



## **Special Interest Group: Assessment and multilingual competence**

**Draft memo, May 2009**

Brigitte Forster Vosicki, Université de Lausanne

The creation of the European Higher Education Area as a result of new needs related to socio-political and economic changes and internationalisation processes at different levels (European integration, economic globalisation on the European and international labour market, new communication technologies, internationalisation of education and research) introduces major changes in the European higher education sector and implies increasing interaction in multilingual and multicultural environments and the need for mutual comprehension in a context of diversity. On the one hand, an adequate multilingual and multicultural communicative competence is now to be considered as a key competence for all students. It is a necessary resource for students and graduates to study, live and work throughout multilingual and multicultural Europe and the world and to manage a diversity of multilingual and multicultural situations in the academic, professional and social contexts. On the other hand, the Bologna process defines new European reference points applicable to all study programmes which to take into account stakeholders' needs in order to develop social relevance in discipline-specific knowledge and expertise and competencies for sustainable employability, citizenship, personal development and lifelong learning. Another reference point is the application of transparency instruments (ECTS, competence-based discipline specific and generic descriptors) to ensure international readability.

For academic language and communication studies, this means redefining learning outcomes with the objective of developing adequate multilingual and multicultural student profiles aiming at competent use of this repertory in relation to the specific needs of students and graduates and in the perspective of lifelong learning. Another aspect is the need for multilingual and multicultural competences to be demonstrated and assessed in order to indicate to the different stakeholders what a student is able to do in this domain and how well he or she can do it.

In this perspective, assessment and multilingual competence will be examined in relation to:

### **Needs and aims specific to the higher education context**

- relevant learning outcomes for academic study and in different cycles
- relevant learning outcomes for future career and employability
- relevant learning outcomes for mobility

### **Assessment procedures**

- testing (accredited versus in-house)
- alternative forms of assessment (self-assessment, peer-assessment, portfolio assessment, learning diary, continuous assessment, assessment of informal learning, etc.) and different objectives of assessment (learner proficiency, learner development and constant dialogue with learner, etc.)
- assessment forms and washback effect on didactic approaches for the development of multilingual competence
- adequacy and balance of assessment

### **Transparency and transnational comparability**

- *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (reference levels and comparison of different systems, programmes, skills, languages, etc)
- common assessment criteria for specific purposes
- common assessment criteria for specific communicative competences
- common assessment criteria for intercultural competences
- common assessment criteria for the capacity to learn (learner awareness skills, meta-cognitive skills, language learning strategies)
- issues of reliability and validity

### **Lifelong learning and documentation of the development of the multilingual profile**

- European Language Portfolio (Council of Europe) for the higher education sector
- e-portfolios, career portfolios
- Diploma supplement

### **Teacher development**

- in-service training related to all categories
- transnational training and coordination