **WebCorp:** a linguistic search engine for accessing the web as a corpus <http://www.webcorp.org.uk>

4.3 How to build a small corpus

A corpus can be compiled in different ways according to the specific needs of the user. For the purposes of the users of this handbook, a few simple steps can be

followed to create a small corpus consisting of the authentic texts used or referred to in each case study or global simulation.

1. Create a folder where your texts will be stored.
2. Select each text you wish to include in your corpus; copy and paste it into a .txt file using NotePad or WordPad.
3. Save each .txt file in the folder, assigning a name that clearly identifies the text.
4. Add metadata to each file to ensure that you can always access information about the texts. This may include the following:
 - source of text (URL, name of website, name of newspaper, etc.)
 - author
 - date text was produced
 - title of text
5. Enclose metadata between tags, i.e. < > (see Fig. 1). This is important because when generating word lists or concordances, you can ask the software to exclude such tags (i.e. the words between < >).

```
<Explics Project>
<http://www.sz.zsm.uni-wuerzburg.de/projekte/explics/>
<08 November 2007>
The aim of the EXPLICS project is to improve language competence of students by preparing models of best-practice in how to exploit Internet case study and simulation templates and by familiarising language teachers with these models. This is achieved by bringing together the different competence areas of the project partners. These specialisations include: task-oriented and
```

Figure 1: An example of metadata added to a text.

6. Optionally, tags can be added to the texts in a corpus. A tag is a short “comment label” attached to a portion of a text, which may specify what purpose it serves in the text. For example, in a letter of complaint, the formula “Dear X” could be tagged <salutation>. When all the functional components of the text are tagged, their sequence can be described. Alternatively, each word in a text can be tagged for its part of speech (see Fig. 2). This can be done using an automatic tagger, such as CLAWS; see resources in 4.2.3.

```
Budget_NN1 airline_NN1 Ryanair_NP0 's_POS appeal_NN1 against_PRP a_AT0
court_NN1 judgement_NN1 which_DTQ found_VVD it_PNP was_VBD unlawful_AJ0
to_TO0
charge_VVI a_AT0 disabled_AJ0 passenger_NN1 for_PRP a_AT0 wheelchair_NN1
begins_VVZ on_PRP Monday_NP0 ._.
```

Figure 2: An example of a text tagged for parts of speech (tagged automatically by CLAWS).

Your corpus can now be analysed using one of the resources listed in 4.2.

4.4 Corpus Analysis

Corpus analysis is the examination of the data stored in an electronic linguistic database with a view to investigating word frequency, key words and phraseological and structural patterns in the corpus. In this section, reference is made to a sample corpus built from the texts used in the “Disability Rights” case study (18,098 words). In all of the following examples, the software AntConc has been used.

4.4.1 Word lists

A **word list** (see Figure 3) is a list of all the words (types) in the corpus, ranked according to their frequency of occurrence. Words can also be listed in alphabetical order. It is also possible to exclude function words from the list by using what is known as a stop list.²⁵ This process leaves us with just the content words and thus allows us to get a clear idea of the content of the corpus texts from the most frequent words.

Rank	Freq	Word	Lemma Word Form(s)
1	144	disabled	
2	136	ryanair	
3	125	wheelchair	
4	122	passengers	
5	119	airport	
6	107	service	
7	97	mr	
8	81	airlines	
9	81	disability	
10	77	airline	
11	77	ra	
12	75	said	
13	72	ross	
14	67	assistance	
15	59	stansted	
16	58	act	
17	57	cost	
18	54	services	
19	53	case	
20	52	costs	
21	52	provide	
22	51	uk	

Figure 3: Word list of lexical items in the Disability Rights corpus sorted by frequency.

²⁵ A stop list is a list of words, typically function words and proper names, that one wants to exclude from a search in the corpus because they are considered unimportant, irrelevant or misleading for the search itself. When the stop list is run, and a word contained within the stop list is encountered, it is disregarded rather than indexed. As a result, only relevant words appear in the frequency list.

4.4.2 Keywords

Keywords (see Figure 4) are words which occur with an unusually high frequency in a corpus. These are revealed when the word list from a corpus is compared with the word list from a reference corpus (see section 4.2.3 for reference corpus word lists). (Keyness is the technical term referring to the statistical measure of their unusual, comparative frequency.) Keywords signal what is lexically characteristic of the corpus that is being analysed but is not typical of the reference corpus.

Rank	Freq	Keyness	Keyword
1	144	358.784	disabled
2	136	349.523	ryanair
3	125	321.253	wheelchair
4	122	302.574	passengers
5	119	286.751	airport
6	97	249.292	mr
7	107	243.143	service
8	81	198.018	airlines
9	77	197.892	ra
10	81	190.613	disability
11	72	185.041	ross
12	75	182.751	said
13	77	180.533	airline
14	67	155.382	assistance
15	59	151.631	stansted
16	51	131.071	uk
17	54	122.820	services
18	58	121.989	act
19	57	119.554	cost
20	52	117.828	costs
21	52	117.828	provide
22	53	114.757	case

Figure 4: Keyword list of lexical items in the Disability Rights corpus sorted by frequency.

4.4.3 Word clusters

Word clusters are recurring multi-word units, that is, combinations of two or more words that identify recurrent formulaic expressions in the corpus such as those exemplified in Figure 5:

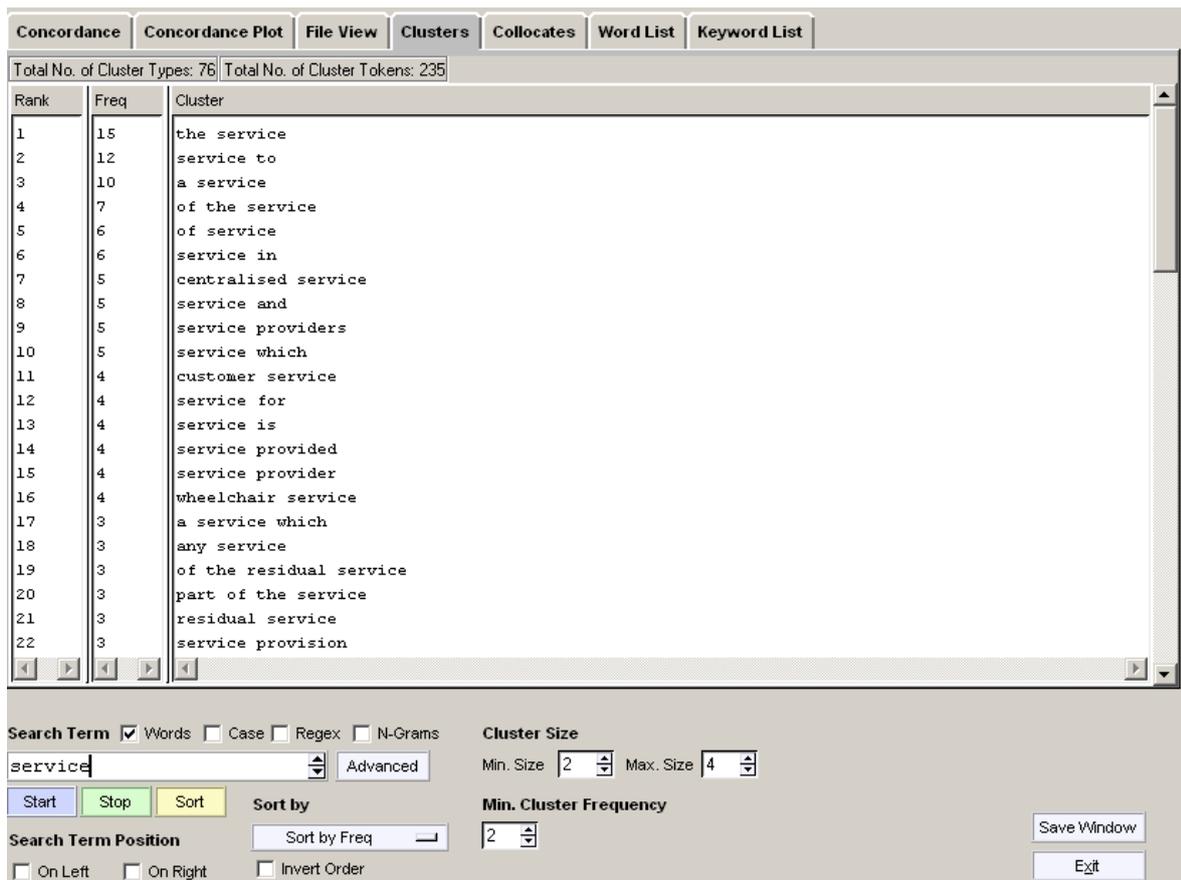


Figure 5: Clusters of words including the search word *service*.

4.4.4 Concordances

When a meaning unit is encoded more than once through similar or the same linguistic and textual resources, then we have a **pattern**. A **pattern** may be defined as the **recurrent encoding of a meaning unit with similar linguistic/textual resources**. A pattern may be discovered by using a concordancer to carry out a search of the so-called “key word in context” (KWIC) type. A key-word search retrieves all the instances of a given word in the corpus and displays them in a **concordance** (see Figure 3). This shows the word searched for, called key word, in its immediate environment. **Concordances** reveal the typical co-text of use of an expression, that is, its associations with other words or structures or meaning units (collocations). Given the high frequency of *provide*, *providing*, *provision* in the corpus, we might want to do a search for the stem *prov**, where the asterisk is a “wild card” representing any subsequent letter(s) up to the next space. The concordance in Figure 6 was generated from this search and reveals recurrent phrases such as: *a provider of services*, *service provider*, *the provision of services*. Such searches may reveal **collocation** or **colligation** (see 4.0).

isabled person which results from compliance by a provider of services with a Section
 ders of services to make adjustments: 1. Where a provider of services has a practice,
 isabled persons to make use of a service which a provider of services provides, or
 service and Ryanair believes that they should be providing free wheelchair services
 e service. Option 1 would create a single service provider at any given airport, which

er, it could result in there being a sole service provider at each airport or
 eeing and publishing quality standards of service provision and providing an annual
 rtunity of clarifying the situation as far as the provision of services to those of
 2 of this Section and Section 20 and 21 - (a) the provision of services includes the

Figure 6: Sample concordance lines for *provi** sorted to the left of the key word.

Another frequently occurring pattern emerges when a key word in context (KWIC) search for *discrim** is carried out. The search reveals the link between the *discrim** forms and the preposition *against*.

w moves to stop airlines discriminating against disabled
 rposes of Section 19, a provider of services also discriminates against a disabled
 pt from Part III. They still have a duty to avoid discrimination against disabled
 ve the right as a disabled person not to be discriminated against The BBC's
 nge was not to determine whether Mr Ross had been discriminated against but to
 y for rental of a wheelchair and that he had been discriminated against; its argument
 It was accordingly accepted that Mr Ross had been discriminated against. 2. RA
 The claimant seeks a declaration that he has been discriminated against. This is in

Figure 7: Sample concordance lines for *discrim** sorted to the left of the key word.

Alternatively, a phraseological pattern may be the **recurrent association of a meaning unit with given linguistic forms or other meaning units**. This may reveal **semantic preference**; for example, *incur* tends to occur with words related to the field of finance, such as *costs* (see Figure 8).

represent only those costs incurred for passengers arriving and
 in which case such redundancy costs would not be incurred. 5.17 Modest
 le PRM assistance service and would therefore not incur any additional costs, and
 provide assistance to PRMs and therefore already incur the associated costs. This
 endants was responsible for paying the sum of £36 incurred by Mr Ross on his
 outward
 d Kingdom Airlines including RA paid for any cost incurred when a passenger in a

Figure 8: Sample concordance lines for *incur** sorted to the left of the key word.

Semantic prosody (see 4.0) may also be seen: for example, words such as *provide* and *avoid* co-occur with words denoting positive and negative concepts, respectively (see Figure 9).

<i>provide</i>	co-occurs with	positive terms like	<i>assistance, service</i>
<i>avoid</i>		negative terms like	<i>discrimination, difficulty</i>

Figure 9: Examples of semantic prosody: *provide, avoid*.

4.5 Language Learning Applications

Corpora can be used both with case studies and with global simulations. With case studies, the corpus can consist of just those texts referred to in the case study itself,

or it can include other relevant texts chosen either by the teacher or by the students. With global simulations, where the students themselves search for relevant reading or listening materials, the teacher and/or the students can compile a corpus of these materials. Corpus texts, whether for a case study or for a global simulation, may be about any of the topics dealt with, in which case they will provide useful vocabulary and collocations (see 4.0). They may instead be samples of the text types which the students are expected to produce, in which case they will serve as models. On the basis of the word lists, clusters and concordances, the teacher can create activities to help students to develop their lexical competence in a particular domain (see, for example, Figure 10). Alternatively, the corpus can be accessed directly by the students to investigate patterns, especially with more advanced learners (see for example Aston / Bernardini / Stewart 2004).

Disability rights case study

Preparatory work on the topic Getting ready for the case study **Prompts for the case study**

Talking about disability: word formation (3)

Fill in all the gaps, then press "Check" to check your answers.

Noun	verb	adjective
Accessibility	to access	accessible/ inaccessible
Access	to assist	
<input type="text"/>	to disable	<input type="text"/>
Disability	to impair	impaired
<input type="text"/>		
Provision	<input type="text"/>	

Prompts for the case study

- Background Information
- Situation
- Objectives
- Vocabulary building
- Roles
- Materials

Figure 10: Screenshot of vocabulary exercise from the Disability Rights Case Study

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Chapter 5: Vocabulary Building

Alison Standring (London) / Elke Gigl (Wien) / Johann Fischer (Göttingen)

5.0 Introduction

As vocabulary is an essential component of any language it is incumbent on language teachers to provide contexts in which learners can acquire, consolidate and expand their lexical range. Case studies and global simulations provide ideal contexts for vocabulary building, as this chapter will outline. Further information on how case studies and global simulations can be used for vocabulary building can be found in the chapter on corpus analysis.

5.1 What are the goals?

The vocabulary which learners need varies from individual to individual and whether the language is required for business, study, socialising, travel or some other purpose.

According to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), at an A1 level, learners should have a basic repertoire of words and phrases related to concrete situations. By A2, they should have sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine, everyday transactions and express basic needs.

At B1 learners should be able to express themselves on most topics pertinent to everyday life (for example, family, hobbies, work, travel and current affairs); while, at B2, learners should have a good range of vocabulary for all matters connected to their field and most general topics.

Learners who reach C1, should have a good command of a broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. Finally, at C2 they should be able to exploit '*a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity*'.²⁶

Case studies and global simulations can be effective for vocabulary building at all levels listed above but to illustrate this requires a closer examination of what we mean by 'vocabulary building'.

5.2 What do we mean by vocabulary building?

Traditionally, language has been divided into vocabulary (seen as individual words) and grammar (seen as the rules governing how words are used). In turn, vocabulary building has often been interpreted as expanding the number of individual words a learner knows. However, this perspective has problems.

5.2.1 How many words do learners need to know?

Firstly, how many words should a learner know? The question is almost impossible to answer, partly because there is controversy over what actually constitutes a 'word':

²⁶ See: http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf (p. 110).

are members of the same word family separate words (e.g. 'complement' and 'complementary'); should slang or dialect should be included (e.g. 'gotcha'); can words of a foreign origin be considered part of the language which has adopted them (e.g. *vice versa* in English)?

Of perhaps more relevance is whether 'knowing' more words means being able to communicate more effectively. This is not necessarily the case, as looking at the English language illustrates. A US company, Global Language Monitor (GLM)²⁷, believes English will soon contain one million words. The *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* contains only a fraction of these (170,000 words) and Professor David Crystal estimates the average native speaker 'only' knows around 35,000 words, with a well-educated person knowing around 50,000-75,000 words²⁸. Shakespeare, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language, used a 'mere' 31,534 words²⁹ in his works.

It would seem that learning all the words in the English language is neither feasible nor necessary. Instead, the number of words a learner needs depends on his/her communicative needs. In English, it has been estimated that, by the age of two, native speakers know around 300 words; by the age of five, they know around 5,000 words; and by the age of twelve they know around 12,000 words. In everyday spoken English, most people use around 2,000 to 2,500 words and newspapers use around 8,000 to 12,000 words³⁰.

Without underestimating the value of an extensive vocabulary range and the need to assimilate new words, especially at lower levels, it would seem that vocabulary building is not just about learning individual words. Rather, it is about being able to use vocabulary flexibly and fluently. As such, participating in case studies and global simulations is a more effective way of building vocabulary than reading dictionaries or memorising word lists.

5.2.2 What does it mean to 'know' a word?

This leads to the question of what it means to 'know' a word. It is generally accepted that learning a new word takes time. Learners will probably need to see, hear or use a word several times before it becomes part of their long-term memory and, again, this is a good reason to use case studies and global simulations as they can help learners consolidate vocabulary.

There are also different levels of knowing a word. Learners may understand the meaning of a word when they see or hear it (receptive knowledge) but might not know how to use it themselves (productive knowledge); they might know one meaning of a word but not its other uses; they might know how to spell a word but not how to pronounce it etc. As Henriksen describes:

In the process of acquiring word meaning, the learner's knowledge of a certain lexical item moves from mere word recognition (i.e. acknowledging that the word exists in

²⁷ Gall, C. (2009). The Words in the Mental Cupboard. In: *BBC News Magazine*
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/8013859.stm>.

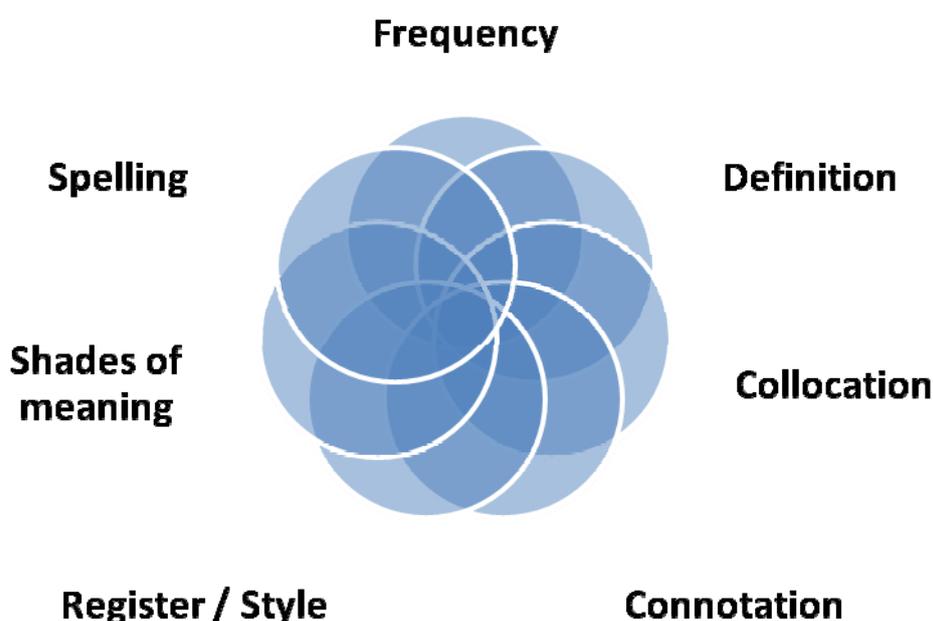
²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Efron, B. & Thisted R. (1976). Estimating the number of unseen species: How many words did Shakespeare know? In: *Biometrika* 63, p. 435-447.

³⁰ Wallwork, A. (1997). *Discussions A-Z*. Cambridge University Press.

the target language) through different degrees of partial knowledge (Brown, 1994) toward precise comprehension.
(Henriksen 1999: 311)

Further, the view of language consisting of 'vocabulary' and 'grammar' as separate entities has now been challenged. Lexicographical research suggests language consists of multi-word chunks, rather than isolated, individual words, and that the distinction between grammar and vocabulary is blurred. In the words of Michael Lewis who pioneered the 'Lexical Approach', 'the grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid'³¹. Fully 'knowing' a word, involves a myriad of factors:



Consequently, it is vital for learners to see, hear and use words in authentic contexts, thereby acquiring information about issues like collocation (words that commonly occur together) and colligation (word 'grammar'). Case studies and global simulations provide a wealth of authentic situations in which learners can observe how vocabulary is used and experiment with using it. As such, they can be extremely effective at vocabulary building.

5.3 How should vocabulary be taught?

Having examined the lexical competency expected at various language levels (A1 to C2) and discussed what 'vocabulary building' means, we have some insight into why case studies and global simulations are useful vehicles for vocabulary building. Further support is provided by research into how vocabulary should be taught.

When reviewing research conducted on vocabulary teaching since 1999, Read³² distinguishes between incidental and intentional vocabulary learning. The former is

³¹ Lewis, M. (2002). *The Lexical Approach*. Thompson Heinle.

³² Read, J. (2004). Research in Teaching Vocabulary. In: *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 24, p. 146-161.

when vocabulary is learnt as a by-product of some other activity (for example reading a newspaper article or listening to a radio programme).

Incidental learning undoubtedly takes place during case studies and global simulations. Case studies in particular typically contain a wealth of authentic (or authentic-like) input. Examples from the EXPLICS products include: dossiers and green papers ('Lobbying – une affaire européenne'; French B/C); internet documents ('Energetic Solutions'; English B) and recorded interviews ('Sicilia: terre liberata'; Italian B/C).

Nonetheless, incidental learning seems far more effective if supported by 'intentional learning', in other words, tasks which specifically focus on vocabulary. Examples of such tasks can be found in many of the EXPLICS products. For instance, the case study on 'Disability Rights' (English B/C) has vocabulary building tasks which involve completing crosswords, matching words and definitions and examining word formation.

Hulstijn and Laufer³³ argue there should be three factors involved in 'task-induced' incidental learning: the learners' need to achieve; a requirement that learners search for information on the meaning and/or form of a word; and an evaluation of how the information relates to the particular use of the word in question. Their research found that tasks incorporating two or three of the factors led to better retention of the target vocabulary than those with only one factor.

Research elsewhere indicates that learners assimilate new words more effectively and retain them for longer if they have a high level of involvement in learning tasks. For example, de la Fuente³⁴ found learners' receptive and productive vocabulary acquisition was greater when they had to negotiate and produce target vocabulary. Joe³⁵ also found that tasks requiring a high level of learner-generated original context were superior for vocabulary acquisition. Both case studies and global simulations require a high level of learner involvement and are thus likely to promote learners' lexical knowledge.

Finally, research suggests that forming associations helps learners recall vocabulary³⁶ and that contextualising lexical items helps to clarify meaning and use, as well as making the lexical items more memorable. Case studies and global simulations provide both contextualised input and output, in addition to encouraging learners to use vocabulary in meaningful ways.

5.3.1 Use your brain!

Our brain consists of two parts, which process input, ideas and feelings in a different way. In learning languages we need the co-operation of both halves. The left part of our brain is in charge of conceptual thinking, understanding and logical systematic patterns. This part puts ideas into a linguistic form and puts words into syntactic

³³ Hulstijn, J. & Laufer, B. (2001). Some empirical evidence for the involvement load hypothesis in vocabulary acquisition. In: *Language Learning* 51, p. 539-558.

³⁴ De la Fuente, M. (2002). Negotiation and oral acquisition of L2 vocabulary: the role of input and output in the receptive and productive acquisition of words. In: *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 24, p. 81-112.

³⁵ Joe, A. (1998). What effects do text-based tasks promoting generation have on incidental vocabulary acquisition?. In: *Applied Linguistics* 19, p. 357-377.

³⁶ Ellis, R. (1994). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford University Press, p. 557.

structures. The right part of the brain is responsible for creative, imaginative thinking and creates contexts; it puts the linguistic material into a meaningful context and creates linguistic phrases.

In traditional vocabulary learning activities, such as using a vocabulary book, the left part of the brain is used a lot as the new information is gathered in a linear way, while the right part is hardly used at all. When using **clustering** and **mind mapping** the effort in learning new vocabulary can be reduced by 30 % as both parts of the brain are active. Students who are familiar with these methods develop a far more positive approach to learning vocabulary. As they are more successful in their learning in a shorter period of time, this increases their motivation considerably.

With traditional methods the learner has to learn the vocabulary in two steps:

- a) learning the new word
- b) learning how the new word is used in a context.

With the methods explained below these two steps are combined and the learner structures the new word during the initial learning process. It is put into a logical context, which facilitates the use of it in a meaningful sentence.

Mind mapping:

Based on findings in brain research, Tony Buzan developed mind mapping to develop new ideas. As the emphasis is not simply on a logical-systematic level, but the creative element is also stimulated, this method has also been adopted for vocabulary acquisition training. Starting from a key topic word, groups are developed and these are then structured in thematic sub-groups with a specific structure which is visible to the learner.

Mind mapping is particularly useful for identifying and extending new subject-specific vocabulary. New words are linked with words already known. The vocabulary becomes more and more specific. By arranging and structuring the vocabulary in sub-groups, new synonyms can also be learnt.

Clustering:

This method was developed by Gabriele Rico in order to develop new ideas, and was then adapted as a method of learning vocabulary by associating new words with familiar ones. In clustering networks of ideas are linked to a core idea in an unstructured way, i.e. words are collected that are linked to a specific topic or situation.

As clustering is based on an unsystematic collection of words, it is particularly useful for the introduction of new words and topics.

With both methods, words are learnt and used in a meaningful context. At a later stage more words can be added, new words can be linked to existing ones, links between words can be made, and a hierarchical structure can be set up, e.g. by numbering the word groups or levels of hierarchy.

These methods can be used to prepare the learners for a specific case study or global simulation activity. In this case, the teacher will ask the learners to collect words linked with the topic or activity to be carried out. They can also be used at an

intermediate phase after the learners first read the reading material or analyse models for the global simulation activity. The learners will start with their personal word list, and each group member will contribute his/her vocabulary. The teacher will monitor the activity and a final version will be developed and presented to the whole class.

This collection of vocabulary will help the learners to discuss a complex topic with fluency and in a logical context. It helps them to enter a “vocabulary jungle”. The learner no longer learns new words in a linear way, but in a structured way in a specific context, i.e. it is already adapted for the brain. The learner can use new words automatically, as learning and using new vocabulary has been successful and he/she is motivated to continue the learning process.

5.3.2 Learning by reading!

When reading the texts in a case study or when analysing models for global simulation activities, the learner will encounter new words in a context and not isolated. It is useful to train the learner to analyse the meaning of new vocabulary from the context as content-related and structural signs might help to understand the exact meaning. Articles, pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions etc. may also help to understand a) the context and b) the meaning of the individual word. In order to check whether the hypothesis about the meaning is correct the learner may replace them by synonyms, words taken from other languages or internationalisms. This potential vocabulary is often not used in vocabulary teaching, but it may be particularly helpful for teaching LSP vocabulary as linguistic knowledge available is used to develop “intelligent hypotheses” in order to identify the meaning of unknown words.

Furthermore, it is useful to train the learners to use text semantics in order to identify key areas of the text, the author’s personal meaning, positive or negative connotations etc. This can be done by asking the learners to:

- identify the text type
- present a hypothesis about the content of the text after a first look at the text
- identify key parts (e.g. by identifying key words and their synonyms)
- identify parts of the texts in which the author presents his/her personal view
- identify the information provided by figures, tables, charts, photos
- look at internationalism and names.

Whereas in traditional reading comprehension activities the learner searches for the specific answers to the questions without analysing the broader context of the text, the activities mentioned above will guide him/her to understand the content, which can then be processed in the productive phase of the case study / global simulation activities. This has the advantage that the students have to make hypotheses about the content of the text, which is more helpful in learning. This will also facilitate a class conversation about the text.

5.3.3 Would you please listen!

Similarly to the reading activities, the learners are invited to make a hypothesis about the content of the listening text after an initial listening. Furthermore, they are asked to identify key words, internationalisms, facts given through figures. When using video recordings, the pictures also help them to understand the meaning.

As the listening (and reading) activities are a preliminary step for the productive phase, both in case study work and in a global simulation activity, the learners need to process the information and use it in their speaking and writing. They will no longer answer questions on the content of the texts simply for the sake of answering the questions, but appreciate that the listening (and reading) texts will be of importance to their own products, and need to be processed. There is a purpose in listening, which will help the learners to look at the context of the vocabulary. This will then help them a) to understand unknown words from the context and b) to use passive vocabulary actively.

5.3.4 Use the new vocabulary in your writing and speaking

The learners will use key words from the texts, subject-specific vocabulary and related vocabulary; they will also use the new words they encountered in the receptive phase of the activity, during the reading and listening activities. Using new vocabulary immediately in a specific context helps to embed it in the learners' active vocabulary.

It can be useful to provide specific phrases the learners might need for their presentations and reports. These can be added to the internet case study or global simulation as resource documents or can be introduced in class. Furthermore, the learners should be trained in paraphrasing a sentence, using words with a similar meaning or synonyms, and internationalisms.

In speaking it is important that the learners learn how to fill gaps in the target language, e.g. when thinking about the next item on their list, as every speaker hesitates, breaks, restarts and self-corrects. They should also be made aware that pronunciation and melody are more important in understanding than correct grammar. Training their pronunciation and giving feedback is therefore extremely important.

Learners also have to know that they are allowed to make mistakes, both in their writing and in their speaking. In many cases they will be afraid of making mistakes, which in speaking will have a negative impact on fluency. This can cause a breakdown in conversation. In language teaching and learning, errors have been redefined in a creative attempt to try to phrase something. Being able to communicate an idea and to understand it has become more important than avoiding errors, as mother tongue speakers will also make mistakes from time to time. Learners have to learn that it is normal to make errors. The teacher should therefore act as a moderator, discuss problematic areas and give feedback. He/she should motivate the learners to produce language, and to try out new words and phrases. Furthermore, he/she should teach the learners to analyse mistakes themselves and to be able to identify which mistakes are more important (as they destroy communication) and which ones are less important in successful communication.

The most important aspect, however, is the nature of the communication: The learners should take a fairly authentic role of a kind they might fill in real life in an

authentic situation. This will stimulate them to take an interest in the case in question, and the vocabulary linked to it, in more detail. They will be personally involved and will work to understand and use new words.

5.4 Conclusion

Case studies and global simulations are task-based and, in general, the focus is on language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) rather than discrete language areas like vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation. This does not however negate their ability to help learners improve their lexical knowledge and range. As this chapter has outlined, both case studies and global simulations are effective for vocabulary building:

- They can be used at any level (A1-C2);
- They provide authentic situations in which learners can observe how vocabulary is used and experiment with using it;
- They encourage learners to use vocabulary flexibly and fluently;
- They discourage learners from having partial knowledge of individual memorised words;
- They encourage 'incidental' vocabulary learning which can be further reinforced by 'intentional' vocabulary learning (i.e. vocabulary-specific tasks);
- They require a high level of learner involvement, which research indicates is vital for retaining new vocabulary and consolidating existing vocabulary;
- They contextualise vocabulary making it more memorable and clarifying its meaning and use.

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Chapter 6: Language Assessment

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6.0 Introduction

This chapter will focus on how case studies and global simulations can be used for language assessment. It includes:

- a definition of ‘assessment’ as seen in contrast to ‘testing’ or ‘evaluation’;
- an examination of the types of assessment case studies and global simulations can offer (focusing on: placement or entry assessment, diagnostic assessment, progress or formative assessment, final achievement or summative assessment, and proficiency assessment);
- a summary of the language levels and competencies case studies and global simulations can assess;
- a rationale for using case studies and global simulations to assess language skills;
- a discussion about how to use case studies and global simulations to assess listening, reading, speaking and writing.

6.1 What is assessment?

Assessment is an important aspect of any language course but its nature varies widely, and is complicated by different interpretations of what ‘assessment’ means. For the purposes of this chapter, and in line with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, the term ‘assessment’ will be used in contrast to the terms ‘evaluation’ or ‘testing’ as depicted below:

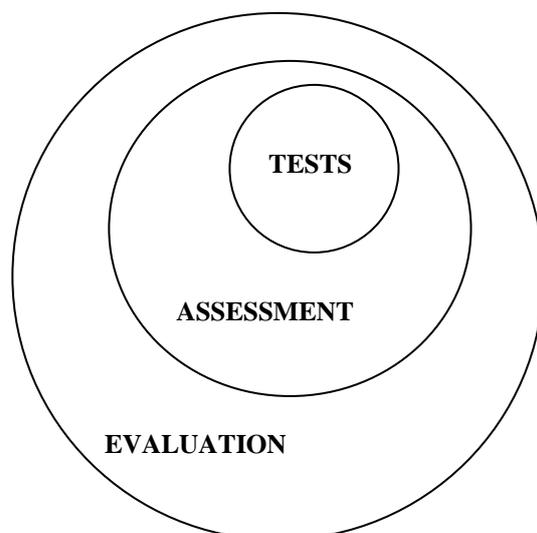


Diagram 1

'Evaluation' is the broadest of the three terms. In addition to learner proficiency, it encompasses all aspects of a course including: "...the effectiveness of particular methods or materials, the kind and quality of discourse actually produced in the programme, learner/teacher satisfaction [and] teaching effectiveness"³⁷. 'Assessment', by contrast, focuses purely on the learner rather than the course as a whole.

'Testing' is the narrowest of the three terms. In order to be credible, tests must conform to strict requirements. These include: validity³⁸, reliability³⁹, practicality and backwash⁴⁰. While 'assessment' includes testing, some forms of assessment (for example, informal observations) cannot really be described as 'tests' because they do not necessarily meet the strict criteria of validity and reliability. They do however provide valuable feedback for learners and can be used to 'assess' learners' language.

6.2 What forms of assessment can case studies and global simulations be used for?

Language assessment serves many functions. It can be used to:

- a) place learners into appropriate classes or levels (i.e. placement or entry assessment);
- b) diagnose learners' strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of a course (i.e. diagnostic assessment);
- c) check whether learners have understood material covered during the course (i.e. progress or formative assessment);
- d) establish whether learners have met course objectives (i.e. final achievement or summative assessment);
- e) assess learners' overall language ability (i.e. proficiency assessment).

The purpose of assessment affects timing, design and grading. With regard to timing, the main issues are whether assessment should occur at the beginning of a course, the end of a course or during a course and whether assessment should be continuous or discrete (i.e. whether it should take place over a period of time or be 'one-off').

With regard to design and grading, key issues are whether a range of marks is desirable or whether all learners should be able to achieve high marks. Similarly, whether grading should be subjective (perhaps following a qualitative marking scheme) or objective (with answers that are either 'right' or 'wrong').

As this chapter will illustrate, case studies and global simulations are ideal for assessment during a course (progress or formative assessment) and, at the end of a course, the portfolios created by learners are well-suited to proficiency assessment and/or summative assessment. It would be rare for case studies and global

³⁷ Council of Europe, *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, available at: http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf, page 177.

³⁸ This includes content-validity, construct-validity and face-validity.

³⁹ This includes test-reliability and scorer-reliability.

⁴⁰ Sometimes referred to as 'wash-back'.

simulations to be used at the beginning of a course (i.e. for placement or diagnosis), but is possible and may provide a refreshing alternative to more traditional assessment methods.

6.3 What sort of language can case studies and global simulations assess?

As the EXPLICS project demonstrates, case studies and global simulations can be used for learners ranging from 'Basic Users' (A1/A2) to 'Proficient Users' (C1/C2). As such, case studies and global simulations can be used to assess language at any level; there is no restriction, although the use of case studies is rather limited at level A 1. Moreover, case studies and global simulations promote a task-based approach to learning. Within this approach, tasks require learners to use all four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking – and to be adept with grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and discourse management. Transferable skills such as team-work, problem-solving, critical thinking, argumentation, research skills and time management, are also required. Consequently, case studies and global simulations can be used to assess all aspects of language learning and use.

6.4 Why should case studies and global simulations be used for language assessment?

There are many reasons for case studies and global simulations to be used when assessing language. This section will focus on three:

- a) the advantage of assessment being continuous rather than 'one-off' (thereby improving assessment reliability);
- b) the authentic nature of case studies and global simulations (thereby enhancing assessment validity);
- c) the opportunity case studies and global simulations allow for self-assessment and peer assessment (thereby encouraging learner autonomy).

6.4.1 Advantages of continuous assessment versus 'one-off' assessment

While case studies and global simulations can be used for 'one-off' assessment, they are perfectly suited to continuous long-term assessment, which has many advantages.

Firstly, 'one-off' exams only provide a snapshot of a learner's performance on a particular day. This is an issue for learners who find examinations daunting and consistently underperform. It is also a problem for learners who experience an 'off' day or, conversely, for learners who manage to perform atypically well. In general, continuous assessment provides a truer picture of learners' abilities and is more reliable than a single test taken on a single day. It also enables the effort and progress of weaker learners to be recognised in a way that is difficult in traditional exams.

Secondly, 'one-off' exams can have negative backwash. Teachers may prioritise test preparation rather than learners' language needs and learners may not value class

activities or homework because they are not directly assessed. As Hughes comments, “If a test is regarded as important, preparation for it can come to dominate all teaching and learning activities”⁴¹. Continuous assessment encourages teachers to focus on all elements of a learner’s work (for example, oral skills, participation in group work and grammatical accuracy). Moreover, it encourages learners to take their work seriously throughout the course.

Continuous assessment is not without problems. During the course, it may require more record-keeping and paperwork than ‘one-off’ assessment. However, modern technology makes it possible to create electronic portfolios (including samples of learners speaking⁴²), which are easy to store, duplicate and access. Continuous assessment also relieves the pressure of having to write and mark traditional tests – a task which is often very time-consuming.

Another drawback is that continuous assessment tends to be less objective than ‘one-off’ assessment. This raises concerns about reliability. Unless continuous assessment is standardised, teachers can operate quite differently; there is no guarantee of consistency. Standardisation requires time, effort and commitment. It involves developing clear guidelines for marking, having regular standardisation meetings (to compare sample materials and agree benchmarking) and may necessitate double-marking. Arguably, though, the many advantages of continuous assessment justify any extra work.

6.4.2 Authenticity

One of the most significant advantages of using case studies and global simulations for assessment is that they involve authentic use of language. Many traditional tests consist of de-contextualised items and multiple-choice, true/false, gap-fill or short-answer questions. Such tests have benefits. They have a high degree of reliability – answers are either right or wrong so marking is not subjective; and they are easy to administer – marking can be done quickly and does not require highly-trained markers. Nonetheless, improving communicative competence is the main aim of many (if not most) language courses. The priority given to communication is evident in the CEFR framework (see below).

Table 1: Common Reference Levels: Global Scale⁴³

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
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⁴¹ Hughes, A. (1989), *Testing for Language Teachers*, Cambridge University Press.

⁴² Using tools such as ‘Wimba’; see: <http://www.wimba.com>.

⁴³ Taken from: http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf, page 24.

	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

If the aim of a course is to develop real-world language skills, a valid test should assess those skills. This is a core reason for using case studies and global simulations for assessment rather than multiple-choice grammar tests. Moreover, as case studies and global simulations are highly adaptable, they can be used to target

whatever language context is of most interest/relevance to learners. The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) highlights three of these areas: *Social and Tourist, Work and Study*, and provides 'Can Do' statements⁴⁴ regarding desired skills in these areas.

For teachers creating case studies and global simulations and intending to use them for assessment purposes, these statements are a useful reference. For example, in a *Social and Tourist* context at ALTE Level 4 (C1), learners are expected to "understand complex opinions / arguments as expressed in serious newspapers". To assess this ability, projects could be devised where learners do exactly this.

6.4.3 Opportunities for self-assessment and peer assessment

Traditionally, teachers assess learners in a hierarchical relationship, where all the power lies with the teacher. More innovative assessment methods have called for a 'redistribution of educational power'⁴⁵ arguing that assessment should be 'done with' and 'done by' the learner rather than merely being 'done to' the learner⁴⁶. Consequently, if we want to develop learners' evaluative and critical skills, various forms of assessment are desirable; specifically self-assessment (where learners assess themselves) and peer assessment (where learners assess other learners). These assessment methods raise learners' awareness and encourage learners to be actively involved in the learning process. They also encourage learners to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and to set personal learning objectives. Ultimately, they increase learner responsibility and autonomy, enhancing the learning process.

6.5 How can we use case studies and global simulations for assessment?

As stated earlier, case studies and global simulations can be used to assess all aspects of language (See 6.4). However, they lend themselves particularly well to skill-based assessment and, in particular, assessment of the productive skills. This section will illustrate how case studies and global simulations can be used to assess receptive skills (listening and reading) but will focus mostly on how they can be used to assess productive skills (reading and writing). Discrete language areas such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and discourse management are subsumed within each skill.

6.5.1 Receptive Skills (Reading & Listening)

Case studies and global simulations contain a wide array of listening and reading materials, spanning newspaper articles, websites, radio programmes, videos, academic journals, letters, reports and presentations. Some materials are specifically written or recorded for projects; others are real-world materials which, in the case of lower levels, may have been adapted. In all instances, the materials represent realistic examples of language – they are authentic in nature. The activities

⁴⁴ See pages 244-257 http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf.

⁴⁵ Heron, J. (1981), "Assessment revisited", in: Boud, D. (ed.), *Developing Learner Autonomy in Learning*, Kogan Page.

⁴⁶ Harris, D. & Bell, C. (1990), *Evaluating and Assessing for Learning*, Kogan Page.

associated with the listening and reading materials are similarly diverse and may include: taking notes, answering questions or producing summaries.

In general, the reading and listening materials exist as input for productive tasks, rather than as an end in themselves. For example, in the case study on Disability Rights (English, CEFR level B/C) learners are shown a video about NISH Postal Services' employment of people with disabilities. This helps them respond to the issue of how Ryan Air treats disabled people⁴⁷. Similarly, in the global simulation on an NGO in Latin America (Spanish, CEFR level B), learners read and listen to information about what NGOs are as preparation for creating their own NGO⁴⁸. This means that, throughout case studies and global simulations, receptive skills are assessed indirectly – if learners have not understood material, they will not be effective with productive tasks. However, this form of assessment is not particularly helpful when generating marks for receptive skills or providing constructive feedback.

More direct assessment is possible although, as is often the case, there can be a conflict between validity and reliability. For example, authentic reading and listening activities are more likely to involve taking notes or providing summaries than completing gap-fills, answering multiple-choice questions or responding to true/false statements. Having said this, the former are more difficult to assess – questions arise over what constitutes an ideal answer; whether spelling should matter; and how to ensure consistent marking. In contrast, the latter are easy to mark but may lack validity in that they do not represent real-world tasks.

A further option is self-assessment. Having experienced the speaking and reading tasks in case studies and global simulations, learners are in a good position to respond to DIALANG statements⁴⁹ such as “I can understand articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints” (Reading, CEFR level B2) or “I can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, academic or vocational life” (Listening, CEFR level B2) – or variations of these drawn up by teachers. Self-assessment is useful for increasing learner autonomy and language awareness, as discussed in Section 6.5.3, but it is difficult to link self-assessment with a credit-bearing grading system. Honest self-appraisal is less likely when formal grades are at stake.

6.5.2 Productive Skills

Case studies and global simulations contain a wide range of productive tasks. At A1/A2 level, writing tasks may include writing post-cards, filling in forms, designing posters, devising menus or creating recipes; speaking tasks may involve basic dialogues, describing people and places, giving simple opinions or expressing requirements. At higher levels, writing tasks may require learners to produce reports, draw up business plans or produce newspaper articles; while speaking tasks may ask learners to give (mini-)presentations, in groups, pairs or individually. At all levels, there are many forms of spoken group work whether prepared (for example, role-plays, interviews, debates or meetings) or spontaneous (for example, class conversations and discussions).

⁴⁷ See: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/implix/disability3/index.html>.

⁴⁸ See: <http://www.zess.uni-goettingen.de/explics/spanish/Index.html>.

⁴⁹ See: http://www.dialang.org/project/english/ProfInt/Icanall_EN.htm.

As mentioned in 6.5.2, the tasks in case studies and global simulations can target any language context, whether *Social and Tourist* (as in writing an email to a hotel, or ordering a meal in a restaurant), *Work* (as in writing a memo, or making a sales pitch) or *Study* (as in writing an academic essay, or responding to questions after a presentation). The range of tasks in case studies and global simulations makes them ideal for assessing productive skills. This is perhaps especially true for speaking, which can be difficult to assess because of practical issues such as space and time, especially when dealing with large numbers of learners. As such, despite being a core language skill, it is often neglected by traditional language tests. Case studies and global simulations can help remedy this.

There are various ways to assess productive skills. One approach is use ‘impression marking’; in other words for the teacher to assign a mark based on an overall impression of competence/worth. This has the advantage of being fairly swift and may be reasonably consistent, especially if done by experienced teachers. However, there is no guarantee that the same teacher would give the same mark on different occasions – factors such as tiredness and mood may have an impact. Nor is there any guarantee that a different teacher would give the same mark. Most importantly, ‘impression marking’ does not provide learners with usable information about their strengths, weaknesses and how to improve. Overall, therefore, ‘impression marking’ is not particularly desirable.

Having said this, ‘impression marking’ can be useful for peer-assessment. In the example below, learners are given a form to complete while listening to other learners’ presentations. The form raises awareness of factors which help or hinder communicative competence and encourages listeners to be reflective and engaged. At the same time, the form is not complicated so should not prove distracting (i.e. it should not remove learners’ attention from the main task of listening).

Speaker	One thing you liked about the presentation	One thing which could have been improved	A question to ask the presenter
1			
2			

Nonetheless, if the marking of productive tasks is to be reliable, clear assessment criteria are required. These may match the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (CEFR) or be inspired by national and international language examinations. Alternatively, they may be drawn up to match the specific needs of individual institutions and/or learners⁵⁰. Once criteria have been decided, they can be used to generate assessment scales, grids, check-lists or ‘can do’ statements.

Assessment scales contain descriptors of language proficiency⁵¹. They can either be *holistic* or *analytic*. As the name implies, *holistic scales* provide a global assessment

⁵⁰ The next chapter contains information on how to benchmark case studies and global simulations. Also, when developing criteria it may be useful to refer to the *Manual for relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference* available at: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Manual%20Revision%20-%20proofread%20-%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁵¹ Details on how to develop scales of descriptors can be found in Appendix A of the *CEFR*, available at: http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf.

of learners' proficiency. This may encompass the full language range (CEFR levels A1 to C2) but, with case studies and global simulations, is more likely to target a narrower range (e.g. B1 to B2). Examples can be found in Cambridge ESOL examinations such as CPE, CAE and FCE⁵². By contrast, *analytic scales*, divide tasks into separate components each of which is assessed separately. Typical categories for writing and speaking are task achievement, cohesion, coherence, style/register, language range, language accuracy and, in the case of speaking, pronunciation. However, many categories are possible. *Analytic scales* provide more specific feedback and thus are probably a more useful learning tool than *holistic scales*.

By using scales, learners can be given feedback in various ways. One method is to use numbers which represent attainment as in 'Method One' below (a similar form can be found in Appendix D). A second method is to use a 'tick grid' (see 'Method Two' below). A third method is to write individual feedback based on assessment criteria (see Appendix C). The first two methods are time-efficient but work best when personalised by 'points to consider' or 'additional comments'.

Method One: Group Task Feedback

A:	Ability to express opinions					
1	2	3	4	5	6	
B:	Ability to listen and respond					
1	2	3	4	5	6	
C:	Pronunciation					
1	2	3	4	5	6	
D:	Accuracy of Language					
1	2	3	4	5	6	
E:	Appropriacy of Language					
1	2	3	4	5	6	
F:	Body Language					
1	2	3	4	5	6	

Key: Higher scores indicate good attainment

<u>Points to Consider</u>	
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⁵² See page 28 of the *First Certificate in English (FCE) handbook for teachers 2008*; http://www.cambridgeesol.org/assets/pdf/resources/teacher/fce_hb_dec08.pdf.

Method Two: Writing Feedback

Assessment Criteria	Needs a lot of work	Satisfactory, but needs work	Good	Very good	Excellent
Text Organisation and Cohesion					
Content					
Register & Style					
Language Range					
Language Accuracy					
Task fulfilment					

Additional Comments:

Another way to assess language is via check-lists. These are presented in the form of either questions or statements which the teacher or learner responds to. Some check-lists focus purely on what the learner *has* or *has not* done. The example below is an extract from a check-list used for self-assessment of a problem-solution report; it could also have been used for teacher-learner assessment or peer assessment.

Structure		
Does the report contain:		
a) an introduction?	YES	NO
b) an analysis of the current situation?	YES	NO
c) possible solutions?	YES	NO
d) an evaluation of the solutions?	YES	NO
e) recommendations?		
Does the report have sub-headings?	YES	NO
Does the main body of the report contain clear, well-organised paragraphs?	YES	NO

A more detailed example of a check list (used for academic essays) is shown in Appendix A. This check list could be used by teachers but was originally intended as a tool for learners to reflect on and assess their strengths and weaknesses after receiving essay feedback from the teacher. Thus, in terms of accuracy, the teacher highlights language errors using a correction code (e.g. SP = spelling mistake and WO = a problem with word order). Then, when the essays are returned, learners have to use the teacher's notes to firstly identify whether they have made a specific mistake (e.g. with articles) and, secondly, assess how serious that mistake is, thinking about its frequency, its effect on flow and impact on understanding. This second dimension encourages a more in-depth approach to assessment than would otherwise be the case.

'Can-Do' statements are frequently used to generate check-lists. In contrast to the check-lists above, 'can-do' statements focus more on what a learner is *able to do* than what he/she *has done*. In the context of case studies and global simulations, a student who has written a report could give an informed response to the DIALANG⁵³ scale below:

CEFR Level	WRITING
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I can expand and support points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples. ▪ I can develop an argument systematically, giving appropriate emphasis to significant points, and presenting relevant supporting detail. ▪ I can give clear detailed descriptions of complex subjects. ▪ I can usually write without consulting a dictionary. ▪ I can write so well that my language needs to be checked only if the text is an important one.

Alternatively a range of assessment criteria can be used to create 'can-do' lists. For example, to obtain Band 7 for Lexical Resources in IELTS Writing Task 2⁵⁴ – students must use 'less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation'. This could be translated into 'can-do' statements such as:

<i>Teacher / Peer assessment</i>	You can...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adopt an appropriate writing style ▪ use less common words ▪ combine appropriate prepositions with nouns and verbs
<i>Self-assessment</i>	I can...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ choose appropriate adjectives and adverbs for nouns and verb

According to the CEFR, the best 'can-do' statements contain an element of scale: "Experience has shown that the consistency with which teachers and learners can interpret descriptors is enhanced if the descriptors describe not only WHAT the learner can do, but also HOW WELL they do it" (p. 180). This is something which teachers should bear in mind.

⁵³ As mentioned in 6.5.3.

⁵⁴ For a full description of the marking scheme see: http://www.ielts.org/pdf/UOBDS_WritingT2.pdf .

6.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, case studies and global simulations are ideal for assessment. They are extremely flexible so can be used for either: summative, formative or proficiency assessment; teacher, peer or learner assessment. They can also be used to assess a wide range of language competencies at all language levels. Once clear scoring criteria have been drawn up and standardisation meetings held, case studies and global simulations are highly reliable. This is particularly true given they view language over a period of time. As such, they provide a full picture of learners' language abilities, unlike 'one-off' tests which are in danger of providing erroneous snap-shots. Perhaps most importantly, case studies and global simulations represent a much more valid form of assessment than many traditional language tests because they focus on authentic use of real-world language. This means backwash is more likely to be positive, learners' needs are more likely to be met and learners are more likely to engage, succeed and be inspired.

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Appendix A

Check List

Task Achievement		
Is the essay an appropriate length?	YES	NO
Is the essay complete?	YES	NO
Does the essay answer the question?	YES	NO
Structure		
Is there an introduction?	YES	NO
Is there a conclusion?	YES	NO
Does it contain clear paragraphs?	YES	NO
Introduction		
Is the introduction an appropriate length?	YES	NO
If no, is it too long or too short?	TOO LONG	TOO SHORT
Is background/context provided?	YES	NO
Is the aim of the essay clear?	YES	NO
Is an outline of the essay provided?	YES	NO
Is the essay thesis stated?	YES	NO
Is the introduction interesting?	YES	NO
Paragraphs		
Are paragraphs an appropriate length?	YES	NO
If not, are they too long or too short?	TOO LONG	TOO SHORT
Are paragraphs similar lengths?	YES	NO
Does each paragraph have a clear theme?	YES	NO
Is there a topic sentence?	YES	NO
Is there a concluding sentence?	YES	NO
Are arguments fully developed?	YES	NO
Is evidence given to support arguments?	YES	NO
Is there any irrelevant information?	YES	NO
Conclusion		
Is the conclusion an appropriate length?	YES	NO
If not, is it too long or too short?	TOO LONG	TOO SHORT
Is there a concise summary of main points?	YES	NO
Is the answer to the essay answer clear?	YES	NO
Is the conclusion interesting?	YES	NO
Sentences		
Are sentences an appropriate length?	YES	NO

If no, are they too long or too short?	TOO LONG	TOO SHORT
Is sentence structure varied?	YES	NO
Are the sentences easy to understand?	YES	NO
Cohesion and Coherence		
Are ideas logically sequenced?	YES	NO
Are linking words used?	YES	NO
Are linking words overused?	YES	NO
Are the arguments clear and easy to follow?	YES	NO
Language		
Is the language academic?	YES	NO
Is a range of vocabulary used?	YES	NO
Is the language clear and concise?	YES	NO
Accuracy		
Do inaccuracies harm understanding?	YES	NO
Are there any spelling mistakes? (SP)	YES	NO
Is spelling a problem?	YES	NO
Are there any grammar mistakes? (GR)	YES	NO
Is grammar a problem?	YES	NO
Are there any punctuation mistakes? (P)	YES	NO
Is punctuation a problem?	YES	NO
Are there any word form mistakes? (WF)	YES	NO
Is this a problem?	YES	NO
Are there any word order mistakes? (WO)	YES	NO
Is this a problem?	YES	NO
Are there any article mistakes? (ART.)	YES	NO
Is this a problem?	YES	NO
Are there any preposition mistakes? (PREP)	YES	NO
Is this a problem?	YES	NO
Overall		
How would you grade the essay?	FAIL	PASS
	MERIT	DISTINCTION
How could the essay be improved?		

Appendix B

Group Task Reflection

A: Overall assessment

1. How well do you think your group performed during the discussion?

Very poorly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Very well

2. How do you feel your group's performance could have been improved?

B: Personal performance

1. How do you rate your own performance in the discussion?
2. What specifically do you think you contributed to the group?
3. How do you feel you could have improved your contribution?
4. Were there any times you felt you didn't have the language you needed to contribute? Give details. What could you do about this in the future?

C: The contribution and performance of others

1. Did you feel that everyone in the group contributed effectively? If not, how could they have improved their contributions?
2. Were there times during the discussion when you felt frustrated? Why?
3. Are there any ways you feel the group could have organised itself more effectively?

D: Summary

1. What are the skills you need to participate well in group tasks?
2. How well do you feel you will perform in group tasks?
3. What skills do you want to work on? How will you do this?

Appendix C

Assessed Essay

- 1. Text Organisation and Cohesion** **20%**
 - Overall structure of the writing: introduction, main body and conclusion. Logical paragraph development, with clear topic / main idea in each paragraph.
 - Communication of message to reader. Awareness of audience.
 - Paragraphs and ideas effectively linked; use of grammatical and lexical cohesive devices.

- 2. Content** **25%**
 - Adequate information provided on the topic, relevant to the question / title. Information drawn from a variety of sources, effectively synthesised and paraphrased. Presentation of effective argument, clear reasoning and analysis. Main points well supported with examples.
 - Explanation of complex, technical ideas and concepts. Quality of information transfer.
 - Avoidance of plagiarism.

- 3. Register, Style and Lexis** **20%**
 - Appropriate academic register; expression of caution or lack of certainty. Analytical and objective approach as opposed to impressionistic and subjective. Formal and appropriate academic style; avoidance of features of more informal spoken language.
 - Wide range of specialised vocabulary, appropriate to the academic field.
 - Definitions and explanations provided where necessary.

- 4. Grammatical Accuracy** **15%**
 - Level of accuracy of full range of grammatical features: tenses, concord, word order, prepositions etc; accurate spelling and punctuation.
 - Ability to employ ambitious range of complex grammatical structures and to manipulate linguistic systems appropriately.

- 5. Academic Conventions** **15%**
 - Ability to incorporate information from a variety of sources.
 - Ability to reference accurately through quotations, paraphrases, footnotes (where appropriate) and bibliographies.
 - Incorporation of relevant statistical data (in the form of tables, graphs, charts etc) and visual material which helps to clarify further the main points of the writing.
 - Appropriate use of appendices.

7. Presentation of Work

5%

- Overall quality of presentation: cover page, contents page (where appropriate) layout of written work and bibliography.
- Inclusion of visuals etc.

Learner:

Date:

Title:

Marker:

Assessment Criteria	Comments	Marks	Total Possible Marks
Text Organisation and Cohesion			20
Content			25
Register, Style and Lexis			20
Grammatical Accuracy			15
Academic Conventions			15
Presentation of Work			5

Appendix D

Presentation Feedback Form

Name:

A: Content

1 2 3 4 5 6

B: Structure & Signalling

1 2 3 4 5 6

C: Body Language

1 2 3 4 5 6

D: Language Range and Accuracy

1 2 3 4 5 6

E: Pronunciation and Fluency

1 2 3 4 5 6

F: Visuals (if relevant)

1 2 3 4 5 6

Key: Higher scores indicate good attainment

Points to Consider

Description of Criteria

Content

- fulfils task
- relevant
- concise
- specific
- interesting
- demonstrates awareness of audience

Structure

- clear introduction
- transition signals to mark changes of direction
- logical flow of ideas
- effective conclusion

Body Language

- appropriate eye contact
- relaxed manner
- effective gestures

Language Range and Accuracy

- a range of vocabulary and expressions used
- accurate language

Pronunciation

- easily comprehensible
- appropriate volume
- appropriate pace
- natural linking of words
- effective use of strategies like pausing, stress and intonation

Chapter 7 Benchmarking

Johann Fischer (Göttingen)

7.0 Introduction

Subject benchmark statements are an important part of maintaining quality in an academic infrastructure. They are used to describe what is expected in cognitive skills and communicative competences from a graduate in a particular discipline and they help to define what gives the discipline its coherence. This framework makes it easier to design courses to widely accepted standards and to review existing courses in order to maintain the quality and standards of the programme. This approach has been developed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) among universities in the UK since 1997 and is now being introduced to other European academic frameworks.

The QAA⁵⁵ has put the benchmarking approach into practice in university language teaching in the UK in order to maintain the quality of the teaching programmes in languages and related studies.⁵⁶ There are subject benchmark statements both for language skills and transferable generic skills:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/statements/languages07.asp>

As with the CEFR and the *European Language Portfolio*, the QAA is concerned with the three elements “teaching”, “learning” and “assessment”.

Benchmarking in languages opens up the perspective of teaching languages so that the teacher no longer looks simply at the linguistic competence of the learners but also at aspects of their competence such as library and research skills or problem solving skills.⁵⁷

Subject benchmarks provide general guidance for designing the learning outcomes of a course but they are not a curriculum in themselves. Current benchmark statements for Languages and Related subjects have been prepared in the UK for an Honours Graduate i.e. a graduate of a three year language degree programme who is trying to achieve a superior standard.

The task-based approach of the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* the CEFR provides a sturdy framework for using benchmarking in CEFR-based teaching and learning programmes. The level descriptors of the CEFR can be used to identify the initial level of competence of the learners and the target levels the teaching programme is aiming at. The *can do* statements can be used to describe the competences the programme is targeting, and languages benchmark statements, perhaps adapted from the QAA list, provide additional transferable skills areas to integrate into the learning products.

When a teacher works with case studies and global simulations **benchmark statements** enable him/her to identify the initial level and the target level of competence of the learners and help the teacher to ensure that the activities fit into

⁵⁵ www.qaa.ac.uk.

⁵⁶ A summary of this initiative is available in Casey 2006.

⁵⁷ See: Casey 2006.

the aims and expectations of the wider teaching and learning programme and the syllabus so that the programme has coherence. Benchmark statements provide a framework against which the learners' progress can be measured.

7.1 Using benchmarking in the design of Case Studies and Simulations

The EXPLICS case studies and simulations have been aligned with the CEFR descriptors and *can do* statements in each of the languages selected. These take into account the learners' expected level of competence when they start working on the case study or global simulation, the aims and objectives of the activities and the expected achievement levels. The QAA benchmark statements cover linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects, and also intercultural reflection, and may refer to knowledge of related studies. Furthermore, they refer to transferable generic skills, which may be predominantly cognitive, predominantly practical or predominantly interpersonal (Casey 2006: 21). In general, the benchmark statements will refer to the expected outcomes and outputs of the case study and global simulation activity and put them into a logical order in the framework of the course in general and of this case study / global simulation in particular. Designers using this approach can better consider the students' needs and are more likely to fully explain the tasks which learners have to carry out and how completion of these will demonstrate the desired competences.

When it comes to assessment, the benchmark statements emphasise measurable competences and achievements, of which knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is one element in a whole range of aspects that need to be taken into account. The benchmark statements thus help to focus on the linguistic and pragmatic competencies of the learners and contribute to a change in perspective, i.e. taking the focus away from the form.

7.2 Student products as benchmark examples

Collecting examples of student products, i.e. written reports, brochures, descriptions etc. and video recordings of oral presentations, discussions, role plays etc. enables the teacher to assess the learners' performance by relating it to a wider pool of work gathered over a longer period. The next group of learners can also use the collection of graded documents as reference material. By comparing students' work to that in the 'archive', the teacher is less likely to be influenced by personal mood or external circumstances when grading work and more likely to take a more objective and evidence based approach. The learners will have a better idea of what is expected of them.

The same approach can be adopted for oral production: the teacher can record group discussions, role plays, presentations and negotiations on video. Whereas in the past it was rather difficult to videotape student presentations and role plays, the recent developments in ICT have made it much easier for the teacher to have access to video cameras and allow him/her to store digital recordings on his/her computer or even to upload model examples onto a learning platform. The activities presented by each new group can be scrutinised to ensure that the quality of the work relates to the benchmark skills and competencies expected at the level and that best practice is being maintained.

In a second step the teacher needs to calibrate the examples collected to the CEFR, if possible in co-operation in a team. This can be done by ordering the products according to their linguistic quality and comparing them to the CEFR descriptors and *can do* statements and to the QAA benchmark statements or to other statements developed earlier. This allows the teachers to ensure that the products conform to the relevant CEFR level and the wider course framework. The work can then be graded according to local regulations.

Models or best-practice examples can help learners to understand the quality which they are expected to achieve and/or to self-assess their performance both in writing and in speaking. This helps them to become more independent in their learning and makes the evaluation process more transparent as the learner can identify what aspects are important, where his/her strengths and weaknesses are and where he/she needs to improve his/her language skills. The teacher can then concentrate on moderating and giving useful feedback and explaining the problematic linguistic areas of individual learners.

7.3 The benefits of using benchmarks

It is important to be sure that the standards of language competence accepted by one institution as indicative of a 'higher' or 'advanced' level or perhaps of a 'lower' or 'intermediate' level are broadly commensurate with those of another institution somewhere in Europe. This is not always the case and there is much confusion as to what these rather vague terms actually mean in practice and what can be expected of learners. The advantage of benchmarks is that by establishing an agreed set of benchmark statements for the design and assessment of learning products, which also relate to CEFR levels, an institution and the learners who graduate from it can be more confident that successful completion of the language programme provides a recognisable and acceptable achievement. In the EXPLICS project, communities of language teachers collaborated to build and pilot products which could be used outside their institutions. This provided an opportunity for them to compare and discuss the core competencies expected, and to consider how the products could be related to broadly accepted language benchmark statements which would identify the wider considerations of communicative competence and intercultural skill.

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Chapter 8 Outlook and Perspectives

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Over the past three years the EXPLICS team has developed and piloted a total of 33 internet-based case studies and global simulation projects for eleven European languages. For some team members this task-based approach was relatively new and has had a considerable impact on their teaching. Although at the beginning we had a clear picture of what we wanted to achieve, we were not quite sure what the final products would look like. The idea was to experiment and to see what was possible. Recent developments in IT have made it much easier for every language teacher, who is not necessarily an expert in using the computer, to develop his/her own computer-based material, including audio and video material, and to integrate internet-based material into his/her teaching. Some EXPLICS products, e.g. the Italian case study “Degrado a Bologna” or the English case study “Disability rights”, contain authentic audio and video material that enriches students’ listening comprehension experience.

During the development of the EXPLICS products, everybody in the team has gained substantial experience in developing, designing and using internet-based case studies and global simulations. Training sessions, regular exchanges on methodological aspects, feedback both from colleagues and from learners, and the development of one’s own EXPLICS product have all contributed to increased competence and understanding when applying various types of task-based approaches to university language teaching and learning.

Whereas in the past task-based teaching materials might have been an extra activity used at some point in a traditional course in order to break the routine, for many EXPLICS team members this approach has become an integral part of their language courses, or – particularly in the case of global simulations – the structure of the course as a whole. As the material is online, the teachers’ competence in using IT in language teaching and learning has grown with practice. Some team members also made their first steps into blended learning and are now eager to continue. The benefit for the EXPLICS team can be seen in our increased proficiency in preparing and using task-based material delivered over the internet. For all of us, it has become much easier to develop such material and to renew our course material. To some extent this experience might be even more valuable than the final products.

The feedback on the EXPLICS product and on the EXPLICS material we have received so far has stimulated the team to continue our activities. There seems to be a strong demand for more material and for training programmes on how to use and develop case studies and global simulations in language teaching. Papers on the EXPLICS project have received very positive feedback and conference attendees have invited us to give training courses at their institutions as they wish to integrate the EXPLICS material and the approach in general into their teaching.

CercleS, the European confederation of university language centres, which has a membership of over 300 partner institutions in all parts of Europe, is a member of the EXPLICS partnership. Through their membership we have reached a considerable target group that is interested in using this approach in their teaching. It has been decided that CercleS would take responsibility for the EXPLICS products in future

and set up a network of institutions and individuals who are eager to continue working in this direction and who will add more products to our range. CercleS is motivated to include the EXPLICS community as the association aims to encourage innovation and raise the quality of language teaching and learning in universities in order to improve the language competence of our graduates in all parts of Europe.

With this handbook we would like to invite all those who are interested to join the EXPLICS community, to use the EXPLICS case studies and global simulations in their teaching, to develop their own case studies and global simulations, and to start their own training courses on how to use and develop internet or paper-based materials.

