

***Competency-based Language Teaching in Higher Education.*** Edited by María Luisa Pérez Cañado, New York & London: Springer. 2013. (pp. xiv+194)  
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Competency-based Language Teaching (CBL) presents a forum for work that crosses traditional boundaries between theory and practice, and between native, second and foreign language education. Cañado provides invaluable practical guidance for the post-secondary sector on how to approach, teach, and assess competencies in Bologna-adapted systems of study. The ultimate aim of this volume is to present a practical delineation of the concept of competency in tertiary language education. It pools the insights of scholars, practitioners, and policy makers from diverse parts of Europe and the US.

The introductory chapter clarifies the definition and taxonomy of competencies in higher education. The definition of CBLT involves not only knowledge, but also skills, attitudes, values, and entails the capacity to perform successfully in an academic, professional, or social environment. The author sets forth the categorization of competencies propounded by Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and TUNING project (TUNING Educational Structures in Europe 2007) regarding learning, teaching and assessment. This chapter also provides an overview of the volume.

The book is subdivided into three main parts. The guidelines derived from the CEFR serve as the overarching theme which guides and connects all three sections. To achieve its objective, section I examines the necessary changes which have to take place in language teaching in order to adapt to a competency-based language model. The first chapter in part I by Ian Tudor focuses on the use of the CEFR's common reference levels for transparency and comparability in terms of what learners are able to do in a language at a given time. The author has highlighted the very positive role which the CEFR can play in the creation of a pedagogical approach geared to the

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development of transferable learning skills needed for lifelong language learning. It offers guidelines for the identification of pragmatically relevant learning goals, and also creates a framework for engaging learners in an active and self-directed manner in their language learning.

Chapter three by María Luisa Pérez Cañado gives a detailed analysis of the adaptation to a competency-based model of language degrees across Europe and scrutinizes the main strengths and weaknesses of this process. She offers the results of the recent European study ADELEEEES, carried out with nearly 500 students and teachers of more than 15 different language degrees across Europe. The purposes of the study were to assess the current state of competency development and evaluation, different types of learning modalities and groupings, student-centered methodologies, and evaluation procedures and strategies, with a view to addressing and overcoming the major gap detected therein.

Part II focuses on the actual teaching of competencies in tertiary education. It provides a valuable bank of materials, procedures and ideas, based on accounts of successful practice and experiences, for the practical implementation of competencies in language education.

Chapter 4 by Daniel Madrid Fernández and Stephen Hughes clarifies competences and foreign language teacher education in Spain. For the pervasiveness and disparity in the notion of competence, they illustrate beneficial references for teacher educators on key competencies help teachers become adept in the use of competences in their future fields of work. Accordingly, the OECD's (2005) definition and selection of key competencies, the European Commission's identification of eight key competences for lifelong learning and the importance attributed to competences in the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System have set the agenda in European educational policy.

Chapter 5 by Melinda Dooly focuses on the learner-centered approach of PBL, which is based on contextualized cooperative learning and can be implemented as a competency-based learning platform. The implementation of PBL aims to foster the development of language learners' cognitive, social and communicative skills through their engagement in authentic activities and sub-activities that lead up to the project output.

Chapter 6 by Greg Kessler and Paige D. Ware focuses specifically on how competencies within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) can be implemented using technology-based instruction with particular emphasis upon the examples of telecollaboration and local

collaboration. They illustrate how telecollaborative projects can be used as a forum for developing discipline-specific EHEA competencies, through the examples of three telecollaborative research projects.

Chapter 7 by Barry Pennock-Speck describes the design, implementation and assessment of activities in which competences are acquired either in part or entirely through the use of ICTs in several English language and linguistics modules in English Studies at the Universitat de València.

Chapter 8 by Manuel Jiménez Raya elaborates on various definitions of autonomy and its pedagogy in language education at universities. In the context of formal education, Jiménez Raya et al. (2007) defines autonomy as “the competence to develop as a self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware participant in (and beyond) educational environments, within a vision of education as (inter)personal empowerment and social transformation” (n.p.). He also presents a methodological framework in which pedagogy for autonomy is operationalized through nine pedagogical principles.

The final part deals with evaluation competencies in tertiary language education. Diverse proposals with specific guidelines, indicators, and descriptors are provided to evaluate the hitherto abstract concept of competency in this section.

Chapter 9 by Kent Löfgren discusses the relationships between CEFR for languages and corrective feedback in higher education second language teaching regarding perspectives from empirical research. The author stipulates CEFR purpose as a reference manual in matters related to the standardization of competencies in terms of language teaching and learning, regardless of what language is being taught or in what country this teaching takes place.

Chapter 10 by María José Terrón-López and María José García-García demonstrates a guide to the implementation of generic skills, particularly giving assessment criteria to readers, as well as grade descriptors and marking schemes of transferable skills, besides providing orientation to integrate guidance and feedback to the students. This chapter also examines several possible educational activities and the assessment of the learning progress of professional skills through self-explanatory templates, using self-assessment and peer-assessment tests, among other useful tools.

Chapter 11 by Marta González-Lloret illustrates how indispensable skills in a competence-based model of education, such as electronic literacies and second language ability, can be

combined into the assessment of a language learning curriculum. The author approaches performance-based, student-centered assessment by expounding what innovative technologies have to offer in this area.

Chapter 12 by Karen M. Lauridsen explains the reasons why individuals learn foreign languages such as interest in foreign languages as their professional goals, living and/or working in a multilingual context whether in their home country or abroad.

In sum, this publication serves as a comprehensive reference book for second/foreign language teachers and decision makers since it offers practical guidelines such as CEFR for goal-setting, course development and evaluation in the new language teaching panorama confronting Europe. Moreover, it provides a valuable bank of materials, procedures and ideas, based on accounts of successful practice and experiences, for the practical implementation of competencies in language education. A particular strength of the book is its concise and accessible presentation of qualitative and quantitative empirical case studies from around the globe.

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