
Preparing for the European Language Portfolio: Internet connections

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ABSTRACT

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a tool for developing learner responsibility and autonomy through reflection and self-awareness. The ELP is based on the Common European Framework (CEF) Reference Levels that enable learners to describe what they can do in different languages. The CEF is a Council of Europe initiative aimed at improving the learning of foreign languages.

This paper uses the internet to look at how the ELP has been implemented in different settings and to suggest how the ELP may be approached. The paper introduces a small-scale case study of ELP pilot implementation in a university preparatory school. The results from this institution show many similarities with responses in other places, and demonstrate the importance of integrating the ELP with the existing programme, providing teacher training and clarifying the status and purpose of the ELP.

Analysis of documents on the internet shows a number of important factors. The most successful examples of ELP use involved integration of the ELP in the institution's programme, training for teachers and students and a high level of commitment of time and financial resources by teachers and administrators. Responses from teachers were often extremely positive, others showed interest but many also expressed reservations about the ELP. Student responses were generally but not universally positive and a number of criticisms were raised concerning the status and purpose of the ELP. The paper provides full internet links so readers can access the same documents.

The paper concludes firstly that future ELP use could exploit the internet for teacher training and secondly that thorough preparation of staff, students and programmes are needed when an innovative tool such as ELP is introduced. The basis for thorough preparation could involve detailed familiarisation with the CEF Reference Levels.

Key words: Common European Framework (CEF), European Language Portfolio (ELP), Internet Links

THE CEF, ELP AND REFERENCE LEVELS

The CEF is available as a book (Council of Europe 2001) and on the web http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/Common_Framework_of_Reference/default.asp#TopOfPage. The CEF describes standards for language teaching and learning and is used by an increasing number of educational institutions and organisations in Europe and other parts of the world. The Reference Levels are a key element in the CEF. There are 6 Levels ranging from A1 to C2, the highest level;

The Levels provide a system for describing the language skills of learners. The Levels are expressed as "can do" statements and are intended to be more user-friendly than terms such as "intermediate" or test scores expressed solely as numbers. Level B2 on the Council of Europe global scale is described as;

"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 Independent disadvantages of various options." (Council of Europe 2001: p. 24).

The Levels can be used for both formal and self-assessment. Many language testing organisations and systems use the Levels, for example members of the Association of Language Testers in Europe- ALTE (available <http://www.alte.org/> and DIALANG, (available, <http://www.dialang.org/english/index.html> a free diagnostic testing service available on the internet.

The ELP is designed to encourage learning through reflection, self-awareness and motivation. The ELP consists of 3 sections; the passport, where learners describe their language knowledge and experience, the language biography, where learners describe and reflect upon their skills and knowledge, and the dossier, where learners collect records of their achievements (see [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/..&L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/portfolios.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/..&L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/portfolios.html)).

The ELP connects with the CEF through self-assessment scales which are part of the Reference Levels. There are many different versions for different learners (for example primary, secondary or tertiary) and speakers of different mother tongues, but they all contain the same self-assessment scales for the Reference Levels.

The Council of Europe supports CEF users with several documents which can be downloaded free of charge from their website; a CEF users guide <http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents/Guide-for-Users-April02.doc>, a testing guide <http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents/Guide%20October%202002%20revised%20version1.doc>, and a manual for relating examinations to the CEF [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/Manual.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/Manual.html). The Council of Europe supports ELP users with principles and guidelines [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/principles_guidelines.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/principles_guidelines.html), a guide for teachers and teacher trainers http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio//documents/ELPguide_teacherstrainers.pdf, a guide for developers [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/developers.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/developers.html), an example of a portfolio and links to 34 of the 68 validated portfolios [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./&L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/portfolios.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./&L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/portfolios.html).

ELP IMPLEMENTATION STUDIES

The ELP was trialled by over 30,000 students and 1,800 teachers in 16 countries. These experiences are described in a Council of Europe report http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio//documents/DGIV_EDU_LANG_2000_31Erev.doc (Scharer 2000) and in a collection of articles <http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio//documents/ELP%20in%20use.pdf> (Little 2001). Study of these documents shows the value of four elements; programme integration, committed support of teachers and administrators, teacher and student training and clarity of status and purpose of the ELP.

Programme integration

The ELP has been integrated into pedagogic programmes at individual class level, institution level and education system level. Several pilot projects noted the importance of integration with the curriculum; in Czech Republic "The ELP is closely linked to the school curriculum while allowing for children's extra-curricular activities." (Nováková and Davidová, 2001:2). In Finland the report notes "It is necessary to aim at a regular use of the ELP in language learning, integrating the work with the language curricula." (Scharer 2000: 44). A further paper on the Finnish experience states "The ELP was always integrated with the daily work of our language classrooms. According to our approach, the dossier had a central role in the process. We also made regular use of the self-assessment grid and the CEF to set further aims for learning." (Päkkilä 2001:8). 7 complete courses were prepared in Finland to support learners in their use of the ELP; "Course 1 (1st year): the student's role and responsibility as a language learner... Courses 6–7 (final, 3rd year): being goal oriented in one's learning and life" (Päkkilä 2001:7).

Successful implementation also benefited from the ELP fitting existing practices and reforms; “the didactic and methodological concepts underlying the ELP are in harmony with the Russian psychological-pedagogical school.” (Scharer 2000:55) and in Portugal “the ELP seems to fit in well with ongoing educational reforms.” (Scharer 2000:53).

Integration of the ELP in the curriculum produced positive results; in Czech Republic “the project shifted the focus of language learning in some pilot classes from a strict structural syllabus to communicative objectives and seeking enjoyment in language learning.” (Scharer 2000:34), in Slovenia “teachers used the ELP as an innovative tool, individualised their approach taking account of intellectual styles of their learners and included parents in monitoring pupils progress and success.” (Scharer 2000:57) and in Ireland “each teacher will supplement the ELP and vary its use according to the needs of his/her particular learners. As a planning and self-assessment tool it helps to make the learning process more visible to the learners and as such involves them more.” (O’Toole 2001:36).

Staff commitment

Programmes needed the support of administrators and enthusiastic teachers in terms of both time and financial resources. Where this support was not available responses to the ELP were less positive.

Pilot projects noted the need for teachers to support ELP work and be able to devote time to its use both in class and outside; in Hungary “Using the ELP takes considerable learner and teacher time.” (Scharer 2000:47). In Slovenia “Competing reform activities created work and there was not enough time to work with the ELP in class.” (Scharer 2000:57) and CERCLES noted “Time is essential to appreciate and understand the potential of the ELP.” (Scharer 2000:60). In Germany “Teachers and learners complain about additional workload. The ELP does not seem to be sufficiently integrated into the curriculum.... Pupils and teachers are used to grades and written achievement tests – but they are not used to learners’ self-assessment... The first experimentation with an ELP should start with a small group of teachers, pupils and schools. They should be well informed and trained. The ELP should be introduced “bottom-up” and not “top-down”. Teachers and pupils have to be convinced and enthusiastic. Support, advice and encouragement from the authorities is needed. They should provide constructive feedback, time and opportunities to those who want to work with the ELP” (Scharer 2000:38).

Teacher and student training

Reports from several pilot projects noted the importance and value of teacher training. For example, in Finland “Teachers need training and support – in-service education is vital – the support needs to be made explicit.” (Scharer 2000:44).

In Italy “All teachers have attended an in-service training course of 50 hours on the Use of the ELP in a learning to learn approach in L1 and L2... Teachers also reconfirmed the need for further reflection and training on how to use the ELP coherently and how to explore its full potential” and

the Report also notes "The Italian pilot project is of particular interest because of the underlying conviction that teachers need a specific theoretical base in order to use the ELP effectively with their learners... through systematic in-service teacher training related to the ELP the necessary basis was created." (Scharer 2000:48-49). The Holland project notes that for "large scale implementation attention will have to be paid to teacher education." (Scharer 2000:51).

The need for learner training is also mentioned in Finland; "Learner training, tutoring, guidance and feedback are essential for the progress of negotiated reflective learning and self-assessment. The change from teacher-directed learning to socially responsible self-directed learning needs to be supported and facilitated with explicit, concrete learning tools and regular tutoring" (Scharer 2000:44).

Status and purpose of the ELP

Misunderstandings were reported amongst some teachers and students concerning the purpose or status of the ELP. In several countries teachers and students were unclear about whether the ELP was accredited and had any value for employment or mobility purposes. In France "The status of the ELP in the educational system needs to be clarified and communicated – learners and teachers need to know. Some learners express doubt about the ELPs validity throughout Europe." (Scharer 2000:57)

The ELP's learner autonomy, self-assessment or reporting functions received differing levels of attention. In Holland "The dossier part has been neglected so far and not enough attention has been paid to the self-assessment part. Teachers are not very familiar with the notion of self-assessment and complain that learners do not assess themselves adequately" (Scharer 2000:51) and ELC noted "students appreciated the documentation and reporting function more than the role change which increases learner responsibility" (Scharer 2000:63).

Responses to the ELP

Many teachers responded in an extremely positive way to the ELP, especially in situations where participants had volunteered for the experience. Some teachers showed interest. Some teachers became less enthusiastic during piloting, for example in Switzerland "19 out of 96 write that their attitude has become more negative in the course of piloting. The reasons given are demotivating experiences in class and lack of time." (Scharer 2000:33) and in Germany "Teachers and pupils are highly motivated to work with our "old" biography section once or twice. Then they lose interest and cannot see any further added value". (Scharer 2000:38). 44% of teachers in Czech Republic (Scharer 2000:37) expressed reservations about the possibilities for wider use of the ELP.

The demands on teacher time and commitment were also noted by Czech Republic, where "the best results have been achieved by teachers who were willing and able to encourage learners' reflection, to listen to their ideas attentively and to accept their opinions" (Scharer 2000:37). Similar comments came from Finland, "the assistance and support teachers can and

are willing to give is very important even at this level... Provided teachers are committed to the philosophy and know what they are doing with the ELP the students are motivated to learn" (Scharer 2000:41). In some places teachers did not have a positive response, for example in Holland "some of the feedback gathered has been positive but overall results are not overwhelming." (Scharer 2000:51).

Student responses were generally but not universally positive and a number of criticisms were raised concerning the status and purpose of the ELP. In France "Learner feedback tended to be favourable in general but rather mixed...Self-assessment posed particular problems in the first phase of the project... The ELP has been well accepted by pupils and learners. However, it has to be noted that participation in the pilot projects was voluntary and that attitudes were positive from the out-set." (Scharer 2000:41). In Czech Republic "Some learners use the ELP intensively, while others make moderate use of it. Some concern themselves with it only when they have to bring it into school." (Nováková and Davidová, 2001:3).

In Slovenia on the other hand very positive results were recorded; "a qualitative effect of the ELP on learning and teaching can be registered. Pupils and students show their interest in using the ELP prototypes, manifest creativity, regain self-esteem in learning and develop their language awareness." (Scharer 2000:57).

Some aspects of the ELP only worked with a minority of students. For example in Czech Republic only 33% of students "thought the ELP stimulates them to participate more fully in the language learning process", in Italy "at primary school level 40% of the pupils filled the biography in with success – the rest felt uneasy, they were not yet able to reflect on how they learnt through languages." (Scharer 2000:48). In Switzerland students felt "the most negative aspect mentioned is the size and bulkiness of the ELP file."

A CASE STUDY OF ELP IMPLEMENTATION IN A UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Research questions, data and analysis

This case study briefly describes results of ELP implementation with two classes in a university preparatory school in Mugla, in south-western Turkey. The study aimed to answer 3 research questions;

- How did the ELP work in this situation?
- To what extent were important factors present; ELP integration with the curriculum, teacher and learner training and clarity of status and purpose of the ELP.
- How did teachers and students respond to the ELP?

Three types of data were collected just before the end of the academic year in May. A questionnaire was administered to a sample of participating students (25 of the 50 who had used the portfolio). The questionnaire consisted of 7 questions with a space of 4 lines for the students to provide

an answer. There was a group interview with 6 teachers who had taught these (and other) students, this interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Field notes were taken of a class interview with one group of 34 students who had participated in the piloting and one group of 28 who had not.

Data were analysed according to 4 categories with the assistance of Atlas-ti, the qualitative analysis software package. The categories were important factors (curriculum integration, teacher and student training and clarity of purpose), how the ELP was used, teacher responses and student responses. The small amount of data and the short period of time of this pilot programme mean results need to be viewed with caution.

The ELP pilot was carried out over six months. There was a two-hour introductory training session in December, after which the portfolios were issued to the students and they started using them. The following June, at the end of the academic year participating teachers and students were interviewed and students completed questionnaires about their experiences. Original responses in Turkish have been translated into English.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Positive Responses

The popularity of the ELP was mentioned by both teachers and students. In the group meeting with students field notes show that the students liked the ELP and felt positive about it. The language passport and learner awareness functions were mentioned by students as positive factors. Students reported that the ELP "language passport helped them a lot to learn the language, they understood how they learn and what is missing in their language learning and asked their teacher to help with these weak points".

Questionnaire responses also show a positive attitude amongst most ELP users. Most students (16 out of 25) stated that they understood autonomy as shown in Table 1. Some provided examples of their understanding, with comments such as "(autonomy is) working alone to research and learn a subject" or "the extent to which a student can learn what he or she wants to learn".

Table 1:
Student Responses to the Question
"How Much Do You Think You Understand Autonomy?"

Response	Number	Percentage
A lot	16	64
Not at all	4	16
No response	5	20
TOTAL	25	100

Most students also reported that they worked to develop their autonomy, as shown in Table 2. 15 students said they had worked at this a lot, 4 some and 4 not at all.

Table 2:
Student Responses to the Question
"How Much Did You Work To Develop Your Autonomy?"

Response	Number	Percentage
A lot	15	60
Some	4	16
Not at all	4	16
No response	2	8
TOTAL	25	100

Most students reported that they were interested in their own learning. Table 3 shows 14 students were interested or very interested in their own learning, 5 some or a little and 2 not at all. The first three tables seem to represent a high level of motivation.

Table 3:
Student Responses to the Question
"How Interested Do You Feel About The Subject Of Your Own Learning?"

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes, a lot	14	56
Some	5	20
No	2	8
No response	4	16
TOTAL	25	100

The positive impression is confirmed in the teacher interviews. One teacher noted that the students liked the ELP; "well they really do like it". Teachers felt that motivation in the ELP user groups was higher, and some attributed this to the ELP. For example one teacher said "yes it affected motivation, it was the cause of a successful increase in motivation, its success increased motivation quite a lot" and another teacher added "I really liked it and the lessons went really well". A teacher also reported most of the students took the ELP seriously; "yes most took it seriously".

One teacher felt the ELP may have contributed to better motivation and learning amongst the ELP user group; "the students maybe read those documents, the statements, the can-do statements, evaluating themselves might have helped motivate them. With the statements like I learned like this month". The same teacher added a note of caution, however; "But were they successful because of this? If the group had been different, would they have been successful because of this?"

Another teacher reported class attendance in the ELP user group had remained high to the end of the year, unlike other groups and groups in previous years; "In the past seven or eight members of the group would be

gone. Sometimes it would be 10-12. At the end of the year there might only be three or five students in the class. This year we started with 22 and we are continuing with 22. They're all coming for this portfolio". The same teacher added that two students in particular had cited the ELP as a reason for not dropping out; "we were thinking we can't learn English any more, we are planning on leaving the school, but after you gave us this portfolio, after you grouped us, we were motivated very well, that's why we gave up leaving school. We were very interested, that's where we carried on for this year".

A teacher reported that the dossier part of the ELP contributed to motivation because it gave the students a reason to keep and select their best work; "now I'd like to say for example the children did their homework because they were keeping it. They decided themselves which one was good and they put it there. The students had a list of Homeworks normally they break because of the summer holiday when the weather got better in the second term the group didn't have all these negative effects because of these conditions they did their homework very well, for putting in their portfolio."

Teachers had also asked students to keep a learner diary. This contributed to motivation at the start, as students felt proud of their diaries and asked their teacher to look at them, although this did not continue for the whole period of the pilot; "Later they said teacher this is like an assignment... we have to write they said. Later on they gave up checking, we can follow it ourselves they said".

Other Responses

The section above describes positive aspects of responses from students and teachers. Not all responses were positive, however. Student responses appeared less positive when asked about their actual use of the ELP and their classroom performance. Only 9 students stated that they had taken responsibility of their own learning because of the ELP. Table 4 shows 9 (36%) of the students felt they had done something different because of the ELP, 10 (40%) stated they had not and 6 did not answer.

Table 4:
Student Responses to the Question
"To What Extent in This Project Did You Take Responsibility For Your
Learning,
For Example With New Materials Or Techniques?"

Response	Number	Percentage
A lot/ some	9	36
Not at all	10	40
No response	6	24
TOTAL	25	100

Student reports of their group work participation are also less positive. Table 5 shows only 7 participated a lot with 10 reporting participation

sometimes and 3 not at all. Some students commented that there were few opportunities to participate in this way.

**Table 5:
Student Responses to the Question
"How Much Did You Participate In Group Work?"**

Response	Number	Percentage
A lot	7	28
Some/ a little	10	40
Not at all	3	12
No response	5	20
TOTAL	25	100

One criticism of the ELP voiced in the student interview was that the materials were bulky and were difficult to bring to every lesson, especially when they were not used in most lessons.

Two other questions in the questionnaire produced responses that do not reflect student responses to the ELP. One question asked whether the approach can be applied at all proficiency levels and the other asked about self-evaluation and the effect of teachers' marks on the students. The responses do not answer the research questions and so are not evaluated in this paper.

IMPORTANT FACTORS

Curriculum Integration

ELP integration with the curriculum can take place at two levels. Firstly the institution can take steps to fit the ELP with the teaching programme, or secondly individual teachers could integrate the ELP into their regular classroom work. In this study there appears to have been no integration of the ELP at institution level and little or no integration at classroom level.

In the teacher interview reference is made several times to the fact that groups using the ELP had to receive exactly the same instruction as those that were not trialling it. For example one teacher remarks "We did the usual things we always did, I didn't do anything extra". Another teacher confirms that the ELP users had to use the same programme and materials as the non-users; "on the subject of our lessons there is little alternative, we all apply the same programme, apply the same curriculum, we have to use the same material, I can't give extra material". A third teacher said "in any case we didn't do any other activity, we kept to the programme, the only thing we did was speak for a couple of minutes about how they learned". There is also just one mention of assessment using the Reference Levels.

Clarity of Status And Purpose of The ELP

Field notes show that in the group interview students expressed the hope that the passport could be used to assist mobility and employment in Europe, which is not the case. Teachers also expressed uncertainty as to

the status and purpose of the ELP. Uncertainty about the ELP seems to have been compounded by uncertainty about the purpose of the pilot and the case study itself. Much of the teacher interview was taken up with discussion concerning the aims and procedures of the study, especially to planned assessment of students' levels at the start and end of the programme. For example, in the final interview teachers asked if students would receive a certificate for the test they would take. Perhaps it was the result of this uncertainty that most teachers chose not to administer the final test that was intended to compare proficiency levels of the user and non-user groups.

Teacher and Learner Training

Teacher training in the pilot was limited to one introductory session of two hours. There are no references to student training in the data.

DISCUSSION

The ELP seems to have had a positive effect on the user group, as shown by the student and teacher responses. Most students welcomed the ELP and expressed positive views about its potential. Many also reported confidence in their own autonomy, although it is not clear what effect if any the ELP had on them. Several students reported their enthusiasm for their own learning and using the ELP became less in the course of the year. A minority of students rejected the idea of self-assessment, as happened in other projects.

The ELP was used little in class because of curriculum constraints. No time was allocated to find ways of fitting the ELP with the existing curriculum. The ELP was given to students and they were expected to make use of it autonomously, but without training. Some students used it for self-assessment purposes. Teachers did not use the content of the ELP in lessons. The ELP seems to have been used as a learner reference resource rather than as something to be used regularly in class.

Only a few hours training was provided to teachers, contrasting with a 3 day seminar for French teachers and a 50 hour course for Italian teachers. As a result responses were similar to comments from Germany or Holland, where "the success and acceptance of the ELP by the learners depends very much on the teachers' attitude towards it. In the absence of teacher support it will not be easy to keep learners interested over a longer period of time." (Scharer 2000:51).

Students were expected to bring the ELP to their lessons, but were disappointed in the number of opportunities to make use of their ELP. Consequently they complained about the bulkiness of the ELP, just as students in Switzerland did (see above).

As the purpose of the ELP is to enhance learner autonomy, then it may have been assumed that the learners themselves should make the best use of the ELP as they see fit without the interference of the teacher. However, ELP experiences elsewhere show a high level of teacher support is

necessary. More training for the teachers involved may have helped to clarify this issue.

Students also seem to have misunderstood the purpose of the ELP and the use of the expression "passport" in the ELP may have caused this confusion. Students did not realise that the ELP language passport has a similar purpose to a curriculum vitae and does not replace formal qualifications or travel documents. The hope that the ELP may assist employment and mobility may therefore have contributed to interest and motivation, at least in the short term, but may also have detracted from the learner autonomy function of the ELP. Similar misunderstandings or doubts occurred in other countries, for example in France.

The findings of this study are similar to many of the pilot projects. Teachers and students responded with enthusiasm, some only initially. There was insufficient integration of the ELP with the curriculum and not enough time for teachers and students to be trained and to gain ownership of the ELP. Consequently much of the positive impact of the ELP reported by certain pilot projects could not occur.

IMPLICATIONS

As many of the pilot studies show, introducing new assessment scales and then trying to use them for both self-assessment and developing learner autonomy is a considerable challenge for many institutions and educational systems and takes a lot of time and resources. The three-pronged nature of this innovation reduces its chances of success, and highly committed teachers and administrators are needed to make it work.

Individual teachers, institutions or educational systems may choose to meet this challenge, and one way to approach implementation would be to divide the job into three parts. First of all teachers need to be very familiar with the Reference Levels before moving on to self-assessment and ultimately ELP implementation, if it is considered desirable. As the Finnish pilot project observed, "Major pedagogical changes, such as the ELP, take time and require sustained commitment." (Scharer 2000:44).

Familiarisation will be easier if the Reference Levels are better known and more widely used, for example by publishers or examination authorities. The integration of the Reference Levels into course books is already taking place. For example, 'English Step by Step' (Mirici and Tellioglu 2004) introduces the idea of the Council of Europe Levels and works towards Level A2, providing self-awareness tasks (vocabulary I have learned) and self-assessment tasks at the end of each unit.

Teachers can familiarise themselves with the Levels through formal training or informally by making use of resources on the internet. Teachers can start to train themselves by obtaining a copy of the Levels and self-assessment scales. Practice in self-assessment can be carried out using Dialang; teachers can assess their own reading, listening, writing, speaking

and language skills using the Levels and compare their self-assessment with that provided by Dialang. Teachers can also access sample examination materials set at different Levels; Cambridge ESOL examinations connect directly with the Levels and provide sample questions on the internet.

Once teachers have developed an understanding, the Levels can be used for both assessment and self-assessment in the classroom. This does not necessarily involve revision of existing programmes or assessment practices if the Levels are used in classroom testing. Marks can be reported in parallel, for example by using numerical or letter grades and the Reference levels.

CONCLUSIONS

The ELP received a positive response from teachers and students in this study, as it did elsewhere in Europe. The similarities between student comments in this study and the pilot studies are striking. As the report on the ELC project comments; "Learners' reactions vary from enthusiasm to rejection. Learner groups of different origin or cultural background do not seem to differ in their perception of the ELP." (Scharer 2000:63). Many participants expressed a desire to use and benefit from the ELP in the future. However, in this case programme integration, teacher and student training and clarity of status and purpose of the ELP do not seem to have been sufficiently present.

If teachers and students feel comfortable using the Reference Levels, then introducing an innovation such as the ELP may become easier. Learning to use the Reference Levels is useful for teachers even if they do not move on to using the ELP. The Reference levels are useful because they are already used by many institutions and organisations and because they are a flexible tool for both formal and informal assessment. The time and resources needed for successful ELP implementation should not be underestimated and smaller scale ELP use by enthusiastic practitioners seems more likely to lead to success than large scale introduction into programmes.

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- DIALANG <http://www.dialang.org/english/index.html>
- CEF users guide <http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents/Guide-for-Users-April02.doc>
- CEF language testing guide
<http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/documents/Guide%20October%202002%20revised%20version1.doc>
- Manual for relating examinations to the CEF
[http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/Manual.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/Manual.html)
- ELP principles and guidelines
[http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/principles_guidelines.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/principles_guidelines.html)
- Guide for teachers and teacher trainers
http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio//documents/ELPgguide_teacherstrainers.pdf
- Guide for developers [http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/developers.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./documents_intro/developers.html)
- An example of a portfolio and links to 34 of the 68 validated portfolios
[http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./&L=E&M=\\$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/portfolios.html](http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio/inc.asp?L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/./&L=E&M=$t/208-1-0-1/main_pages/portfolios.html).
- Council of Europe ELP pilot projects report
http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio//documents/DGIV_EDU_LANG_2000_31Erev.doc
- Collection of articles on ELP pilot projects
<http://culture2.coe.int/portfolio//documents/ELP%20in%20use.pdf>

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