Silvia Irimiea

ON WRITING

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Theories of Writing

"Writers are made, not born" says an old saying.

1.1. Early theories of writing

Theories of writing come from two major areas: writing in L1 and writing in L2, areas in which researchers made several major inquiries about the process of writing. Henceforth, the particular conceptual framework for teaching writing to foreign languages trainees necessarily incorporates the writing concepts and theories developed within L1 and L2 teaching.

1.1.1. L1 Theories of writing

The first coherent theories of L1 (first language) writing in modern contexts emerged in the early 1980s, when a rather small group of early researchers in writing issues like Graves (1984), and Flower and Hayes (1980) proposed "competing views of writing, and in particular, writing processes, although with little consideration for social contexts, tasks variation, motivational factors, learning theories, language knowledge, or even variability in the language processes themselves", as noted by Grabe W.(2001, pg 42). Grabe's stance on their contribution to the *development of writing studies* also points out the inherent, although not all, ingredients

necessary for a replete and comprehensive theory of writing, amongst which the following factors prevail:

- social or situational contexts,
- task variation,
- motivational factors,
- learning theories,
- language knowledge.

In the later 1980s, however, further contributions were made to the construct of writing. First, North B. (1987) synthesized the research on writing from an L1 and rhetoric perspective, focusing on research assumptions, goals and the findings of key studies. According to Grabe (2001, pg 42) the studies carried out by North "generated a useful map of the composition discipline and of competing ideas for understanding the nature of writing". A second impetus came from the work of Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), who contributed a number of fundamental insights to theories about the construct of writing proposing a *model of writing processes* rather than 'the process'. They highlighted issues like: the differences between skilled writers and less-skilled ones, the variable processing demands of writing, the relevance and significance of "coordinating strategic planning and processing, and the need to foster in writers 'self-regulation, evaluative abilities and self-reflection" (Grabe, 2001, pg. 43).

The 1990s research on writing broadened the conceptual heritage on writing. Flower has the merit of having underscored the influence exerted by contextual factors (social context) on individual cognition, on writing abilities and performance. Further, Witte (1992) and Faigley (1992) expanded the theory on writing incorporating *social context influences* and *theories of language knowledge* as factors responsible for the discourse framing of the written text. Hayes (1996) and Kellogg (1994, 1996) added *motivational factors*, *learning theory concepts*, and *social context influences* to the process model of writing.

Within the same period, L1 writing researchers (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995, and Swales, 1990) approached *genre knowledge* and explored its role in writing both as a "discourse construct and as a social context influence"

(Grabe, 2001, pg 43). Following the same lead, Grabe further noted that "This work incorporating ideas of social setting and task variability in advanced writing contexts, allowed for renewed discussions of the role of language as cues for discourse structuring and also raised issues of socializing practices as they influence writing development."

The development of writing studies is undoubtedly indicative of the expansion of the **construct of writing** towards an integrative, interdisciplinary study. Consequently, the aims of such studies have been duly modified as well as the evaluation of the products and performance of writing.

The expansion of writing studies into a self-referential panoramic discipline calls for course content expansion and growth, which will necessarily reflect the kaleidoscopic competences needed by performers or actors for such a complex performance.

1.1.2. L2 Theories of writing

Relatively similar and concurrent studies were undertaken in the field of L2 writing, mainly derived from and urged by the development of English for Specific Purposes, from such fields like contrastive rhetoric, written discourse analysis, functional language use, English for Academic Purposes, all of which were mainly carried out in USA.

The early studies made in the 1970s and 1980s in L2 writing were much indebted to L1 approaches to writing and the writing process. Concomitantly, L2 contributions stepped in, focusing on:

- the use of language in writing production,
- the nature of organizational structuring in writing, and
- the influence of cross-cultural variation on writing.

A most influential contribution to the studies of writing emerged in the 1990s from Swales, Johns, and Connor, and was summarized, in part, by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) and Johns (1997). The scientific relevance of their work lies in the theoretical perspectives they provided on the *nature of writing* and on *writing instruction*. However, an input came from a number of productive research studies conducted in L2 settings, which improved the understanding of the process of *L2 writing* and of *writing constraints*.

The studies were carried out by the following researchers: Belcher & Braine (1995), Carrell & Connor (1991), Carson (1991), Cumming (1998), Ferris (1995, 1997), Kroll, 1990, 1998), Silva (1993, 1997), Silva, Leki & Carson (1997).

A number of research articles published by Atkinson and Ramanathan (Atkinson, 1997, Atkinson and Ramanathan, 1995) made some pertinent assumptions with wide impact on writing instruction. They underscored the role played by critical thinking and the logic of argumentation. They equally emphasized the high significance attributed to *originality*, *creativity*, *critical thinking*, *logic*, *insight*, *individual voice*, *audience* etc. in English L1 university cultures.

Further studies conducted by Leki and Carson (Leki, 1995; Leki and Carson, 1994, 1997) foregrounded the problems encountered by L2 students when dealing with other classes than the writing ones. They pointed out that the L2 students were usually required to perform writing tasks that did not match the level of competence and skills needed by them later in their academic or professional encounters, that they benefited less from practical work and were not faced with real and challenging demands.

The differences between L1 and L2 writers have been further investigated and have yielded the following conclusions:

- L1 trainee-writers are more skilled and versatile in the use of rhetorical devices,
- L1 writers show certain culture-bound preferences regarding the organization and/or structuring of the arguments, ideas or sections of texts,
- they exhibit genre-related knowledge, which they gather from different shared values available at different levels (shared communicative purpose, shared awareness of the roles, shared awareness of formal features, of register use, intertextuality etc).

These values are not shared, picked up or inferred by L2 writers. A further reason accounting for the disadvantage of L2 trainee-writers is that they are not given sufficient practice in the type of writing they will need in their future academic and/or career environments. In addition, specific research assigns the distinctions between L1 and L2 writers to a set of

influencing factors that include writing processes, writing purpose(s), and varied constraints exercised on the performance of writing. Grabe in his article (2001, pg 45) gives credit to the consistent research conducted by Silva, whose effort to explore the L1- L2 underlying distinctions is noteworthy, and who argued that, given the different conditions that L2 writing-trainees have to work in, and the cultural dispositions they rely on in their writing tasks, a considerable awareness of the teachers/trainers regarding these prerequisites is needed, therewith placing a greater burden on them.

In order to assist trainers in carrying out their task, Grabe (2001, pg 45) indexes a list of issues that teachers/trainers must pay considerable attention to:

1. "Epistemological issues (distinct cultural socialization and belief systems).
2. Functions of writing (a wider potential range of legitimate functions for L2 writing).
3. Writing topics (personal expression and humanistic individualism as North American educational preferences).
4. Knowledge storage (L1-based knowledge creates complexities for L2 writers).
5. Writing from reading (adds reading-skills complexities for L2 writers).
6. Audience awareness (English L2 audience sense may be culturally different from English L1 students).
7. Textual issues (cross-cultural discourse patterns, contrastive rhetoric).
8. Plagiarism.
9. Memorization, imitation, quotation.
10. Students' rights to their own language".

The brief survey of the development stages of writing studies has revealed so far a few considerations that fully deserve the status of conclusions:

- Although, still in its inception, writing has turned slowly and gradually into a full-status discipline and has become the focus of several studies.
- Given the distinction in the purposes of writing, the specific conditions and the expected results/products, the **construct of writing** must be looked at along two distinct pragmatic applications or uses: along the L1 and along the L2 dimensions.
- Although some progress has been made in the study of writing, a strong, reliable, clear, productive *explanatory model* of the *writing construct* has not been produced yet.

The next pages of the present study will frame up a course content based on the construct of writing derived from the L1 and L2 theories, and the specific conditions offered by the foreign languages departments.

1.2. A simplified, pragmatic theory on writing

A valid **construct of writing** must be: comprehensive, i.e. capable of encompassing all relevant components, *productive, descriptive, explanatory, end-effective, usable* and capable of reliably showing how the desired performance standards should be attained (S. Irimiea, 2004).

This particular construct has been tailored for the trainees of the foreign languages departments. To begin with, these trainees are different from the L1 and L2 trainees in several respects. They are excellent communicators in two foreign languages, they possess almost native-like foreign language skills, have an excellent cognitive capacity, master professional competence and skills in the areas of interest for their future careers, are cognizant of cultural, social and ideological conventions, and are particularly aware of the purposes of their writing needs. Their academic curriculum offers them insights into branches of linguistics, including: discourse analysis, text analysis, text production, genre analysis, ESP, (text-bound) translation studies, and finally, grammar.

Assumedly, the trainees are relatively familiar with theoretical concepts, a quality that gives them a certain advantage over other trainees, regardless whether L1 or L2. Their mastery of theoretical concepts, their knowledge about text organization, text and discourse conventions increases their expertise turning them into better writers. Their expertise is, nonetheless, supported by an intensive practice in the field of writing.

Going out from Cumming's (1998) assumption that there does not yet appear to be an available 'predictive model' of the construct of writing, every course planner may feel at liberty to adopt his/her own particularized construct, a model that best suits his/her instructional purposes. Grabe, on the other hand, offers- what he calls- a "set of suggestions for what might be a useful direction for developing such a theory of the writing construct" (Grabe, 2001, pg 48). According to him they "begin with the idea of *purposes for writing*, the *processes of writing* that might vary predictably according to purpose, and the *task performances*".

A helpful stimulus in the direction of the construct building attempt came from investigations carried out on the related field of *reading*, where Carver's (1992, 1997, 1998) findings opened up new inquiries for further research insights. He stated that reading may not be a single construct, but may be composed of a set of "related abilities and consequent processes that vary systematically with the purpose for reading"(quotation from Grabe, 2001, pg 49). The assumption may well be illustrated by the componential distinctions between, for example, reading to learn and reading to get general information. It is clear that, in the two examples, the underlying distinctions come from the differences in the sets of processes that are associated with the proposed/requested task(s).

This assumption has quickly contaminated the field of writing studies, and, henceforth, a similar multi-layer construct has soon been proposed to the writing research community. The notion of multiple constructs that has been adopted has not yet been refined and pursued extensively. However, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argued that there is no such thing as the existence of only *one* writing process, but that rather there are, at least, two writing processes and even *more*, whose construct is revealed through

particular writing tasks, that vary considerably in *complexity*, and *compositional elements*. De facto, they explain the writing process as depending on a few variables, that necessarily include:

- task
- purpose and
- process development stages.

Perhaps it is worth turning at this point to Spolsky (1980, 1989) and consider his *theory of learning* model in the hope that it will illuminate several uncovered aspects about the process of writing, which can be safely transferred to the field of writing. Spolsky's model is influential in several ways. First, it attempts to build up a panoramic or integrative picture of the process of second language learning from all factors and conditions that influence the process. The attempt to assemble most of the factors that could lead to an improved learning was overtly recognized by him in his statement: "My goal …will not be to establish a model of how language is learned, but rather to explore how to specify, as exactly as possible, the conditions under which learning takes place"(1989, pg 5). Second, Grabe also suggests that Spolsky's theory is applicable or transferable to writing, and in this respect quotes Splosky's (1998) major categories for *conditions of learning*:

1. Knowing the language
2. Knowing how to use the language (communicative competence)
3. The human learner
4. Individual abilities and preferences
5. The social context
6. Attitudes and motivation
7. Opportunities for learning and practice, and
8. Formal instructional contexts.

To the already indexed items, a few other categories have been added:

9. Processing factors
10. Cultural variability
11. Content and topical knowledge
12. Discourse, genre, and register knowledge (specific to writing).

In his article Grabe (2001, pg. 53) adopts Spolsky's perspective suggesting the building up of a construct of writing based on indexing the *conditions* necessary for writing. He also shares the belief that "following Spolsky's lead would produce a number of generalizing statements drawn from sets of research on writing performance under varying conditions. These generalizations would be a useful foundation for other types of theory building in that they create a set of facts to be accounted for by any future model. They also suggest constraints on writing performance because conditions inevitably suggest constraints in the absence of these conditions. They further suggested that recognizing *constraints on writing performance* could be a very useful foundation for effective instruction under varying conditions"(Grabe, 2001, pg 54).

Spolsky's view encompasses relatively all valid elements that a model of language learning should rightfully be made up of. This again affirms the imperative need of researchers and practitioners to look at the writing process integratively and to view it as a multi-layered, complex process.

The underlying idea expressed by Grabe's article (2001) is that writing may be approached from several perspectives:

- the theoretical stance,
- the construct of writing (a theory of purposes, processes, and outcomes) point of view,
- the conditions of writing stance,
- the performance-constraints view.

The list of mentioned perspectives, however, may index a further perspective, i.e. the inventory of the competences and skills necessary as prerequisites to the assignment of writing tasks. The list of the items building a referential competence-framework can be inferred from looking closer at the process of writing.

The already discussed items justify an attempt to synthesize the items into a *congruent* and *descriptive* model. Thus, the writing construct would consist of:

	a valid theory of learning to write
	a set of objectives purposes for writing
	a set of conditions for writing
The writing construct	the processes of writing
	performance constraints
	evaluation criteria for outcomes.

The construct does not seem to be replete without a few further elements that have a sound bearing on the product of writing. These are:

- knowledge of the field,
- the stance the writer adopts vis-à-vis the knowledge and the chosen or assigned topic.

By this time it has been clear that the exploration of the process of writing must be guided by working out a construct of writing, i.e. a *complex construct* that encompasses all, or at least all explored and discovered influential factors. In this respect, so far, the study has scrutinized some of the elements that are relevant to writing.

1.3. A purpose- and skill-focused view on writing

The **purpose** of writing accounts for the reason why people resort to writing. The concept of purpose is relatively broad, and, in a simplified view, it may include: writing to plan, understand, learn, synthesize, discover, critique etc.

On the other hand, the purpose may be looked at from the wider perspective of *discourse aims*. Such aims, which may coincide or slightly differ from the ones that stand for writing aims, may be: *to inform, entertain, and persuade*. They are different from the lower level functions of writing, that include functions like: to apologize, invite, threaten, deny, complement, reject, etc. Nonetheless, the purpose of writing should not be misleadingly equated with traditional aims and modes of writing.

Both research on writing and practice have demonstrated that certain tasks reflect a simpler basic purpose and are easier to carry out than other tasks that, for example, require a higher level of expertise and a more complex processing effort, that includes: processing information, writing a critique at a piece of information, etc. Even in the case of similar writing tasks, one can note a certain degree or amount of variation in the performance and the writing products of various trainees, who were requested to carry out the task. The variation is the outcome of:

- the individual competences and skills of the writers,
- the conditions available for the completion of the task,
- the individual performance-time necessary for the activity,
- overall time-constraints etc.

Nevertheless, these variations are normally overlooked, and, therefore, may be considered negligible.

To begin with, the purpose(s) of writing can be broadly outlined as a set of *composing* and *processing demands* imposed on performance. Given the assumption- more or less empirically demonstrated- that some purposes of writing tasks call for the use of certain types of writing and differ in terms of the level of complexity involved, it follows that *purposes* can be ranked or hierarchised.

Grabe draws up a list of five broad levels of writing purpose that may as well acquire hierarchical status (2001, pg. 50):

1. writing to control the mechanical production aspect (motor coordination, minimal fluency)
2. writing to list, fill in, repeat, paraphrase (not composing, only stating knowledge)
3. writing to understand, remember, and summarize simply, and extend notes to oneself (composing and recounting)
4. writing to learn, problem solve, summarize complexly, synthesize (composing and transforming, composing from multiple sources)
5.a. writing to critique, persuade, interpret (privileging perspectives and using evidence selectively but appropriately)

5.b. writing to create an aesthetic experience, to entertain (composing in new ways, figurative levels of composing, violating composing norms in effective ways).

The *purpose list* devised by Grabe comprises a couched hierarchy of necessary skills and competences. This means that the fulfilment of one task may require a smaller number of skills and competences, while other tasks, which are more elaborate or complex, would necessitate a set or hierarchy of skills and competences. Thus, in order, for example, to draw up a *list of items*, the writer must master a few abilities, such as: ability to list and production fluency, while in order to write a *summary* one needs to be able to list, repeat, paraphrase ideas, concepts, theories, to mention only a few skills and competences necessary for the completion of the activity. The range of abilities and competences necessarily increases when or if the purpose of writing is to write a complex summary, which, apart from the already expressed abilities necessary for summary writing, will additionally necessitate ability to write to understand (take notes) and ability to write to remember. The same holds true for other complex purposes of writing, such as: *problem-solving writing, synthesizing information, learning from texts* etc. Furthermore, in order to be able to *critique, persuade*, and *interpret* one must be able to perform successfully other activities like: ability to summarize, synthesize, learn from texts etc to mention only a few.

The approach to writing that places particular emphasis on the *purpose of writing* and on the due de-composition and exploitation of the writing skill and competence hierarchy makes up what might be conventionally called a different approach, i.e. the **purpose- and skill-focused view on writing**.

This approach, which privileges *purpose-setting*, undoubtedly emanates far-reaching research consequences, in that it can spawn further inquiry research on the variability of other factors once the purpose is kept constant, and vice versa. In addition, this stance can open up novel inquiries into ways of assessing writing proficiency, ways of assessing the final product of writing and the development of writing.

In most pragmatic terms, when a writer sets up or defines purpose(s) he makes a genuine and firm statement of intent. He undertakes this at the very inception of the process of writing or when embarking on the task of writing. As an activity, from the chronological point of view, *purpose-statement* should follow task setting and should draw on it. The purpose must be the writer's ultimate goal and must depend on the decisions the writer makes regarding his/her own stance vis-à-vis the given topic or task. Once the purpose has been defined, the writer's only concern should be to keep to that purpose throughout the work. Assumedly, if the purpose is clear in the writer's mind it should genuinely transpire to the reader.

1.4. Processing models or models of writing

Both researchers and trainee-writers are equally interested in creating a useful and applicable model of writing that could benefit them all. Yet there are neither purposefully designed L2 theories of writing development nor predictive models for L1 writing contexts. Apart from the earlier attempts of Flower and Hayes (1981) and by Bereiter & Scandamalia (1987) to frame such models, there are two more attempts to build up a descriptive model for writing worked out by Hayes (1996), and by Grabe & Kaplan (1996), who, in spite of using different perspectives, reach consensus on a few issues, such as: the underlying theories that support writing should result from combining *contextual influences, cognitive knowledge bases* and *processes of writing production*. (Grabe, 2001, pg 46).

Hayes's model (1996) relies on the earlier model of Flower and Hayes (1981) and embraces a few additional components to make up, what Grabe calls, "a composing model of writing"(Grabe, 2001, pg 46). The components indexed are *context factors* which include: *task, audience, and purpose of writing*. The mentioned authors uphold the view that these context factors have a bearing on cognitive processes and relate to: *goal setting, motivational involvement, task assessment, task planning,* and *judgments on outcomes*. They further believe that the goal-setting and purpose-driven component then

focuses the processing system for writing. The processing system draws on several knowledge bases and devices, the processing and planning that takes place in the 'working memory', which provides the background for interactional processes that take place between process interactants, such as writing processes and reading processes. The processes that take place in the *working memory* integrate knowledge bases and are accountable for the knowledge-into-writing transforming processes. During these transformation processes the information is transcribed and concomitantly evaluated. The produced text/writing becomes the context base or resource for further writing, i.e. for a new writing cycle.

Hayes (1996) incorporates in his model the most relevant components of a valid model for writing, namely: context factors, processing and planning stages, interaction of varied processes, the role played by knowledge base, permanent assessment, repetition of the cycle. Hayes also suggested that the model grows in sophistication as writers increase their abilities. The drawback of the model is, however, its failure to draw into the model a *linguistic proficiency component*, which would also benefit L2 writing, thereby restricting its applicability only to L1 writing instances.

The second meritorious contribution to the research that aimed at building up a valid *writing model* is the Grabe and Kaplan model (1996). Although very much similar to the previously discussed model, this one addresses the needs of applied linguistics, and consequently incorporates a component that significantly benefits L2 writing, i.e. the *linguistic knowledge base*. In his account of the Grabe and Kaplan model (1996), Grabe (2001, pg. 47) describes the model as follows: "Like the Hayes model it also begins cognitive processing through a planning component, one that incorporates the teaching of EFL, learning theories, psycholinguistics, text analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis to mention only a few". This input provides again a reason for considerable and permanent change of the concepts and theories that operate in writing.

The models presented are indicative of the progress made in deciphering the complex process of writing and of the attempt to bring into the process

most factors that contribute to the process. The range of findings, undoubtedly, contributes consistently to the methodology of teaching writing and opens up further research inquiries.

1.5. A Performance-Constraints View on Writing

Such an approach would spring from the already existing *conditions' approach* to theory building in writing suggested by Grabe (2001). Grabe adopts Spolsky's lead (1989) admitting that:

> "a conditions approach …would produce a number of generalizing statements drawn from sets of research on writing performance under varying conditions. These generalizations would be a useful foundation for other types of theory building in that they create a set of facts to be accounted for by any future model. They also suggest constraints on writing performance because conditions inevitably suggest constraints in the absence of these conditions."
>
> (Grabe, 2001, pg 54).

Such an approach will contribute consistently to the development of L2 acquisition and L2 writing studies may set the foundation for a productive instruction, in that it may provide useful insights into the processes under study, may set forth specific conditions for each model, and recommend a set of performance standards and constraints.

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Curriculum and Course Design

2.1. A writing curriculum

The initiative to build up a productive **construct of writing** framed to meet the instructional purposes of foreign languages departments and the professional qualification needs of future business experts or other professional users grows out from the endeavour to find a lucrative *rationale* and an *adapted course content* for the envisaged trainees. The course content design stage must follow a precursory curriculum design stage.

The *curriculum* is a "formal institutional plan that guides the processes of teaching and learning" (Reid Joy, 2001, pg. 143). For more pragmatic reasons, Reid Joy (2001, pg. 143-4) re-defines curriculum as a "dynamic overall plan for a writing programme that is based on the needs of the students, the principles that underlie both the theories and practices of learning and teaching, and essential expectations and constraints". Reid's definition appears to be relatively comprehensive, encompassing the major elements that should necessarily define a curriculum, i.e. learners' needs, teaching theories and practices, expectations and constraints.

In order to warrant a productive and efficient learning/teaching process and successful products of writing, the curriculum design process must follow a preliminary **needs analysis** stage and must eventually turn into a

rather complex process. The degree of complexity is accounted for by the multiple *teaching process-influencing factors*, on the one hand, and the factors that have a bearing on the *products*, on the other, to mention only two of the major standard-setting determiners. In order to ensure full efficiency, nevertheless, the preliminary needs analysis must focus on the factors outlined below:

Needs analysis:
1. teaching/learning process-influencing factors: teaching rationale, teaching process, learner-group, teaching conditions
2. factors determining the process products
3. institutional goals, values, constraints, standards, educational policy
4. professional/career constraints, standards, values
5. scientific and research community standards
6. individual expectations, self-fulfilment prospects and motivational factors
7. community /societal expectations and standards
8. broader transnational vocational and educational community/society
9. educational or academic constraints and standards.

Although several items of the analysis may have a general, universal character, and are henceforth, transferable to other educational or instructional institutions, there are, nonetheless, items that cannot be transferred. After all, what is acceptable and necessary for an institution, may not necessarily be valid and lucrative for another. Thus, even if, in broader lines the needs analysis is carried out similarly in several institutions, the instructional strategies adopted by one institution may not accommodate or measure up to the environmental conditions, educational policies and values used by another.

In spite of the differences outlined, there are a number of European educational forums which try through consistent efforts to reconcile diversity or variability in national, regional, and local training systems with the need to standardize and align vocational training throughout Europe.

Such attempts seek to "contribute to the promotion of a **Europe of knowledge by developing a European area of cooperation in the field of education and vocational training**" (Art. 1 of the European Council Decision of 26 April 1999 regarding the second phase of the Community vocational training action programme "Leonardo da Vinci"). The final purposes of this endeavour are to facilitate:

- the access of professionals to the European labour market,
- the exchange of professional expertise, and of ,good practices' throughout a unified Europe.

These initiatives are consonant with the 5th objective of the *Bologna Declaration* (1999), which is focused on the promotion of the **European dimension of higher education**, particularly on the elaboration of study programmes, on collaboration among institutions, on the elaboration of mobility schemes and on the adoption of the general, integrative study frames that bring together instruction and research. The initiative was also reiterated at the Prague summit meeting (2001), where the assembled higher education Ministers recommended the speeding up of the process of elaboration of training modules, courses, and study programmes for all levels of instruction with a more *'European' content, orientation, and organization* that will award a joint diploma recognized as such. The Ministers also addressed an open invitation to higher education institutions to strengthen the collaboration between the networks of credit recognition and transfer and the networks of quality assurance, recommending a more lucrative collaboration between institutions, national agencies and ENQA in view of the creation of a *common reference framework* and the dissemination of 'good practices'.

Despite the recommendations made by the European forums regarding the alignment of vocational and linguistic training, including writing, each university, or higher education institution deals with curriculum design and related issues according to: its own domestic policy, its own traditions, availabilities and trainees' professional career needs.

Drawing up a curriculum is a complex institutional process that must also be circumscribed to national education needs and practices. Such an

endeavour must also follow a thorough survey commissioned by the training providing institution to investigate:

- o vocational market demands
- o individual professional needs
- o social and professional group needs
- o the traditional vocational qualification offered by various/other training institutions
- o new and innovative methodological trends in vocational training
- o IT aids to training
- o other achievements accomplished within the sector under focus.

Following the outlined items, the present *writing curriculum proposal* is designed for language departments, as a response to the employment needs signalled by the labour market and addressed to the training providing institutions.

Henceforth, the present initiative follows the surveys conducted by a group of "Babes-Bolyai" University undergraduates, employers and experts from the Regional Social Employment Department. The surveys carried out through questionnaires, talks and interviews were focused on the examination of the labour market needs vis-à-vis the capability and qualification standards of graduates.

Furthermore, any curriculum must be permanently reconsidered, as there are a number of objective reasons that call for a reconsideration or reassessment of instructional policies. They are:

- ▪ the rapidly changing demands of the labour market
- ▪ the need to ensure rapid and effective access to the labour market to a larger contingent of workers/employees
- ▪ the need to combat unemployment and increase competitiveness
- ▪ the need to secure an international/transnational labour market open to the free movement of professionals
- ▪ the growing demand for **continuing training** as well as for policies that provide "second chance education".

In addition, the investigation of the needs forerunning a curriculum design process for writing that targets foreign language departments' or language centres' trainees should take into account the former studies, the educational practices, and should survey the findings accomplished in the area of English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes, applied linguistics, EFL and ESL. What can be reliably borrowed from the research findings of these disciplines are:

- o the inventory of *skills* and *competences* which need to be formed through writing courses designed for various purposes (academic, professional, cultural etc.)
- o a set of criteria used for the evaluation of skills and competences, i.e. a valid assessment system for the:
  - ▪ formed *skills*
  - ▪ the *product of writing* or
  - ▪ *secondary outcomes* of the writing activity
- o the reference framework of qualifications designed for the completion of a teaching module.

Then, a writing curriculum and/or course outline may as well be the result of an agreed approach to writing and of a collaborative work that involves instruction providers, employers and graduates as beneficiaries of the professional qualification process. This means that training providers turn to the employers for illuminating suggestions in what specific job-related needs are concerned. Such dialogues are frequently staged between the involved actors or stakeholders and yield productive guidance for curricula designers or planners.

A writing curriculum may also be the product of a joint endeavour carried out by institutions networked in research projects or other thematic actions. In this respect, the Romanian Babes-Bolyai University foreign languages departments and language centres have academic links with similar departments of universities from EU countries, which facilitate the setting up and implementation of joint instruction modules. It is in this very

spirit that the recommendations of the Bologna process referring to the adoption of a joint degree system must be understood and implemented.

Finally, the last actor to be taken into account in the curriculum design negotiating process and in outlining it, is the beneficiary himself, i.e. the undergraduate. It is commonplace practice and also an established curriculum requirement for undergraduates to complete a one-month annual internship in a company or firm that may serve their professional interests by providing them with opportunities to carry out practical work and assignments. The activities thus carried out make the beneficiaries cognizant of some of the professional needs encountered during their internship period. Consequently, when designing the curriculum, the tutors may well negotiate the content with the beneficiaries, who may contribute practical issues and frame-setting recommendations to the curriculum-design process. Such an integrative perspective on curriculum design is well consonant with the principles embraced by modern linguistics, particularly by **critical curriculum design** promoters. The *critical curriculum design* movement has established itself as a derivative branch of *critical linguistics*. According to the approach advocated by its promoters, *learners* may have their own perspective on the curriculum design process and the range of students' needs may be looked at not only from the point of view of *what is*, but of *what may be relevant* to them. Henceforth, critical curriculum design is about what is relevant to the learner, who is the decision maker and major stakeholder in the process. Further details about this particular approach will be outlined in the next surveys.

The curriculum design process is, thus, a complex process involving several factors that contribute critically to its rounding up. First, each higher education institution designs it according to: its own domestic policy, availabilities and the trainees' professional career needs. Second, the curriculum must also be circumscribed to national education needs and practices. Third, the curriculum must be circumscribed to the educational and linguistic policies of the Council of Europe, and finally, it must be negotiated with the prospective employers and the beneficiaries themselves.

2.2. **Linguistic prerequisites to a** *writing curriculum*

The plan that guides the processes of **teaching and learning writing** is the *writing curriculum*. It relies on data coming from a large spectrum of disciplines that have developed under the auspices of the field of *composition*. The circumscribed disciplines are relatively young, as they date back only two decades or so. The disciplines embrace:

- ❏ primary *composition-related disciplines*, including: English as a Second Language (ESL) composition, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) writing, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing, and the range of offspring-linguistic disciplines like: genre studies, discourse studies etc.
- ❏ secondary, broader-oriented, more *general, pedagogic disciplines*, such as: *pragmatics*, *educational linguistics***,** *second language pedagogy* (language teaching) etc.
- ❏ *research areas* that focus on issues like *assessment, standard-setting frames and practices* for writing etc.
- ❏ a less formal alternative of writing instruction which may yield astonishing results in building writing skills and which is the outcome of *activities carried out in non-educational settings, in work places and enterprises.*

The development of the first category of disciplines has been the outcome of more attention devoted to teaching English to other native speakers, a demand that swept Europe and other continents in the 1970s. This marked the era of ***English becoming an international language*** *used for business, travel and cultural purposes*. This concern to respond to a growing demand for English language skills, both for oral and written communication, has spawned the development of several language-teaching disciplines: ESP, EAP, ETP, EBP etc., all branched out from the common core of *General English*. This is also the time when Henry Widdowson stepped in and asserted his **communicative approach to language**

teaching. Furthermore, the more recent linguistic theories also served as landmarks for the theoretical agenda of academic training in many institutions and language centres, and, henceforth, influenced language teaching consistently. The development of writing theories and practices is further indebted to the studies and researches that emerged in *applied linguistics* and *functional linguistics* (Irimiea S, 2005).

ESP research has generated a keen interest in non-literary genres in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) contexts. This interest has been also shared by the most recently emerging *writing-across-the-curriculum* (WAC) movement, which has been focused on helping instructors and tutors outside the English departments *design*, *assign*, and *assess* writing in their own fields. In L2 teaching ESP researchers have examined the linguistic and rhetorical purposes, the devices and the audience specificity requested by different fields, such as: business, technology, engineering and science. They have investigated the topic-related types of non-literary writing, and linked them to *form*, *function* and s*ocial context* in discipline-specific areas of study. ESL and native English speaking (NES) researchers agree that *genre* represents the "linguistic, rhetorical, and communicative (ie social) conventions in discourses of various academic disciplines"(Reid, 2001, pg 146-153). Of extreme importance to the concept of *genre* is the concept of *discourse community*, since genre cannot exist outside a given community, the one that yielded the particular genre. Swales (1990) defined *non-literary genre* as writing in which there are constraints in writing conventions in 'content, positioning, form and functional value'. Further, Swales (1981, 1985 and 1998) defined *genre* as "a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalised with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private

intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s)" (Bhatia, V.K., 1993, pg. 13).

More recently, EAP researchers have found that, despite their students' understanding the content that must be communicated in writing, they fail to understand how the information should be conveyed in a comprehensible way to the envisaged audience (Reid, 2001). Reid further notes that teachers and researchers should design a curriculum which should necessarily incorporate all their findings about various (academic) genres, and about the sub-skills common to most writing assignments across the curriculum. Reid quotes Meyer (1996) in suggesting that such a curriculum explicitly offers students' "not only the grammatical and discourse building blocks, but also, more importantly, the skills needed to learn and use those building blocks in community-appropriate interactions in order to build a genre"(1996, pg. 41). Following the same lead, Hamp-Lyons and Kroll (1997) acknowledged the EAP researchers' assumption that "each writer needs both guidance on what is important about a writing task and what qualities will be valued" (1997, pg. 22) by those who will assess their writing. Reid (2001, pg. 154) agrees that "both undergraduate and graduate students, find the more direct teaching of functions and forms relatively easy to understand and to acquire, thereby leaving them less burdened by how to present material, with more time and energy to focus on the material itself, and more confident about fulfilling the assignment".

It is however noteworthy to point out that all developments attained in linguistics are related to real teaching needs, and hence serve teaching purposes. In other words, it was teaching foreign language skills that pushed research and linguistic development forward. Since writing in a foreign/second language is a complex activity that necessarily involves: learning a language, learning a specialized or restricted area of the language (ESP, EAP, EBP, ETP etc.), a curriculum for writing must draw on all available resources. Consequently, curricular integration must rely on all or some of the aforementioned areas of concern.

In respect of the secondary group of determining disciplines, a reliable theoretical input comes from Spolsky (1970), who makes four disciplines responsible for the problem of *language education*:

1. *psychology* for the theory of learning,
2. *psycholinguistics* for the theory of language learning,
3. *general linguistics* for a theory of language and language descriptions, and
4. *sociolinguistics* for a theory of language use in society.

Spolsky turned language teaching into an interdisciplinary problem-oriented construct or discipline, which he calls *educational linguistics.* He claims that, while educational linguistics represents a theoretical interdisciplinary corpus, foreign or second language pedagogy is the pragmatic-oriented language teaching.

Since university students must be adept at responding successfully to all writing assignments posed by the curriculum, an advanced ESP and EAP writing curriculum cannot exist in a vacuum. Instead, it must be planned out as an integrative project which responds to immediate and further-reaching students' needs and which embraces:

o the *hierarchy of institutional values,*
o *disciplinary goals* and
o *teachers' expectations.*

Indeed, an effective curriculum incorporates the results of multiple-needs analyses that "describe existing elements of the target situation to provide the basis for curriculum development"(Benesch, 1996, p. 723).

The last category of less formal writing instruction makes its way into the writing curriculum design policy following, on the one hand, the lead of ESL curriculum designers who adopted a challenging on site approach, considering corporate goals, evaluating departmental objectives, describing the job task and language demands of the ESL workers and developing curriculum to meet those demands. On the other hand, this trend follows the lead opened up by the European Council directives (Call for Proposals 2003-2004 for Leonardo da Vinci projects, EC DGEC, 2003) that promote:

1. diversification of the range of placement opportunities offered to beneficiaries for a profitable acquisition of work-related and linguistic skills;

2. formal recognition of the skills and competences acquired at work place, or in environments other than the traditional institutional settings, that is, *learning with specific emphasis placed on learning within enterprises and industrial sectors.*

From the methodological and management points of view, curriculum designers must, nevertheless, observe the following sequence of processes:

❑ carry out a preliminary *needs analysis*,
❑ collect authentic data,
❑ interpret and describe the data,
❑ assess the gathered information and finally,
❑ integrate the results into reference frames of curriculum objectives.

Equally, the designers must:

❑ explore theories of writing and literacy development,
❑ investigate the challenges and expectations EFL writers will encounter, and
❑ supply adequate assignments that will enable the students to fully participate in the completion of assignments and benefit therefrom.

Eventually, the final objective of the writing curriculum design process must be that of serving the EFL or ESL students in becoming *successful, confident, efficient*, and *effective writers*.

The curriculum-determining factors outlined in the previous chapter must also include linguistic factors resulting from a wide spectrum of linguistic branches, all of which are influential for foreign language or L2 teaching. They embrace: *composition-related disciplines*, secondary, larger-oriented, more *general pedagogic disciplines*, such as: *pragmatics, educational linguistics*, *second language pedagogy* (language teaching) etc., *research areas* that focus on issues like *assessment, standard- setting frames and practices* for writing etc., a non-formal alternative of writing instruction *carried out in non-educational settings (in work places and enterprises)*. Trainers must be permanently aware of the final objectives envisaged by the training activities, i.e. the targeted skills and competences.

2.3. Institutional constraints and demands

Designing a writing curriculum is a complex activity that, first, abides by discipline-determining factors, teaching or pedagogical theoretical frameworks and practices, the needs resulting from comprehensive needs analyses, and second, makes full use of institutional:
- goals,
- values,
- training policy,
- training paradigm,
- practices,
- assumptions, etc.

Institutional goals are generally culture-determined and may vary from institution to institution. Some cultures cherish the preparation of active citizens as their overriding value, others take pride in (over) qualifying their workers to make them responsible citizens in furthering the growth of the country. The European Union, for example, prepares people for an active European citizenship, hence all EU educational forums will duly advocate and accomplish this goal.

On the other hand, *educational values* have to do with such concepts like:
- the nature and purpose of learning,
- the roles played by the teacher and the learner,
- effective and successful methods of teaching,
- the nature of curriculum and syllabus design, and, last but not least,
- teaching and learning techniques.

In order to investigate the inherent values of an institution, one can employ both quantitative and qualitative approaches. To this end, the curriculum designers will look at official documents, test data, and survey students' opinion. They can further examine the mission statement of the institution encapsulated in such general, descriptive statements like: "upon graduation/matriculation from the university undergraduates will be able to…". Curriculum designers may also interpret information about outstanding

or prominent alumni, analyse their qualities, achievements, and their position and use them as models in the instruction of community members.

Another way of approaching the task is by reversing the process and looking at *discrete course descriptions* in an attempt to bring together all pieces of the more general puzzle.

An institutional curriculum should also go out from the in-house gate-keeping processes, i.e. *admission scores, admission requirements, progress scores/ levels,* and finally, *exit examinations* and *scores*. Such reference-landmarks will help the curriculum designers to project their vision within the range of some defined and definable scores or descriptors. Correspondingly, a writing curriculum should index all these determining elements. In addition to *design* and *types of writing topics,* the *evaluation procedures* employed are extremely important in understanding the institution's goals regarding writing literacy, and also reversibly, in building up the institutional writing curriculum.

Yet, writing curriculum designers may insight the *standardized testing procedures* traditionally used in the institutional and national culture, and the particularized evaluation systems that test writing skills, individual performance, and may supply adequate scoring guidelines. Such guidelines affecting the national foreign language training and assessment systems have to do with the decisions made by the Council of Europe. The CE has conducted for a number of years a series of projects in the field of modern languages teaching. All the projects were initiated by the Modern Language section of the CE and have acquired a Europe-wide scale. The projects have had "a dual aim: firstly, to improve the extent and quality of communication, mutual understanding and co-operation among the peoples of Europe, and secondly to accomplish this aim whilst respecting European linguistic and cultural diversity"(Trim J., 1999, pg 8). Among the projects devised, including *The Threshold Level* and *Communication in the modern languages classroom,* two have gained prominence: **The Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment (CEF),** and the **European Language Portfolio (ELP).** The Committee of Ministers to the Member States of the Council of Europe in their Recommendation No. R (98) 6, Appendix points 25 and 26

- ❑ «encourage institutions to use the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference to plan or review language teaching in a coherent and transparent manner in the interests of better international co-ordination and more diversified language teaching."
- ❑ "Encourage the development and use by learners in all educational sectors of a personal document (European language portfolio) in which they can record their qualifications and other experiences in an internationally transparent manner, thus motivating learners and acknowledging their efforts to extend and diversify their language learning at all levels in a lifelong perspective."

The first document, the CEF, aims:
- ❑ to promote and facilitate cooperation and mutual information among educational institutions in different countries,
- ❑ to provide a second basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications,
- ❑ to assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to reflect on their current practice and to situate and co-ordinate their efforts. (Trim John L. M., 1999, pg. 9, former director of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research).

The CEF provides:
- a) "a descriptive scheme, presenting and exemplifying the parameters and categories needed to describe, first, what a language user has to **do** in order to communicate in the situational context, then the role of the **texts**, which carry the message from producer to receiver, then the underlying **competences** which enable a language user to perform acts of communication and finally the **strategies** which enable the language user to bring those competences to bear in action;
- b) a survey of approaches to language learning and teaching, providing options for users to consider in relation to their existing practices;

c) a set of **scales** for describing proficiency in language use, both globally and in relation to the categories of the descriptive scheme at a series of **levels**;

d) a discussion of the issues raised for **curricular design** in different educational contexts, with particular reference to the development of **plurilingualism** in the learner." (Trim, 1999, pg. 9).

De facto, the CEF is aimed at providing common standards against which to reference the assessment of modern language attainment in different educational sectors, target languages, linguistic regions and states. It is meant to provide "a basis for criteria-referenced assessment, i.e. assessment in relation to the criterion of real world language proficiency" (North B, 1999, pg 25). The document presents the levels through descriptors of the type:

> *Can express himself/herself clearly and correctly in a formal register on topics of interest (either general, i.e. formal/informal letters, CV, etc., or personal, i.e. narrative, report, interpreting data, process description) and can express and argue his/her point of view.*

> *Can utilize relatively easily (on the basis of a supporting material) concepts/specific academic register functions, such as: description, definition, exemplification, classification, and comparison.*

This example illustrates the descriptors worked out for the intermediate-level writing skills published in CE documents.

Looking back at the institutional norms and constraints that impact the curriculum design process, we must necessarily note the goals, values, training policy, institutional training paradigms, practices, and assumptions cherished by the institution throughout its existence. In addition, the institutional constraints cannot work in a vacuum, but be part of the wider European educational process, and, thus, comprise suggestions coming from standard-setting institutions, from forums and their issued documents, including the CEF.

2.4. Critical curriculum design

Critical curriculum design is an approach indebted to *critical theory*, and finally, to *critical teaching*, a field that has spawned other derivative branches, including critical pragmatism, critical ESP teaching, critical EAP teaching etc.

Poststructuralists claimed that different groups in society and also institutions have different *discourses*, or *social constructions*, which they impose on others by virtue of the influence or dominance they exercise through a reinforced or more aggressive dissemination policy, or through their acceptance by other groups or institutions. Henceforth, the only basis for interrelations between groups with different discourses lies in the power or dominance they enact. Once the power relations have been shaped and established, they can be duly called into question and challenged, which becomes the domain of *critical theory*. The aims and instruments this theory operates with are threefold:

a) to *problematise* (question) any dominant site in society (institution, course content etc.) by exposing its inequity, or discrimination,

b) to *contest* the power structures of these sites and subjects through challenge and resistance, and

c) to s*ubvert and transform* them through actions that will restore the power balance or lack thereof (Santos, 2001).

Peirce (1995a) recognizes six tenets as crucial to *critical research*:

a) acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity;

b) aiming for social and educational change;

c) investigating the relationship between individuals' everyday lives and the social structures affecting them;

d) studying ways individuals make sense of their experience;

e) taking into account social hierarchies and the inequities of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation;

f) taking into account the historical context, that is, the relation between present and past conditions and events" (Bensch, 2001, pg. 164).

Critical curriculum design steps in when and where the obsolete, traditional and simplistic view on L2 writing is interrogated, and alternative versions are suggested for further research and practice.

According to traditional L2 composition research, "the students' relationships to their native language and to English are unproblematic" (Benesch, 2001, pg 162), as students may simply add a new linguistic repertoire with positive results. In respect of writing in L2 the input of ESL teachers/instructors is thus restricted to simply add English to the students' repertoires. Benesch Sarah (2001, pg 163) states that "these assumptions are now being challenged in critical research and pedagogy. The aim is to capture the complexity of L2 learning in a variety of contexts by students of various social backgrounds, problematising monolithic portraits of NNS (non-native speaking) students and questioning the myth of the neutrality of English".

However, surveys and research into writing in ESL or EFL have indicated that writing in L2 may turn into a difficult task, and may not yield the desired results if various student-related conditions and prerequisites are not fulfilled. They also revealed that in the cases where: task assignment, conditions setting, activity progress monitoring, and, finally, process and product evaluation were devised by a tutor who was inspired by institutional needs and aims, and who had ignored the students' own needs, future professional requirements, individual development and characteristics, the task fulfilment failed and the students claimed their own rights to a differentiated or discriminative treatment. In some cases the students organised themselves and acted on their own to rectify the situation; in others, they turned to their tutors for amendments of the initial task. Such cases were reported by Benesch S. (2001) where the students experimenting ways of dealing with undemocratic and unfavourable situation made their own decisions and acted upon them, rather than surrendering to the unfair obstacles imposed by inexperienced or complacent tutors.

The conclusion foregrounded is that no extreme approach should be adopted without a careful consideration of the *learner* targeted by the curriculum design process. Teachers must take into consideration the learner's attitude and desire vis-à-vis the instructional process, particularly in a democratic society, which becomes increasingly dominated by politics and political issues.

2.5. Developing a (writing) curriculum through intake and recognition of non-formal activities

There is a growing and persistent concern on behalf of education stakeholders and administrators to find new ways of standardizing or aligning **Vocational and Education Training (VET)** throughout Europe. The final goals of this joint endeavour will be:

- ➢ improved mobility of professionals and qualified work force in Europe,
- ➢ developed and more intensive inter-institutional cooperation in higher education,
- ➢ a raised profile of the European education and training area in an international context which will make Europe recognized as a world-wide reference for learners.

This initiative was called for by the decisive role played by institutional cooperation in creating a future knowledge based European society. In this respect, the *Bologna declaration* on higher education made in June 1999 represented the first step that marked the introduction of a new enhanced European cooperation. It was followed by the *Lisbon European Council* in March 2000, another cornerstone event which reaffirmed the role played by *education* in economic and social policies that aimed at strengthening Europe's power worldwide and guaranteeing the full development of citizens. The outcome of the Council's works was the setting up of the strategic objective for the European Union to become the *world's most dynamic knowledge based economy*. Consequently, the development of a high

quality VET is crucial and becomes an integral part of this strategy, particularly in terms of promoting: social inclusion, cohesion, mobility, employability and competitiveness.

The **Copenhagen Declaration** represents the declaration of the European Ministers of VET and the European Commission convened in Copenhagen in November 2002 on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training. The Declaration enunciates a number of priorities to be pursued through enhanced cooperation in VET, which all finally aim at promoting *mutual trust, transparency and recognition of competences and qualifications*, thereby establishing a basis for increased mobility and facilitating access to lifelong learning"(Copenhagen declaration). The following four major sections with the underpinned priorities make up the Declaration:

The European dimension focused on
- strengthening the European dimension in VET with the aim of improving closer cooperation in order to promote mobility and inter-institutional cooperation, partnerships and transnational initiatives

Transparency, information and guidance
- increasing transparency in VET through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks, incorporating such instruments as: the European CV, certificate and diploma supplements, the Common European Framework of reference for languages and the EUROPASS into one single framework

Recognition of competences and qualifications
- strengthening policies, systems and practices that support information, guidance and counselling in the Member States, at all levels of education, training and employment in order to ensure transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, and therewith to support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe;

- development of competences and qualifications at sectorial level, by reinforcing cooperation with social partners;
- development of a set of common principles relating to validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between various European training systems;

Quality assurance

- promoting cooperation in quality assurance, materialized in exchanges of models, good practices etc.

The mentioned goals have become the stated objectives of the Leonardo da Vinci vocational training programme framework.

The *Leonardo da Vinci mobility scheme* (Call for Proposals 2003-2004 for Leonardo da Vinci projects, EC DGEC, 2003) operates on the **principle** of a transnational training network aimed at the implementation of vocational training policies by creating a *European co-operation area for education and training*, where the *formation and consolidation of vocational and linguistic aptitudes and skills* are necessary for the effective and functional integration of young professionals and/or learners into working life and for the full exercise of an active European citizenship.

The *second phase* of the programme, and its broad objectives are expressed in the Council Decision of 26 April 1999, which foregrounds the need to develop *quality*, *innovation*, and particularly the **European dimension of vocational training systems and practices through trans-national co-operation**. Three **objectives** receive major concern and make up the programme agenda, e.g.:

- *improvement of the skills and competencies* of people or young people in initial vocational training
- *improvement of the quality of, and access to continuing vocational training and the lifelong acquisition of skills and competencies* with a view to increasing and developing adaptability, particularly in order to consolidate technological and organizational change
- *promotion and reinforcement of the contribution of vocational training to the process of innovation*, with a view to increasing competitiveness and entrepreneurship, through fostering cooperation between vocational training institutions, including universities and SMEs.

The Council initiative seeks to raise the level of vocational expertise of (future) professionals and to standardise vocational training in Europe. It targets groups of young people, workers, and employees.

The European Council directives are expressed in the Priorities of the Leonardo da Vinci programme Call for Proposals (Call for Proposals 2003-2004 for Leonardo da Vinci projects, EC DGEC, 2003, pg 2), especially in **Priority 1**, which is focused on **valuing learning.** The Council directive reads:

> "A comprehensive new approach to acknowledging the value of learning is seen as a prerequisite for the creation of an area of lifelong learning, building on the existing rights of free movement within the EU.
>
> Issues are here the **identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as the transfer and mutual recognition of formal certificates and diplomas**. *All forms of learning, be it acquired in educational settings, work, leisure time or family activities should be identified, assessed and recognized*, enabling citizens to combine and build in these different forms of learning.
>
> Valuing learning requires the development of comprehensive, integrated approaches enabling those involved to assess and value a wide range of qualifications and competence resources."

The projects undertaken under this priority measure must pay particular attention to the following aspects (Call for Proposals 2003-2004 for Leonardo da Vinci projects, EC DGEC, 2003):

1. the development of new, *sustainable and transferable approaches to valuing formal, non-formal and informal learning with specific emphasis on learning within enterprises and industrial sectors*
2. development of certification so as to promote transparency of diplomas, qualification and competences
3. exchange of experiences and good practices in the field of identification, assessment and recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

These objectives are set forth by the European Commission and envision wider objectives. The target is a larger population, i.e. that of young trainees of the European continent. However, the objectives are congruent

with the ones set forth by the *Bologna declaration*, as they envisage the setting up of a European area of knowledge based society, with qualified, active citizens, adept at the demands of a challenging continent, where all qualifications and competences acquired should be easily transferred and recognized. The final aim of the Bologna declaration is that of ensuring free mobility of trained specialists in all European countries.

This brings us to the conclusion that all European training forums move on towards the achievement of the same grand goals, by using instruments that operate in specific educational areas.

The *Priorities* laid down by the second phase of the LdV vocational training programme framework may inspire the curriculum and course content of some avantgarde institutions that agree to implement the guidelines recommended by the Council. De facto, the intake of non-formal activities and their formal recognition is a complex process, which necessitates institutional agreement on a few prerequisites outlined below.

1. First, the training institution must be willing to *recognize the vocational and educational value of the activities* carried out in various non-formal/non-academic settings and must set out specific norms and standards for the activities.

2. Second, such an endeavour necessarily assumes a *partnership* between the training institution and one or more work settings, such as workshops, laboratories, enterprises, SMEs, which can provide adequate work and learning conditions for the trainees.

3. Third, the training providing institution should work out beforehand a *training curriculum and syllabi* that incorporate the activities carried out by the trainees in work places.
Following the mentioned prerequisites, the **activities** staged in non-formal settings must ensure:
   - a range of activities that facilitate the trainees' access to the acquisition of skills and professional/linguistic expertise,
   - a faster acquisition of the required skills, or
   - a more hectic and efficient professional work setting than the one the training providing institution can offer.

Furthermore, the activities planned to be carried out in a non-formal setting must comply with the following requirements:

- they must complement the trainees' curricular offer in terms of the competences, skills, area of activities, type of activities envisioned
- they must help the trainees understand the learned theoretical processes
- they must bring novel elements to the trainees' vocational and linguistic experience
- they must prepare trainees for their future professional profiles.

4. The formal institution must collaborate with the non-formal training institution and monitor the following aspects, which include:
   - appointment of placement mentors
   - a permanent monitoring of the activities and of the trainees' progress
   - appointment of evaluators for the evaluation of the trainees' performance and competences
   - capacity to award certificates of attendance and graduation which will be formally acknowledged by both institutions involved in the training process.

5. The formal institution must appoint an in-house commission that will certify the acquired skills and competences and acknowledge them formally.

The attempt to support the EC policy of adopting *non-formal and informal learning with specific emphasis on learning within enterprises and industrial sectors* has swept over Europe in the last decade and has taken firm and concrete forms. The present outline of a planned system for the acquisition of non-formal skills and competences in non-formal setting is a reality-based system, one that has been piloted by a Romanian university and has yielded very good and excellent results. The system has been

operational for several years, but it has received a strong impetus from the achievements of a number of Leonardo da Vinci projects focused on developing the expertise of university students. The next section will further detail the Leonardo da Vinci projects that contributed substantially to the development of excellent job-related skills in European host country enterprises and SMEs.

2.6. A practical initiative of developing writing skills through immersion activities within the framework of community vocational placement programmes (Leonardo da Vinci programmes)

The following 'good practices' are the outcome of several three-month Leonardo da Vinci vocational placement projects completed at the Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca during the interval 2001- 2004.

The projects themselves were designed to offer a viable opportunity to BBU undergraduates to broaden and consolidate their vocational expertise alongside their *linguistic competence* in the use of a foreign language for vocational purposes.

The projects have had a consistent contribution to the expertise-forming process through:

1. widening the spectrum of theoretical input;
2. diversifying the range of placement opportunities offered to beneficiaries for a profitable acquisition of work-related and linguistic skills;
3. recognizing formally the skills and competences acquired at work place, or in environments other than the traditional institutional settings, i.e. learning with specific emphasis on learning within enterprises and industrial sectors;
4. working towards the European recognition and transfer of competences acquired in non-formal settings;
5. promoting a European *linguistic passport* for professionals or future professionals.

These prime competence-determining variables are easily identifiable in the Leonardo da Vinci directives documents mentioned on pg 16.

The initiative of devising and implementing such projects has been inspired by:

> ➢ the tremendous interest devoted to vocational training Europe-wide and to the acquisition of linguistic competences,
>
> ➢ the endeavours undertaken by the Council of Europe to standardise vocational training in Europe and a profitable acquisition of linguistic skills.

Further, the initiative to draw up mobility projects under the framework of LdV vocational programmes with a view to broadening the professionals' vocational and linguistic expertise, derives from the necessity to follow the European Council directives expressed in the Priorities of the Leonardo da Vinci programme Call for Proposals, especially Priority 1 also exposed on pg. 17.

The *rationale* behind this undertaking is the assumption that the undergraduates' vocational training includes an annual work placement in an enterprise, consequently the implemented projects were intended to complement the practical training carried out at home enterprises and to enhance a more profitable acquisition of work related skills in a business environment. The students' exposure to a native language environment increased the students' mastery of the foreign language(s) learned for business, communication or tourism purposes.

The proposed **linguistic immersion through placement activities** carried out at partner institutions or at their collaborative enterprises deserves special focus, given its crucial role in the project scheme.

The results of the placement activities were guaranteed by the following aspects:

> ▪ proper and adequate conditions for the fulfilment of placement activities, through: a) adequate and challenging placement locations/settings, b) committed, competent, and demanding placement supervisors/mentors, c) adequate, challenging activities, responsibilities, job assignments

- permanent and competent supervision
- stimulating work environment and
- friendly and inspiring work team.

In addition, the results in terms of **linguistic performance and competence formation/consolidation** were the outcome of:

- a permanent vocational /work contact with native professionals, including: fellow workers, superiors (company management members), mentors
- regular contacts with academics (teachers, tutors)
- contacts with university colleagues
- occasional contacts with customers
- occasional contact with native-friends (S. Irimiea 2005b).

A close scrutiny of a one-day professional job-assignment will reveal the students' involvement in the activities outlined below (S. Irimiea 2005b):

- verbal encounters with job-related professionals, customers and company members under the form of: business *talks*, *negotiations*, *meetings*, *presentations*
- written communication with professionals, customers and other under the form of *business correspondence* (letters, memos, emails etc.)
- written assignments including: *form-filling, writing reports, advertising leaflets, brochures, questionnaires, various business/trade documents*, etc.

The written component of the skill-forming process was successful and acknowledged by the beneficiaries as such mostly because of the adequate conditions that were ensured for the outset and progress of the assigned tasks.

The encounters and assignments were reported by the beneficiaries to have been mostly formal, as these occupied most of their professional involvement period.

In terms of the acquisition and broadening of the linguistic repertoire, the day-to-day placement immersion yielded the following **results** (S. Irimiea, 2005b):

   i. it enriched the beneficiaries' **linguistic competence** in the use of the foreign language for

      1. special purposes, resting on expansion of formal, specialized vocabulary,

      2. socio-professional vocabulary,

      3. cultural vocabulary,

      4. non-formal forms / the language used in familiar/friendly interactions;

   ii. it contributed to the consolidation of **communicative competence** both in speech and writing;

   iii. it increased the beneficiaries' familiarity and versatility in the use of formal and non-formal specialized registers;

   iv. it developed the beneficiaries' (linguistic) **strategic competence**, e.g. the linguistic instruments for the substitution of other linguistic, cultural or professional communication gaps;

   v. it consolidated socio-linguistic competence;

   vi. it developed a relatively enriched linguistic *persona*.

In the area of **written communication** the beneficiaries outdid themselves, attaining *effectiveness and appropriateness*, e.g. the primary features of communicative competence. In other words, the beneficiaries acquired practical knowledge about "appropriate and effective communication behaviours, development of a repertoire of skills that encompasses both appropriate and effective means of communicating, and motivation to behave in ways that are viewed as both appropriate and effective by interactants" (Rubin, 1991: 289) in interpersonal intercourses (S. Irimiea, 2005b).

The written assignments were real assignments required by the enterprise on-going business procedures and were designed by the task-setting mentor in realistic terms both to meet the due business requirements and the students' level of expertise and performance.

The students did not complain about the assigned tasks; on the contrary, they were extremely pleased and regarded them as a challenge, a

gratification or recognition of their skills. This was possible due to the mentors' permanent concern to provide the placement students with adequate assignments. Where the assignment exceeded the students' ability, due explanation and training was provided immediately, on site, to enable the students to fulfil their tasks.

The completed linguistic experience represented a *medium-* and *long-term linguistic investment* due to the following contributors:

- a three-month exposure to a genuine vocational and linguistic environment,
- an intense and demanding vocational and linguistic context, with challenging and hectic assignments, with responsibilities that fully provoked the beneficiaries,
- demanding and qualified supervisors,
- severe teachers who planned out the students' job requirements so to as to fully benefit the beneficiaries.

The excellent results accomplished by the Romanian undergraduates were, nevertheless, also the outcome of the extremely careful and adequate assignment of responsibilities by the partner. In other words, the partners have thoroughly considered the job-options and repartitioned them according to the students' competencies, skills, aptitudes, professional experience and linguistic background.

The acquisition and/or consolidation of vocation-bound linguistic competence was **measured** or **assessed** by the mentors'/tutors' evaluation of the students' progress and resulted from the students' self-assessments.

Given the aforementioned prerequisites and work conditions, there was no room for a *critical approach* to the placement activity. This demonstrates that a successful acquisition and consolidation of **writing skills** and **competences** must be the outcome of the orchestrated efforts of:

- o a well and carefully planned activity
- o a permanent monitoring
- o a permanent adaptation of all project stages to
    - the requirements of the syllabus content,

- the general work requirements,
- the available human resources and capabilities
  o a flexible and motivating development plan for the foreseen activities and a productive repartitioning of job responsibilities
  o a gratifying instructional system and
  o a friendly work environment and team.

In conclusion, placement programmes for undergraduates or other young worker groups provided good opportunities for the acquisition and development of job-related skills and competences, which were formally recognized by both the sending and the host institutions. The projects further contributed to the self-assertion of individuals.

<h2 style="text-align:right">2.7. The European Linguistic Portfolio
a single European framework
for the transparency of qualifications and competences
and the EUROPASS</h2>

The prerequisites for a common educational policy in Europe, or a common endeavour to support through financial contribution the insurance of professional training Europe wide have a long history that go back to the year 1957, when the **Treaty of Rome** was signed. The Treaty envisaged the development of professional training as a prerequisite to the free movement of citizens in Europe. The idea of acquiring experience and knowledge from travelling to other prominent universities and places throughout Europe has been prolific since the Middle Ages, when many a noble men and men of means completed their knowledge and won their reputation through travelling to other countries and places, then known as cradles of culture and science. People understood that developing professional and personal competence could be achieved only through reference to other cultures. In 1985 the European Commission revived this old tradition and launched two consistent exchange programmes, which were focused on the transnational

mobility of young people. Their aim was the development of professional training. The two programmes were ERASMUS and COMETT, i.e. the forerunners of the **Leonardo da Vinci** programme framework. The COMETT programme has facilitated the access of 40 000 young people to professional training through practical work in enterprises between 1986 and 1994. The Leonardo da Vinci programme has taken the achievement further, facilitating the access to professional training in other countries to 250 000 individuals. From then on, Leonardo da Vinci has become the European programme which has supported the European Union's vocational training policy through funding a range of programmes aimed at *improving the quality of professional training* and *fostering lifelong learning*.

During the last decade, co-operation at European level in education and training has progressed considerably and has underlined one crucial aspect: that social and economic progress in Europe depends heavily on *developing and raising the level of education and vocational training*, specifically up to 2010, when Europe was expected to become the **most competitive knowledge-based society**. This new concept was debated and agreed upon at the Copenhagen summit, which brought together the European Ministers of Vocational and Education Training (VET) and the European Commission in November 2002. The participants drafted a Declaration, the **Copenhagen Declaration** on enhanced European cooperation in VET, which circled around the following concepts:

- strengthening the European dimension in VET with the aim of improving closer cooperation, partnerships and transnational initiatives;
- increasing transparency in VET through the implementation and rationalization of information tools and networks;
- development of competences and qualifications at sectorial level, by reinforcing cooperation with social partners;
- development of a set of common principles relating to validation of non-formal and informal learning with the aim of ensuring greater compatibility between various European training systems;
- promoting cooperation in quality assurance.

The Commission pushed into the foreground its policy aimed at creating and developing a system of **transparent recognition and valorisation** of competences, of diplomas and qualifications. Particular emphasis was then placed on *recognition and validation of informal and non-formal knowledge*. The instruments proposed for use were:

- the European CV,
- certificate and diploma supplements,
- the Common European Framework of reference for languages and
- the EUROPASS

Against this background, the Leonardo da Vinci programme policy-makers, framers, promoters and others have set forth as major aims the following targets:

- to give visibility to the actual contribution of the programme and the projects to the processes of *transparency of qualifications* and *validation of informal and non-formal skills* in Europe
- to contribute significantly to the *creation of a European area of lifelong learning.*

The strategic context which enhanced the EUROPASS concept was set out by:

- the Copenhagen Declaration
- the Council Resolution on enhanced cooperation in VET.

Both documents expressing common decisions call for a single framework bringing together the inherent transparency-enhancing instruments and the rationalization of related networks.

The next concrete action of the European Commission was the adoption of a *proposal* for a decision on EUROPASS in December 2003. The proposal established that:

- a transparency framework in the form of a portfolio of documents called EUROPASS with a single common logo should be adopted
- each country appoints a single body to be responsible for all activities related to the implementation of the EUROPASS.

Concurrently, a technical group was also appointed by the Commission to work out the details and technicalities regarding the practical implementation and the drafting of a EUROPASS electronic version later on to be piloted.

The overall aim of the EUROPASS is to help citizens to better communicate their qualifications and competences. The practical resolution regarding the setting up of a single coordinating body to supervise all procedures and progress, and the idea of bringing the transparency documents together into a single framework is expected to yield:

- o easier access to it,
- o stronger impact on those who experiment it,
- o a more effective management,
- o a coherent strategy for the transparency of competences and qualification.

The **EUROPASS PORTFOLIO** for lifelong learning is thought to incorporate 5 documents established at European level and recognized as such. The components are:

1. the **European CV**, expected to become the backbone of the EUROPASS,
2. the **Mobilipass**, a document aimed at recording all European mobility for learning purposes, and gradually replacing the Europass-Training,
3. the **Diploma Supplement** for higher education
4. the **Certificate Supplement** used for vocational and educational training
5. the **European Language Portfolio** used to record the foreign language skills.

The present version of the portfolio is still open to improvements, though an electronic version is also available. It is, however, noteworthy to point out that a considerable number of stakeholders, administrators, promoters and beneficiaries have understood the role of such a *portfolio* and it has received general acceptance and use.

The accomplishment of such an internationally relevant document stood good chances of success, first because the initiative was a necessary solution to a problem that troubled East European citizens from several countries, namely that of having their professional competences recognized Europe-wide, which would enhance their access on the European labour market. Second, because the EU training institutions have experienced at least two major educational policy-making events, i.e. the Bologna process and the European Language Portfolio, which may fuel the determination to accomplish further advancements in the field of education.

To these VET experiences the Leonardo da Vinci programmes have a considerable contribution, as they sought

> ➢ to network training institutions, social partners, enterprises, SMEs into a general/sectorial system of training,
> ➢ to facilitate the intercourse of trainers and beneficiaries,
> ➢ to facilitate the exchange of good methods and practices, all of which could influence the final, overall outcome.

The impressive participation of trainers, administrators, educational policy makers, managers etc. in meetings and conferences throughout Europe have demonstrated the impact the EUROPASS had Europe-wide.

It is extremely relevant that at all levels of education, training and employment, trainers, administrators, educational policy makers, and managers understood their mission, made a firm effort to ensure transferability and recognition of competences and qualifications, and support occupational and geographical mobility of citizens in Europe;

The last decades have been marked by the consistent efforts of the European Council and the European Commission to ensure transparency of qualifications and competences. The efforts have taken concrete forms, i.e. the EUROPASS and the European Linguistic Portfolio broadly accepted and adopted by teachers and institutions.

2.8. Writing-across-the-curriculum (WAC)

Writing assignments are not restricted to English or foreign language courses, they are not insulated assignments. Insights into what is going on in other discipline-courses, in other major field courses, such as business, technology, physical science etc. reveal that they equally make use of writing assignments for various instructional purposes: to expedite quick apprehension of scientific data, to ensure fast consolidation, to foster new information, and to assess acquired knowledge. The movement that accounts for these useful cross-curricular insights is the so-called *writing-across-the-curriculum* movement (WAC). The prime function of WAC researchers is to help instructors outside the English departments *design*, *assign* and *assess writing* in their particular fields.

In addition, WAC researchers have carried out consistent surveys on several critical writing-related issues, including: types of writing assignments, procedures of evaluation, types of representative academic writing assignments. They have interviewed instructors and students and have investigated literacy requirements, etc. Most of their investigative findings indicate that little writing, formal or informal, is required in university and college undergraduate courses, although, gradually, more institutional focus on essential communication skills is slowly influential in departmental writing goals. Reid (2001) sums up recent research outcomes:

- in-class writing assignments are almost solely short-answer tasks and essays;
- nearly all writing topics to be completed in or outside of class are assigned; some allow choice of topic within limited scope, and some allow narrowing;
- all topics grow out of class material;
- most extended tasks require work external to the class;
- the most common out-of-class assignments are:
  - the library research paper
  - the report with interpretation

- o   the summary, with or without analysis,
- o   the plan proposal
- o   the book review/critique.

In spite of the little progress made by the WAC movement researchers and teachers, the WAC seems to be a necessary approach to common issues that affect writing and literacy at academic and professional training level and may, indeed, contribute to the improvement of the writing skills that are inherent to most academic or professional disciplines, such as: essay writing, form filling, report writing, business letter writing etc, forms that both academics and professionals deal with on a regular basis.

What is needed to encourage a broader participation of experts and trainers is the intercourse that should be established both at formal, institutional level, and at informal, peer level.

The so-called *writing-across-the-curriculum* movement (WAC) is an emerging trend that seeks to help instructors outside the English departments *design*, *assign* and *assess writing* in their particular fields. It appears to be a necessary cross-disciplines interactional process that requires more input from the actors involved in the teaching process.

2.9. Tertiary sector course design for writing

Up to the year 1990 the Romanian schooling system, particularly the secondary system, was governed by uniformity and standardization. This covered the school curricula, the number of disciplines, the content area of disciplines, the allotted number of classes per discipline, the schoolbooks to be used, and, finally, the evaluation criteria. Since the 1990s, both the secondary and the tertiary training systems in Romania have enjoyed a relative autonomy in drawing up their curricula and syllabuses, in assuring teaching conditions and using the same teaching instruments.

The more recent era that brought about the alignment of the Romanian training system to the European one has challenged the system in several ways. On the one hand, the Romanian system had to preserve its

educational and cultural traditions, but on the other, it had to comply with the European standards and traditions. As a consequence, many academic institutions turned for models and 'practices' to well-established and prestigious European universities and created new departments that were consonant with the European training norms and standards. The foreign languages departments, the applied modern languages departments and the language centres represent a few examples of institutions that embraced European models and started functioning thereon. As a follow up, the institutions adopted most of the disciplines and courses that the departments operated with. In the long run, this turned to be an extremely useful strategy, as it enhanced the comparability and transferability of credits and academic awards in varied practical cases, like:

- the Socrates exchanges
- the Leonardo da Vinci vocational mobility schemes
- the recognition of vocational credentials and expertise of professionals
- the free movement of professionals throughout Europe.

Alongside the historical evolution of writing in English, however, during the nineties, a few novel factors have impacted it:

1. **the Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment(CEF),**
2. the **European Language Portfolio(ELP)**,
3. the **European principles of validation of non-formal and informal learning** and
4. the institutional experiences acquired from the implementation of European linguistic and vocational training projects.

The Romanian EFL departments and training centres have adopted the ELP and the other European documents. The institutional departments, for example, which formerly awarded nationally and locally recognized FL certificates, have adopted the ELP as a measurement instrument, a certification formula and a skills' record. The use of the Language Portfolio, along with the other EURO-certification documents has also become

commonplace 'practice' in the case of Socrates and, particularly, Leonardo da Vinci vocational and linguistic training projects, where the beneficiaries need a formal European certification of their competences. Finally, many English language trainers have turned to the document and use it as a competence-setting norm and use its indicators as useful variables that impose course content changes, methodological improvements and reconsidered linguistic targets.

The Common European Principles for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning seek to "support a voluntary process leading towards more coherent and comparable validation practices in Europe". The areas of validation encompass: validation of learning taking place in a) formal education and training settings, b) in relation to the labour market (enterprises, public organizations and economic sectors), c) in relation to voluntary and civil society activities as well as in community learning. With a view to accomplishing the principles, the institutions and stakeholders acquire major responsibilities, including the responsibility to provide a legal and practical basis that enables the individuals to have their learning validated.

This means that, on the basis of the previous endeavours (institutional, national, departmental) and on the on-hand European documents, the institutions must further work out widely acceptable evaluation and recognition strategies.

The **linguistic and vocational exchange projects under the auspices of Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci EU programmes** were aimed at consolidating and developing vocational and linguistic competences. They have impacted learning in several ways: first, they called for the creation of new training environments in host institutions and the adjustment of placement settings to respond to training needs; second, they called for the initiation of a mentoring system, of a reporting/on-hand evaluation system, and finally, the recognition of acquired or consolidated skills.

The Romanian tertiary sector focused on humanities and on intensive language studies for business, tourism, or communication purposes has developed in consonance with the advancements made in the area of

linguistic studies, applied linguistics, educational studies and, more recently, of Vocational and Education Training. Further input and inspiration for the design of curriculum came from the international language tests available, including the Cambridge test, the Common European Framework Levels (CEFL), the ALTE grid for testing and language evaluation etc.

Given these prerequisites, the Romanian tertiary system has not worked out isolated foreign language curricula. It adopted the norms and standards promoted by European institutions, which eventually became benchmarks for curricula interpretation and output evaluation.

The study will outline a sample of writing curricula used at the Romanian Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj. The undergraduates have an upper intermediate to advanced level of English language mastery on their entrance and during their undergraduate studies they develop on to *mastery*. Upon graduation the students' acquired competences will allow them to take up jobs in the following areas: business, tourism, communication, mass media etc. Consequently, the range of learned writing texts will be in line with the prospective job needs. The curricula used by teachers have been fully displayed below.

The first sample of curriculum refers to writing studies for business purposes that address the full undergraduate training programme, i.e. from the first year of study through to the third year of study. The writing course runs throughout the bachelor degree study programme according to the following grid:

Year of study	Discipline
1.	Oral and written communication
2.	Linguistic studies (text types, discourse and genre studies)
3.	Business communication (business letters and international trade)
4.	More elaborate types of business texts (reports, proposals, projects etc.)

The first year communication studies targeting undergraduates, who range from upper intermediate to advanced levels of English, incorporates both some theoretical subjects and practical writing tasks. The theoretical component is focused on the topics outlined below:

- ➢ writing vs speaking,
- ➢ the process of writing with its components,
- ➢ theories of writing (L1 and L2 theories of writing),
- ➢ evaluation of writing and writing products.

The more pragmatic-oriented part of the study grows on the development of the following writing skills:

- ➢ Writing sentences and paragraphs
- ➢ Organizing texts
- ➢ Note-taking
- ➢ Giving information (informative texts)
- ➢ Writing advertisements (very short ads, longer ads)
- ➢ Designing brochures and writing out brochure texts
- ➢ Writing reviews
- ➢ Writing news casts and newspaper articles
- ➢ Writing scientific articles
- ➢ Writing essays
- ➢ Writing summaries

These practical skill-forming topics seek to give the students practice in the following stages of composing:

- o brainstorming
- o mind-mapping
- o gathering information
- o organizing information
- o planning
- o drafting (moving from sentence level to entire texts)
- o revising
- o editing.

The 2nd year one semester course on discourse attempts to raise the trainees' awareness and understanding of the main concepts and approaches to **text, discourse** and **genre** and develop the skills necessary for the production of effective texts, discourses and genres. Since these are

held to be central for the future career of any professional linguist, the course insights **text, discourse** and **genre** as prerequisites and adjacent inquiries to further linguistic studies. Going out from definitions, the course features key characteristics of the three concepts, and provides a number of productive hand-on examples.

The first term practical course in Commercial Correspondence seeks to familiarize students with the basic ingredients of writing in the business world, which include: genre analysis, register analysis, style, linguistic structures and functions which are instrumental in expressing and addressing the targeted receiver, adopting the right attitude, tone etc to meet the addressee's social and professional status.

The practical course is intended to further introduce the **basic types of letters**, ranging from application letters to international trade-specific letters.

As an extension of the theoretical input, the course encompasses a practical component focused on skill-based **practical training** in business letter writing.

The same year practical course on **business communication** is designed to further develop business writing expertise and skills. As a consequence, it tackles the following issues: *summary writing* (corres-pondence, longer advertising texts, other text types), *meeting agendas, minutes, memoranda (shorter and longer memos)*, *reports, business plans, project proposals, regional development plans, press releases.*

The outlined three-year curricular scheme may not prove valid for other higher education institutions or language centres, but it turned out productive and useful in the process of training future communicators. The validity test for the designed curricula is the graduates' capacity to measure up to practical job demands and requirements. The scheme is further subject to improvements dictated by the changes and challenges posed by the raising standards of various professions.

A further example of a writing curriculum is that used by teachers who teach at the Romanian college of tourism after the books on English for International Tourism written by Silvia Irimiea (1999, 2006a, 2006b). The writing activities proposed by the Romanian book have been compared with the ones designed, in general, by the Longman book on International Tourism written by Miriam Jacob and Peter Strutt (1997), Michael Duckworth's book (1996) published by the OUP and other more recent ones:

	EFB and EFT curricula	Writing activities comprised by the Longman book on English for International Tourism	OUP High Season
1.	Writing for the newspaper	Writing press releases	
2.	Writing advertisements, Application letters, CVs	Writing promotional letters Writing CVs and covering letters	Writing an advertisement
3.	Message writing

Writing and answering business letters | Writing faxes Writing and recording messages Memos Writing and answering letters of inquiry Writing letters of confirmation Writing letters of recommendation | Completing a fax Sending out faxes

Memos |
| 4. | Questionnaire design | Designing a questionnaire and carrying out a survey | |
| 5. | Writing letters of complaint and adjustment letters | Dealing with complaints | |
| 6. | Reports

Tourist welcome letters | Writing reports | Reports/a report on Sicily/ a report on sales patterns/ reporting on how Ireland is promoted |
7.	Brochure language	Writing promotional material, Writing a tourist information leaflet	
8.	Sales letters and advertising materials		Recommending a new site
9.	Correspondence regarding organising conferences		
10.	Writing business plans Writing summaries	Writing summaries after notes	
11.		Taking bookings and filling in forms	
12.		Writing a set of information	Giving tourism information Writing a set of instructions for travellers How to create a good impression
13.		Describing an area	Describing a career

Fig. 1. *A comparative perspective on writing curricula*

The parallel evidences the similarity of writing activities and the tendency of the Romanian book(s) to comply with the standard topics and requirements proposed by outstanding publishing houses and by experienced authors.

These examples further emphasise the Romanian institutions' alignment with other European standard-setting institutions and the attempt to contribute to the complex standardization and benchmarking process of language training in Europe.

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Evaluating Writing

3.1. A short introduction to testing

Evaluating writing is an extremely old activity. According to L. Hamp-Lyons (2001) its early precursor can be traced back in the 1111-771 BC period in China, where essay testing was rigorously carried out. The Chinese developed an 'impartial' system of evaluation as a result of the imperative need to select officials. Impartiality in the examination process meant a rigorous, sometimes traumatic sequence of demanding examinations in which candidates and examiners were locked away together, while the candidates' scripts were recopied by scribes to ensure anonymity and more than one examiner marked each script. In reality, however, these ideals of impartiality were crushed by bribery, cheating, etc.

In Europe and Britain, university education or instruction was offered only to a tiny minority of male students and examinations consisted of a tutor-student dialogue and a seminar-style debate and enquiry. As the British colonial empire expanded there was a growing need for literate persons for administrative and colonial jobs, which could ensure the run of colonial issues. Yet, the British colonies also recruited literate locals for various colonial jobs to work under the colonial representatives and administrators. The once oral examinations that tested the literacy of the future colonial employees gave way to a more severe written testing model

inspired from the Chinese examination tradition. Gradually this kind of written examination form was adopted by almost all British universities. The need to apply the examinations to growing numbers of candidates brought statistics into the general focus and contributed to increasing *objectivity*, *accuracy*, and the *development of measuring devices*, all driven by the quest for the 'true judgment' of written work.

Apparently, the adoption of the written form of testing goes back to the introduction of a **written composition** as an entrance examination at the Harvard University in 1873-1874. Lunsford (1986) also quoted by L. Hamp-Lyons (2001) tried to describe the university entrance examination relating it to the Harvard experience. The large-scale adoption of such a written examination system inevitably called for an increased concern for finding adequate measurement devices and a certain standardization of the procedures. In this respect Hillegas (1912) proposed a *thousand-point scale* to assess writing and the separation of writing into *content* and *form.* The content-form split gave a momentum to the use of 'objective' tests, which resulted in the adoption and intensive exploitation of the **multiple-choice tests**. This type of tests brought about new measurements, which incorporated assessment of:

- ability to recognize conventions of grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics, and the
- ability to choose the appropriate style for a certain kind of writing.

All in all, these abilities made up a set of viable criteria that was supposed to cover all skills necessary to good writing. "Form became writing" notes L. Hamp-Lyons (2001, pg 118) and writing assessment in the United States "became the preserve of the statisticians and their supporters". The tremendous use of multiple-choice tests also called for the establish-ment of *standard-setting institutions*, such as the Educational Testing Service in 1947, with which multiple-choice tests became part of the "American way".

In spite of the progress made and the general 'fair spirit' that dominated the movement, the multiple-choice tests could not measure the

broad spectrum of abilities that teachers of writing identified as important to effective writing. According to them, effective writing rested on:

- inventing ideas and arguments,
- building material into a *coherent and overall structure* to inform, convince, etc. and, finally,
- revising and editing one's own work to closely match the genre-text conventions and the expectations of a wide range of audiences.

The 1970s and 1980s brought discomfort with the multiple-choice tests and resulted in many American universities' reintroducing the use of formal examinations focused rather on writing abilities than on content examination through writing. Fader D. (1986) described that the University of Michigan was in the forefront of this new trend.

At the same time, a new approach that turned into a movement emerged in Europe and Canada. L. Hamp-Lyons (2001, pg. 119) notes: "In the early 1970s Britain's General Certificate of Education (GCE) "O" level introduced *Mode 3 English*, a writing folio to complement or replace a single sitting exam". The folio was presented and discussed at conferences in the early 1980s and was tested by Elbow and Belanoff (1986) at the State University of New York at Stonybrook. The folio soon turned into a popular examination form and received the label "**portfolio**". It was used for placement at the University of Michigan and then it was increasingly used at all levels of education in the United States. Other forms of portfolio, including teacher portfolios and various electronic portfolios were added to the initial folio.

L. Hamp-Lyons (2001) has become an influential promoter of the portfolio-based approach in second language writing instruction and assessment (1994, 1996). However, she also expressed concerns and cautions regarding their use, as there is still little research carried out and much too little practice on the consequences of portfolio-based instruction and assessment.

Given this three-stage development of examination forms, Liz Hamp-Lyons (2001) assumes that the development of writing testing underwent three stages: an *essay or composition type of writing, a multiple-choice stage* and a *portfolio stage*.

From the earlier stages of writing assessment development, L. Hamp-Lyons (2001) draws some interesting and challenging assumptions regarding the further evolution thereof. At least in the field of *second language writing* she anticipates a *holistic* and *more critical perspective* on the students' assessment needs, methods and strategies. She states:

> "The fourth generation in writing assessment will, naturally enough, share many qualities with other forms of assessment. However, because the fourth generation will have different qualities from the previous three, it will expand, enrich, and change thinking not only about portfolios, but also about essay testing and multiple-choice testing. The development of a powerful and encompassing explanatory and evaluative paradigm for thinking about how we „do" writing assessment will benefit teachers, students, and maybe even bureaucracies by offering more solidly grounded tools of critique for assessment systems and their uses (and abuses)." (L. Hamp-Lyons, 2001, pg. 120)

L. Hamp-Lyons (2001) describes the *fourth generation* writing assessment as displaying the following qualities: *technological*, *humanistic*, *political* and *ethical*.

Hamp-Lyons admits that writing assessment, particularly in the first language, has avoided the use of **technological input** or resources, as being too distant, too difficult for people to handle and inappropriate. It has been equally assumed that technological intrusions into assessment are not only expensive but also complex, and that, finally, they "are too distant from the participants and make text creation (and perhaps text evaluation) too lonely an enterprise" (L. Hamp-Lyons, 2001, pg. 120).

In the last years, studies carried out tried to find ways of applying technological breakthroughs in some writing assessment related fields, including text linguistics (corpus linguistics, and computational linguistics). It has been, nevertheless, found that the use of technological devices has both advantages and disadvantages. The relevant advantages of the intrusion of modern technology into writing assessment, according to L. Hamp-Lyons, (2001) are: the ability to perform repeated actions without boredom or variation, adaptability (within a specified range of preworked pathways), flexibility (testing can take place at any time, for

varied purposes, and for any number of candidates), and objectivity, that is the quality to pass judgments without being judgmental or confrontational. On the other hand, the disadvantage is that technology does not permit human interaction, does not allow human contact between the written text and the evaluator.

The **humanistic** component added by L. Hamp-Lyons (2001) to writing assessment has been related to the old Chinese concept of "impartiality", which, in turn, was related to social justice. The concept of impartiality was questioned even during the Sung period in which the concept emerged, when the government realized that impartiality could not address the need for social, regional and moral justice. The argument brought forth was that, while it attempted to create equal possibilities for all candidates, it could not, however, create equal opportunities for all members of the society. It is assumed that the chasm between "fairness" and social justice has not been settled by the Chinese examination system whose concept of impartiality has been questioned ever since. L. Hamp-Lyons (2001) opinionates that "the move toward humanistic values in fourth generation writing assessment is impelled by the same motive, the search for a 'great fairness'". She further pleads for humanistic values stating that "what is meant by saying that the fourth generation will be humanistic is that it will be far more conscious of and responsive to the human needs of stakeholders" L. Hamp-Lyons (2001, pg. 122). She then clarifies the notion of *stakeholder*, which has gained prominence in the 1990s, which refers to the broad category of test takers, designers, raters and score users and can be expanded to cover larger groups of people and institutions that have some kind of stake in any assessment. Yet a general, valid and comprehensive humanistic assessment theory has not been produced, one that would comprise the expected knowledge variables, behaviours, attitudes, the consequences for test takers or raters, their standards, the score scale used, the uses that score users make of test results, etc. Then again, there are further elements or contributors that must be considered, such as: the attitude of various stakeholder groups towards specific tests, and the way it influences educational, social and political use of tests or

scoring. Nevertheless, if stakeholders are given too much interference credit, then the boundary between the human characteristic of assessment and the political implicature becomes blurred.

Assessment is **political** and this was the case of China where education was highly politised and where assessment of performances had a wide impact on politics. Sung emperors shared the view that education was inherently political and used as a tool for political engineering. Education has preserved its political character even today in China, whereby students have limited access to forms of culture and education (L. Hamp-Lyons, 2001).

Furthermore, at *microlevel* (classroom activity, school, and school district level) there is an increasing amount of evidence of the impact tests and other forms of assessment have on curriculum design, on the teaching material used, and teaching methods. The compliance of curriculum with assessment needs is generally known as "curricular alignment".

On *macrolevel* there is consensus that several factors, including: the type of assessment, the role different stakeholders have, the uses they are used for in society, the attitude of the society at large toward the examination processes, the results, and the status influence of the value attributed by society to education in a society. The influence exerted by testing on society is known as *impact* (Wall, 1998) quoted by L. Hamp-Lyons (2001).

The fourth generation testing will therefore be more political-oriented in that it will be more aware of the influences that politics have on testing, on processing testing, delivery and final reporting.

From the **ethical** stance, tests have always involved human emotions and excitement. Even in the rare cases when tests are explicitly told to have no impact on the testees, the latter find it difficult not to become anxious about the test or examiners. In addition, little has been done to investigate the students and the test takers regarding the way they may be affected by tests.

Generally, when ethics is involved in testing or assessment it has to do with **fairness.** The problem that arises is how can a language tester or another tester ensure fairness, how does he know what is fair to one

candidate and what is fair to another, or what is fair to a larger group, and how does a society determine what is best for the largest number of test takers when fairnesses are in conflict? (L. Hamp-Lyons, 1997a). In view of ensuring fairness, the same researcher recommends a few questions, whose answers would guide the testers, students, stakeholders, etc. in their endeavours, and which are: How do we ensure test takers' rights? How do we ensure that decisions are made meaningful? Whose judgments count when decisions are made? How do we decide among competing approaches? How do we monitor our conduct, when in most contexts no one else is doing it?

Finally, testing has become a complex process, with broad implications in several areas. Testing is also influenced by an array of factors, by technical progress and skill development, by the challenging needs and expectations of testers, of test takers, students, institutions and government. These variables will altogether raise the level of tests and the outcomes of further research and practice in writing assessment.

In conclusion, testing is an extremely old activity that, according to L. Hamp-Lyons (2001), underwent three stages: an *essay or composition type of writing*, *a multiple-choice stage* and a *portfolio stage*. The same testing researcher further postulates that the present stage is marked by a technological input, by a humanistic component, by politics and ethics. Despite the progress made in testing and the consistent input coming from prominent institutions, research on testing may yield more confident answers to the issue of ‚fairness' in assessment.

3.2. Evaluation stances and criteria

Almost all writing is produced for an audience, a person, an examiner, an authority, i.e. somebody who will ultimately evaluate or assess the product of writing. Henceforth, the final, formal products have to be *graded, marked, tested, evaluated, assessed, examined, defended*, etc.

The audience or checking authority, for convenience reasons called **evaluator**, *evaluates* the process or the product of writing vis-à-vis his *needs*, *expectations*, *standards* and *requirements* which would broadly and normally coincide with the function or purpose set forth by the writer prior to engaging in the process stage, or by some higher academic or community authority.

The *purpose* or the *function* of a piece of writing is established by the writer in accordance with:

- his writing intentions,
- the envisaged audience's needs and expectations,
- the audience's professional and socio-cultural requirements,
- the socio-professional needs and requirements of the community he lives or works in
- the cultural conventions and norms which govern the writer's environment and behaviour.

Further, during the *evaluation stage* or *process*, the evaluator will look at a few elements which represent his own evaluation criteria, established in full consonance with his needs, which may, however, slightly differ from the ones imagined, thought out or targeted by the writer.

The evaluator will assess either the *process*, or, as it happens more often, the *product*.

If the evaluator focuses on the assessment of the **process of writing**, he must be an instructor who:

- either wishes to find out for teaching purposes whether the writer has complied with the theoretical elements or stages of writing or not,
- or wishes to form, develop, and/or correct writing skills related to particular stages of the process of writing.

If the instructor wishes to form writing skills for particular stages of the writing process, he has to break the process into the subcomponent activities and go through a thorough examination of one or all activities. In the case of a partial examination or assessment the evaluator may use only

those criteria that stand for the completed activity. Examples of separate activities that can be evaluated are:

- 'rewriting while writing', i.e. rewriting sentences and/or paragraphs during the process of their construction with a view to enabling writers to express meanings in the ways they wish to; it is, however, important that such assessments be carried out or evaluated alongside or vis-à-vis the first version or the original;
- evaluation of 'rewriting for the reader' skills, i.e. evaluation of the skills necessary to write for a specified audience, or for different target readers;
- rewriting skills for eliminating errors or distracting features, such as *poor punctuation, incorrect spelling*, etc.; although it may look like proofreading, this activity involves slightly more than simply proofreading.

Apart from the mentioned examples of discrete activities that can be monitored and assessed, writing instructors or teachers can find further ways of assessing general or partial writing skills tailored to suit their teaching purposes. It lies in the teachers' expertise and experience to work out effective assessment solutions for various writing activities or segments thereof.

Should we look for some lucrative suggestions in the direction of writing assessment or evaluation, then we should turn to researches carried out in the field of writing, to applied linguistics, to teachers of EFL or ESL, and, last but not least, to the recommendations and documents issued by the Council of Europe regarding the foreign language learning and its evaluation, as all the promoted documents necessarily encompass a writing component as well.

A general, all-purpose-serving taxonomy of measures and analyses for the evaluation of final, formal **writing products** would comprise the following categories: overall quality, linguistic accuracy, syntactic complexity, lexical features, content, mechanics, coherence and discourse features, fluency and revision.

The **overall quality criterion** evaluates the overall quality of a piece of writing, as opposed to the evaluation of particular components. The ways to access and assess the overall quality of a text include: *holistic scales, analytic-scale scores, and ranking*. Holistic scales usually rely on Test of Written English (TWE) or in the USA the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery. The purpose for assessing overall quality is varied. Some evaluators may wish to compare overall quality to components of writing, or overall quality with accuracy and complexity, or to evidence the progress made as part of a teaching programme, or varied characteristics of writers vis-à-vis their overall writing quality.

Linguistic accuracy is a rather broad term that is related to the absence of errors. The term is expected to cover: *word choice, spelling,* and *punctuation*. For measuring accuracy, as part of a research study of assessments, Polio C. (2001) mentions: holistic scales, the number of error-free units (clauses or text-units), number of individual errors, with or without classification. However, it is understandable that these measurement devices are not error-free. For example, a number of errors count may not clearly indicate the severity of the errors and how it affects comprehensibility. Then, we may question the relevance of accuracy in L2 writing, for example. On the other hand, accuracy can be a reflection of the writer's attention devoted to the task(s) he performs or a reflection of his scope of his explicit knowledge. Regardless, of the other disadvantages, accuracy can give some indication of the processes involved in the accomplishment of some writing tasks.

Complexity usually refers to grammatical complexity, which defined by Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998, pg. 107) means „that a wide variety of both basic and sophisticated structures are available and can be accessed quickly, whereas a lack of complexity means that only a narrow range of basic structures are available or can be accessed" According to Polio C. (2001) complexity refers to syntactic complexity and encompasses average sentence length of a structure. The same researcher recommends three ways of measuring complexity: *the average length of a structure*, specifically

words in a T-unit (text unit), *frequency of a structure*, such as passive sentences or dependent clauses usually measured against a certain period of time, and *complexity ratios*, the most common thereof being clauses per T-unit. Qualitative analyses can also permeate these measurements, which rely almost exclusively on the *kind of structures* used by writers and the *frequency of their occurrence*.

There are various reasons for undertaking such an analysis: first, to examine the impact of some instructional treatment on writing, second, to establish the differences between groups of writing-trainees, third, to determine the effect of task differences, and, finally, to study change over time in a given period.

A distinct set of criteria relates to the identification and quantification of **lexical features,** which, according to some researchers would, de facto, measure *lexical richness***.** Laufer and Nation (1995, pg. 307) opinionated that the purpose of the measures of lexical richness is „to quantify the degree to which a writer is using a varied and large vocabulary". Furthermore, many studies or analyses which focused on the examination of lexicon, do not only quantify size and variation, but look at error occurrence as well. Polio C. (2001) claims that a writer's lexicon can be measured by quantifying the following elements and constructs: *overall quality*, *lexical individuality or originality*, *lexical sophistication*, *lexical variation or diversity*, and less frequently, *lexical density*, *lexical accuracy* and *diversity of form classes*. For the replete measurement of lexical quality she recommends the use of a holistic scale, specifically Jacobs' scale.

The *lexical individuality index* or *originality* is measured by dividing the number of tokens unique to a writer by the total number of tokens. This measurement compares or contrasts an individual writer to a group.

Lexical sophistication is measured by examining the ratio of the so-called advanced tokens to the total number of words. Again, Laufer and Nation (1995) suggested that the study should focus on the Lexical Frequency Profile that takes into account the writers' use of words on several different lists, not just a set of advanced words.

Lexical variation or *diversity* is measured by the type: token ratio.

Lexical density is measured by dividing the number of tokens by the number of lexical tokens, while *lexical errors* can be determined by counting the lexical errors, or the number of lexical errors against the total number of errors.

The *diversity of form* class criterion relies on the ratio: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, modifiers and total number of lexical words.

With regard to *lexical originality*, this is a quality that should be measured against the characteristics of a group. Equally, lexical variation depends on the length of the written text. This means that the longer the text, the more likely it is that more lexical items will occur in free variation, or repetitions thereof. By contrast, lexical sophistication has to do with the use of a certain amount and range of ,advanced' words.

Lexical measures provide data about both *quality* and *development*. Laufer and Nation (1995), who carried out reliable and extensive research in the field, have measured change over time and found that their subjects used increasingly more sophisticated words. With L2 writers there is, however, the risk of making more errors and damaging the lexical profile by not using advanced words or original ones correctly.

Content seems to be a relevant and consistent evaluation criterion, since it has been used for an extremely long time, ever since evaluators and instructors have started checking the form and content of a written text.

Most general judgments about the content quality of a written text include holistic scales and other measurements. L. Hamp-Lyons and Henning (1991) used scales for multiple traits including: interest, referencing, and argumentation. Fischer (1984) used scales for ,pertinence' and communicative value. Researchers like Friedlander (1990) counted the number of details, while other researchers used a qualitative description of the content with a list of topics covered by writers and whether or not they completed the task. Kepner (1991, pg. 308) focused on counting the number of higher level propositions that included "propositions or propositional clusters within the students text which exemplified the cognitive processes

of analysis, comparison/ contrast, inference/interpretation/and/or evaluation". One further suggestion is to count all idea units that are covered by a written text/composition, which might also account for the density of content, if necessary.

Mechanics is a less relevant descriptor that occurs in Jacobs' scale, and refers to: *spelling, punctuation, capitalization* and *indentation*. It is, nevertheless, arguable whether or not mechanics is a valid measurement.

Coherence and discourse features make up a two-set category of text evaluation criteria.

The **first set** evaluates the *overall coherence* and *organization of a text*. This can be done in several ways:

- conducting a *qualitative description* of the writer's text to highlight the differences between writers or between writers belonging to a particular culture and others belonging to a different one,
- *identifying and classifying* text elements into specific categories
- *locating the main idea(s)*, or
- carrying out a *topic structure analysis* intended to study the flow of topics.

The **second set** of features relating to discourse features comprises:

- *Metadiscourse features*, which were defined by Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995, pg 253) as "those factors of a text which make the organization explicit, provide information about the writer's attitude toward the text content, and engage the reader in interaction". The two researchers who advocated this measurement focused on features like *hedges, emphatics* and *attitude markers* in essays. Other researchers like Hyland and Milton (1997) through a semantic and grammatical analysis looked at *markers of doubt and uncertainty* in native speakers' (NS) essays and non-native speakers' (NNS) writings. Some researchers, including Allison (1995) carried out qualitative descriptions and highlighted the NNS' use of *assertions* with a view to rectifying deficiencies through appropriate pedagogical and/or linguistic training.

- *Cohesive devices.* The studies that used these criteria pointed out the use of repetitions, whereas Reid (1992) focused on cohesion in native and non-native texts by quantifying pronouns, conjunctions, subordinate conjunction openers, and prepositions.
- *Register features.* Some researchers and instructors focused on the examination and evaluation of features, including syntactic features, that were considered to reflect a certain register; the elements that called the researchers' and instructors' attention were: *use of contractions*, *of first person singular*, *connectives* and *passive voice* forms. The studies showed, however, that, if due attention had been devoted to the acquisition of a formal register in time, the subjects gradually moved from a speech-like register to an improved formal register through the development of their writing skills that accounted for a formal register.

Fluency is another writing assessment criterion listed by some evaluators. Fluency does not necessarily mean how fast the writer pours his thoughts onto the paper, but rather how native-like and smooth the writing flows. This stance has been adopted by Tarone who used it in his *holistic scale of fluency*. His scale refers to "nativeness, standardness, length, ease of reading, idiomaticity" (Tarone, et al., 1993, pg 170). De facto, many writing researchers locate fluency in varied measuring contexts; some would include it under the organisation component, or lexical richness, or complexity. Research practice has evidenced at least three ways of measuring fluency:

- the first one is through the use of a *holistic scale*, as pointed out earlier,
- the second through counting the *amount of production* according to some unit, usually words, but occasionally clauses or T-units,
- the third through measures of fluency, which have been considered a reflection of complexity and lexical quality criteria and have included c*lauses per T-unit*, *average length of T-unit*, and *type-token ratio*.

Other measures of fluency have insisted on counting the *number of words* and *total number of clauses*. Finally, the definition given to fluency by Wolfe-Quintero et al., (1998, pg 25) would perhaps clarify the issue:

> In our view, fluency means that more words and more structures are accessed in a limited time; whereas a lack of fluency means that only a few words or structures are accessed. Learners who have the same number of productive vocabulary items or productive structures may retrieve them with differing degrees of efficiency. Fluency is not a measure of how sophisticated or accurate the words or structures are, but a measure of the sheer number of words, or structural units a writer is able to include in his writing within a particular period of time.

Fluency, on the other hand, must not impede on overall text quality, T-length, lexical features or coherence. If, for example, in order to be fluent a writer neglects or overlooks length, or any other element from the array of measure-giving criteria, then he will be severely penalized therefore within the frames of those specific features or measures. If fluency has been improved as a consequence of a careful observance of all other features, and not at their expense, then the writer can be said to have really registered a consistent improvement of his writing skills and of the inherent cognitive processes.

Revision can also be used as a measurement criterion, albeit its reliability is questionable. *Analysing and scoring revision* is a limited way of examining writing and means examining the changes that were made from one draft to the next only. This survey is not indicative of the changes made by the writer, neither is it indicative of the reasons that prompted the writer to revise his writing. Writing researchers coded revision to find out how students revised their writing in response to either peer or teacher comments. While dealing with revision, researchers came across two questions: do writers differ in how they revise in their L1 and L2? and how does experience with a computer and writing proficiency affect revision?

Faigley and Witte (1981) differentiated between surface changes and text-based changes, where the latter represented *meaning changes.* They further classified the changes into:

- *deletions*,
- *additions*,
- *substitutions*,
- *punctuation* and so on.

In their 1981 study they used the sentence unit as an average unit of analysis and reported the changes as a ratio of changes per 1 000 words.

Other researchers classified the changes into: *graphic, word, phrase, clause, sentence* or *multisentence change*. However, as in most cases, there is no general consensus on the coding and scoring systems. Even the distinction between a surface and a meaning change is problematic and requires deeper consideration.

The deplorable lack of agreement on various issues springs from the inconsistency of research studies and the absence of a thorough guide or manual with clear definitions and samples to substantiate the research methodology and scoring system recommended for use.

Evaluating writing has become a consistent area of concern that yielded some valid conclusions as an outcome of the researches carried out, but at the same time spawned up further inquiry in several areas of the evaluation process, where both evidence and experience are far from being reliable.

The outlined criteria are valid measurement instruments for different writing-related purposes, but their use must be eclectic and must serve the proposed objectives. The decision regarding the criteria that will be used must belong to the instructor or testing authority, who is expected to know what he is looking for by administering a particular test.

3.3. European scales and standards. Fundamental concepts of evaluation

3.3.1. Evaluation

Assessment or evaluation has grown into an area of consistent study with the advent of applied linguistics, the tremendous development of English for Specific Purposes and of other branches of linguistics like EFL and ESL.

Presumably, in time, at least one or more FL skills, including writing skills, will be tested and evaluated for various reasons. Teachers and testers world-wide strive to find most adequate ways to measure the amount of

what would presumably be necessary to a European citizen in terms of professional and linguistic skills acquisition to function effectively and rewardingly in an international environment.

Any attempt to create a feasible, usable and instrumental evaluation system must examine the general linguistic theories, experiments, and experiences developed so far.

The best and most advanced testing models have come from *performance tests* and *proficiency tests*, from *standard language tests*, from the *theories* relating to *foreign language communicative competence* formation, from the latest Common European Reference Levels promoted by the Council of Europe. Any attempt to assess writing/communicative skills should be made in full consonance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe regarding the standardization of the certificates and award systems in Europe, of elaborating a generally recognized, transparent assessment system for professional and language skills, including writing.

These findings must inspire the teachers and testers in building a corpus of evaluation principles, which should reconcile the transnational models and requirements with local needs and traditions and classroom or vocational purposes. In finding the adequate evaluative method(s) the teachers or testers should first try to respond to the question: what do we want to teach? Since the aim is to form writing skills for the use of English, the skills subject to evaluation are the skill(s) developed through the process of teaching writing. New, feasible and operative evaluation procedures must, thus, be worked out in strict compliance with the skills that will be formed and adjusted to the specific activities and conditions, which act as variables in the overall evaluation process. Consequently, the evaluation criteria to be used will also be established according to the specific communication medium, the general discourse type, the particular needs of the academic curriculum, the general and particular learner's needs, etc.

From the theoretical and scientific perspective, an approach to writing evaluation should incorporate the language theories and theoretical approaches to language teaching promoted by famous native linguists and

language theoreticians. In this respect, the influence exerted by the *communicative approach in language teaching*, amongst which the works of Widdowson and Littlewood held a central part, was strongly consistent with the aim of drawing up a TEFL theory and an evaluation system. The evaluation study must further draw on the studies and developments that emerged in *pragmatics*, *applied linguistics*, in *ESP* and *functional linguistics.*

What is **evaluation** in the first place? According to H.H. Stern (1983), any educational scheme is aimed at organizing learning experiences in a planned way and ensuring that educators achieve their targets. Evaluation

> „serves to make judgments about the progress and performance of individual students exposed to the curriculum in question. It comprises informal assessments, such as the nod of the head and expressions of right or wrong, as well as the intuitive self-assessment a student may make of his own work. At the more formal end of the spectrum of evaluative measures it includes teacher-made classroom tests, standardized tests, and internal or external examinations, or whatever other devices are used (for example interviews and observation) to assess outcomes". H.H. Stern (1983, pg. 439)

The outcome of all teaching and learning is what has been termed 'proficiency'. Writing is part of the training process that involves learning a foreign language, consequently in order to build up a *construct of writing assessment* researchers need to thoroughly look at the *process of learning* and at the concept of *proficiency* as the process outcome.

Evaluation has become a consistent area of research and inquiry both for testers and teachers. Testers must look at the corpus of testing standards set forth by the Council of Europe, by prominent testing researchers and should reflect on what they wish to evaluate, in the first place.

3.3.2. Stern's 'knowing the language' approach

First of all, **proficiency** is the learning outcome in which several actors and interactants are involved: teachers, administrators, curriculum designers, test constructors, researchers, parents, and finally, the students. Proficiency has been looked at as a goal and thus was defined in terms of *objectives* and *standards*.

Prior to discussing a few approaches on proficiency, the study shall briefly survey some aspects drawn by H.H. Stern (1983, pg 343) that relate to ‚knowing the language' and which have a strong bearing on rounding up a theory of language learning. The aspects quoted from Stern help us understand the construct of ‚competence' and also build up a suited evaluation system.

1. *The language user knows the rules governing his native language and he can ‚apply' them without paying attention to them.* This mastery of the forms of a language, which is intuitive and yet can be made conscious under certain circumstances, can be acquired gradually by learners of a foreign language during the process of language acquisition.

2. *The native speaker has an intuitive grasp of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and sociocultural meaning expressed by language forms.* This means that the ‚fusion of forms and meanings' in the native language is self-evident, but it is non-existent for the second or foreign language learner, who has to grasp and learn it.

3. *The mastery of linguistic rules and sociocultural meaning by the native speaker represents linguistic competence* and refers to formal and semantic features of a language.

4. *The native speaker spontaneously uses language for the purpose of communication and has an intuitive understanding of the socio-linguistic functions of a language in use.* Assumedly, knowledge of sociolinguistic and stylistic varieties of a language is non-implicit with a non-native speaker, and must be learned. D. Hymes (1972) calls the intuitive knowledge of social, functional, and contextual features *communicative competence.*

5. *Linguistic and communicative competence manifests itself in language behaviour receptively and productively in listening and in talking, in literate societies, after training, also in reading and writing.*

6. *The native speaker uses the first language ‘creatively’.* Going out from N. Chomsky's statement that a language user does not simply

possess a set repertoire of phrases and sentences, but that he can further make up an infinite number of new sentences that conform to the rules of first language, Stern (1983) points out that 'creativity' means that the language users do not simply 'conform' to the existing rules, but that they ,impose order and regularity on language data' thus creating their own language system. By extension then, *creativity* means creating novel rules. Stern further admits that "as second language learners we make up our own rules, impose our interpretations on the second language, and cope with communicative functions of the second language as best as we can on the basis of our experience as first language users and our imperfect knowledge of the second language" (Stern, 1983, pg. 344-345).

7. *A child also has linguistic and communicative competence, i.e. a system of formal and social rules, which are applied creatively and more or less unconsciously*, which evolves from a simple undifferentiated competence level to a developed one which characterizes an adult.

8. *Different first language users will possess different degrees or levels of competence.*

9. *The native speaker has an 'internal system', 'mechanism' 'structure' or 'schema' that incorporates and processes all language items.* Likewise, second language competence or proficiency is an internal structure or system which is relatively simple and unstructured at the beginning, but which, in the course of the learning process becomes more structured, complex and efficient.

10. *Each individual has his own competence, i.e.* his internalised system of knowledge of the first language imbued with certain individual characteristics.

11. *The concept of competence or proficiency is a construct which is accessible only through inference from the language behaviour of the individual, his ,performance' in speaking, listening, reading and writing.*

The elements pointed out as markers of competence and proficiency are extremely important to a language teacher, who must pay equal attention to the teaching of the four skills, and who will ultimately assess the acquisition of the skills.

Perhaps a clearer outlook on the concept of *proficiency* will be reached after another survey, this time a survey of the approaches to *(second) language proficiency*.

3.3.3. Second language proficiency

The sixties exhibited an intensified effort to define, describe and provide serviceable specifications of language proficiency to teachers, testers, researchers, etc. Stern (1983) distinguished four approaches to the phenomenon of language proficiency: theoretical conceptions, rating scales, standardized tests, and interlanguage studies, all of which range from theoretical-based to more empirical-based schemes.

3.3.3.1. Theoretical-based conceptions of proficiency

Within this frame Stern differentiates three categories of concepts.

The first group of concepts defines *proficiency* as *linguistic content.* Up to the 1970s *phonology*, *vocabulary* and *grammar* had governed most definitions, then definitions of proficiency incorporated *semantic*, *discourse* and *sociolinguistic features* as well, which means that definitions of proficiency comprise not only grammatical 'well-formedness', but also *speech act rules*, *functions of language* and varieties thereof. However, proficiency researchers, like Canale and Swain (1980) point out that the stronger emphasis shown to communication should not mean that the grammatical component must be neglected.

A second group of concepts is more *psychological* or *behavioural* in nature. This approach covers:
   1. relatively abstract concepts at the theoretical end of the scale: proficiency as competence (linguistic or communicative) or proficiency described in more concrete terms as 'intralingual' skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and 'crosslingual' or 'mediating' skills of interpreting and translating;

2. at the concrete end of the scale, proficiency has been described in terms of detailed inventories of: language items, situations, psychological roles, speech functions, semantic categories and topics.

Canale and Swain (1980) devised a basis for test development in which they viewed *proficiency* as communicative competence, which they decomposed into

3. *grammatical competence* accounting for mastery of forms and meanings,

4. *sociolinguistic competence* which is analogous to the capacity to communicate, and

5. *strategic competence*, which is the ability of a communicator to compensate for the problems in communication, but which in Canale and Swain covered *creativity*.

Very much by contrast, the *Threshold Level* scheme for second language English devised by the Council of Europe and the *niveau-seuil* for second language French, defined *proficiency* in the concrete details of a syllabus of items useful for specified groups of learners, for example travellers coming into contact with the target language community.

A third group of concepts combines the *behavioural* and the *linguistic content* categories. As early as the 1960s Carroll offered a version of a proficiency scheme which combined *language skill* (auditory comprehension, oral production, reading and writing) with *language aspects* (phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon). Carroll's most elaborated version comprises two charts: one detailing 'linguistic competences' and the other 'performance abilities' (1968, pg. 57). Thus, for the written language component corresponding to the productive skill 'writing' we read:

> Ability to write (by hand or other method) the graphemes of the language, state their customary ordering.

The relevance of such a scheme lies in its capacity to provide a testing system for specific competences.

A somewhat different model has been put forward by **Oller** (1976), which departs from the previous component-made up model. Oller's scheme suggests that *proficiency* is unitary and that its main marker is what he called *grammar-based expectancies* or an *expectancy grammar.* His theory is based on the assumption that both the listener and the reader anticipate the message and then compare the received message with the anticipations. Proficiency, after him, is the reader's or the listener's *ability to anticipate language use.* The productive skills, speaking and writing, also involve a corresponding process of planning messages.

Oller's theory has been contested by other researchers, who claimed that his unitary proficiency-based assumptions are grounded on interpretations of language test data. Oller's opponents argued that his language tests, very much like all tests, have a rather 'academic or cognitive character', as they test a 'cognitive/academic language proficiency' (CALP). What indeed, they fail to capture is a very important characteristic of language use, which Cummins (1979, 1980) calls 'the basic interpersonal and communicative skills' (BICS), corresponding roughly to what other researchers, including Stern (1983), called 'communicative capacity and creativity'.

The definitions presented under the heading of *theoretical-based concepts* are mainly based on either *theoretical considerations* or expressions of *desired outcomes.*

3.3.3.2. Descriptions of proficiency levels on rating scales

Going out from the assumption that second language proficiency ranges from zero to full bilingual proficiency, it is possible, however, on the basis of the practical knowledge possessed by learners at different stages, to define the levels of proficiency that are appropriate for different purposes. One such rating scale is that of the US Foreign Service Institute and the Defense Language Institute, i.e. the FSI Language Proficiency Ratings. This proficiency rating system distinguishes five classes of proficiency:

1. elementary proficiency,
2. limited working proficiency,

3. minimum professional proficiency,
4. full professional proficiency,
5. native or bilingual proficiency.

All the five rating levels are defined according to the *communicative roles* ascribed and to certain *linguistic criteria*. For example, the communicative standard for the lowest speaking level is defined as the *ability to satisfy routine travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements*. The Council of Europe scholars have also been assigned various tasks regarding evaluating proficiency levels and have worked out a seven-level system, ranging from 'survival' and 'waystage' to an ambilingual level (Trim, 1978). The findings and experiences of the Council of Europe in terms of proficiency-level assessment will be detailed in the next subchapter.

The benefits of the *proficiency levels based on rating scales* are the following:

- they often perform a dual function: on the one hand, they provide standards for given purposes, such as particular jobs, etc., on the other, rating scales can be used as descriptors or analyses of levels reached by second language learners;
- they can also be used by learners as *self-assessment scales;*
- they provide descriptions of different stages of the development of proficiency from minimal levels to advanced ones.

3.3.3.3. Proficiency measured by standardized tests

Researchers argue that language tests, including the MLA Cooperative Tests or the i.e. A French Tests, are empirically-based tests in that they merely reflect what learners are institutionally expected to perform. In addition, language tests should cover only what is taught in classrooms, and then it is arguable that proficiency is more than that and that language tests only partially cover 'proficiency'. The drawback is that they assess the aspects of proficiency that are taught as academic or institutional skills, such as grammar, vocabulary, etc. Henceforth, the tests seem to capture 'certain aspects of second language proficiency, the analytical or explicit component of language use' but at the same time, fail to assess the 'intuitive mastery and the communicative or creative aspects of proficiency' (Stern, 1983).

Along with the well-established test models advocated and promoted by famous institutions, the teachers, testers and other curriculum devisers may devise tests, at times, in response to various, more or less immediate, needs and goals.

Indeed, the tests may well assess language proficiency aspects, such as the use of grammatical forms, but cannot capture the full panorama of aspects related to communicative competence. They equally fail to reproduce the conditions or circumstances in which various performances usually are exhibited and then tested. Finally, they cannot capture the entire spectrum of communicative competence subcomponents involved in such a vast process, and cannot render accurately the complex picture of a communicative test.

3.3.3.4. Interlanguage studies

These studies have emerged in the 1960s and 1970s and have focused on *how learners perform in a second language*. Mainly, the studies and concepts centre around the nature, lawfulness, and characteristics of the 'interlanguage', a language system which has been alternatively called 'transitional competence', 'approximative system', 'idiosyncratic dialect', or 'learner's language' (Corder, 1981).

In 1967 Corder suggested that a significant input regarding the language learning process may come from a more systematic analysis of the learners' errors, by discovering the 'built-in syllabus' of the language learner. Many of the research efforts of the following decade were devoted to discovering the natural sequences of second language learning. A key concept of these studies was the one put forward by the American linguist *Selinker*, i.e. the concept of *'interlanguage'*.

Selinker postulated that the learner's language is a language in its own right. According to the interlanguage hypothesis, "second language speech rarely conforms to what one expects native speakers of the target language to produce, that it is not an exact translation of the native language, that it differs from the target language in systematic ways, and that the forms of utterances produced in the second language by the learner are not random.

This second language learning must be the speech forms which result from the attempted expression of meaning in a second language" (Selinker, Swain and Dumas, 1975, pg. 140).

In the 1960s language theories, *errors* came to be highly treasured as signals for *improved pedagogical grading*, while a decade later, they were recognized as valuable instruments for the *evaluation of proficiency*, and as equally *valuable aspects* of training. Researchers became enthusiastic about examining errors and creating a database therewith, which they found useful for the insight into the learner's language. Researchers studied the use of particular grammatical features and their incorporation into the learner's repertoire. The findings were also used to answer some questions about the learner's *acquisition of the second language.* Hatch E. (1978) tried to examine the extent to which the 'interlanguage' theory and research answered the questions regarding the *learning process*, its *lawfulness*, the *relation of first to second language learning* and the *'interlanguage' concept*. For this very purpose he posed ten questions about 'interlanguage' research, most of which deal with the learning process. The following example quoted via H.H.Stern (1983, pg 355) provides a general picture of the range of problems raised, of the capacity of 'interlanguage' research studies to answer legitimate questions thereabout:

Question

Is 'interlanguage' real

(systematic) or is it just a

cover term for random fluctuation…?

Answer

'While there is a good deal of

argument about the degree of

systematicity' …'the move from

the beginning stages to fluency

is not random'.

Question

'If interlanguage is systematic,

what is then the system? How

much variability is there?'

Answer
'While each learner's
interlanguage may develop
systematically, the system is not invariant'.

Despite the efforts made by Hatch to find credible answers, many aspects regarding the development, the stages of interlanguage, the development of proficiency at various age levels are still not clarified explicitly and convincingly by research.

However, the noteworthy outcome of the interlanguage research endeavours has demonstrated that the learner's proficiency can legitimately be conceived as a 'system' created by the learner himself to help him overcome the difficulties of a foreign or second language acquisition. Selinker (1972) upholds the view that this 'system' is not invariant, although it may have, according to him, 'certain relatively fixed defects', which are referred to as 'fossilizations'. The researchers, however, admit further that the main inquiries in this direction should regard the interplay of variation and systematicity and the causation of interlanguage characteristics.

In conclusion, the instruments that can accurately and successfully measure the mastery of second or foreign language skills from the stance of second language researchers, must necessarily focus on the *measurement of proficiency*, which is both the goal and end of language acquisition.

In the early 1980s Stern summed up the findings regarding second language proficiency stating that it can be expressed in terms of: 1) levels of proficiency and 2) components of proficiency.

The first set of options relates to the levels of proficiency displayed along the minimum-to-maximum proficiency axis. The levels mirror the degrees of actual or required proficiency or the progress from a basic to a near-native level. The levels are given by rating scales, tests measure, and interlanguage studies.

Minimum proficiency   Maximum proficiency

(Stern, 1983)
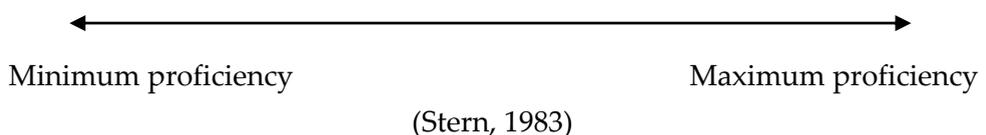
The second set of options relates to establishing the major categories of components that are likely to make up the list of *components*. The components can be expressed in two ways:

1. more abstractly, in most general terms referring to concepts,
2. or in relatively more concrete terms.

Up to the 1980s Stern summed up the following scheme:

1. **Oller** (1976) devised a *single concept expression* of proficiency represented by what he termed *expectancy grammar.*
2. **Cummins** (1979) has worked out a two-fold or *two-component division scheme* of the concept made up of *linguistic competence* and *communicative competence*, where both competence-components integrate: *phonology, lexis, syntax, semantics, sociocultural, discourse* and *situational features*.
3. **Canale and Swain** (1980), also quoted by Stern, used a *three-component scheme of 'proficiency'* composed of
   - a grammatical
   - a sociolinguistic component and
   - a strategic component

   The mastery of 'proficiency', however, as resulting from the compression of the eleven-points proposition proposed by H.H. Stern (1983, pg. 343) refers to four aspects, which also derive from the Canale-Swain scheme: *listening, speaking, writing* and *reading*.
4. The fourfold concept relied on the traditional *four-element scheme*: listening, speaking, writing and reading.
5. The **Council of Europe** concept was made up of more complex inventories that incorporate: roles, settings, topics, functions, and notions.
6. **Carroll's representation of proficiency** (1968) implies a fourfold representation of proficiency enlarged with some descriptors like: *phonology, lexicon* and *grammar*.

What most of the representation schemes share is the multiple-inventory scheme composed of elements that include the four basic skills and additional facets like: phonology, lexis and grammar.

In conclusion, given the following prerequisites:

1. language complexity;
2. complexity of task and the need to render the skill measurement as accurately as possible;
3. the need to assess partial or restricted skills

it seems more reasonable to approach *proficiency as a multifaceted construct* and investigate at least two or three components of proficiency, rather than focusing on a single item.

3.3.4. The Council of Europe efforts
to create common standards for evaluation

The endeavours of the Council of Europe to raise the level of vocational expertise of professionals, its efforts to standardize vocational training in Europe and the attempt to consolidate language learning throughout Europe has been more than notable and has yielded far-reaching results.

On the one hand, the need to improve **vocational training policy and practice** is requested throughout the EU by at least four prerequisites:

1. The general level of skills and qualifications in the labour force needs to be raised to meet the rapidly changing demands of the labour market, to facilitate the access to the labour market to a larger contingent of workers/employees, to combat unemployment and increase competitiveness.
2. General EU statistics and figures note that, despite the need to improve skill levels, around 25-30 % of young people leave the initial education system inadequately qualified or without an adequate initial training, which accounts for long term unemployment and their further exposure to social/ professional exclusion.
3. Almost all training efforts are directed towards those already highly qualified, leaving the unskilled, the women, and the part-timers or temporary workers more vulnerable to labour market phenomena.
4. There is a growing demand for **continuing training** as well as for policies that provide "second chance education".

These are reasonable arguments that call for a reconsideration of the former vocational training policies, that speak up for the development of integrated policies of lifelong learning and for the implementation of standardized methods for skill and/or competence evaluation, for the recognition of qualifications. This concern was materialized in the endeavour to create a single European framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences: the EUROPASS (Irimiea, 2005b).

The overall aim of the EUROPASS is to help citizens to better communicate their qualifications and competences.

It is thought to incorporate 5 documents established at European level and to be recognized as such. The components are:

6. the **European CV**, expected to become the backbone of the EUROPASS;
7. the Mobilipass, a document aimed at recording all European mobility for learning purposes, and gradually replacing the Europass-Training;
8. the Diploma Supplement for higher education;
9. the Certificate Supplement, used for vocational and educational training;
10. the European Language Portfolio, used to record the foreign language skills.

On the other hand, the Council of Europe has devised and orchestrated a dual action: to facilitate the **learning of foreign languages in Europe** and to **create a common reference system** of recognisable certificates and diplomas. These concerns are aimed at facilitating the free movement of professionals throughout Europe and the recognition of professional and linguistic competences and skills of European citizens.

In the past two decades, the Council of Europe began its four-fold influence through:

1. the creation of a *theoretic framework for foreign language teaching;*
2. the creation of institutions and forums to enhance and promote *language theories* and good practices;

3. the initiative of *standardizing the evaluation criteria* of vocational and linguistic competences;

4. the initiative to devise and carry out various *activities* under the umbrella of such community programmes as: Tempus, Minerva, Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates.

It is thus noteworthy to point out that the Council of Europe has created a number of tools through which it stimulates linguistic and cultural diversity in a unified Europe. The CE has conducted a long and transparent policy of linguistic training and evaluation resulting in the creation of a series of far-reaching projects, that include: *The Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment*, the *European Language Portfolio*, *Communication in the modern languages classroom*, etc., all intended to facilitate the work of language teachers and enhance a fast and effective acquisition of foreign language skills. These undertakings originated in the proposed dual aim of the CE: that of improving the extent and quality of communication, of mutual understanding and cooperation among the people of Europe, and that of respecting European linguistic and cultural diversity. In addition, the activities and actions launched by the CE have sought to **reform vocational training, to improve quality and innovation in vocational training in Europe**.

The *Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment* is a document that provides a set of common criteria against which to reference the assessment of modern language attainment in different educational sectors, target languages, linguistic regions and states. This is indeed an ambitious project, given the difficulty of finding reference tools that could relate different contexts to each other.

The Common Reference Framework is an attempt to establish reference levels based on the *criterion-referenced assessment*, i.e. assessment in relation to the continuum of ability, or assessment in relation to the criterion of real world language proficiency. This criterion is opposed to the norm-referenced assessment, i.e. assessment in relation to one's peers. The Common Reference Framework defines six Levels or standards of proficiency through *descriptors* like the following:

Can maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what he/she would like to.

The individual descriptors on checklists are sometimes referred to as *indicators* because they can be used to show the extent to which someone has met the standards. These indicators can be considered *criteria.*

The descriptors were selected according to a rigorous methodology, remarks Brian North (1999). The initiative has been built on the international experience of the development of such descriptors and standards, it has incorporated the experience and practices of representative groups of teachers in some extensive series of workshops. It has used an extremely reliable measurement model to scale the best descriptors mathematically. Brian North (1999, anno VII, no 1) admits that the Framework provides a 'hard core' of descriptors around which teachers may add descriptors of their own.

The Common Reference Levels are represented in the following grid.

	Swiss research project	**Common Reference Levels**
C2	*Mastery……………C2* ……………….Mastery *Effectiveness………C1…………..……*Effectiveness ……….CPE	
B2	*Vantage Plus……..B2+ ………………* *Vantage…………..***B2***………………*Vantage…… ………FCE	
B1	*Threshold Plus……B1+* *Threshold Plus……***B1***……………….*. Threshold	
A2	*Waystage Plus ……A2+* *Waystage …………***A2***…………………* Waystage ………………	
A1	Breakthrough………**A1**………………*Breakthrough.*LANGCRED Tourist/Smattering	

It is noteworthy to remark the corresponding reference examinations, as stated by Brian North (1999, Babylonia, pg. 26).

"the Council of Europe specifications *Waystage* and *Threshold Level* are operationalised in examinations like Key English Test (KET) and by the Preliminary English Test (PET) form the UCLES (the University of Camridge Local Examinations Syndicate) and Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZdaF) from the Goethe Institute. Then there appears to be a level the same distance above Threshold as Waystage is below. It is at the level of the Cambridge First Certificate (FCE) – represented by the new specification Ventage Level. The need for a level below Waystage found expression in the Breakthrough level of the LANGCRED project sponsored by the EU. Finally, ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) a group of examining bodies led by the UCLES, have added a further two broad levels for (a) effective use of language for higher education and career training (Certificate of Advanced English – CAE – and the Diplôme Approfondi en Langue Française – DALF, and (b) practical mastery of the language (Certificate of Proficiency in English – CPE and the Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom – KDS)".

The efforts of the Council of Europe to standardize linguistic training in Europe have been materialized in the *Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment*, a comprehensive document that provides a set of common criteria for the assessment of modern language attainment in different educational sectors, target languages, linguistic regions and states. It is an extremely broad and ambitious project that receives more and more attention from theoreticians and practitioners.

3.3.5. The CEFR Levels and Descriptor Scales

The most important European document for the evaluation of writing appears to be, undoubtedly, the **Common European Framework of Reference Levels (CEFR)** commissioned and developed by the Council of Europe. The 'father' of the document is Brian North, who, in his Berlin 2005 presentation, exposed the origin and purpose of the CEFR, the descriptive scheme, the descriptor development, the next steps awaiting ahead, and supplied supportive examples and handouts.

According to B. North's conference handout (Berlin, 2005), the CEFR envisaged three purposes:

> ➢ *"to establish a metalanguage common across educational sectors, national and linguistic boundaries that could be used to talk about objectives and language levels. It was hoped that this would make it easier for practitioners to tell each other and their clientèle what they wish to help learners to achieve, and how they attempt to do so;*
> ➢ *to encourage practitioners in the language field to reflect on their current practice, particularly in relation to learners' practical language learning needs, the setting of suitable objectives and the tracking learner progress;*
> ➢ *to agree common reference points based on the work on objectives that had taken place in the Council of Europe's Modern Languages projects since the 1970s."*

In the document, the author(s) admitted, that:

> "We have NOT set out to tell practitioners what to do or how to do it. We are raising questions not answering them. It is not the function of the CEF to lay down the objectives that users should pursue or the methods they should employ."

Despite the clearly defined aims, comprised in the statement of the CE representatives which expressly point out the problem of awareness-raising purpose of the enterprise, the document acquired a prescriptive value throughout the 1990s when the CEFR was piloted and its validity tested in several European centres. The practitioners all over Europe have gradually understood the significance and the real use of the CEF. Particularly, smaller countries, including EU non-member countries welcomed the CEF as a standard setting document that helps them in the teaching effort and that, through formal recognition of language competences, facilitates the citizens' access to the European labour market.

The document and the underlying concepts are the outcome of strenuous endeavours carried through by an impressive number of expert linguists and experienced practitioners, and therefore acquire the status of latest achievements in the field. In fact, many of the most prominent European linguistic experts have joined the project and contributed to it.

Brian North pointed out the prerequisites of this breakthrough linguistic enterprise (ALTE Conference, Berlin, May 2005, presentation handout):

> "Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences.** They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various conditions and under various constraints to engage in language activities involving language processes to produce and/or receive texts in relation to themes in specific domains, activating strategies which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences".

The all-inclusive document has been worked out from the research carried out consistently in the main areas of concern, and incorporated: alternative categories to four skills, cross-referencing macro-function and mode, categories for communicative activities, scale categories, scale categories for linguistic and pragmatic competence, Common Reference Levels.

We shall not attempt to trace back here the extremely complex and elaborate evolution scheme of the CEFR, but to reproduce below the general table that, according to B. North, illustrates the emergence of the CR Levels (ALTE Conference, Berlin, May 2005, presentation handout).

Wilkins, 1978, Ludwigshafen	Cambridge 1992	Council of Europe/ Sweiss project 1992-7	CEFR Levels
Ambilingual Proficiency			
Comprehensive Operational Proficiency	CPE	Mastery	C2
Adequate Operational Proficiency	CAE	Effective Operational Proficiency	C1
Limited Operational Proficiency	FCE	Vantage	B2
Basic Operational Proficiency	PET	Threshold	B1
Survival Proficiency	(KET)	Waystage	A2
Formulaic Proficiency		Breakthrough	A1

The descriptors used for the CEFR were drawn from a wide documentation of over 30 existing sets of language proficiency statements. Brian North explains that: "Exact formulations and the viability of categories used were checked through a series of some 32 workshops with teachers. The tasks in these workshops mainly involved sorting individual descriptors presented on separate pieces of paper into different categories".

As for the quantitative research of the CE project, Brian North (2005) stated:

> "The best descriptors were then presented on overlapping checklists of descriptors for different levels. The descriptors on the different questionnaires were 'calibrated' onto the same mathematical scale through an analysis of the way in which some 300 teachers interpreted them in assessing the learners in their classes at the end of the school year. After this analysis, each individual descriptor had a mathematical number (e.g. 1.76 or 0.53) that represented its position on the scale. Descriptors higher up the scale were perceived by teachers to be more difficult than those lower on the scale."

The difficulty arouse when the appointed commissions had to break or "cut" the scale into levels. B. North (ALTE Conference, Berlin, May 2005, presentation handout) explained how this was accomplished:

> "The 'cut-off points' were established by an interactive process of a) marking out units of approximately equal size on the scale, b) identifying 'jumps' in the content described or gaps between clusters of descriptors, c) comparing the content described to the levels adopted by the ALTE examinations, the Council of Europe's Waystage and Threshold Level specifications, and finally by comparing with the intentions of the original authors."

A final step was then to match the established descriptors to the ones established in the 1970s and 1980s by the CE, which were suggested at a symposium in 1978, which were acknowledged by the CEFR Working Party and were adopted by ALTE in the 1990s. This has been an elaborate and sustained effort which still needs to be continued. The further steps that will be taken, as suggested by B. North (2005 ALTE Conference Berlin), would be:

➢ to calibrate performance samples
➢ to define key assessment criteria and salient features at each level followed by
  ○ confirmation of existing illustrative descriptors
  ○ enrichment of existing illustrative descriptors
  ○ identification of weak points, contradictions
➢ to examine potential of other descriptors (the ALTE and DIALANG descriptors)
➢ to create CEF-based language specifications
➢ to create CEF-based test content specifications.

To exemplify the written assessment criteria we quote again from B. North and reproduce parts of the CEF Manual Table 5.8. produced by Sauli Takala and Brian North in 2003, and distributed as handouts at the ALTE Berlin Conference in May 2005.

	Overall	Description	Argument
C2	Can write *clear, highly accurate and smoothly flowing complex texts* in an appropriate and effective *personal* style *conveying finer shades of meaning.* Can use a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.	Can write clear, smoothly flowing and fully engrossing stories and descriptions of experience in a style appropriate to the genre adopted.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles, and essays which present a case or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works. Can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write clear, well-structured and *mostly accurate* texts on complex subjects. Can *underline* the relevant salient issues, *expand and support* points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and *round off* with an appropriate conclusion.	Can write clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in an assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader.	Can write clear, well-structured expositions of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues. Can expand and support point of view with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant samples.

	Overall	Description	Argument
B2	Can write clear, detailed *official and semi-official* texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest, synthesizing and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources. *Can make a distinction between formal and informal language with occasional less appropriate expression.*	Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned. Can write clear, detailed descriptions on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest. Can write a review of a film, book or play.	Can write an essay or report that develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem. Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can synthesize information and arguments from a number of sources.
B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. The texts are understandable but occasional unclear expressions and/or inconsistencies may cause a break-up in reading.	Can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple connected text. Can write a description of an event, a recent trip- real or imagined. Can narrate a story. Can write straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest.	Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest. Can summarize, report and give his/her opinion about accumulated factual information on a familiar routine and non-routine matters, within his field with some confidence. Can write brief reports to a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like ‚and' and, ‚but' and' because'. Longer texts may contain expressions and show coherence problems which makes the text hard to understand.	Can write short simple imaginary biographies and simple poems about people. Can write short basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences.	

	Overall	Description	Argument
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences. Longer texts contain expressions and show coherence problems which makes the text very hard or impossible to understand.	Can write simple phrases and sentences about themselves and imaginary people, where they live and what they do.	

However, we must also mention that the CEF manual is available on the CE site and can be both examined and exploited by individual practitioners.

In conclusion, the CEF has been the most important and impressive effort of the CE to standardise the assessment criteria used for language learning purposes. The project started out as an extremely bold project and reunited a large number of linguists, practitioners and teachers. It has equally spread out as a general experiential practice in most of the countries in Europe. Despite the achievements accomplished, there is still much work lying ahead and there are many areas to be further explored. In the next chapter more details about the CEF and a comparison to the ALTE models of evaluation are presented.

3.3.6. The ALTE assessment grids

The **Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)** has become a well-established and prominent association of providers of foreign language examinations since 1990. The association has incorporated a number of the world's leading language assessment bodies, including the Alliance Française, France, Goethe Institut, Germany, Instituto Cervantes, Spain, Stockholms Universitet, Stockholm, Universidade de Lisbon, Portugal, University of Athens, Greece, University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, UK, etc. In 2004 the Association grew to embrace 28 members and provide tests for 24 languages. The Association and its members provide standard examinations and computer-based language tests throughout Europe (www.alte.org).

The **ALTE Framework** covers 6 levels of language proficiency, all aligned with the Council of Europe's CEFR and described as **Can-do** statements. The *can dos*:

- define levels of ability in terms of what language users can typically do at each level,
- facilitate the users' understanding of what each level means in relation to what language users actually do.

Further the *can do* system encapsulates approximately 400 statements broken down into 40 sub-categories, which describe what typical language users can do. The can do system has been worked out for 13 languages: Catalan, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish.

The ALTE has involved leading experts on language assessment, including distinguished personalities like B. North, Liz Hamp-Lions, John Pidcock, ESOL team leaders and applied linguists. The data has been collected from 10,000 language learners throughout Europe and has been permanently aligned to the CEF. The ALTE framework has been designed for four areas:

- general overall ability,
- social and tourist typical abilities,
- work typical abilities,
- study typical abilities.

We reproduce below the Council of Europe levels and their descriptions compared to the ALTE levels:

Council of Europe Levels	Description
C2 (ALTE 5)	The capacity to deal with material which is academic or cognitively demanding, and to use language to good effect at a level of performance which may in certain respects be more advanced than that of an average native speaker. Example: CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker.
C1 (ALTE 4)	The ability to communicate with the emphasis on how well it is done, in terms of appropriacy, sensitivity and the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics. Example: CAN deal with hostile questioning confidently. CAN get and hold onto his/her turn to speak.
B2 (ALTE 3)	The capacity to achieve most goals and express oneself on a range of topics. Example: CAN show visitors around and give a detailed description of a place.
B1 (ALTE 2)	The ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with non-routine information. Example: CAN ask to open an account at a bank, provided that the procedure is straightforward.
A2 (ALTE 1)	An ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts. Example: CAN take part in a routine conversation on simple predictable topics.
A1 (ALTE Breakthrough)	A basic ability to communicate and exchange information in a simple way. Example: CAN ask simple questions about a menu and understand simple answers.

On Writing

We shall further reproduce **the ALTE assessment grid** for Social and Tourist typical abilities.

LEVELS	LISTENING/ SPEAKING	READING	WRITING
C2 **ALTE 5**	CAN talk about complex or sensitive issues without awkwardness.	CAN (when looking for accommodation) understand a tenancy agreement in detail, for example technical details and the main legal implications.	CAN write letters on any subject with good expression and accuracy.
C1 **ALTE 4**	CAN keep up conversations of a casual nature for an extended period of time and discuss abstract/ cultural topics with a good degree of fluency and range of expression.	CAN understand complex opinions/ arguments as expressed in serious newspapers.	CAN write letters on most subjects. Such difficulties as the reader may experience are likely to be at the level of vocabulary.
B2 **ALTE 3**	CAN keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics, such as personal and professional experiences, events currently in the news.	CAN understand detailed information, for example a wide range of culinary terms and abbreviations in accommodation advertisements.	CAN write to a hotel to ask about the availability of services, for example facilities for the disabled or the provision of a special diet.
B1 **ALTE 2**	CAN express opinions on abstract / cultural matters in a limited way and pick up nuances of meaning/ opinion.	CAN understand factual articles in newspapers, routine letters from hotels and letters expressing personal opinions.	CAN write letters on a limited range of predictable topics related to personal experience and express opinions in predictable language.

LEVELS	LISTENING/ SPEAKING	READING	WRITING
A2 ALTE 1	CAN express likes and dislikes in familiar contexts using simple language such as 'I (don't) like…'	CAN understand straightforward information, for example labels on food, standard menus, road signs and messages on automatic cash machines.	CAN complete most forms related to personal information.
A1 ALTE Breakthrough	CAN ask simple questions of a factual nature and understand answers expressed in simple language.	CAN understand simple notices and information, for example in airport, on store guides and on menus. CAN understand simple instructions on medicines and simple directions to places.	CAN leave a very simple message for a host family or write short simple 'thank you' notes.

In the present study we were concerned with the writing *Can do*s, which, according to the grid, range from writing short informal messages to family and friends (ALTE A1level) to writing "letters on *any subject* with *good expression and accuracy*" (ALTE Level 5).

Despite the relative clarity of the grid and of the descriptors or explanatory statements, in real evaluation situations the "cut-off" between levels is more difficult to achieve, as the differences between levels are relatively blurred. Then, another aspect that necessitates further inquiry and settlement is *How can teachers from practically all Europe use the same descriptors without failing in their judgements, since what seems to be right for one level may not be right in the eyes of another assessor?*

In order to illustrate the alignment of the ALTE system to the CEF we shall reproduce the *ALTE draft writing scale and the CEF 2001* version below.

	ALTE draft writing scale (reformulated)	Common European Framework of Reference – 2001
	Writing	**Overall Written Production**
C2	Can write extensively and enhance positive impact on the reader through variation in style, use of advanced vocabulary, idiom and humour.	Can write clear, smoothly-flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
C1	Can write extensively and make a positive impact on the reader through variation in style, use of advanced vocabulary, idiom/ humour, though use of the latter is not always appropriate	Can write clear, well-structured texts on complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
C1	Can write extensively and make a positive impact on the reader through variation in style, use of advanced vocabulary, idiom/ humour, though use of the latter is not always appropriate	Can write clear, well-structured texts on complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
B2	Can write extensively on chosen topics with occasional evidence of limited and often quite inappropriate matching of style to topic, use of advanced vocabulary and of idiom.	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest, synthesizing and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.
B1	Can communicate meaning on an extended topic although without variation in style, idiomatic use of language or use of advanced vocabulary.	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.
	Linguistic: Range	**Linguistic:** Overall Linguistic Range, Vocabulary Range

	ALTE draft writing scale (reformulated)	**Common European Framework of Reference – 2001**
	Writing	**Overall Written Production**
C2	Can enhance impact through the use of advanced vocabulary, word order and idioms.	Can exploit a comprehensive and reliable mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity. No signs of having to restrict what he/she wants to say. Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.
C1	Can make a positive impact through the use of advanced vocabulary and word order and idioms.	Can select an appropriate formulation from a broad range of language to express him/herself clearly, without having to restrict what he/she wants to say. Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions. Good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.
B2	Can only occasionally show limited use of advanced vocabulary	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints and develop arguments without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so. Has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to his field and most general topics. Can vary formulation to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution.
B1	Communicates meaning on chosen topics without using advanced vocabulary	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events, but lexical limitations cause repetition and even difficulty with formulation at times.

	ALTE draft writing scale (reformulated)	Common European Framework of Reference – 2001
	Writing	**Overall Written Production**
	Linguistic: Grammatical Accuracy; Vocabulary Control	**Linguistic: Grammatical Accuracy; Vocabulary Control**
B2	Can communicate meaning on chosen topics although the impact may be reduced by some quite basic errors of grammar or vocabulary although these do not significantly impede comprehension. Occasional attempts to use advanced vocabulary are quite often inappropriate.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Lexical accuracy is generally high, though some confusion and incorrect word choice does occur without hindering communication.
B1	Impact may be reduced and the message may be sometimes impeded by frequent basic errors of grammar or vocabulary.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations. Shows good control of elementary vocabulary but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts or handling unfamiliar topics and situations.
	Sociolinguistic Appropriateness	**Sociolinguistic Appropriateness / Flexibility**
C2	Can enhance impact by effectively varying style of expression and sentence length for effect and by using idiom and humour.	Has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning.
C1	Can make a positive impact by effectively varying style of expression and sentence length for effect, and through the use of idiom and/or humour though the use of the latter is not always completely appropriate.	Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage. *Can express him or herself confidently, clearly and politely in a formal or informal register, appropriate to the situation and person(s) concerned.* *Can adjust what he/she says and the means of expressing it to the situation and the recipient* and adopt a level of formality appropriate to the circumstances.
B2	Can only occasionally and quite often inappropriately match style of expression to the topic or use idioms.	*Can express him or herself appropriately in situations and avoid crass errors of formulation.* (Can vary formulation of what he/she wants to say: *was very low* B2+)

	ALTE draft writing scale (reformulated)	Common European Framework of Reference – 2001
	Writing	**Overall Written Production**
B1	Communicates in a straightforward manner without variation in style of expression or use of idiom.	Can perform and respond to a wide range of language functions, using their most common exponents in a neutral register.
	Pragmatic: Coherence / Cohesion	**Pragmatic:** Coherence / Cohesion & Thematic Development
C2	Can organise extended text effectively, linking ideas appropriately with or without explicit words.	*Can create coherent and cohesive text making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns and a wide range of cohesive devices.*
C1	Can organise extended text in a generally sound way, linking most ideas appropriately, with or without explicit linking words.	Can produce clear, smoothly-flowing, well-structured text, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. Can use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas.
B2	Can organise extended text but weaknesses of organization and some inappropriate linking of ideas, tend sometimes to reduce impact.	Can develop a clear description or narrative, expanding and supporting his/her main points with relevant supporting detail and examples. Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long contribution.
B1	Can attempt to organise text, but quite frequent weaknesses of organization and inappropriate linking of ideas, weaken and occasionally impede the message.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.

The grids reproduced are also indicative of the degree of in-depth referential representation of evaluation variables: linguistics, sociolinguistic appropriateness, pragmatics, etc.

To come to terms with this issue, the CE has undertaken the initiative of carrying out, standardizing and piloting projects throughout Europe. The mission appears to have been successful as more and more teachers

have become familiar with the CEF and the ALTE grids and have used it experimentally. This is, however, a good progress, which, if pursued, can yield the intended results.

So far, we can safely assert that a tremendous amount of research and effort has been placed into the attempt to standardize the evaluation system in Europe for the first time in history. The initiative also aims at facilitating the intercourse of European citizens and the access of professionals on the labour market through developing and recognizing the foreign language skills of learners.

The COE efforts backed up by the endeavours of researchers and experts have created productive and valid tools for the evaluation of foreign language learning and writing, which is further improved and verified. It is also a notable achievement that teachers all over Europe welcome the initiative and adopt it along with the standard-setting norms.

3.3.7. Other writing qualifications

Amongst the prestigious qualification-awarding institutions the **London Chamber of Commerce and Industry** stands apart as a *trusted and valued* international qualifications centre.

The LCCI International Qualifications have come to be regarded as trusted and high quality examinations, and as springboards to employment opportunities all over the world, recognized by employers, universities, professional bodies, etc. The LCCI international qualifications can be successfully used by individuals to support their job applications or their admission to higher education institutions and other bodies. The LCCI presentation materials boast that in one year only the LCCI has awarded over 200,000 certificates in over 100 countries (www.lcci.org.uk, Business English Qualifications printed handout).

The range of qualifications awarded include:
- Business English both oral and written at 5 levels: preliminary, and levels 1, 2, 3, 4;
- English Language Skills Assessment (ELSA);
- Spoken English for Industry and Commerce;

- English for Tourism including Written English for Tourism (WEFT) at 2 levels;
- Further Certificate for Teachers of Business English (FCTBE).

The LCCI International qualifications are aligned with the UK National Qualifications Framework, the British National Standards for Language, and with the Council of Europe's Common European Framework.

The **written examinations for EFB** and the **WEFT** are distinctively based on testing communicative skills in business environments and activeties. For example, according to the printed *Business English Qualifications handout* the *Level 2 examination* designed for 21/2 hours consists of 3 sections:

- an extended writing task requiring candidates to produce a memo, an article, a report, etc.,
- a letter writing task,
- a reformulation task requiring candidates to expand, reduce or selectively rewrite a passage of English.

The *Level 4* requirements for writing are designed for a higher level of linguistic and business knowledge and timed to be carried out in a 3-hour timeframe. For example, according to the Business English Qualifications printed handout, they involve:

- reading and comprehension of an authentic text and producing a piece of business writing related to this text,
- writing business texts from given information,
- reformulating and reformatting text from one text type to another,
- extending and producing complete texts in a range of contrasting genres.

If we look at WEFT examinations, apart from their adaptation to the requirements of a challenging and fast-growing sector, very much like all other LCCI examinations, they tackle and assess job-specific writing skills and address:

1. the staff working in travel agencies, tourism boards, tourism information centres, etc. for the Level 1 WEFT, and
2. the administrative and managerial staff for WEFT Level 2.

The following general grid, reproduced from the LCCI printed handout brochure, stands for the alignment of the LCCI examination standards to the CEF.

LCCI/ Common European Framework (CEF)/
National Standards for Languages

Framework (NSL) Equivalence Table

LCCI/ NSL Levels	CEF		DESCRIPTION	EFB	EFB1	Written English for Tourism WEFT	SEFIC
4	C1= Proficient User	This should be the target Level for personnel who need to attend and participate fully in formal or informal business meetings or attend conferences or conventions	People at this level can: • use appropriate language to deal with an extensive range of oral and written tasks • respond to a wide variety of situations with fluency and spontaneity • read, interpret and produce highly specialized texts/reports and present/discuss complex arguments • make presentations and contribute fully at seminars and conferences				
3	B2=Independent User (Vantage)	This should be the target level for people for whom establishing and sustaining business relationships in a language is essential, eg sales personnel, senior executives, etc.	People at this level can: • understand and write complex business correspondence and reports within own field • understand and discuss complex concepts of a general and work-related nature • handle formal and informal meetings and negotiations with, for example, customers or suppliers • relocate to an English-speaking country and function fully in all routine areas and aspects of work • deliver structured presentations and participate in discussions on known topics				

LCCI/ NSL Levels	CEF		DESCRIPTION	EFB	EFB1	Written English for Tourism WEFT	SEFIC
2	B1=Independent User (Threshold)	This should be the target level for people whose work involves them in extensive contact with overseas colleagues, customers or counterparts, eg line managers, technical or research personnel, senior administrators, etc.	People at this level can: • understand and interpret key, work-related information, eg handling customer enquiries • understand and write standard business correspondence and reports • give more complex instructions and explanations and explain ideas • participate in routine interviews • participate more fully in business meetings and discussions • make more complex formulaic presentations on familiar topics				
1	A2=Basic User (Waystage)	This should be the target level for people who need to work with overseas counterparts on a routine functional level, eg administrators, clerical staff, line supervisors, secretarial staff, etc.	People at this level can: • describe the company and its products • confirm and alter meeting arrangements • give simple instructions and explanations • develop contacts and exchange more specific/ detailed information • understand and write simple business correspondence and notes • contribute to discussions (eg express opinions, agree and disagree) and make simple, formulaic presentations on familiar topics				

LCCI/ NSL Levels	CEF		DESCRIPTION	EFB	EFBI	Written English for Tourism WEFT	SEFIC
Prelim inary/ Entry Level	A1=Basic User (Breakthrough)	This should be the target level for people who need to use a language in their work in basic interaction, eg receptionists, line operatives, clerical or secretarial staff who have occasional contact with speakers of the language.	People at this level can: • make contacts and exchange basic information (personal, work and social) • handle basic business telephone language • work with numbers (eg dates and figures) • understand simple requests and instructions • make basic travel arrangements and appointment • handle basic forms and documents				

The grid points out the commonness of the two systems. What must be, nevertheless, noted is that the LCCI does not have a level corresponding to the C2 CEF, but provides reliable examinations that would match the A1, A2, B1, B2, and C1 levels of the CEF.

Very much like most of the other prominent institutions, the LCCI provides online tests and instant results, a range of accessible practice tests and handbooks dischargeable from the LCCI website.

In conclusion I would state that:

- almost all certificate-awarding institutions make great efforts to align their standards and criteria to the CEF, including the LCCI
- all institutions expand their range of criteria bringing into the scheme notions of discourse, knowledge of text types, of genres etc. along with knowledge of professional activities and setting-specific issues, conventions and attitudes.

Given the afore-stated conclusions, I would dare to predict that soon most of the certificate-awarding institutions will use adapted versions of the CEF.

I would also conclude that in more than 100 years the LCCI examinations have developed extremely fast into a prestigious internationally recognized certificate-awarding institution rivalling the Cambridge certifycates and aligning with the CEF.

3.3.8. Vocational linguistics. An integrative approach to foreign language learning and assessment

Vocational linguistics is an integrative construct and approach to teaching a foreign language developed by the author of the present book. It goes out from English for Vocational Purposes (EVP) as the core component and represents more than a pragmatic approach to teaching English. Provided that the concept of EVP has been built on the existent ESP approach, as a foreign language teaching framework, *vocational linguistics* is an interdisciplinary framework intended to cover the theoretical and practical assumptions of a corpus that comes from the disciplines which determine the vocationally-required linguistic (foreign language) competences of a learner. In theory, the 'hard core' of vocational linguistics appears to come from the vocational components involved in the competence-acquisition process and equally to go back to them (Irimiea S, 2005a).

The teaching approach based on vocational linguistics is expected to enhance:

- the formation/consolidation of *communicative competence for business* and other professional areas;
- an improved, more *end-effective and thorough acquisition of the 'special' English used in international business environments*, in trade and financial contexts;
- *improved individual proficiency and scores in oral communication* on the basis of a new theoretical agenda.

The concept of *vocational linguistics* was inspired by some older concepts that emerged in language teaching and focused on the relationship between language sciences and language teaching. The concept relies particularly on Spolsky's definition of *educational linguistics* (1970). The underlying assumption of *vocational linguistics* is that, hence educational linguistics provided a comprehensive conceptual framework for a language pedagogy, *vocational linguistics* may well serve the aim of *teaching English for vocational purposes* (Irimiea S., 2005a).

Spolsky's model goes out from the definition of what he termed *second language pedagogy* (language teaching), which, according to him, relied on three main sources:

1. **language description,**
2. **a theory of language learning**, which according to him, must necessarily derive from a theory of language and a theory of learning and
3. **a theory of language use**.

According to Spolsky (1970), *educational linguistics* should be an interdisciplinary problem-oriented construct or discipline based on the mentioned theories that are provided by four basic disciplines: *psychology* for the theory of learning, *psycholinguistics* for the theory of language learning, *general linguistics* for a theory of language and language descriptions, and *sociolinguistics* for a theory of language use in society. Spolsky further claims that, while educational linguistics represents a theoretical interdisciplinary corpus, foreign or second language pedagogy is the pragmatic-oriented language teaching.

The table below shows the components of the two integrative constructs.

Theoretical framework	Disciplines	Components
Educational Linguistics Fundamental Sciences	Psychology Psycholinguistics General linguistics Sociolinguistics	Pragmatics
Vocational Linguistics Area of vocational concern: Business	Economics Communication Management Computer science General linguistics Sociolinguistics Cultural awareness	• Vocational setting • Vocational expertise/area-specific knowledge • Professional status, role, attitude-referential descriptors • Area/domain of vocational activity • Job/activity- related general characteristics • Job/activity- related general principles, rules, conventions • Job/activity-related linguistic rules, conventions • Job/activity-related socio-linguistic norms • Specificity of vocational (human) intercourse • Range /type of materials used

According to the representation, *vocational linguistics* should consist of the disciplines that contribute to the linguistically-bound professional profile of a learner. They may be: economics, communication, management, computer science, general linguistics, sociolinguistics, cultural awareness and other disciplines for foreign language competence training in the area of business. It follows that the trainer must examine the array of disciplines that he considers would impact the envisaged competences and must build up the *vocational and linguistic construct* that he would use in the teaching process according to his own needs.

Furthermore, the advantage offered by a profession-oriented or vocational approach to language teaching is that it enhances the use of a profession-bound, purposefully designed methodology that gives the

teacher clear clues as to what are the real, most useful and linguistically servicing ingredients that he may use for an effective and fast teaching/acquisition of a linguistic corpus (Irimiea S., 2005a).

The need to broaden the linguistic conceptual framework arises from the growing demands of various professional profiles and from the attempt to shape up complex vocational and linguistic professionals. Vocational linguistics, thus, seeks to develop the *individual human and professional skills* necessary for an effective acquisition of a foreign language used for professional purposes.

Similarly, the *evaluation of formed competences or skills* must encompass the evaluation of the components or variables that stood for the professional and linguistic qualities necessary for a specific job. For example, in the case of a qualified secretary the linguistic qualities should include: data collection and selection ability, capacity to use the information *vis-à-vis* the proposed objective, capacity to use the language correctly for writing and oral communication purposes, mastery of discourse coherence, competence in organizing the work load, adaptability, capacity to respond promptly and efficiently, liaising skills, an appropriate socio-professional attitude, capacity to create, adapt and convey messages etc.

The task of the language trainer for vocational purposes is rendered more difficult as he has to form a relatively broad and complex set of skills and competences required by specific jobs and, in order to measure the degree of his pedagogical success, he has to evaluate all envisaged skills. Awareness of the job demands is crucial as a prerequisite to his teaching activity, as they will determine the teacher's training agenda. Awareness of the job demands will further help the teacher work out a vocational and linguistic construct, a work plan, a syllabus, choose the right methods and materials, and, finally, measure his success and outcome.

3.3.9. Institutional evaluation.
The case of Romanian foreign language departments and centers

The English language examinations carried out in Romanian foreign language departments and centres in the period 1970-2005 underwent several stages, which are more or less clearly defined.

The major forms of foreign language evaluation used both in the secondary and tertiary sectors consisted in:

- o written entrance examinations,
- o progress examinations,
- o term examinations,
- o final/one-year examinations.

In general, the evolution of testing writing nation-wide was prone to the following contributors:

- national directives and norms set forth by national authorities, including the National Board for Education and Research;
- outside interventions and standard-setting contributions, e.g. the contribution of the British Council in promoting language norms and approaches;
- the contribution of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, of international training providing institutions and forums materialized in linguistic policies and tools, including the ELP and the CEF;
- the contribution of *testing* and English language *certificate-awarding institutions* from Great Britain and other prominent European institutions, including the Cambridge examinations and ALTE;
- the growth of the professional expertise of English language teachers;
- changes and challenges posed by the European socio-economic and cultural community;
- changes called for by sectorial and national needs.

Roughly speaking, the evolution of *testing English language writing* in the Romanian secondary and tertiary sectors followed two broad chronologically-defined periods:

1. one that lasted up to the 1989 democratising 'revolution' and was marked by uniformity and alignment to the norms laid out by the National Education Ministry;

2. one which commenced in the early 1990s and was characterrized by

    a. institutional autonomy,
    b. alignment to European linguistic policies and norms,
    c. adoption of European 'good practices' and experiences,
    d. development of international links,
    e. active participation of Romanian teachers in international training events, conferences, seminars, etc.

In broad lines, the evaluation of English language writing is outlined below.

Oral examinations were the preferred instruments for the assessment of foreign language skills in almost all areas that the foreign language was used for, including cultural studies, literature, etc. They prevailed in the 70s and early 80s.

Nonetheless, written examinations were administered for the assessment of linguistic competence, particularly for:

- the assessment of grammar, lexis, etc.,
- progress evaluation during the school/academic term for almost all disciplines, and
- final examinations.

University *entrance examinations* for language departments incorporated both a written component, aimed at testing grammar, lexis, fluency, and an oral component, which sought to measure the oral skills of the candidates, namely: the ability to communicate in a foreign language, the ability to present a topic, to describe, to narrate, to comment, etc.

The 1980s featured Henry Widdowson's *communicative revolution* in language teaching. The new trend permeated the Romanian secondary and tertiary sectors toward the end of the decade. It provided a new language-teaching paradigm, methods and instruments for teaching a foreign language for communicative purposes. Consequently, the second part of the decade was marked by oral tests and examinations that assessed the *communicative competence* of candidates. Linguistic competence was also thoroughly tested along with the communicative component in oral examinations. However, written examinations were further used for testing mastery of grammar and other issues related to grammar, or knowledge of particular items.

The early 1990s were marked by an extremely efficient support of the British Council representatives focused on the adoption of the communicative approach to language teaching. The BC representatives became the missionaries of the new linguistic movement. Along with the communicative approach, the British Council regional representatives also promoted the concept of ESP. The British Council endeavour to promote the communicative approach and ESP rested on a few strategies and tools, which indeed, in time, proved extremely helpful to the teachers of English. The strategies and tools included:

- appointment of regional advisers;
- organization of seminars and training modules for teachers;
- setting up BC libraries in institutions and counties for the full benefit of teachers and all those interested in the acquisition of English or learning about Great Britain and the British people;
- promotion of international and prestigious English language teaching events, such as the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) conferences;
- contribution to the organization of regional and national linguistic events;
- links with other European institutions;
- working out and implementing language teaching projects throughout Romania.

Consequently, in less than a decade, the Romanian English language teachers were re-qualified as communicative language teachers or ESP teachers. The BC efforts thus contributed to:

- raising the level of professional expertise of English language teachers in Romania;
- facilitating the participation of teachers in British and European language events;
- assisting teachers in their teaching activity and in organizing linguistic events, including conferences and seminars;
- promoting Romanian teachers Europe-wide.

In spite of the preference shown to oral examinations both in secondary schools and HE institutions they did neither eliminate the written form of testing nor replace it.

The 1990s brought about new socio-economic changes which impacted education and testing in other ways as well. The trainers and/or course tutors have acquired the liberty to choose their own form of evaluation in compliance with the kind of competences they intended to form and, henceforth, to assess. In time, particularly in the 90s, the general interest of assessors shifted towards written examinations and the adoption of new assessment standards. The entrance examinations for the English language undergraduate programme of the Babes-Bolyai University relied mainly on a written examination which assessed *linguistic competence* (particularly the use of correct grammar) and *written communicative competence* expressed in written compositions or various forms of writing. Progress examinations, as well as the other forms of examination, despite their focus on specific discipline-bound competences, co-existed with oral forms of examination. Nevertheless, great consideration was still shown to linguistic competences, including mastery of grammar and lexis. Although, to a large extent there is consensus among examiners regarding the general reference standards for the evaluation of language use and grammaticality, the discipline-bound competence evaluation remains very much a matter of arbitrary or individual decision.

The first decade of the 21 century heralded a somewhat more autonomous, elastic and target-determined era for *testing writing*.

Institutional assessment in HE and language centres has been broadly determined by:

- institutional norms,
- European linguistic policies and
- the tutors' own prerogatives.

A further impetus to writing assessment came from the progress achieved in IT worldwide, from the possibility of transmitting and imparting knowledge to an incredibly vast mass of learners and trainers. The internet provided novel sources of information and access to institutions which otherwise were difficult to reach. Last but not least, the use of IT inaugurated a new era for assessment, one carried out via the internet. Teachers started using and valuing the advantages of electronic learning and assessment, which, nonetheless, were rather experiential. Reputable institutions published electronic versions of examination forms, grading tools, etc. very much for the help of teachers and learners.

Within the general panorama of *academic English language training*, however, two attitudinal trends towards writing assessment have emerged in the BBU. One is consistent with the old traditional examination procedure, inherent with the English culture, literature and other disciplines taught by the English cultural studies department, and the other is the one adopted or worked out by other training departments, such as the department of Applied Modern Languages and EFL centres. The latter approach is more flexible and devised to accommodate the changes undergone by writing assessment on European level.

The language centres affiliated to universities have adopted the Common European Framework (CEF) standards and proceedings not only for experiential reasons, but also for greater efficiency and the international recognition associated with it.

The evolution of writing evaluation from a standardized, very uniform system to an elastic, integrative and adaptable system stands for the complex changes undergone by all segments of the educational process, including the stakeholders involved in the process. Further chapters will deal with issues related to evaluation as well.

3.3.10. Challenges to institutional writing assessment

Despite the stated and acknowledged autonomy of institutions that carry out testing or evaluating procedures, institutional evaluation is, however, subject to challenges coming from uncontrollable, outside factors, to which it must promptly react and adapt.

First, the contributors which also represent challenges to *institutional writing evaluation* can be conveniently grouped into three broad categories that relate to:

1. **major European Higher Education and Vocational and Education Training policy-framing documents;**
2. exclusively theoretical or **background-setting contributors;**
3. **pragmatic and circumstance-oriented factors**.

1. The first category embraces: the Bologna declaration, the Copenhagen Declaration, and all the major follow-up HE and VET documents or commissioned reports that set the general background for the development of the educational process Europe-wide.

2. According to the approach adopted by the present study, the *second category* has to do with general European frames and VET policies set forth by norm-setting institutions like the Council of Europe along with other transnational VET organizations. The category encompasses the policies relating to:

1. the Common European Framework of Reference for language learning, teaching and assessment,
2. the five-component EUROPASS inclusive of the European Language Portfolio,
3. the European principles of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

3. The *third category* of envisioned contributors comprises training priciples, practices and factors that are mandatory for the formal development and recognition of competences acquired and developed in non-educational settings, including work or placement environments.

This category relies on:

1) *general EU practices and principles*, *on constructs and theories relating to competence acquisition*, necessarily including the more recent research completed under the auspices of CEDEFOP (2005), which provides insights into the mainstream typology of knowledge, skills and competences;

2) *training, educational concepts* and *determining factors* ranging from Spolsky's educational linguistic model (1970) to modern linguistic training models, including the ones proposed by EFL, ESP, applied linguistics, etc.;

3) the institutional experience acquired as a result of the implementation of European vocational and linguistic training projects (Irimiea S., 2005a).

De facto, the last category, i.e. the institutional experience acquired from the *implementation of European vocational and linguistic training projects*, in turn, is focused on a few stages of the learning and recognition processes, that branch out into:

I.   *mentoring systems* designed and implemented for the acquisition and development of vocational competences in particular settings;

II.   a set of standard conditions that must be met by the work- or placement-settings and are aimed at ensuring an effective acquisition of competences and skills;

III.   competence and skill *evaluation frameworks;*

IV.   *recognition principles* and norms.

From the pragmatic point of view, writing evaluation standards and norms must be permanently adapted to meet the demanding changes in the European HE and VET systems. Any national HE institution functions and is networked to other systems, whether national or international and must comply with the aforementioned standards. In addition, the dynamic exchange of undergraduates, of trainers, professionals and HE staff calls for the use of standardized and internationally agreed on forms of evaluation and certification like the *CEF* and the *Europass*.

In order to measure up to these challenges the institutions have to:

- keep permanently updated on the latest development in the area of education and testing,
- be linked to evaluation authorities and institutions,
- be involved in piloting and experimenting activities in the field of testing and evaluation,
- train the teaching staff and give them opportunities to learn about the progress made by other institutions and
- offer opportunities to staff to participate actively in educational events.

The institutions must be further willing to:

- adopt far-reaching and progressive paradigms, methods, instruments for teaching,
- create due conditions for the implementation of projects that are consonant with the European Commission policies in the area of HE and VET,
- ensure training and updating for the training staff,
- facilitate and ensure participation in European projects that would benefit the institution.

From the practical point of view, the institutions must create systems that can easily adapt to any changes and challenges that have developed and improved their credit systems so as to transfer credentials acquired in other institutions.

For a proper transfer of credentials the Romanian universities have created their in-house systems that can promptly and accurately transfer credentials acquired in host institutions. The transfer process usually relies on established and well-consolidated professional/academic links where the actors and factors involved in the process are all known and fully controlled. The factors that are crucial in credit transfer procedures are:

- comparability of curricula;
- comparability of course content and willingness to recognize the value and usefulness of other courses;
- reliance on in-service mentoring and tutoring systems;
- recognition of the credentials by the tutors and by the staff involved in teaching and professional activities.

In general, institutions appoint commissions that attend to credit transfer issues and who are well familiar with the general and particular procedures involved.

For the recognition of non-formal education or for the recognition of competences acquired in informal or non-formal settings, the Romanian language centres and departments must make sure that the following **contributors** are observed:

- *proper* and *adequate conditions* for the fulfilment of work or placement activities, through:
  - ❑ adequate and challenging placement locations/settings,
  - ❑ committed, competent, and demanding placement supervisors/mentors,
  - ❑ adequate, challenging activities, responsibilities, job assignments, tasks;
- *permanent and competent supervision*;
- *prompt educational or professional intervention, if needed*
- *stimulating work environment* and *work team*.

Nevertheless, the fulfilment of the proper conditions for the completion, evaluation and recognition process must be ensured by a **close interaction of the stakeholders** involved in the process or the organizing parties. This means that the home institution credit transfer officer or coordinator *must:*

- formally acknowledge the work or placement settings,
- negotiate with the mentors and agree on basic and specific objectives and their fulfilment,
- appoint tutors and supervisors,
- compare work conditions, job-specific requirements, expectations,
- agree on evaluation criteria and, finally,
- agree on the forms of mutual recognition of formed skills or competences.

In addition, the acquisition of the students' vocational and linguistic skills must be facilitated by:

- a permanent vocational or work contact with professionals, including: fellow employees, superiors (company management members), mentors;

- regular contact with academics (teachers, tutors);
- contact with colleagues;
- permanent contact with customers;
- contact with natives, including native-friends.

The home institution recognition process should run according to the following frame.

1. *Recognition of qualifications and their conversion into the home evaluation system.* This is a complex and demanding procedure in which the home course tutors together with the project coordinator should:
   o assess and inventorise all qualifications, certificates, evaluation reports, and certifying documents,
   o compare the training and work conditions in the host country with those of the home country,
   o compare the resulting performances and
   o grade the progress according to the home institution's standards.

2. *Comparison of home vs host institution factors*, which include:
   - targeted competence formation/development,
   - course/discipline content,
   - teaching methodology,
   - teaching activities,
   - forms of assessment (examinations)
   - grading criteria.

3. *Comparison of assessment criteria* representing:
   - mentors'/tutors' evaluation of the students' progress and
   - the students' general self-assessments or reports.

In general, the benefits of the recognition of informal or non-formal learning processes can be the following:

- placement institutions provide an extremely productive exposure to a genuine vocational environment,

❑ they provide an intense and demanding vocational and linguistic context with challenging and hectic assignments and responsibilities that provoke the beneficiaries,

❑ they familiarize the beneficiaries with demanding supervisors and severe teachers who planned out the students' job requirements to intensively and fully benefit the beneficiaries.

Apart from outstanding professional and linguistic benefits, the recognition of learning taking place in other settings may further contribute to: 1) broadening up the academic offer of the undergraduates by providing them with supplementary placement opportunities; 2) increasing the prestige of the home university through increasing its capacity to release to the domestic labour market highly qualified graduates with internationally acquired certificates and credentials; 3) raising the national vocational training standards in consonance with the EU standards of vocational training; 4) adhering to the policy promoted by the Council of Europe regarding the creation of an aligned vocational training system in Europe.

The challenges posed to the institutional (writing) evaluation systems may come from a number of factors, which, if known and controlled, can turn into educational benefits. Every institution must create its own recognition and credit transfer system based on its educational experience, its quality standards, on the experience acquired from other reputable training institutions and the skills of the appointed credit transfer commissions. Last but not least, the credit transfer beneficiaries must also contribute to overcoming difficult situations by supplying due certifying documents and testifying for the activities carried out.

3.4. Evaluation of writing through *text quality*. The evaluation of functional texts in the 1990s

3.4.1. Introduction

Text linguistics has developed rapidly over the last two and a half decades. Research conducted in this area has been mainly related to teaching languages for specific purposes, particularly aimed at teaching writers to produce effective and successful pieces of writing, like proposals, business plans and other such functional texts. Text quality has thus gained significance both for trainers, for evaluation and production reasons, and for readers, who are called to comprehend information and react to it either by performing certain tasks or adopting a certain (or required) behaviour.

Following the communicative trend which emerged in the 80s, functionalism has established itself as a pragmatic approach to text analysis and some text-related domains seeking to describe the relationship between language use and the functions to which it was put.
The present study investigates and summarizes some views on the quality of functional (non-narrative) texts and seeks to reconcile perspectives.

3.4.2. Text functions and text quality. A brief survey

Texts are written with various purposes in mind. According to the functional perspective on text, it is assumed that each text should perform at least one function and that the quality of the (functional) text should be judged in the light of the assigned or performed functions, i.e. of whether it performs the assigned task or not.

The attempts to assess or judge text and discourse quality go back to the 1960s when Paul Diderich experimented and constructed a reasonably reliable judgment model made up of the following components: *content* (including: wealth of ideas, clarity, relevance for the topic, relevance for the audience), *usage* (sentence structure, punctuation and spelling), *organization*, *vocabulary* and *personal qualities.* Many writing-experts and trainers,

including Tricia Hedge (1988) have adopted the model, which has not only gained prestige but has been widely used by teachers for the assessment of creative writing. Later on, the CCC model gained prominence. It consisted of three main elements: *correspondence* (accounting for the correspondence between the sender and receiver needs), *consistency*, and *correctness*, which can be further followed along some variables like: text type, content, structure, wording and punctuation.

The 80s pushed into general use the *functionalist comprehensibility theory*, according to which the text must fulfill the purpose for which it was created, i.e. the reader must get all the necessary information he is looking for (Gunnarsson B.L., 1984). Gunnarsson speaks up for *situational coherence*, emphasizing that not only syntactical and semantic factors are relevant, but that pragmatic ones are equally important. Gunnarsson assumes that text should be judged by what functions it performs to the reader, by what the reader makes out of it and how it impacts on him.

The next decade brought to light the prolific German school of text linguistics, whose representatives advanced useful approaches and insights into text and its quality. The research was prompted by the development of language for specific purposes, particularly for technical purposes. Since texts belonging to this category perform, in general, the same rhetorical function, it was estimated that their function was defined by the situational context in which they appeared and were used. In general, these linguists' approach went out from the assumption that text is a functional and structural unit and attempted to describe a text through its functional and structural components. Klauke M. (1992) worked out a model of text analysis based on the approaches of the German linguists Möhn and Pelka (1984), Hoffmann (1987) and Beier & Möhn (1988) in which he combined all their important criteria and to which he added a few more elements, which he considered relevant. According to Klauke any text should be viewed from three major perspectives, each made up of several elements. Klauke's approach (1992:91) integrates the following components, which, he suggests influence text quality:

A Situational Frame
1.   Special field of a subject
2.   Text label- name of the text
3.   Special situation of a text
a.   topic/subject
b.   participants
c.   functionality
d.   place/time of action
e.   medium
f.   textual relationship
B Language Structure
1.   Text macrostructure
2.   Cohesion
3.   Pragmatic aspect
4.   Syntactic structures
5.   Lexical structures
6.   Standardization – degree of standardization, means of standardazition
C. Extralinguistic Features
1.   Graphics
2.   Layout
3.   Paper size

Fig. 2. *Klauke (1992:91) Overview of method of text analysis*

When he turned to functionality, he made functionality a component of *situational frame*, and explained it in terms of 'what the text is supposed to achieve, what its task is' (1992:93). He quoted the functions enumerated by Möhn and Pelka (1984), which, he admitted, covered the entire range of possible texts (i.e.: *descriptive, directive, instructive, metalinguistic, contractual, expressive and isolative)*. Klauke postulated that the mentioned functions cover not only entire texts, but also 'the text segments of a text which may have different functions' (1992:93). He equally assumed that the functions 'may vary from text to text and may appear in typical combinations in certain texts'(ibid.). In his study Klauke provided the example of a manual, which, according to him, was made up of two different parts: a description of the subject and an instruction for a certain action.

In more recent decades, text and discourse quality have been investigated extensively by applied linguists and text linguists. A wealth of research comes, however, from English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers or language testers who have worked out several evaluation grids whose validity has been tested in many European countries particularly in the 90s. Well-known evaluation instruments like the *Common European Reference Framework for Language Teaching*, the Cambridge examinations, the ALTE examinations, etc. use assessment devices that grade the quality of texts or discourses produced by learners.

3.4.3. The German school on evaluation methods for functional texts

In order to be able to assess text quality, researchers and linguists turned to finding adequate evaluation methods. This study reviews some more attempts to work out reliable methods, the attempts of some German researchers, particularly those of Lentz L and Maat H.P. (1992). They mention three types of methods for text evaluation: *text-focused*, *reader-focused and processor focused*, insisting on the relevance and adequacy of the text-focused method or model. They adopt the *Functional Test Evaluation Scheme* and test the reliability of the model against an example of functional text, i.e. a grant or subsidy proposal.

Lentz L. and Maat H.P. (1992:106) claim that 'our text-focused model serves to help the writer during the cognitive process of evaluating the text from the perspective of how effective it is for the intended audience', which must rely on a 'functional analysis of the rhetorical situation of the document'. The authors actually look at a four-component analysis, which embraces: *a functional analysis, task analysis, criteria regarding content and structure, and criteria regarding style and graphics*.

Functional analysis, in turn, results in statements about the *communicative objective(s)* of the text, given that 'one of the central components of the evaluation process is testing the text against its intended intentions' (idem, 106). They further postulate that these 'objectives and intentions' instead of

being stated clearly and overtly, 'form a vague and complex functional web, hardly accessible in the absence of a profound functional analysis' (idem, 106). For example, the authors break down the objectives that the requirements of a grant proposal place on a text into a few questions, such as (idem, 106):

- Which elements of content are necessary to fulfill these objectives?
- How should these elements be structured and how should they be related?
- What stylistic elements and formal features are best suited to the different content elements, with regard to their objectives? …

After having analyzed instructional documents for grant proposals, committee proposal evaluations, the authors interviewed writers of documents, looked at reference materials on the subject of grants and proposal writing, and concluded that an informative document regarding a grant proposal should necessarily include the following objectives:

- to draw the potential proposal writer's attention to the possibility of claiming a subsidy for an activity;
- to help the writers estimate their chances of receiving a grant;
- to persuade the applicants that applying is worth the trouble, etc. … (idem, 107).

The authors call the assignment of several objectives to the text 'functional complexity' and argue that some objectives can be fulfilled through other means than linguistic ones. The example they use is that of a grant proposal, and admit that, particularly the function of 'drawing attention' will not be achieved solely through the text itself, but through other means as well, as it is rather a matter of distributing the documents to the right persons.

If in the case of functional analysis the focus was placed on text, in that of *task analysis* the focus is the reader and his tasks. To illustrate their point Lentz L and Maat H.P. (1992:106) look at the *cognitive activities that the reader must go through* in order to achieve the text's more general objectives.

The *criteria regarding textual content and structure* make up a third component of the model for quality evaluation. According to the two researchers, this component provides useful tips for the evaluation of global aspects of the text and sheds light on issues like: what content elements are helpful and indicative of this type of text-document, and how they should be organized to account for it. In their study Lentz L and Maat H.P.(1992) refer to two ways of answering this: one is by looking at the *results* of the reader's task analysis with the particular aim of identifying the content elements that enable the reader to fulfill his task, the second is by *analyzing elements belonging to a corpus of similar texts* and relating all elements to the functions of the document. They analyzed subsidy instructions and, for example, for the function of 'providing information', Lenz and Maat (ibid.) enumerate all elements that should occur in the text (ie the objectives of the subsidy, the type of activities that can receive subsidy, specific requirements for these activities, etc.). The researchers point out that the first-time readers of the document as well as the readers looking for specific information, can easily find it. This, then, is the outcome of the effective organization of the necessary elements in the document. Their conclusion to the specific structuring of elements is that 'instructive content fragments follow informative content fragments' (Lentz L and Maat H.P., 1992:109).

The final component of the evaluation method proposed by the two German researchers is made up of a set of *criteria regarding style and graphics.* Both stylistic and graphical features of the text must derive from the functions of the text. Thus each function of a specific element of the text may require particular style and graphical features. In spite of the researches conducted, mainly those investigating the informative functions of texts, apart from a few features like: presenting the information in smaller bits, using headings, simplifying difficult concepts and making them operational, making judgments on clarity, no clear statement has been made regarding the 'persuasive style' and how it should meet the exigencies of the persuasive function of texts. The researchers equally lament the scarcity of references regarding the graphic features and their use in various texts, calling for further investigations in the field.

The *Functional Test Evaluation Scheme* worked out by Lentz L and Maat H.P. (1992) consists of the following components: 1) an instruction for the evaluator, where the structure of the model is explained and the functional context of the type of document, 2) a second component aimed at helping the evaluator divide the texts into content fragments which contain the content criteria as well, 3) a third component, which seeks to separate relevant from irrelevant functions (those which can be easily discarded from the text) by asking the evaluator to list the content elements that do not relate to the primary functions of the document, 4) a forth component, where the complete document is evaluated according to the general features related to the primary functions. In addition, the last component contains features like: adequacy of register and avoidance of lengthy sentences and awkward words.

After having presented these methods, the authors conclude that the *Functional Test Evaluation Scheme* can provide useful judgments, but that it can well be complemented by the use of the *reader-focused* and *processor-focused* methods, since the last two can provide further information on the text, the kind of information that does not come from the FTES.

3.4.4. The functional perspective of the Dutch school on text quality

Without competing openly with the German researchers for authority over the complex and whimsical problem of *text quality*, the Dutch school representatives, which I consider in this study, brought their contribution to the aforementioned domain. It is, however, noteworthy to point out that both schools published their outcomes in the early 90s. Yet, there is no evidence that the researchers of one school were aware of the efforts made by the other party, since no reference has been made to the researchers involved in the experiments of the other party. A closer look at the outcomes of both schools highlights both similarities and divergences.

The Dutch researchers whose experimental outcomes are reflected in the present article are P. Schellens and Elling M.G. both active in the 90s.

Schelllens goes out from the basic assumption that a text is a site for *multiple and conflicting functions* and advises that four types of research could contribute to 'a better understanding of functional text quality': *functional analysis, problem analysis, experimental research,* and *field studies* (1992: 128).

Schellens (1992) bases his study on the insights of some colleague researchers into some text genres, which include: forms, informative texts, school curriculum documents, policy documents, and safety rules. The outcomes of these researches showed that the task of identifying intended functions is rather complicated. Summing up previous researches on text functions undertaken by Lentz and Van Tuijl (1989) on school curriculum documents and Elling's (1991) studies on safety rules, Schellens asserted that 'more than one function can be assigned to texts and that these hinder each other'(1992:128).

If the documents are aimed at performing several functions it is only advisable that it should become a matter of priority to give to one of them, the one that is crucial to the text, priority and overlook the others.

Moving on to text quality Schellens (1992) discusses the four types of research that could improve the understanding of (functional) text quality and optimize texts in practice. *Functional analysis* is the first type of research proposed. He prefaces his discussion to functional analysis with the assumption that 'no standard method has yet been developed which can be used to determine which functions are assigned to a text or text genre. Also, there exists no standard conceptual framework with which to specify different functions at a different level'(1992:132).

In addition, the researchers also agreed that a functional analysis should expose the function(s) of a text at different levels, which they group into *communicative* and *functional or organizational.*

Problem analysis is a second method proposed by Schellens (Idem.) which should indicate what functions can be successfully realized and what problems arise in the functioning of a text. The study, consisting of both surveys among text users and text analysis, was carried out through work-aloud protocols, where the respondents, while filling out forms, also discussed the answers to various items, thus identifying possible errors.

According to Schellens (Idem.), the third type of research that can provide useful data to text quality vis-à-vis its functionality is *experimental research.* This means a traditional experiment where a certain variable is manipulated in order to measure or observe the subsequent changes incurred. Various studies carried out in the early 90s used various variables specific for the text types examined. Amongst others, Elling (1991) investigated the effect of vague versus precise formulation in the interpretation of safety rules. As a result Ellis found that varying one element or function can yield important information about the choices writers have to make with a view to the functions assigned to a specific text genre.

The last method recommended by Schellens (1992) consisted of *field experiments.* Arguing, on the one hand, that experimental research is effective in that it provides results that can easily be interpreted, on the other hand, he admits, it proves insufficient since the outcomes cannot be extrapolated to other contexts because of the limited character of the laboratory conditions. Consequently, he recommends field research studies, in which more than one point can be revised.

3.4.5. An empirical view on the quality of creative vs functional writing. Reconciling views.

The models that were presented demonstrated their validity for certain text genres and their specific requirements.

The evaluation of creative (narrative) texts can be carried out in various time-frames: during the writing process (throughout various stages of the process), in the *post writing stage* or in the *post-publication stage*. From all evaluators, the examiner may fully benefit of all these forms and employ them productively, as his evaluation is prevailingly determined by the aim of his evaluation which depends on circumstances.

Tricia Hedge in her book on writing (1988:145) uses a set of evaluation criteria, which she divided into two groups. The first group, which she called *authoring*, contains the skills necessary for the process of *composing*, eg: having a sense of purpose, a sense of audience, and a sense of direction.

The second group consists of skills that are necessary for *crafting* and includes "the way in which the writer puts together the pieces of the text and chooses correct and appropriate language" (T. Hedge, 1988: 146). The diagramme proposed by T Hedge is reproduced below along with the criteria for marking.

	What skills do good writers demonstrate	Criteria for marking
	Authoring	
1)	Having something to say (a sense of purpose)	Content
2)	Being aware of the reader (a sense of audience)	Length, Style
3)	Developing the ideas (a sense of direction)	Organization
	Crafting	
4)	Organizing the content clearly and in a logical manner	Organization
5)	Manipulating the script	Handwriting
6)	Using the conventions, e.g. spelling, layout, etc.	Accuracy
7)	Getting the grammar right	Complexity
8)	Developing sentence structure	Complexity
9)	Linking ideas in a variety of ways	Range
10)	Having a range of vocabulary	Range

The criteria worked out by T. Hedge represented a basic framework of reference criteria frequently used as marking guidelines by the teachers and evaluators of Romanian language centres for marking general English writing skills in the 90s.

In the same book on writing, T Hedge suggests a 'useful approach to the evaluation' of writing tasks, which is to 'borrow a notion from the field of testing, "validity", and apply it to materials'. The author distinguishes between *internal validity and external validity* (Idem.). According to her, internal validity means evaluating a task in relation to its immediate and

discernible aims and within the overall objectives of the textbook or set of learning materials. E*xternal validation*, on the other hand, is the evaluation by which 'the teachers evaluate the aims themselves'. This very compliance of tasks with the aims or expectations regarding the text has been taken over by the text linguists of the 90s, particularly Klauke (1992), who later on proposes a matrix based on many of the elements that occur in Hedge's (1988) model. Hedge worked out a general model that was best suited for teaching purposes, but at a closer consideration we may admit that her assumptions are applicable to a wider spectrum of texts, i.e. written products. In her book Hedge suggests that in order to find out whether or not a produced text is externally valid, the teachers should look at 'the approach to writing implicit in the task design, the suitability of the methodology involved in the expectations of our learners, and so on'(1988:162). This consideration again reminds us of the compliance of texts with the envisaged functions, a concept that surfaced later in the approaches of the 90s.

The criteria proposed by T. Hedge proved productive and valid, in spite of their general character, as they represent a set of elements that are necessary and are inherent qualities of any piece of writing (Irimiea, 2006). Their usefulness is obviated in the trainers' and teachers' practice, who have been successfully using them for more than two decades, and, therefore, are likely to inspire confidence. As mentioned earlier, the criteria prove helpful and reliable in evaluating creative (narrative) writing in general. This means that for other evaluation purposes evaluators may look for inspiration elsewhere, since each evaluation purpose determines a different set of selected criteria, i.e. the ones that best meet the envisioned purpose. So, for example, for the international recognition of writing skills the examiner must look at the standards set forth by international examination boards through specific standards and criteria.

The issue of evaluating functional texts/writing is extremely important and has been the focus of many institutions, including the Council of Europe and the European Commission, not to mention the vast number of teachers who face it on a day-to-day basis. Although there are several

recommendations regarding the variables that may turn useful in evaluating texts, there are no all-covering or all-purpose-serving sets of recommended criteria, except for the extremely formal and widely recognized CEF criteria. For all the other cases, the teachers should turn for appropriate answers to their own experience and exploit the acknowledged criteria. Nevertheless, they should not loose sight of the institutional standards or traditions in the field.

3.4.6. Conclusion

Since all methods that were detailed in this commentarial study were experimented by their proponents as part of thorough research activities, they cannot be either contested or ignored. They can be challenged on a few items or grounds. As a result of experimental research, each is, indeed, well suited for a particular environment (situational context), text genre and particular aim. Therefore, it is my conviction that given a particular text genre, like a subsidy proposal, or perhaps a business plan, or report, the method of functional analysis carried out by Lentz and Maat (1992) would respond well to the aim. If the drafters wish to receive feedback on the subsidy proposal form or on other forms, and seek to revise and improve the forms a mere functional analysis in the absence of a thorough text analysis and problem analysis would make no difference. Similarly, if a trainer or teacher wishes to grade a student report or business proposal, he would most certainly resort to a detailed text analysis and leave aside other methods.

Thus, I am persuaded that from the array of methods of evaluation of text quality, the evaluators may choose the one or the ones, or a combination of methods, that could best meet their intended purposes. I am equally persuaded, that the researches on text quality are still scarce and need to be continued until a viable, standardized, good-for-all-seasons method would be reached.

3.5. Writing as evaluation

3.5.1. The writer's own evaluation

Generally speaking, there is no established and unanimously agreed on convention or rule regarding the evaluation of the writing process or the product of writing that writers use. What can be noted, however, is that writers normally use only random or personal approaches to evaluating writing, not to mention the fact that they rely heavily on their editors for the evaluating process.

In spite of the fact that writers usually focus more on the product than on the process, the evaluation process is not neglected either. In fact, for a good writer the evaluating process of writing begins right with his recollection and ideas gathering stage. Furtheron, he pays equal attention to all stages and elements of the writing process, including the final product. The evaluation may well continue in the *post publishing stage,* but then no further changes of the product are possible.

A writer usually embarks upon writing when he has or wishes to communicate something to his peers, or to a larger audience, which he cannot reach otherwise etc. He often goes out from stating the form of writing he wishes to adopt and makes general statements of the kind: *I wish to write a narrative which features my youth.* Such a statement whether conscious or not, defines two critical elements of the writing process: the *form* he wishes to use and the restricted *topic area* or *subject matter*. Further, he would consider his audience and the adjacent objectives. The writer's next concerns are:

- the content,
- the general organization of the narrative (including introduction, main body and end),
- thinking out the string of events, or story outline,
- creating the plot that will be narrated,
- the (chronological) sequencing or ordering of events,

- the use of particular rhetorical devices throughout the narrative,
- the use of cohesive devices to link events and parts, the characters,
- the particular techniques used for the characters' descriptions,
- the presentation or description of places, atmosphere, events,
- the use of dialogue,
- the linguistic wrap up (referential function and other functions).

Starting from these prerequisites, after having written his novel, the writer must ask himself the following questions, which may be grouped under a few topic areas and which may illuminate him in terms of whether he managed to transmit the desired message or not:

Content and other narrative-related elements

Is my message clear? Is my novel too long or too short?

Are my characters representative and well described?

Are they presented as vivid and convincing as possible?

Are the presented events relevant and do they support my ideas?

Are the happenings realistically rendered? Are they adequately stringed together in a meaningful text unit?

Cohesion and fluency

Are all the parts well organized, meaningful and properly linked?

Are the cohesive devices and markers in place and do they support the ideas?

Linguistic complexity, lexical features, coherence and discourse features, fluency

Is the language used appropriate to the topic, to the genre and audience expectations? Is it adapted to and does it change with the text circumstances or parts to suit them?

Overall quality

Is the text unit meaningful and unitary?

Did I make myself clear?

Mechanics

Did I use the punctuation rules adequately?

The list of evaluating items is far form being complete. It only seeks to suggest a few points that the writer should consider throughout his writing activity, particularly during his editing and proofreading stages. Furthermore, each suggested reflection item from the list may be decomposed in smaller items, which may indeed impact the final product. For example, the *introduction* of the narrative must inherently address a few points, which turn helpful in achieving the desired style or the writer' intentions. The points addressed are: the particular and personal use of vivid setting the scene devices, which include expressive descriptions of the place, time, characters, atmosphere, use of writing techniques which may capture the reader's attention and create the desire to continue reading.

Nonetheless, both before and during the activity, the writer relies on some elements which may broadly represent reference points for him and which will bridge the gap between himself and his reader. These points will be:

- a common topic
- a shared experience or interest in a certain topic, or issue
- a common socio-professional, cultural and linguistic background
- shared beliefs, the same cultural heritage or environment
- the same community norms and conventions the interactants (writer and reader) share.

The writer may apply various other evaluation criteria, which he thinks would best suit his writing intentions, his personal style or writing 'practices'. He may, for example, wish to insist on audience-related expectations and standards and use them as standard-setting evaluation criteria. He may also wish to be more concerned with topic-related items and overshadow the audience expectations' criterion. Finally, the writer may be guided merely by his instincts in evaluating the process he goes through or the resulting product.

Regardless of the method used and the time-span spent, the writers tend to look back at their writing and assess it. The most frequently used approach to evaluating writing is to carefully monitor every stage of the writing process and, then, to finally edit the text unit. It is, however, on

very rare occasions that the writer edits and evaluates his writing without further help. His relying on editors and other appointed professionals allows him to focus exclusively on his writing. This alone will guarantee the success of his writing.

3.5.2. The editor's evaluation

According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, an *editor* is a 'person who edits material for publication or broadcasting' or 'a person who directs the preparation of a newspaper or periodical, or a particular section of one' or 'a person who selects or commissions material for publication' (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990). The definitions refer to text editors, as opposed to film editors, or sound track editors or computer programme editors.

The **editor** is a professional whose main responsibility is to **edit** the text provided by a writer or author and prepare it for publication. This means to carefully and critically read the written text adopting the reader's or the connoisseur's perspective and making rectifying suggestions. The difference between a writer and an editor is that, although writers also prepare, revise or edit their text with the aim of publishing it, they do it less thoroughly and objectively, as their mind is still imbued with the substance of writing and as their major focus is their writing, leaving the editing job to the editor, whose sole responsibility is to further prepare it for publication.

A text ready for publication must perform a particular function and meet certain norms or standards, all of which are text-related. The function of a text may be that of: *informing, persuading, arguing, narrating, describing* etc. and must be easily recognized as such from the text. The other standards or norms, though unwritten, are rigorously followed by writers and editors because otherwise they run the risk of being awkward and unsuccessful. Such norms have to do with: selecting the form or format of the text, adhering to the genre rules, observing discourse and its specific strategies, taking the reader into account, etc.

By looking at the text thoroughly, the editor evaluates the *product*. He is not interested in what and how the writer wrote the text, whether or not he observed the stages of the writing process or if he followed strictly all writing recommendations, but is rather concerned with what impact the text has on the reader. Whereas the writer's job, in what evaluation is concerned, was that of looking for errors throughout the writing process and at the product, the editor's responsibility relies solely on looking at the product and finding misfits, errors, etc.

At the more loose end of the evaluation axis, the editor may follow his own 'editorial' instincts and judge a text unit according to them. At the other end of the editorial evaluation axis is situated the professionally accurate evaluation based on following acknowledged steps and procedures.

The editor's general evaluation criteria are those used by the writer and mentioned in the previous chapter.

However, given the specific role of *mediator* or *intermediary* between the author and the audience, the editor must serve the audience as well. Consequently, much of his effort is devoted to the audience and to satisfying its expectations and exigencies. This makes the editor sometimes a biased, *critical* and audience-sensitive *editor* serving the interests of his audience. This also makes him a good connoisseur of the audience.

In addition, the editor functions in a community-determined environment which is usually ideologically controlled by administrators, community policy makers, politicians, etc. Since there is no bias-free community, this normally impacts the editor turning him into an ideologically-oriented and biased professional, who agrees to serve the interests of the community he is part of.

The editor must have an in-depth knowledge of the process of writing, of all components and stages in order to be able to recommend adequate changes that solve specific writing or rhetorical issues.

Last but not least, the editor must also be familiar with the author, with his writing, his ideas, his style so as to easily 'manipulate' him and convince him, when the case arises, to adjust the material to suit the editorial requirements. A good familiarity and relationship with the author facilitates the communication with him and the rectification process.

The editor is a valuable and irreplaceable asset in the process of writing, whose role is clearly determined and whose contribution to the published work is crucial. He does not perform a unique job, but carries out the writer's editing activity more thoroughly and professionally that the writer. Equally, he relies on all editing tools and assets that writers also have at their disposal. The difference lies in his being more efficient and critical, since the writer cannot fully detach himself from the text and adopt a critical approach that could lead to the text rendered ready for publication.

3.5.3. The examiner's evaluative stance

The examiner's evaluation of the learners' writing is an intricate process which rests, first of all, on his position in the educational system, second, on the more general criteria agreed internationally, and third, on his immediate, writing-related teaching purposes.

The first stance, the teacher's position in the system has to do with his professional commitments vis-à-vis the national educational policy, on the one hand, and his educational commitments towards the institution he works for, on the other. These commitments are defined and outlined by the curricular documents which represent the working documents of the national and local institutions involved. From this point of view, the teacher-examiner has to conform to the standards established and drawn up by the accredited or responsible institutions. Many national educational systems in Europe have worked towards establishing an educational policy guided by sets of standards, which clarify and define appropriate goals for the students' achievements, educational practices and resources. Their endeavours have been mostly directed towards bringing different but related standards under the umbrella of a unifying, though achievable, framework or policy to be used by the educational institutions of a country. In Europe the changes undertaken by the national education boards or ministries are in line with the achievements and recommendations of the Council of Europe.

The same experience characterizes the broader international area. The teachers' teaching and evaluation processes have been subordinated to the standards set forth by different international fora and to those elaborated by professional associations. Finally, the most important contribution to the international standardization process of a writing curriculum (including teaching and evaluating writing) came from the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment* (Trim, 1998). Other noteworthy contributions were those of international associations such as the Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages' (TESOL's) *ESL Standards* (1997, 1998), International Reading Association's (IRA's) and National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE's) *Standards for the English Language Arts* (1996). These associations just like the EC's CEF acknowledge the common endeavour to unify and standardize the teaching and evaluation of writing, and their commitment to use them. The efforts of these associations were geared towards finding common, agreed on frameworks, benchmarks, attainment targets, or outcomes-oriented targets which should guide the training and evaluation of writing.

These standards seek to reconcile differences and the decentralizing tendencies that characterize some countries, in contrast to other countries where school and university curricula are clearly defined by central authorities. Ideas about how to clarify and define standards go back to educational philosophers, such as Dewey (1916, 1938) and Habermas (1984, 1987).

The movement towards standardization is the outcome of trends such as increased global interdependence, making public education more public oriented and accountable, moving towards outcomes-oriented approaches to curricula and other more recent achievements in educational sciences.

Cumming assumes that standards of writing 'involve performance genres that each of us appreciates, from a common tradition, as conventional expectations for students' writing or abilities, classroom activities or teaching' (2001:212). The examples provided by her for L2 writing include 'a 30-minute argumentative essay (which has become a

standard expectation for L2 writing assessment, 1997), or various other types of writing tasks commonly assigned in university courses (e.g. as described in Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Hale et al., 1996), or to extend the analogy, even certain routines of teaching, classroom activities, or beliefs associated with them.'(2001: 212).

According to Cumming the current views on standards of L2 writing are germane to the following characterization: 'are implicit, culturally circumscribed, professional expectations' (Idem.).

From the above-mentioned prerequisites, Cummings derives her belief that 'there is a need for more systematic research in standards, [...] to clarify what they really involve [...] and to counter negative applications of the concept', or in other words, this means that 'we need to research and to refine the standards of educational practice related to L2 writing, not only to better understand them and to know how to act on them but also to know how to be critically wary of certain political uses of this concept. As content as we may feel with our implicit beliefs about standard practices of teaching L2 writing, unless these are articulated, studied, evaluated, and justified, they are prey to confusions as well as political manipulations' (2001: 212).

From this broader perspective which involves the attempts to establish a research-validated set of evaluation standards based on a sound curriculum, we shall move to a more idiosyncratic perspective on L2 writing assessment, which will provide some insights into the teacher's assessment and his criteria, and which are articulated on his own experience, his teaching practice, all of which are, ultimately, aligned to the school or institutional curricular outlines and, last but not least, the research in applied linguistics, EFL, discourse and genre studies, and so on. Such an approach seeks, first of all, to evaluate the students' texts.

Many L2 teachers and evaluators have come to use and rely on the evaluation of the students' texts when they wish to grade or measure the students' progress regarding the acquisition of writing skills. Thornbury (2005: 153) acknowledges three benefits that the teacher and evaluator can take from the assessment of the students' texts: first, texts represent 'data

for diagnosis and evaluation', second, they account for the students' 'language awarenes', and third, they are 'texts in their own right'. In addition, Thornbury argues that when students have their texts 'used for analysis as, for example, a poem or a newspaper story' it 'can be very motivating, even flattering, and serves to break down the distinction between language *learner* and language *user*'(Idem.)

Speaking about the students' written texts, Thornbury admits that they have had a long history as 'testing instruments, especially where fluency and coherence are valued' (Idem.) He states that assessment has long moved from mere testing the students' ability to write or complete isolated sentences to testing their ability to 'communicate at the text-level'. These approaches look beyond mere grammar errors adopting a broader and fairer view on the students' writing abilities. They also make use of more comprehensive criteria that evaluate more abilities which are needed for text production. Thornbury provides the example of a writing paper of the Cambridge Advanced English examination (CAE) which consists of two tasks of approximately 250 words each. He quotes the criteria used by the CAE, which, as he estimates, can be used for the assessment of any text and which are:

- **Content**

Does the text cover a sufficient range of points, according to the specifications of the task?

- **Organization**

Is the text appropriately organized, laid and linked?

- **Range**

Is there a sufficiently wide range of vocabulary and grammatical structures?

- **Register**

Is the style appropriate to the topic, text type, purpose and target reader?

- **Target reader**

Has the writer kept the reader in mind? Would the text achieve the desired effect on the reader?

- **Accuracy of language**

Is the text accurate in its use of vocabulary, grammar, discourse features, etc.?

(Thornbury, 2005:132)

Thornbury pleads for the use of students' texts arguing that they are as good as any real text or any coursebook text and that they are 'the best resources for a focus on language'(Idem.). His argument is that 'learners' texts are more likely to be closer to the developmental stage that other learners are going through (their interlanguage)'. A further reason is that 'learners' texts are more likely to include features that other learners can approapriate, given the current staate of their interlanguage' (Idem.). A counterargument to this point of view could be that these texts would not be 'genuine or native-speaker productions', a shortcoming that could influence the learners in an inapproapriate way. Thornbury addresses this counterargument by providing the following strategies available to teachers: pre-editing, guided self-editing, guided collaborative editing and guided collaborative production (Idem.). *Pre-editing* is an awareness-raising, 'tidying up' operation carried out by the teacher, that would render the learners' texts correct for other learners. It consists in error correction and the reformulation of erroneous or awkward wordings. In Thornbury's view 'it is analogous to the way that teachers (or coursebook writers) simplify, adapt, authentic texts, both to make them easier to process, but also to maximize their language learning spin-off'(2005:156). He specifies that for students to understand the differences it is important to show both versions, the original text and the edited one.

Guided self-editing is a strategy used by learners which consists in their own editing under the teacher's guidance. It woks in the following way: the teacher indicates the errors and their type ('Sp' for spelling errors, 'Gr' for grammar error, etc.) and the learner is then left to make the necessary changes. Another alternative for guided self-editing suggested by Thornbury is *conferencing.* The difference between guided self-editing and conferencing is that the learners discuss the text with the teacher and then

re-draft it following the suggestions that result from the discussion. Thus, this strategy is both interactive, as it requires the participation of drafters in the discussion of errors, and personalized, in that it leaves the re-drafting task to the learners. Thornbury suggests that self-editing need not be used only for the production of texts but that it can be applied to spoken texts and other texts as well.

Guided collaborative editing is the students' activity carried out under the teacher's supervision and guidance. Thornbury remarks that 'it's important that the process be seen as an editing, rather than a correcting, one'. He further explains that 'In other words, the purpose is not simply to correct inaccuracies, but to make the text optimally effective, given its purpose and audience', which might mean adding text or deleting text chunks. However, it is important that the students participate and understand the process of reformulation.

Guided collaborative production is a strategy which involves both the students and the teacher. The learners provide the content, while the teacher's role is to give to the content an acceptable form. Thornbury (2005) recommends that this be done through *Community Language Learning* (CLL), where the students sit in a circle, talk and make suggestions, which are recorded after the teacher gives his approval. So, basically, the teacher's role is that of consultant, intervening only when necessary and not in matters of content or turn-taking.

Thornbury (2005) also claims that such texts can be recorded and further used as a corpus for data collection, language and error analyses, error identification and correction.

However, evaluating writing does not mean focusing solely on the production of non-literary texts, but may also involve encouraging or teaching creative writing. On the one hand, dealing with creative writing might contribute to the formation of skills and mastery of such writing, on the other, it may represent a moment of breaking away from routines and rules, using imagination and creativity and playing with language and words (Thornbury, 2005). Such activities can become 'a powerful source of motivation' if they are used by the teacher skillfully to praise, valorize or

'value' the students' productions. To this purpose, the best writings should be displayed on a web-site, on boards, in student magazins, etc. (Idem.)

It is, however, important to recognize the significance of the use of texts, in all their forms for both teaching and evaluation purposes. Since texts come in all shapes and forms, ranging from genuine, invented, simplified, adapted, fabricated ones, created by individual students, jointly created by students, or created under the teacher's supervision, all can be subject to the teacher's evaluation. The evaluation and the underlying criteria must be carefully focused by the teacher on the envisaged purpose. If, for example, the teacher teaches text production insisting on the use of guided self-editing, or simply using self-editing, to construct his set of evaluation criteria he must choose those criteria which refer to the students' operations. Consequently, the teacher-examiner should grade only the specific features or aspects that have to do with the students' contribution. Thus, the teacher must analyse only those features and operations that are specifically carried out by the students. It goes without saying that in evaluating the students' texts or writing activities, the teacher must clearly explain both the tasks to be completed, the expected results and his grading criteria. By making his criteria known to the students the teacher will not only indicate to the students that they need to tackle more carefully some writing activities, but, he will also lay emphasis on the most relevant aspects of writing.

In conclusion, the examiner's evaluation is a complex effort to comply with several constraints. The difficulty of his mission lies in his threefold position towards writing evaluation: first he must abide by the institutional constraints which are aligned to national standards, second, his stance should be congruent with the standards recommended by international organizations or fora. Finally, he may enjoy a certain degree of freedom to work out his specific criteria regarding the achievement of particular purposes he set out for classroom activities. However, in spite of this simplified approach to L2 writing assessment, practitioners, experts and scholars still deplore the lack of research that could shed more light on the educational practice of L2 writing assessment.

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