

Title of example of practice:	Relations between academic programmes and external stakeholders (clients, partners, providers, commercial market): Opportunities and challenges in transferring language learning instruments
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Institution and initiating department/faculty (i.e. where example of practice takes/took place):	
ES: Institute for Modern Languages (Universidad Pablo de Olavide) Seville.	
IT: SeLDA – Università Cattolica del S. Cuore - Milan	
DE: Freie Universität Berlin, ZE Sprachenzentrum (Language Centre), Instituto Cervantes Berlin	
BE: LINGUAPOLIS (Institute for Language and Communication at the University of Antwerp) and its external clients and partners	

Departments/faculties in which initiative implemented/to be implemented:

ES: Institute for Modern Languages (Universidad Pablo de Olavide) Seville.

IT: Facoltà di Scienze Linguistiche e Letterature Straniere and SeLDA (language center) Univ. Cattolica - Milan

DE: Freie Universität Berlin, ZE Sprachenzentrum (Language Centre), Instituto Cervantes Berlin

BE: LINGUAPOLIS (Institute for Language and Communication at the University of Antwerp) and its external clients and partners

Abstract**(QA question: What are/were you trying to do?)**

This case study assembles a series of examples collected in Spain, Italy, Germany and Belgium. They all show that university language centres and language departments are facing new challenges. Without being the primary role of the language centres or departments, they are exploring the opportunities how to transfer their research based, academic know-how in language learning to external environments. Mostly the transfer concerns LSP or a professional use of the target language.

The transfer to external environments is usually diverse and concerns training, assessment and testing, consultancy, coaching and hosting. The external partners have different backgrounds: profit, non-profit, governmental. There are different ways to interact with these external stakeholders. Generally, the cooperation is based on a demand oriented project, but the initiative can also emerge from the university (see DE example).

This transfer to external applications is the acknowledgement of the expert role universities have in the domain of language learning. In addition, it emphasizes the transition from the focus on knowledge to problem-solving and entrepreneurship, which is currently being expected from and being experienced by the universities.

Subgroup 5 selected the following examples of practice:

ES: hosting Certicap language exams

IT: providing assessment and certification in English (B1) for primary school teachers, commissioned by the Ministry of Education

DE: cooperation with Instituto Cervantes for providing Spanish language courses for general preparation for professional life for BA students up to B1 level.

BE: several experiences in working with external clients, e.g. the adaptation of an online language testing platform for a publishing company

In the current European context, numerous jobs require foreign language skills. The main goal of working with external clients is to use the academic know-how for building state-of-the-art solutions in professional environments.



This approach results in a mutual benefit to all the parties involved. In order to maximise the efforts, to re-invest the materials, to stimulate efficiency and to enhance synergy, all the partners constantly have to map existing tools to new demands, without neglecting creativity and vision. Quality, of course, is a permanent concern.

Background – contextual issues giving rise to the initiative

(QA questions: Why are/were you trying to do it? / What are/were the aims and objectives?)

Establishing relations between academic language programmes and external partners responds either to the need of serving a large number of students (ES and GE examples), either to questions coming from organisations requiring improvement of the professional language skills of their employees.

ES: Universities are now facing the pressure of mass certification based on European Framework standards. Reliability and external recognition are key in this process and departments and university language institutes are feeling this task exceeds their present capabilities both in resource deployment and time allotment. Search for external bodies and testing corporations were more than welcome in this situation. Certicap, a certificate backed up by ALTE - Association Language testers of Europe- members like BULATS in partnership with financial institution cultural foundations like Universia (Foundation for Cultural and Educational affairs of Banco de Santander), is being run at universities.

IT: Italian University Language Centres cater for not only specialized degree (i.e. Foreign Language) courses but also for non-specialized degree courses. Since 2006 SeLDA – Università Cattolica (Milan) - has been taking part in the project of the Italian Ministry of Education for the in-service training of primary school teachers who want to qualify for teaching English in their classes. Following an agreement with the state education authorities a number of Italian University language centres (including SeLDA) have been catering for the certification of B1 level, coordinated by AICLU (Associazione Italiana Centri Linguistici Universitari).

DE: Under the Bachelor structure, students at the Freie Universität can receive up to 15 ECTS for language learning within the general preparation for professional life, *Allgemeine Berufsvorbereitung* (ABV). Since the demand for Spanish, particularly for beginner level, was increasing and since the Sprachenzentrum alone couldn't satisfy it, a cooperation was established with the Instituto Cervantes, in order to design and implement language courses especially for students of the Freie Universität.

These courses bring beginner students of Spanish to level B1 within three semesters and are designed in order to satisfy the requirements of the Study regulations of the Freie Universität, so that students can get credits for it and can continue learning Spanish in further modules (from B1) of the Sprachenzentrum, if they want to. The fees of these courses are sustained mainly by the Freie Universität. Students contribute only for a small part of it.

BE: Based on an experience developed through the cooperation of University of Antwerp (UA) and the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV, with thanks to Jesús Garcia Laborda) a language testing platform was used to produce simple and multi language skills assessments for a publishing company.

Description of activity or initiative

(QA question: How is/was the activity/initiative implemented?)

ES: Universia (the educational branch of Banco de Santander Corporation) sponsors a network of Spanish speaking universities worldwide (mainly in Latin America and Spain). Universia consists of 1070 Universities in 11 Spanish American Countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Spain, México, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela. It has 12 internet portals, one for each country and another global site which offers information and contents from across the network. The network represents 10.1 million students and 0.8 million university teaching staff (75% of the total number of students and staff in these countries). Among other services, Universia provides language testing services that take place at universities in the network. Exams are at the university premises and are graded based on levels as set by the European Framework.

IT: After attending a specific programme organized by state education authorities and consisting in language and language-teaching courses, primary school teachers must be assessed according to fixed criteria. On the basis of national recommendations given by a national commission formed by representatives of the Ministry of Education and of the University Language Centres the three certifying centres of Lombardy (Universities of Bergamo, Pavia and Milan) developed a common

format for the assessment of B1 competence; the role of SeLDA is therefore to assess and certify the teachers' level according to the Ministry's specifications (B1 of the CEF).

DE: A contract of cooperation between the Freie Universität and the Instituto Cervantes was signed. In the contract the conditions of the course offer for the students of the Freie Universität were defined: number of courses, fees (for students and for the Freie Universität), design of the courses and other aspects of the cooperation.

In order to ensure the quality of the course design and the suitability of the learning outcomes for the requirements of the Sprachenzentrum a two-year position for a coordinator has been created, supported both by the Freie Universität and by the Instituto Cervantes. This coordinator was in charge mainly of the pedagogical coordination and of the evaluation of the project.

The courses implemented are especially reserved for students of the Freie Universität and were monitored for the first two years by the coordinator. Besides pedagogical issues the number of participants, the schedule were discussed and redefined after piloting them.

BE: During the academic course of 2007-2008, UPV finished a prototype of an online test for foreign languages that included both oral and written sections. The platform allows including all the different, just one or some sections. The platform was designed to evaluate the four skills plus grammar and vocabulary. The conviction was that the platform, being designed for regular academic use, could be extended in order to use it in a professional environment.

At that time Heinemann Iberia, a publishing company, was just about to begin a teacher training course in language testing. As UPV considered the possibility to use the platform for testing for commercial purposes, UA recommended to deliver the tests as a part of the professional training course for language teachers.

Evaluative comments

(QA questions: What are/were the outcomes? What is/was the impact? Is/was the activity/initiative successful? How do you know whether or not it works/worked?)

ES: Exams have been run at Pablo de Olavide for three consecutive years. Although numbers are not big yet, participating students are on the rise as they find it an inexpensive (sixty euros) straightforward means of having their language level certified, something they all find necessary in the new European university context. The technical support of the University of Cambridge, Instituto Cervantes and other major testing services and institutions gives extra credence and prestige to Certicap.

IT: Seven exam sessions have taken place since June 2006 and about 550 primary school teachers have been examined. The pass rate is about 83%, which seems to indicate that the language courses organized by the state education authority meet the needs of the candidates. The initiative is continuing (the latest exam session was held at the end of June 2009) and further sessions will be held in the next months. The positive impact of the initiative mainly consists in the approach the teacher have towards the necessity of reaching a level of competence that is tested by a University Language Centre.

DE: In the first two years of the cooperation the number of students of the Freie Universität taking part to the Spanish courses at the Instituto Cervantes increased significantly (from 588 in 2003/04 to 756 in 2004/05) and it's still increasing. The number and the type of the courses are defined (and redefined) every year according to the needs of the Freie Universität.

The initiative had a very positive impact among the students. A report of the first two years written by the coordinators points out factors of success and quality and proposes ideas for further development.

BE: The initiative was positively evaluated. Teachers valued saving time in their assessments and also were happy because each individual activity and task corresponded exactly to what was necessary at each stage of the course. The older teachers acknowledged the difficulty of taking online tests when their computer skills were limited but also recognized that handling the computer tool had been simpler than they thought at the beginning. Eventually, most of them got used to the computer tool

and believed they performed almost free of anxiety and the awareness of the presence of a computer. Most of them also believed that taking the test would be appropriate in other professions and professional situations.

General evaluation:

Transferring language learning instruments to external environments offers advantages and opportunities but also includes challenges and pitfalls, up to wondering whether the partner is friend or foe (see ES example).

Conflicts may appear on different levels:

- Time and/or budget (deadlines, setbacks, clash of interests, technical complications, Murphy...)
- Expectations from all parties involved are not well synchronized due to assumptions made on apparently obvious elements
- PDCA (frequently used in private companies) versus ADDIE (Instructional Design)
 - * PDCA or Plan-Do-Check-Act or the Deming Circle is an iterative 4-step problem-solving process in Quality Control
 - * ADDIE or Analysis-Design-Development-Implementation-Evaluation is used in Instructional Design as a dynamic & flexible guideline for building effective training tools and includes rapid prototyping, which allows saving time and money by detecting problems and issues while they are still easy to fix

The key success factor is establishing the link between applied research and workplace practice. Other possible benefits are:

- Establishing a long term cooperation leading towards in-depth knowledge of the partner's training culture, specialisation in the activity domain of the partner, modular & progressive extension of the language learning instruments
- Exposing language learning instruments to multiple users (academic + commercial + professional) which can lead to interesting research topics and validation of the tools
- Flexibility: all partners are encouraged to constantly re-invest, re-think and adapt to new contexts
- Two-way feedback and bridge-building strategies for bringing universities and workplace together
- Building up a lifelong language learning culture
- Working on dissemination of the CEF, helping to build up language competence transparency

Advice to others

ES: Universities must consider the suitability of this project. One must see pros and cons: exams take a more flexible design and students can see the convenience of it all price wise and time wise. However it marks a turning point in language related issues normally, in Spain at least, totally disconnected of private and commercial initiatives. In the end, this venture has all the pros and cons of merging academic issues with market forces.

IT: The cooperation of various institutions is of paramount importance in order to develop test formats to be applied on a national level; this guarantees uniformity in assessment and help the state school authority to design language courses for primary school teachers aiming at a set level of competence related to the CEF.

DE: Cooperation between the university and other institutions offering language courses can be very fruitful for both of the parts.

BE: Advice according to UPV (by Jesús Garcia Laborda)

Language testing must be flexible and adaptable to its needs. Relying on fixed testing structures may be a major drawback when designing online language tests. Reducing costs and developing multimodal platforms is a must in language testing. Good academic developments offer great opportunities to benefit all the stakeholders especially the designers and central administrators. On

the other hand, these platforms offer tailored responses to the most specific demands in training. Designing platforms for low stakes testing specifically aimed to certain the company's needs may be valuable and certainly a solution for midsize companies with low cost language training systems.

Reflection/any other comments

QA question: Is/was that the best way to do it? Why/why not? What improvements or adjustments are needed?

Transferring language learning tools from an academic context to a professional environment needs to be requirement driven and conducted by performant project management. If so, the language learning tools result in a flexible, configurable and durable solution.

Requirement mapping is one of the critical success factors. Therefore, the analysis phase is crucial and sufficient time should be spent to get the requirements down on paper.

These initiatives also require an engineering lifecycle where constant monitoring and evaluation leads to improvements in design and development.

Further details

e.g. web links; relevant references/publications; alternative contact names [OPTIONAL]

ES: For further information, go to this link: <http://www.universia.es/>

IT: <http://www3.unicatt.it/unicattolica/selda/bachecami/USR.pdf>

DE:

BE: