



Aline Gohard-Radenkovic
University of Fribourg

translated by
Banu Akin

STANDARDIZING COMPETENCES AND THE IDEOLOGY OF ASSESSMENT: ON DISSOCIATED KNOWLEDGE AND DISPOSSESSED ACTORS IN EU LANGUAGE EDUCATION POLICY

Abstract:

The following article addresses the issue of evaluation, and more specifically the “ideology of evaluation,” as it affects all sectors of society through standardization. This article will first recount the true story of a foreign student, a scholarship holder in the Swiss Confederation, whose assessed language level decreases over the course of a series of successive tests, with conflicting results from diverse institutions. His status thus changes from an evaluated student to a devaluated one. I will then enumerate the evaluation procedures claiming to be “self-assessments” in this context, mainly designed in the form of “grids” that organize the rhetoric and products of the Council of Europe (specifically the Common European Framework of Reference, or CEFR, and the European Language Portfolio or ELP). I will attempt to highlight their limitations, recognizing social and intercultural competences. Finally, I will evaluate the consequences of this systemic phenomenon of evaluation for and among the diverse actors of the institutional landscape. Throughout, I will try to identify the abuses of the assessment system as a whole, which not only dominates institutional discourse, but also controls and even supplants teaching and other institutional practices, to the point of dispossessing the actors concerned and the main evaluation bodies responsible for promoting language learning.

Keywords:

ideology of evaluation ♦ Council of Europe ♦ dissociated knowledge ♦ dispossessed actors ♦ assessment systems

Introduction: Ravi, or The Humiliating Case of a (D)evaluated School Record

Having earned his Bachelor's diploma in French Language and Literature in India, Ravi received a scholarship from the Swiss Confederation to pursue a Master's degree at a Swiss university.¹ His story is revealing, as regards specific evaluation practices and the blind abuses resulting from the assessment system as a whole. Ravi, enrolled in the Master's program at the University of Fribourg, was ultimately required to complete four language tests and was assessed by three different institutional bodies, all with conflicting results which canceled each other out as follows:

- Test / trial #1: In order to pre-qualify for Master's-level study in Switzerland, Ravi was required to demonstrate B2 level² competence through written and oral exams, followed by a highly selective screening interview at the Swiss Embassy in New Delhi. Swiss scholarships are rare for candidates in India (especially in the humanities);

¹ Ravi is a pseudonym. The Swiss Confederation (Confederatio Helvetica, henceforth CH) awards scholarships to foreign students (from outside the European Union) to study for a Master's Degree at a Swiss university of their choice. The first selection screening takes place at one's local Swiss embassy, which holds written exams followed by an oral interview in the language chosen by the candidate (French or German). The language exams are based not only on the evaluation grids from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), but also on other oral and written exams that attempt to evaluate students' general cultural awareness, their knowledge of the country of study, and their ability to adapt to life in Switzerland. The second selection of candidates is made at the CH level, which means that not all those preselected by the embassies will be retained. The competition is very fierce, since there are many contenders but few are chosen. Therefore, successful candidates should in principle not require further evaluation upon arrival. However, the supervisor of the Master's thesis may encourage his or her student to take language classes (free of charge) at the Language Center of the respective university, focusing on academic writing and speaking. These courses have been conceived for foreign students in order to prepare them for the requirements of the university in question. This scholarship program was eliminated in 2014.

² B2 corresponds to the level of an "Independent User": "Can understand the main ideas of a complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible, without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options." See the principles and more specifically the Grid of Skill Descriptors conceived by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, whose aim is to implement EU policies in the field of education:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

- Test / trial #2: At the beginning of an intensive three-week language course intended for “mobility students”³, Ravi was prompted to take a placement exam. This *stage intensif pour étudiants internationaux* was designed to offer language and cultural immersion prior to the beginning of the academic year for newly arrived students. He also took an end-of-course test demonstrating the level of his skills upon completion of the “mobility students” course. On the initial placement exam, Ravi had demonstrated B1 level and, at the end of the course, B1+;
- Test / trial #3: Ravi was eager to enhance and improve the skills he had acquired during his language-upgrading training, as well as his academic language proficiency. He therefore sought to attend courses at the Language Center of the University of Fribourg, whose primary mission is to support and track students from different faculties throughout the university. The head of the language center, essentially a specialist in evaluation and convinced of the virtue of standardizing competences, was unwilling to take into account any results from other existing evaluations, nor any aspect of the candidate’s particular circumstances. That is, the respective local decision-maker was predisposed not to recognize the highly selective process of admission for academic study within the Swiss Confederation that the candidate had undergone and, subsequently, the results of the “mobility course” demonstrating Ravi’s progress. Instead, Ravi was asked to retake a series of online tests, based on which he demonstrated an A2+ level⁴;
- Test / trial #4: Subsequent to the A2+ result, Ravi’s application for further language support courses was received too late in the semester, and he was thus unable to attend any such courses, as they were already full. He was accordingly advised to pursue his further language learning

³ Terms such as “international students,” “overseas students,” and “exchange students” are commonly used in the USA, and in English-speaking countries in general, to describe students in mobility situations. The term “mobility students” is specific to the context of the European Union and designates an academic audience with specific mobility goals and concerns, which are different from those in countries such as the USA. Thus, the term “mobility student” has been recognized and officially used term in English within the framework of the European Union and CEFR. See the self-assessment section entitled “My Mobility Stay” in the *European Language Portfolio*: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>. See Murphy-Lejeune 2003/2002 and Gohard-Radenkovic and Murphy-Lejeune 2011/2008.

⁴The A2+ level ranks far below the required B2 Level according to the CEFR. Students with an A2+ level are not allowed to pursue a Master’s degree. See http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

through self-study. Essentially abandoned by the system, he was not even paired with a tutor who might have guided his learning, which suddenly became “independent” learning. Ravi was thus left to his own devices and to those of the “interactive machine” (also known as, the computer).

The term “test / trial” gains a double meaning in Ravi’s case. At no juncture did university officials take into account the number of years Ravi had already invested in building his various competences in French—having done so in an English-speaking environment in India, whose auditoriums accommodated 200–300 students, and where learners had hardly any chance to utter a single word in French in four years of university study. Discouraged, humiliated, sick, and depressed, he returned to his country before the end of the semester.

It should not be assumed that Ravi’s case is an isolated one. We have repeatedly witnessed this kind of chain evaluation (spread out over a protracted sequence), where varying test protocols and procedures lead to conflicting results. Successive evaluators, positioning themselves as sovereign experts unaccountable to the institutional landscape in which they work, did not take into account Ravi’s longitudinal efforts to acquire academic French and ignored the results of previous evaluations. Allophone students like Ravi—eager to improve their skills in foreign/second language(s), so as to pursue their studies under optimal conditions—have paid a heavy price for what I call our ‘evaluation wars.’

What have we done to our languages, and especially to our language users, through the arbitrary and contradictory assessments we perform upon them? What have we done to our instructors who, in theory, have been trained to teach and evaluate acquired and required skills? When exactly did we start to drift, allowing evaluation practices to dominate teaching—and institutional practices more broadly? In what ways have such abuses gone so far as to dispossess the actors directly concerned, and bestowed primary gatekeeping power on authorities in charge of evaluation? To understand how this “ideology of evaluation” (Zarka 2009) has been implanted throughout all sectors of education, training and research, a look at its history is in order.

1. Relations among the European Union’s Education, Competences, Standardization, and Education policies

1.1 The Evaluation and (Re)Production of Values

According to François Simonet (2009: 97), “the current key issue is ‘evaluating’ and everything is subjected to this injunction.” But what does “evaluate” here mean? Yves Charles Zarka offers the following definition:

Evaluating means determining the value. Therefore, evaluation implies the establishment of a scale of values that are either positive or negative. Without this scale, value cannot be determined. Evaluation, then, is all about confronting the object to evaluate according to this previously established scale of values. This process comprises three operations, which are in conflict. (2009: 116)

The close links Zarka establishes between evaluation and values can be summarized in three points:

The first operation consists in setting the values, which means that the values are determined prior to the evaluation. They cannot vouchsafe the objectivity and universality upon which evaluation is predicated, since these values are subjected to arbitrary selection. However, those who have determined these values have specific interests. Thus, there is no specific inherently objective system of values, as one specific system of values *de facto* denies another. Moreover, the hierarchy of pre-constructed values can be imposed only by an act of will and hence of power. As Zarka puts it: “Evaluation opens the way toward an infinite questioning of the war of values.” (117)

The second operation consists of hiding the subjective and relative nature of the values that have been set at a particular juncture. The process is simple: it consists of transforming any qualitative determination into a quantitative determination, as the scalar generalization of assessment becomes “a sort of numerical scholasticism” (117). The use of quantitative indicators offers a glimmer of objectivity, but also expresses an act of power. As Zarka puts it, “This is how one cedes the field of knowledge and teaching to accountants. Under the illusion of quantification, the goal is to justify ranking and hierarchy in all aspects of research, teaching, or any other discipline” (117).

The third operation is based on the interplay of transparency and opacity. Though evaluation claims to be all about transparency, everything is decided in the dark: the

evaluation criteria are never made explicit or remain notional and vague. Their arbitrariness is exacerbated because they are decontextualized in practice and increasingly outsourced. Names of the evaluators remain anonymous in the “interest of objectivity” and are therefore obscured amid the organizational labels of certified experts (who are often appointed by higher authorities, sometimes themselves self-proclaimed). “The language of evaluation is never unequivocal; it is based on a double truth: one that is made public and the other that must remain hidden” (Zarka 118).

Further on, Zarka indicates how the established evaluation system as a whole can operate not only as a closed system with its own rules of selection, rewards, and sanctions acting in complicity with certain institutional actors, but also as a system of control upon these same institutions:

Evaluation is a system of control that cannot be held accountable: Who controls the controllers? They are called the experts, but who appoints these experts? Who has assessed their capacity to evaluate their own integrity? The whole process is unclear and must remain so, as the evaluation system can only function in ambiguity and duplicity. (118–119)

Simonet (2009) agrees with Zarka’s understanding of the preconceived and pre-organized (re)production of values in matters of evaluation. Simonet attempts to describe the main procedural elements—organized along social and cultural, technical and scientific, and political and economic frameworks as follows:

The first [element] corresponds to the context [...], with all its characteristics. The second includes all the procedures and their technical features. How else, other than through technical means, can one see the birthing process of the production of values: in reference according to a set model (*about what?*), where the referent depends on an existing one (*in relation to what?*), and the referee (*based on what?*)? This gives rise to the frame of reference. Technically built processes will guide evaluation through its implementation, with criteria from which the operator will be able to evaluate and interpret in order to obtain ‘a map of an existing system.’ (97–98)

One has to admit that setting values before assessing is inevitable and the non-universal nature of any evaluation is undeniable. However, what is particularly deceitful is the specific nature of the selection and the universal value attributed to this selection, which Zarka (2009) describes as an “imposture.” Even though Bourdieu (1980) has

demonstrated that any act of judgment or any linguistic exchange takes place in a relationship of power, it is the will to conceal it that makes the process arbitrary and even totalitarian.

1.2 Between Evaluation and Competences: Gradual Shifts from the Business World towards the World of Education

The notion of competences comes from the business world of the pre-World War II United States and its ideologies of Taylorism. They were incorporated by European companies in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in order to improve the management of human resources, in the service of the organization and of society more broadly. This notion of competences, “imported” into Europe since the 1980s, has remained robust within the corporate sphere. François Minet, Michel Parlier and Serge de Witte (consulting and training experts) have questioned the notion of competences (1994) by highlighting the polysemous and vague nature of this term:

There is no single acknowledged meaning associated with this term [competence]. The definitions will vary and even conflict according to the interlocutor, the point of view, and the use of the notion of competence. Serge de Witte demonstrates that there is not only one notion of competences, but several ones which are concomitant and even in competition. This is more than a simple abuse of language; it is indeed a mistake to use the elements from one domain in another given context or to use the goals of another one. While the concept takes on a more precise scope, caution is needed as far as its use is concerned. (16)

Moreover, they suggest that:

The notion of competence is not only a cognitive item expressing a relation between a subject relevant to the competence and situations in which it could be invested. [...] *Competence could even be the process regulating the relations between the individual and the collective, on psychological and social levels.* (187, my emphasis)

Jean-Pierre Le Goff, in *Soft Barbarism*, speaks to the “logomachy of the notion of competence” (1999: 28), not as a hegemonic concept in itself, but as inserted in a theoretical system, guaranteeing its own credibility by resorting to terms such as “audit”, “diagnostic”, “evaluation”, “assessment” (including “skills assessment”), “profile”, “portfolio of skills”, and even “competency framework”, with a view of professionalizing

all the agents involved. Thus, “the evaluated person who self-evaluates” throughout the year, throughout their entire learning process, becomes the author-actor of his or her own professional future. Subjects of evaluation will therefore reinvest their competences (understanding and recognizing their value) throughout their future and that of their companies, as “skills assessment” promises to allow individuals to gain more autonomy. According to Le Goff, the practice of “skills assessment” is solidly anchored in various economic and (professional) training sectors and is also regulated by law. At the same time, however, it confers status and social roles upon the service providers who constitute the training and management institutions.

This legal recognition confers unprecedented legitimacy on the tools at their disposal. Thus, competence specialists occupy positions of power in training and teaching institutions, hold numerous seminars and colloquiums, and refer to various disciplines, such as psychology, cognitive sciences, educational sciences, etc. whose authority is rarely questioned. (29)

Even though competences are sometimes defined as “general, specific, professional, technical, multifunctional, transversal, individual or collective,” there is a nested structuring, with sub-competences embedded in greater competences. As they are transformed into (training) goals to be reached, these competences end up being turned into categories and sub-categories “which relate to each other in a logomachy, confusing common sense” (1999: 31).

These difficulties are exacerbated even further when one addresses simultaneously the concept of knowledge: how might one articulate it alongside the notion of competences? The sacred trilogy, composed of “knowledge” (theoretical knowledge), “know-how” (competences gained through professional practice) and “know-how-to-be” (attitudes and behaviors). These two latter competences will also, in turn, go through subtle divisions according to disciplinary anchorage, as is the case in cognitive psychology, where it is not only subdivided into “procedural and declarative knowledge, beliefs, percepts and concepts, but also representations and social cognition as well as behaviors, etc.” Le Goff (1999) points out the confusion as follows:

Know-how-to-be (*savoir-être*) is the most confusing notion, since it blithely mixes personal and professional levels, refers haphazardly to behaviors, values and opinions, and lends itself to multiple uses and manipulations. According to

some specialists, it is “a term whose use brings forth a number of difficulties; that’s why this term should be forgotten.” (32)⁵

From the 1980s onward, this suggestion was ignored in the sectors of management, training, and even education. This conception of competences has indeed reached the world of education in a creeping and relentless way, through professional and continuing education modules. It certainly had established itself in all sectors of education, training, and research by the 1990s. It disrupted not only the concept of transmission of knowledge and know-how, but also the existing procedures of assessment, and on a broader level, the learner’s relationship to knowledge. As a result, this “machinery of insignificance” (Le Goff 1999) has had increasing impact on actors in education, specifically. According to Le Goff,

These tools should be subjected to criticism not only in terms of their uses, but also their impact. These tools are troublesome and they induce “perverse effects” that are beyond the grasp of their developers, who are full of good intentions. They insidiously become the carriers of a representation of the child’s training (or of any learner’s, for that matter) which ignores the experience of discovery and knowledge of the world. (42)

In her article, “From Knowledge to Skills? The Case of French Language” (1994), another sociologist of education, Françoise Ropé, confirms the concordance between the introduction of evaluation and the emergence of the notion of “competences” in the world of education (in France). According to Ropé, “the notion of competences has established itself in schools for some years now, mainly through evaluation” (63).

1.3 The Notion of Competence in the Policies of the EU: A Change of Paradigm or a New Ideology?

Nowadays, the term “competences” has gained significant ground in our pedagogical jargon, learning conceptions, and teaching methodologies through the policies of the EU, namely through principles from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)⁶ as conveyed by the European Language Portfolio.⁷ The ELP is the education

⁵ I had not yet read Le Goff when I questioned the notion of “*savoir-être*” in a monograph published in 1999 by Peter Lang; M. Anquetil has also questioned in a critical way the notion of “know-how-to-be” in Zarate and Gohard-Radenkovic (2004).

⁶ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

⁷ <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>

tool for the evaluation and self-evaluation of competences (linguistic, communicative, intercultural), as acquired or developed through experiences of mobility.⁸ How did it manage to reach us, and what are the conceptions related to it? Since the 1980s, we have witnessed a range of language teaching policies primarily focused on know-how rather than knowledge. School and university curricula are now built using the logic of competences, based on a socio-constructivist approach toward enhancing a co-construction process of competences through individual interactions. On this, Dunya Acklin Muji (2007) remarks:

Indeed, the emphasis is not necessarily on school knowledge, but rather on a certain number of qualities and relational and behavioral competences required by the world of work, namely the ability to adapt, to communicate, to work as a team, to show initiative, to use information and new technologies, to solve problems and to learn. (238)

This new conception of competence cannot be dissociated from the economic and market-oriented framework that penetrates contemporary schools and universities and contributes to the reorganization of relations between the school and learners, the State and the private sector, and the individual and society. In her book *The European Erasmus Student and the Adventure of Alterity* (2003), Vassiliki Papatsiba discusses the evolution of the principles of European mobility and demonstrates how, from the 1980s onwards, a certain concept of student mobility skills for social cohesion, and economic employability has developed:

Many young people leave school without having the slightest idea of the competences that will be necessary for their professional life: the ability to work within groups, team spirit, and the appetite for risk; the sense of responsibility and self-discipline; the sense of decision and commitment; the sense of initiative, curiosity, creativity; a spirit of professionalism, the pursuit of excellence, the sense of competition; the sense of community service, civic spirit. These qualities are the cornerstones of the entrepreneurial spirit. (European Round Table 1995, cited in Papatsiba 2003: 59)

⁸ Mobility policies have encouraged students in situations of mobility to share their linguistic and (inter)cultural experiences in their EPL. Self-assessment, language biographies, reflexive approaches, etc., were conceived to (or were supposed to) reflect the development of multilingual competences, of a social, cultural and economic adaptability, and the emergence of a European awareness.

In order to develop this potential “human capital”, the ideologists of the European Union invest in education and offer a “European conscience”⁹ training, allowing a better knowledge of “otherness.” This “wished unity” would also contribute to the development of solidarity among all Europeans (European Commission 1996: 62). This European policy program and its liberal inspirations, based on the notion of human capital, aims at making the individual autonomous and responsible for his or her choices, which means that the individual is also responsible for his or her successes and failures. In this sense, the individual is paradoxically decontextualized and atomized.

The *European Language Portfolio* perfectly illustrates this paradigm shift: “coordination” and “coherence” based on contents and objectives are replaced by a “harmonization”, based on categories of competences from the *CEFR*. In this new model, competence is measured by the performance of tasks: competence is therefore strictly action-related; it becomes an attribute that should be assessed and it is measured only in a given context. CEFR experts have thus developed skill descriptors listing the competences required of students that involve not only the acquisition of corresponding knowledge and know-how, but also the assessment procedures in themselves. The consequence of this new concept, according to Dunya Acklin Muji (2007), is as follows:

Competence is essentially identified through the descriptions and measures established by the assessment techniques. These measures then become the proof of their relevance. As a result, the relation between knowledge and action is forgotten, even though this connection was the origin of the interest in the notion of competence. (238-239)

This concept implies a recentering upon the assessment activity and the precise description of the tasks to achieve the aimed activity—and not on the resources and needs of the learners—which gives rise to the action-oriented teaching currently dominating the field of education. One cannot deny the positive outcomes that have emerged from this approach, called *pédagogie actionnelle*.¹⁰ However, we have also observed negative

⁹ Such are typical expressions from Euro-discourses that one can find in various sorts of documents, mainly reports of the Commission of the European Communities, and taken up by the Council of Europe on a pedagogical level. See Papatsiba (2003).

¹⁰ An approach initiated in Canada, in the 1980s, in order to promote learning and teaching of French as a Second Language according to the Federal bilingual policy. This *pédagogie actionnelle* has been revisited by European researchers to develop individual multilingual competences. See: *Guide for the development of Language Education Policies in Europe: From linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education* (2007): http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Guide_niveau2_EN.asp

results of this action-oriented learning and teaching, characterized by a strong (almost obsessive) focus on the task procedure itself. Moreover, action-oriented learning and teaching seem to privilege a more examination-oriented approach than a project- or action-research-oriented one. Scholarly interpretations of the interactive approach, which is supposed to contribute to the development of transversal and specific skills as well as collective and individual skills in foreign languages,¹¹ has further disarticulated the functional conception of language evaluation from the concrete needs of the learners, who must diversify their knowledge and know-how, while reinvesting their social and intercultural abilities in an increasingly demanding international market. Along these lines, the standardization of competences and their evaluation will continue to impose itself in the field of language didactics, of cultural studies and of interculturality through educational policies on mobility and plurilingualism.¹²

2. Consequences of the Standardization of Competences and of their Evaluation

2.1. Knowledge and Know-How: Dissociated in the European Language Portfolio

In accordance with European educational policy and its liberal inspirations, and based on the notion of *human capital*, the individual is imagined as having been given a sense of autonomy and responsibility. In other words, the learner is “aware of the advantages and the costs of learning and has to make the best learning choice for his or her own benefit” (Acklin Muji 2007: 249); he or she has to manage his or her competences to certify his or her employability. This results in a subtle and still constrainingly prescriptive system, a process that Le Goff (1999) has described as “soft barbarism” above. Experts have made available “competence descriptors”¹³ listing the required competences involved in the acquisition of corresponding knowledge and know-how, but also the different assessment procedures related to test-taking skills. According to Pascale Banon and Chaké Cartron-

¹¹ For more details on this project, and on action-oriented approach inside and outside the language classroom, both at the university and at school, see Gohard-Radenkovic (2000) and Maurer (2011), offering an accurate and critical analysis of *pédagogie actionnelle* and its applications.

¹² The Council of Europe distinguishes between “plurilingualism” as used for individuals and “multilingualism” as used for language policies.

¹³ A team of linguists at the Council of Europe in the early 2000s initiated the first grid of descriptors to assess and self-assess linguistic and communicative competences in the 4 skills for 5 levels, ranging from beginners to bilingual speakers (A1, B1, B2, C1, C2). Since then, other linguists have completed, detailed, extended, and developed new descriptors (for instance, conversation) and new level ranks (A1+, A2+, B1+, etc.). See: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf

Markardidjian (2006), even though the European Language Portfolio has revolutionized the relation between learning and evaluation, it nevertheless falls within a specific field conveying a certain number of limits that are conceptual, pragmatic and ethical. In this sense, Banon and Cartron-Markardidjian identify the mixture of genres and accumulation of tasks, as follows.

Chopped-Up Knowledge and Know-How

Knowledge and competences are systematized and standardized according to a pragmatic approach, which aims for profitability as well as universality; the ELP was inspired by functional/notional¹⁴ and communicative approaches. Indeed, the portfolio is the outcome of studies that gave birth to the Threshold Level in 1974¹⁵ and has paved the way for the establishment of common descriptors for 21 languages. These descriptors are essentially based on a functional model that includes knowledge and know-how segmented and categorized on the basis of types and genres of speech, for instance for the levels C2 and B2:

Typologies

C2: Can give clear and fluent descriptions

C2: Can tell a story

B2: Can develop an argument

Genres

B2: Can give a clear and well-developed presentation

C2: Can produce reports and articles

C2: Can write stories and narratives based on experience

However, the segmentation of competences based on genres and types does not take into account the interrelations between sub-competences: how could one possibly tell a story

¹⁴ In this approach, the “notion” corresponds to a specific context, implying for the speaker the use of precise “functions” in targeted situations of communication. It is focused on the analysis of learners’ needs, but it also takes into account the institutional aims. We cannot understand the emergence of a new field in the 1970s, called “Language for Specific Purposes,” and the conception of the descriptors grid in the CEFR without this functional / notional step: <https://prezi.com/xolydptwc9ux/laproche-fonctionnellenotionnelle/>

¹⁵ The Threshold Level, conceived by the Council of Europe (1974–1977), is based on speech acts and specific purposes, was mainly dedicated to migrants’ integration at school and in the labour market. See the synthesis of L.M. Trim (2001) http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Publications_FR.asp

without giving descriptions and integrating reported speech, comments and connections? (2006: 112). Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian pose further questions:

One could also wonder if all these educational cultures agree on the determination of linguistic and discursive features allowing the characterization and thus the categorization of certain text types and genres. One can, for example, ask whether the way a report or a summary is organized is the same in all the European countries. What should one know, to be able to know-how to do it? (112)

Ambiguities Surrounding the Descriptors

Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian (2006), referring to the various descriptors from the grid, underlined the lack of clarity in their formulation, and wondered whether they should be categorized as language competence, or rather an ability to analyze a text.

Ex. B2: Reading: When I read, I can identify a narrative or dramatic text, the reasons that lead the characters to act and the consequences of their decisions on the course of the action (Source: Swiss Portfolio, the young and adult version). (Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian 113)

Other descriptors integrate several parameters. It is, therefore, difficult to give firm and assertive overall feedback.

Ex. C1: Listening: I can understand **the details** of a speech on **specialized**, abstract or complex **topics, even outside my area of expertise**, even though I still need a couple of elements to be confirmed, in particular if the **accent** is not familiar (Source: Swiss Portfolio, the higher education version). (Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian 114)

Other test items also integrate the judgments of the speakers on the quality of their own speech. In general, speakers do not routinely attempt to regulate the norm and, often out of politeness, do not react when hearing mistakes. It is, therefore, difficult to position oneself on the following item:

Ex. C1: Linguistic tools: I can maintain a high level of grammatical correction; the errors are rare and **nearly pass unnoticed**. (Source: Swiss Portfolio, the young and adult version). (Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian 114)

Discrepancies of Sociocultural Descriptors: The Map against the Grid

Let us remember that research groups specialized in the didactics of foreign languages and cultures have waged a real battle within the Council of Europe in order to foreground the recognition of the concept of social and cultural complexity in relation to “otherness.” In fact, in order to avoid the codification of a “mutilated culture,” these groups, more specifically Geneviève Zarate and Aline Gohard-Radenkovic (2004), have proposed the “recognition of multicultural and even intercultural competences,” instead of the evaluation of such competences:

In 2001 a new version of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages promoted [...] competences expressed in terms of knowledge (general culture, socio-cultural knowledge, development of intercultural awareness), skills and know-how ([...] intercultural skills), know-how-to-be ([...] motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles, personality traits affecting communication). (Anquetil 2004: 79)

But what type of competences is at issue here? Is it sufficient to juxtapose linguistic and cultural competences to build new cultural knowledge and social links? Does one have to consider a cultural *in-betweenness* in which the learner would participate in supposedly intercultural communication without actually merging into another culture, thereby demonstrating skills about cultural knowledge? One could wonder which knowledge is required from the learners: national, cultivated, or anthropological? Behavioral know-how? Which know-how really establishes both the ability to distance oneself and the availability to go towards the other? How could one evaluate such intimate and interrelational processes?

Where is “the other”? The *Portfolio* assigns a functional position to the foreigner, *creating a duality with the native*. In several items, the learner is seen as the immigrant or the tourist, in other words, *the foreigner in the target culture*, as Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian (2006) pointed out above:

Ex. C2: Taking part in a conversation: I can defend my point of view in a formal discussion on complex questions, elaborate distinct and convincing arguments *the same way as a native speaker* (Source: Swiss Portfolio, version higher education). (Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian 115, my emphasis)

The evaluation grid does not integrate competences in agonal relations, such as “I know how to respond to an insult,” or “I know how to impose myself in a conversation from which the other speakers attempt to exclude me!”¹⁶ Conflict management is never included in these interactions that are conceived as “dialogical and harmonious communication” (Gohard-Radenkovic 2006: 88). These detailed descriptions of parts of competences are reminiscent of an entomologist’s almost obsessive sense of accuracy through the use of describable, measurable, and classifiable features—which, in turn, become a source of diffraction, ambiguity and confusion. Banon and Cartron-Makardidjian’s point of view seconds Zarka (2009), who questions evaluation criteria that are “never clarified and remain opaque.” Even though there are grading scales based on these renowned descriptors, what really prevails is the evaluation of satisfaction (the threshold for acceptability at level) or the degree of satisfaction (the assigned grade), which, in the end, remains vague and arbitrary but seemingly beyond reproach under the guise of scientificity. Ravi’s story has proven that.

2.2. The Losing End

This section aims at understanding the position of language users in this “ideology of evaluation” through some discrepancies (among many others) between the learner’s autonomous status and right to free self-expression claimed in the CEFR and their actual insertion in the Portfolio grid of competences.

An Ethnocentric Approach of Intercultural Communication

As one might notice, the instructions given by the Swiss Version of the Portfolio for Higher Education (2002) imply a culturizing concept of the intercultural and a moralizing approach to one’s relation to / perception of oneself and one’s relations to others (Gohard-Radenkovic 2006):

“I am aware of my own cultural identity, my values and my cultural beliefs determining my vision of the other”: “yes/partly/no/my goal”

“I would like to go beyond a stereotyped vision of the other culture”:
“yes/partly/no/my goal”

¹⁶ See the self-assessment grid of communicative and intercultural competences in the *Swiss Version of the European Portfolio of Languages for Higher Education* (2002)
<http://www.languageportfolio.ch/page/content/index.asp?MenuID=2489&ID=4176&Menu=17&Item=6.1.5>

Review the different points from the checklist, compare them and consider your level of awareness (My mobility experience, form 6.1.).

As this example shows, the instructions are modeled after descriptors related to language activities. One wonders whether the authors presume that culture can be compartmentalized into descriptors and competence items that can be summatively marked. Furthermore, the expression “encouraging dialogue among cultures” is the result of a concept from the 1970s, while many researchers have opposed this culturizing concept that positions “the culture” as a privileged component. One notices a process of reification of the other, who is reduced to his or her culture (national or ethnic) when involved in the experience of the “intercultural encounter” (Gohard-Radenkovic 2006: 90-92).

This conception is accentuated in recent European documents, which envision an Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters,¹⁷ posing the following question: “How are the intercultural encounters exploited?” Moreover, it ensures its legitimacy as being a document “contributing to the Council of Europe education program by completing the ELP.”¹⁸ What one witnesses here is a form of standardization taking place. However, interculturality is a process of questing and questioning. Certain values put forward, namely empathy and tolerance, implicate other notions such as conflicts and tensions. The latter were avoided and circumvented in the instructions of the ELP, as though intercultural communication can only be dialogical and harmonious, which Christian Giordano calls “the unbearable innocence of the intercultural” (2008: 161).

The Position of the “I” in the ELP: At the Heart of the Whole Assessment System

Mathilde Anquetil, Martine Derivry and Aline Gohard-Radenkovic (2017) have questioned the position of the “I” in the ELP and identified a transitory phase in which the absolute performative present of the Council of Europe anticipates the future profile of a promising “I” becoming a successful and autonomous learner.

Thanks to the language biography, you can see your learning in the past and reflect on the paths you have taken as (a) language learner(s). You can draw useful conclusions for your future learning. [...] You have the opportunity to discover what you are already capable of in different languages in order to decide

¹⁷ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_FR.asp?

¹⁸ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/autobiogrweb_FR.asp

later on which language and intercultural competences you wish to develop. [...] You can, on your own or with others, define learning objectives and plan your progress yourself and the results you have reached. You can reflect on your learning process in order to get to know yourself as a learner. (2017)

According to the ELP authors, “the enunciator creates the recipient by narrativizing him or her as the hero searching for multiple language competences.” The expected effects of the experience are anticipated for the recipient. These effects should not be underestimated, as they have an impact on one’s consciousness of the past and ability to master the future: a full mastery of elaboration as far as the learning process is concerned and a knowledge of the self harmoniously related to the limitless expansion of language learning. They examine whether one has to deal with “presumption or means of communication close to promotional advertising involving participation” (in press).

Anquetil, Derivry and Gohard-Radenkovic (2017) conclude that this “I” is “more constrained” and “controlled,” rather than autonomous:

Based on an analysis of the discourses in the ELP, we have noticed that the “constrained I” staged there reflects a certain vision of the individual, on whose behalf, paradoxically, the multiplicity of the “I” with its complex but cohesive language, social and cultural experience is reduced, formatted, and drained. The ELP model certainly claims its uniqueness and universality and is in contradiction with the principle of adapting to local factors. In the ELP the “I” is supposed to conform while asserting its autonomy and creativity. Therefore, in the domain of didactics of languages and cultures, the ELP promotes a certain ideology of training in the service of a unique form of employability conforming to the dominant economic model. The intercultural encounter reified in the ELP is reduced to an opportunity to put into practice the capacity to adapt and the required amount of “tolerance” to ensure the effective functioning of the global market. (2017)

They also invoke the ELP’s failure to find a place for the learner and the expression of the self:

One of the reasons for the failure of the ELP is certainly its dogmatic dimension, which is neither flexible nor user-friendly, but rather overwhelms its users by imposing lists formulated for education professionals and not for the learners. It thus offers an extremely decontextualized view of competence. (Mondada and Pekarek Doehler 2006)

From a Multimodal Concept of Mediation to a Unimodal Linguistic Concept

Since the 1990s, the concept of mediation has been launched in the Common European Framework of Reference in which this notion is addressed in the form of generically annotated competences, such as “intercultural awareness,” “intercultural ability,” “know-how,” “the capacity for discovery,” etc. In fact, the notion of mediation is reduced to the context of translation and interpretation, and communication in foreign languages is used for purely functional purposes (Zarate, Gohard-Radenkovic, Lussier and Penz 2004). More recently, in order to elaborate standardized evaluation criteria based on the *Guide for the development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (2007) promoting multilingual education, the competences in mediation have been defined in terms of solely linguistic interactions among users. The latter resorts to spoken and written repertoires of *de facto* multilingualism that can vary according to the level of the speakers (Lenz and Berthele 2010)¹⁹:

In the CEFR, mediation is one of the four fundamental language activities besides reception, production and interaction. Mediation includes not only elements from reception and production, but also a particular competence linking the receptive part to the specific conditions of the productive part; in other words, it mainly takes into account the particularities of the recipient. *Intermediaries should be able to determine the type of language and communication the recipient can understand; the speakers should have the means to adapt (adjust) their communicative behavior accordingly. Based on the interpersonal situation, the intercultural competences play a more or less important role.* (19-20, my emphasis)

In addition to the competences in mediation that have been identified—assuming that they can be evaluated at all (Zarate and Gohard-Radenkovic 2004)—one can also highlight the importance of intercultural competences. However, articulation with competences called “mediation” seems to be essentially the result of linguistic intercomprehension and (good) collaborative intuitive practices among the interacting protagonists. This almost magical “sleight of hand” has already been highlighted in the introduction of the notion of mediation in the multilingual context (Gohard-Radenkovic, Gremion, Yanaprasart, and Veillette 2012: 5).

¹⁹The mediation concept of the two authors was already criticized by Gohard-Radenkovic, Gremion, Yanaprasart, and Veillette (2012). See Introduction, “Stratégies de (re)médiation en situation plurilingue. Etudes de cas dans des contextes de recherche et d’éducation.”

On the other hand, Gohard-Radenkovic notices that these concepts—implicitly based on a belief of “good will” as far as interculturality and of multilingualism are concerned (2006: 88)—lead to (political, economic, social, historical) decontextualization of communicative situations in foreign languages, to the depersonalization of individuals and to the ignorance of their capitals. Moreover, these concepts make it obvious that the present users have to resort to a *de facto* multilingual repertoire, as well as to the dissociation between linguistic and intercultural competences and between intercultural and mediation competences. With this in mind, Simona Pekarek Doehler (2007) recalls that language competences fall into social relationships that are the product of a history of relations among individuals, groups of individuals belonging to a collectivity in a specific context and at a specific epoch. Nevertheless, socio-interactional linguistics provide two indicators to take this social dimension into account (Mondada and Pekarek Doeler 2006; Pekarek Doeler 2007):

- language competences are not independent of socio-interactional conditions when they are mobilized to produce a performance;
- any discourse is defined as a co-construction in which the social relation is organized, which results in both the local and socio-historical nature of the interaction.

The main idea is that linguistic and communicative competences are not the unique results of an individual and isolated learning process, but they are also the results of interactive exchanges between two or several individuals in diverse social situations of communication through a co-constructive process in a specific and situated context.

The Dispossessed

Françoise Ropé (1994) rightly highlights that the status of pedagogues has profoundly changed. They do not master the content, nor the objectives of their own teaching, nor their own assessment methods when it comes to evaluating the knowledge and know-how which they transmit, as they are dependent on the modalities imposed by the institution. The institution is itself dependent on a control system coming from above:

As far as evaluation is concerned, even though it constitutes for pedagogues a means of bringing innovation, it is at the same time a source of change in the status of the teacher. The teacher has to apply what comes from “above” and not what he or she creates. However, it cannot be stated that teachers wish to be

transformed into “technicians” who are obliged to apply instructions coming from “experts”. They undoubtedly feel dispossessed of a part of their autonomy as a sort of social control takes over and, in the last resort, evaluates them as much as it evaluates the students. (91)

Of course, one could reply that it is important to take into account, in the evaluation practices, various parameters (contextual, social, institutional, individual, academic, disciplinary, situational) when these competences relate to complex processes of linguistic and interpersonal remediation and when the learning environments, learning methods, interactions, and consequently evaluation methods should be diversified. One of the possible approaches could be the adoption of a critical distance inviting developers and practitioners to question their unilateral references.²⁰ It would indeed be essential not to consider the evaluations from the ELP the only way to evaluate language learners. In this sense, a study conducted by Tisa Retfalvi proposes to refocus on the learners rather than following the evaluation models sent from “above” and imposed as diktats:

His main concern [speaking about Jan Hulstijn 2007] with the CEFR is that it accords primacy to teacher’s and other experts’ perceptions of what constitutes a level, *at the expense of what learners have to say about the topic, thus restricting our understanding of proficiency in a foreign language*. While lauding the CEFR “enterprise” as “good for Europe and its citizens” (Hulstijn 665), he is nonetheless adamant that “we must not forget that its empirical basis consists of judgments of language teachers and other experts with respect to the scaling of the descriptions. In some cases, teachers have had to take one of their students as a point of reference, judging whether that student was or was not able to perform what was tested by the descriptors. It is crucial to note... *that the CEFR is not based on evidence taken from learner’s data* (Hulstijn 666).” (Retfalvi 243, my emphasis)

As Ropé, quoted above, points out in her conclusion:

It is beyond the ambiguities related to the various concepts, and perhaps even to the various purposes mobilizing the various actors in these transformations. The humanist purposes of the pedagogues and linguists conflict with the technocratic purposes of managers. (90)

²⁰ “Critical distance” or “*regard distancié*” is primarily inspired by a socio-ethnological and / or socio-anthropological perspective that I have systematically developed in my field through research, teaching and training.

One could add that this posture concerns all the learning, teaching, translation, interpretation, transmission and mediation professionals of languages and cultures. I do not pretend to offer any good practice (it was not actually the aim of this paper) but this humanist posture bottom-up could be perceived as a fundamental good practice. One wonders if Isabelle Barb  ris (2009) has a point, in the conclusion of her presentation of the issue in *The Ideology of Evaluation*, when she writes:

The ideology of evaluation signals the emergence of a society that stutters, unable to think other than in terms of fragments. One may perhaps find a small consolation in not recognizing these numerous grids, which allow one to feel the exultation of a free electron. Not being “in” but “out” means that one is not accountable to anybody, which seems to be a good thing. But for how much longer? (11)

This brings only conditional and even temporary liberty, in any case. As has been previously highlighted, evaluations of competences, their contents, criteria and procedures are more and more beyond the grasp of the learners who are forgotten by this framework and drilling process. However, these new procedures of evaluation are also beyond the grasp of language professionals, teachers, trainers and advisors who are themselves evaluators and intended to further the institutional objectives (academic ones, in this case). In fact, they have been dispossessed of their expertise, function and responsibilities.

This phenomenon is caused by institutions attempting to please the “experts” (for the most part external, for reasons of presumed credibility). By doing so, they become the playing field of a managerial governance ideology “applied to a world that does not correspond to the business world, as freedom of initiative, research and spirit are an integral part of it” (Zarka 2009: 118). It would appear that those who lend themselves to this game (decision-makers as well as representatives and executives) are the sorcerers’ apprentices who do not control the rules of the game anymore. They have passed over their responsibility in evaluation, selection and training to hidden authorities, in the name of imagined “good practices” and fantasized governance.

Conclusion: Evaluation as an Ideology but also a Factory of the Pre-Thought

This article has identified, through concrete examples in the domain of language assessments, the hegemony of tasks to be performed toward the competences to be

acquired, of the know-how toward the knowledge, the separation between knowledge and competences, the inconsistencies between tasks and objectives, and discrepancies and even competitions between various procedures of evaluation. Thus, results can cancel each other based on very “objective” conditions, as was the case with Ravi. This ominous story hides another truth: it demonstrates how a learner who wishes to improve his language competences in order to pursue his university studies has been handicapped and then abandoned by the institution that was supposed to help him, just because he did not fit into any category. His story plays another role: it is a warning as regards evaluation methods, as they do not focus on the development of competences the individual aspires to. They are (hyper)standardized and offer pre-thought models and selection criteria designed as “universal” and above contextual contingencies. These types of evaluations dismiss *de facto* the singularity of the learner and his or her experience, even though he or she is considered “actor/author of his or her learning” according to (Euro)discourses. It should be noted that it is not the beginning of the process that requires the observation, measuring and evaluation of every aspect, and defines itself as a “new science.” Quite the contrary, one has to deal with the already institutionalized and individualized outcome of the process of standardization, implying a reification process of vagueness amid the official canon of normalization (Aflalo 2009). This article analyzed some effects in the field (arbitrariness, discrepancies, contradictions, and even paralysis), even though these consequences are still difficult to identify and measure. However, according to Zarka, it is not as of now a training process taking into account the objectified needs of the learners, but a formatting process based on an *evaluation mimesis* (122). Which processes are included in this expression?

It is a question of a “dynamic that will establish itself (or is even already established) in the production and transmission of knowledge which intend to conform to the evaluation requirements and to comply with the evaluators. Instead of aiming for the production of knowledge—which implies taking risks, undertaking research with a final outcome which is uncertain for long periods, but with often unexpected results that can be decisive in order to open new and non-accredited paths towards non-directly productive research fields—, individuals and groups attempt to conform to established principles and accredited values. It is research and teaching in their entirety that can be contaminated by this grotesque decision. Resistance is obviously difficult since it supposes isolation and even public disqualification” (Zarka 2009: 122).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Bruno Maurer, director of the online review *Travaux en didactique du Français langue étrangère*, for permitting the publication of a translated and revised version of this article, initially written under the title: “*L’idéologie de la standardisation des compétences et de leur évaluation dans les politiques éducatives de l’Union européenne: des savoirs dissociés aux acteurs dépossédés dans le domaine des langues,*” in the issue TDFLE n°70, *La pensée CECR* (2017). I would also like to note that I have made some modifications and add a certain number of precisions in order to make this piece more accessible to the intended audience.

References

- Acklin Muji, Dunya. 2007. *Langues à l’école: quelle politique pour la Suisse?* Berne: Transversales / Peter Lang.
- Aflalo, Agnès. 2009. “L’évaluation: un nouveau scientisme.” In: *L’idéologie de l’évaluation. La grande imposture*, edited by Yves Charles Zarka, 79–90. *Cités* n° 37. Paris: PUF.
- Anquetil, Mathilde. 2010. “L’interaction en situation de certification de FLE, un regard critique.” In International Colloquium “Spécificités et diversité des interactions didactiques: disciplines, finalités, contextes.” Université de Lyon - ICAR - CNRS - INRP, Lyon. 24-26 June 2010. <http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00534429>
- . 2004. “Les compétences interculturelles sont-elles des savoir-être?” In: *La reconnaissance des compétences interculturelles : de la grille à la carte*, edited by Geneviève Zarate and Aline Gohard-Radenkovic, 77–92. Paris: Cahiers du CIEP / Didier.
- Anquetil, Mathilde, Martine Derivry, and Aline Gohard-Radenkovic. 2017. “En finir avec le Je contraint et réifié dans l’objet PEL : pour une didactique de la biographie langagière comme processus relationnel,” In: *La pensée CECR*, coordinated by Bruno Maurer and Jean-Marie Prieur. *Travaux de Didactique du Français Langue Etrangère* n° 70. Online.
- Banon, Pascale and Chaké Cartron-Markardidjian. 2006. “Un outil controversé d’une standardisation européenne: le Portfolio des langues.” *La richesse de la diversité*:

recherches et réflexions dans l'Europe des langues et cultures, coordinated by Enrica Piccardo. *Review Synergies Europe* n° 1: 110–117.

- Barbérís, Isabelle. 2009. "Présentation du dossier. Le cauchemar de Paul Otlet." In: *L'idéologie de l'évaluation. La grande imposture*, edited by Yves Charles Zarka, 9–11. *Cités* n° 37. Paris: PUF.
- Giordano, Christian. 2008. "Postface. L'insoutenable innocence de l'interculturel." In: *Coopération internationale: entre accommodements interculturels et utopies du changement*, edited by Aline Gohard-Radenkovic and Abdeljalil Akkari, 161–170. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Gohard-Radenkovic, Aline. 2000. "Evaluer les compétences socioculturelles. Le cas de l'étudiant en situation de mobilité." *Babylonia* n°1. Switzerland: Fondation langues et cultures / Stiftung Sprachen und Kulturen / Fondazione Lingue e Culture / Fundaziun Linguatgs e Culturas, 41–46.
- . 2004. *Communiquer en langue étrangères. De compétences culturelles vers des compétences linguistiques*. Berne: Peter Lang.
- . 2006. "Interrogations sur la conception de 'l'interculturel' dans le Portfolio européen des langues et autres productions de l'Europe." *La richesse de la diversité: recherches et réflexions dans l'Europe des langues et cultures*, coordinated by Enrica Piccardo. *Synergies Europe* n°1, 82–94.
- . 2012. "Contre point: Le plurilinguisme, un nouveau champ ou une nouvelle idéologie? Ou quand les discours politiquement corrects prônent la diversité." *Alterstice 2 / n°1*. University of Laval, Québec, 89–102.
- Gohard-Radenkovic, Aline, Myriam Gremion, Patchareerat Yanapasart, and Josianne Veillette (eds.). 2012. "Introduction. Stratégies de (re)médiation en situation plurilingue. Etudes de cas dans des contextes de recherche et d'éducation. Review on line." *Alterstice 2: n°1*, University of Laval, Québec.
- Gohard-Radenkovic, Aline and Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune (eds.). 2011 / 2008. "Mobilities and Itineraries." In: *Handbook for Multilingualism and Multiculturalism / Précis du plurilinguisme et du pluriculturalisme*, edited by Geneviève Zarate, Danielle Lévy and Claire Kramsch, 115–161. Paris: Editions des Archives contemporaines.

- Le Goff, Jean-Pierre. 1999. *La barbarie douce. La modernisation aveugle des entreprises et de l'école*. Paris: La découverte.
- Lenz, Peter and Raphael Berthele. 2010. "Prise en compte des compétences plurilingue et interculturelle. Etude satellite n°2." Strasbourg: Conseil de l'Europe.
- Maurer, Bruno. 2011. *Enseignement des langues et construction européenne. Le plurilinguisme, nouvelle idéologie dominante*. Paris: Editions des Archives contemporaines.
- Minet, Francis, Michel Parlier and Serge de Witte. 1994. *La compétence: mythe, construction ou réalité?* Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Mondada, Lorenza and Simona Pekarek Doehler (eds.). 2006. *La compétence: études critiques. Bulletin VALS – ASLA n° 84*.
- Murphy-Lejeune, Elizabeth. 2003. *L'étudiant européen voyageur, un nouvel étranger*. Paris: Essais / Didier.
- Papatsiba, Vassiliki. 2003. *Des étudiants européens. "Erasmus" et l'aventure de l'altérité*. Berne: Transversales / Peter Lang.
- Pekarek Doehler, Simona. 2007. "Démystifier les compétences: vers une pratique écologique d'évaluation." In: *Actes du colloque international CERC I, IRFFLE: Construction du sens et acquisition de la signification linguistique dans l'interaction, Nantes, 22-24 novembre 2007*.
- Retfalvi-Schaer, Tisa. 2012. "Enriching our Understanding of Level in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching by Paying Closer Attention to Learners' Perceptions of Competence: Preliminary Qualitative Explorations." In: *Apprendre, enseigner et évaluer les langues dans le contexte de Bologne et du CECR / Sprachen Lernen, Lehren und Beurteilen im Kontext von Bologna und dem GER*, edited by Catherine Blons-Pierre, 241–253. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Ropé, Françoise. 1994. "Des savoirs aux compétences? Le cas du français." In: *Savoirs et compétences. De l'usage de ces notions dans l'école et l'entreprise*, edited by Françoise Ropé and Lucille Tanguy. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Simonet, François. 2009. "L'évaluation: objet de standardisation des pratiques sociales." In: *L'idéologie de l'évaluation. La grande imposture. Cités n° 37*, edited by Yves Charles Zarka, 91–100. Paris: PUF.

- Trim, John L.M. (2001). *Modern Languages in the Council of Europe 1954–1997*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Zarate, Geneviève, Aline Gohard-Radenkovic, Denise Lussier and Hermine Penz (eds.). 2004. *Cultural Mediation in Language Learning and Teaching / Médiation culturelle et didactique des langues*. Council of Europe / Conseil de l'Europe. Graz: European Centre of Modern Languages / Centre Européen des Langues vivantes.
- Zarate, Geneviève and Aline Gohard-Radenkovic (eds.). 2004. *La reconnaissance des compétences interculturelles : de la grille à la carte, Cahiers du CIEP*. Paris: Didier,
- Zarka, Yves Charles. 2009. "L'évaluation: un pouvoir supposé savoir." In: *L'idéologie de l'évaluation. La grande imposture. Cités n°37*. Paris: PUF, 113–123.

Consulted documents:

- Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg. 2007: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_FR.asp?
- Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)*, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2001: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/FullGuide_EN.pdf
- European Language Portfolio (ELP)*, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2001: <http://europass.cedefop.europa.eu/en/resources/european-language-levels-cefr>
- Functional / notional Approach*: <https://prezi.com/xolydptwc9ux/lapproche-fonctionnellenotionnelle/>
- Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe: From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education*, Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2007: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/FullGuide_EN.pdf
- Swiss Version of the European Portfolio of Languages for Higher Education*, 2002: <http://www.languageportfolio.ch/page/content/index.asp?MenuID=2489&ID=4176&Menu=17&Item=6.1.5>