

Curricula Guidelines for four levels of language learning

These guidelines are intended to help tutors planning courses for trade unionists to make decisions about course content and delivery. More details of the approach adopted are given in the *Methodological Principles* section under the following headings :

Listening; Speaking; Reading; Writing; Grammar; Vocabulary; Cultural Awareness; Communication Activities; Classroom Management and Group Dynamics; Study Skills.

These are all presented together with examples of activities.

Summary of general principles:

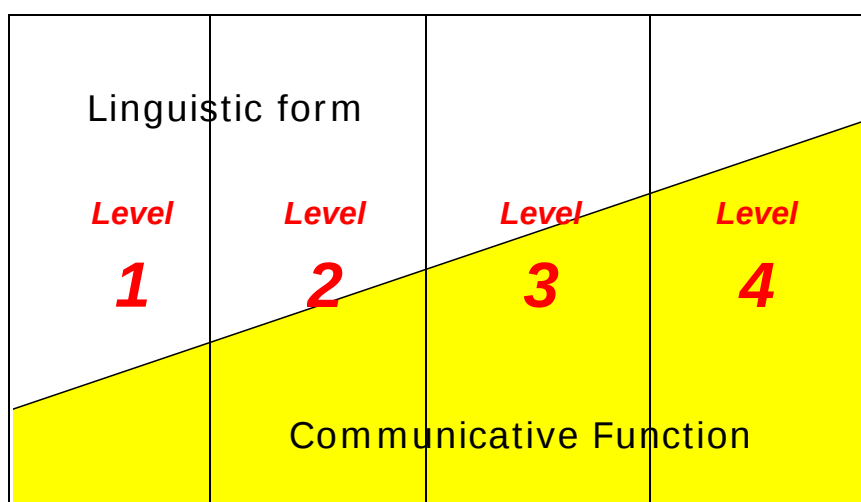
- ❑ In trade union organisations around Europe, there are enormous differences in both the funding arrangements for language learning for the target group, as well as in the time made available for the delivery of language courses, and in the availability of suitably qualified tutors. Courses developed will vary in duration, as well as in the distribution of time; they may be delivered just once, or may form part of a regular and repeated programme of training courses. The curricula presented here are therefore eclectic, and are designed to be adapted with maximum flexibility in order to accommodate the needs of trade union representatives learning a foreign language in a wide variety of contexts.
- ❑ The model curriculum aims to meet the individual needs of learners, who will have a variety of language-learning backgrounds, and some of whom may be unfamiliar with the demands of learning a language.
- ❑ Materials developed according to these guidelines should not be rooted in one culture or tradition of trade union education, but should seek to draw from a variety of sources in the target language.
- ❑ Ideally, learning materials should not be based on one methodology but unite a variety of methods to suit different needs of students according to a learner-centred approach which is based on best practice within a particular context. The methodology should provide opportunities for individual and group work, for autonomous as well as tutor-led learning.
- ❑ The mode of delivery will depend on the frequency and duration of interactive as well as individual learning, of face-to-face and computer-mediated learning, and according to the overall time scale. Experience with these target groups has shown that special



attention must be paid to the rate of learning, and that adequate learning time must be built into all courses if the materials are to be exploited successfully and motivation sustained.

- ❑ Active trade union representatives have many demands placed upon their time, and the nature of some of these demands means that the individual is not always able to plan his or her availability. Thus they are not always able to attend regular classes. Materials used should therefore also be accessible to the individual learner, and be accompanied by a study guide which provides notes explaining how the material should be exploited, with answers to exercises where appropriate.
- ❑ These curricula follow a modular structure in order that courses may be delivered in a variety of modes (part-time evening, short intensive) which can be adapted according to student and organisational needs.
- ❑ An integrated skills approach is envisaged, but tutors / learners can concentrate on particular skills (e.g. speaking and listening) by more selective use of course components.
- ❑ These guidelines adopt a task-oriented and output-based approach, so learners are able to perform particular functions at the end of a unit and produce an assignment incorporating this, e.g. send an e-mail, leave or take a telephone message, participate in a meeting, etc.
- ❑ In order to maximise motivation in the target group, source materials as well as learning tasks indicated by these guidelines will be authentic as far as this is practicable. The proportion of authentic materials will increase as the level increases.

The proportional model



The curriculum is progressively less structure-based as the language level increases. A proportional model, with a gradual shift in emphasis from grammatical structures towards communicative functions as the level increases, makes the necessary allowances for responsiveness towards the differing needs of learners at the successive stages of their language learning.

These Guidelines contain suggestions for four Modules representing four levels:

- 1. Basic Survival**
- 2. Lower intermediate**
- 3. Upper Intermediate**
- 4. Advanced**

Curricula have been developed within a framework of levels which is capable of definition and recognition throughout the EU, in order to accommodate further language learning to take place in a systematic way. The definitions of level are informed by work carried out by the Council of Europe, the Royal Society of Arts Business Language Competence Scheme, the International Certificate Conference, and the Languages Lead Body (UK).

These guidelines indicate what can be attempted at each of four language-learning levels, and give realistic objectives for that level, and details of the range of vocabulary that can be acquired, the type of activity undertaken, and the authentic source materials that can be exploited.

- At **Level One** (Basic Survival, or Waystage Level), greatest emphasis is placed on the learning of grammatical structures in order that the learner may carry out certain well-defined communicative functions. At this level, the situations the learner is likely to find him or herself in are more or less predictable.
- At **Level Two** (Lower Intermediate, or Threshold Level), there is a shift in balance towards communicative functions, as the learner needs to use the target language in more varied and less predictable situations.
- At **Level Three** (Upper Intermediate, or Operational Level), grammatical structures are further de-emphasized in favour of more communicative functions and discourse skills, so that the learner is linguistically equipped to become competent in carrying out tasks relevant to his or her role as a trade union officer or representative.
- At **Level Four** (Advanced Level), as the learner acquires competence in the target language to carry out complex work-related tasks, there is a predominance of relevant communicative functions within the syllabus. Appropriate and increasingly complex structures are also covered at this level, but the treatment is confined to authentic



examples. By this stage it is expected that the learner will have achieved a greater degree of autonomy in dealing with the formal aspects of the target language.

Thus, in accordance with the proportional model for syllabus design, the definition of levels given here for Levels One and Two includes more detailed guidelines for communicative functions (and the grammatical structures it is necessary to master in order to carry out these functions) than for Levels Three and Four. At these more advanced levels, the syllabus is determined according to the specialised content relevant to the occupational needs of trade union representatives operating in the European dimension.

The structure of the curricula for the four levels:

- ❑ Each level is first of all defined according to the **overall linguistic competence** which will be achieved.
- ❑ Details are then given as to the **degree of autonomy** that will be achieved in using the target language in terms of
 - structure
 - vocabulary
 - register (cultural adaptation)
 - contexts (recipients and environments within which the language will be used).
- ❑ A list of **themes** follows, together with some suggested scenarios for creating language learning activities
- ❑ A detailed breakdown of **competences** follows for each of the four language skills
- ❑ Lastly, a list of appropriate **text types** is suggested for authentic source material for the level.

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