

D4.2. User Requirements

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Online CEF-based assessment of oral proficiency for intercultural professional communication

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The CEFcult project has been funded with support from the European Commission, Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency, under KA2 – Multilateral Projects of the Lifelong Learning Programme

1 Introduction

The CEFcult project aims to support learners in working on their intercultural communicative skills. It does this by developing an online assessment platform where learners can capture their behaviour by going through scenarios and performing tasks that elicit intercultural performance. The samples can then be assessed and rated against intercultural and linguistic assessment scales, by the learner herself or by invited others.

The aim of this deliverable is to identify the user requirements in order to design and implement a platform enabling social assessment of intercultural communicative competence.

Firstly, we will discuss the relevant characteristics of intercultural and linguistic competence assessment. Secondly, we will go into the requirements and options for technological support in this kind of assessment. Thirdly, we will describe the expected user experience we want to design on this platform and finally, establish the required functionality from the platform.

2 User Need

Learning to become interculturally competent is a complex learning activity that requires ongoing learning and assessment. It can occur in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings and necessarily involves interaction with others (social learning).

Some prototypical contexts that require intercultural competence are presented below in the form of a user story.

Rani was selected amongst Bangladeshi top students to join an educational programme on geographic information systems at Lancaster University in the United Kingdom. She received a grant from the British department of developing aid, just like other students from various other countries, from different parts of the globe (e.g. Colombia, Vietnam, Malawi, Indonesia). Although she did not expect to experience language problems during this programme, as she mastered English very well, various misunderstandings and irritation between fellow students rose at the start of this international class. Although some were due to language problems from other students, many of these misunderstandings seemed to be more related to the different interpretation frameworks students used due to their various cultural (and related, educational) backgrounds.

Rani wants to understand why these conflicts and misunderstandings rise, in order to try to solve them, at least partly when possible. They will be expected to work in groups during this programme, so the students have to collaborate for quite an extensive period, so it is better if this is possible on good terms. She also acknowledges that it is very likely that she will work in international teams in the future and that it is important to develop her cultural awareness. Lancaster University has a web-supported tool available which can

help to support her to learn more about various cultures and culture-related communication and even get a formal acknowledgement of her skills. The institute experienced culture-related problems in previous courses, and have accommodated by offering this service. One of the first things she learns is that the private physical space around a person is different between various cultures, and reflecting upon this, she recalls that she indeed felt uncomfortable in several situations in class, which she now understands. She also learns that her nod to accept to work on a part of a specific learning task can be interpreted differently by others, as in some cultures this can either mean 'yes' or 'no'. She also discovers that saying 'no' is not easy within some cultures. Rani expects that she will find more hints that will help to understand where it sometimes unconsciously, without purpose, went wrong between people in her class. She also expects to learn how her linguistic skills can help in overcoming these cultural differences.

This story indicates a prototypical setting of learning to become interculturally competent.

Learning is **ongoing** and can never be complete (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey, 2002). Assessment of this learning is not in the form of traditional examination of knowledge, but needs a reflection on the performance of the learner. In this context, portfolios have been recognized as useful tools to record learners' behaviour and support intercultural competence development (INCA, Autobiography, Byram).

Intercultural competence development is not restricted by **learning settings**, and can occur in formal, non-formal and informal contexts. Lifelong learners need to develop their competences across these settings, keeping track of their intercultural experiences.

Finally, intercultural competence development is a **social learning activity**, learnt in and through interaction with others. Other people are an essential part in intercultural experiences, bringing their cultural background in the interaction with a learner, but also providing (explicit and implicit) feedback on the intercultural performance of the learner. Therefore, assessment by others (peers and experts) can offer learners valuable input on their intercultural behaviour.

Another important aspect in intercultural competence development is that learners not only build their intercultural competence through **performing** in intercultural contexts but also (and maybe primarily) through **observing and understanding** intercultural performance. In other words, learners need to take on the roles of assessees and assessors to gain the most from intercultural assessment contexts.

The CEFcult project aims to support learners in this learning situation with a web-based platform, allowing for ongoing reflection and assessment in intercultural competence in flexible learning situations and through interaction with others. In the next section, we will look into the technological solutions that can be employed to create such a web-based platform.

3 Technological Support

In its support for individual intercultural competence development, the CEFcult web-based platform needs to accommodate for:

- learners' individual ongoing reflection and assessment
- learners' performance in intercultural tasks and guided observation of intercultural performance
- flexibility in recording individual behaviour in different learning settings
- interaction with others, providing them the option to give standardized and open feedback on individual learner's intercultural performance

Such a web-based platform will consist of several distinct technological functions to enable these requirements. We distinguish the following four as key functions: technology to manage an intercultural portfolio, technology to elicit intercultural behaviour, technology to capture intercultural behaviour and technology to share and interact with others on individual intercultural performances.

Firstly, technology can be used to create a **portfolio**. Portfolios¹ have been of interest in language competence development and intercultural competence development for some time now. The European Language Portfolio, with the CEF, has grown into a standard across Europe, and is part of the EuroPASS standard curriculum vitae. The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson & Méndez Garcia, 2009; Council of Europe) and INCA portfolio (INCA, 2004) show that a similar approach is preferred for intercultural competence. The CEFcult web-based assessment platform needs to be in line with existing e-portfolio standards and be interoperable with existing popular e-portfolio environments.

Secondly, technology can also play a significant role the **eliciting of learners' intercultural behaviour**. The CEFcult platform enables this through specially designed scenarios and tasks. Scenarios are elaborate individual or group exercises with observation or production tasks for learners in simulated intercultural settings. By going through the tasks, learners can create instances of their intercultural behaviour on a platform where others can assess them. Technology can be used to guide learners through relevant tasks and their supportive material.

Thirdly, technology can be employed to **capture** learners' intercultural behaviour. When learners observe their own or others' performance in intercultural contexts, they can record their observations in textual or audiovisual form. Their individual performance can also be recorded through the use of video cameras or webcams to share with others on the platform. This aspect was extensively used in the WebCEF project, and this will continue to be used in CEFcult.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_portfolio

Fourthly, technology can be used to connect to others and receive feedback from others. The CEFcult platform will be an environment where learners can **connect and interact** with other learners and experts on their intercultural performance. They will be able to receive structured and guided feedback from others on their own performance and be able to give feedback on others' performance.

These technological solutions give some idea of what a CEFcult platform can offer. In the next section, we will discuss the CEFcult platform more concretely, through the user experience required and the functionalities expected from such a platform.

4 The CEFcult Platform

The CEFcult platform will be designed to accommodate for the learning setting described above. It will need to incorporate general, abstract functionalities of

Maintaining a portfolio, eliciting learners' intercultural behaviour, capturing this behaviour and allowing learners to connect and interact with other learners on the platform. In this section, we will describe the user experience expected from this platform more concretely. We will then go into the concrete functionalities required from the environment.

4.1 Required User Experience

The CEFcult platform supports a learner in developing their intercultural skills, including their foreign language skills. A prototypical user of the CEFcult platform will be a language learner who seeks to develop her intercultural skills in interactions in that language, or a learner who seeks to develop her intercultural skills in interactions with foreign speakers in her native language.

The platform will allow the learner to go through specially designed observation or performance tasks, to capture her observations or performance and assess them against linguistic (CEF) or intercultural (INCA) assessment scales.

A prototypical user workflow is illustrated in Figure 1.

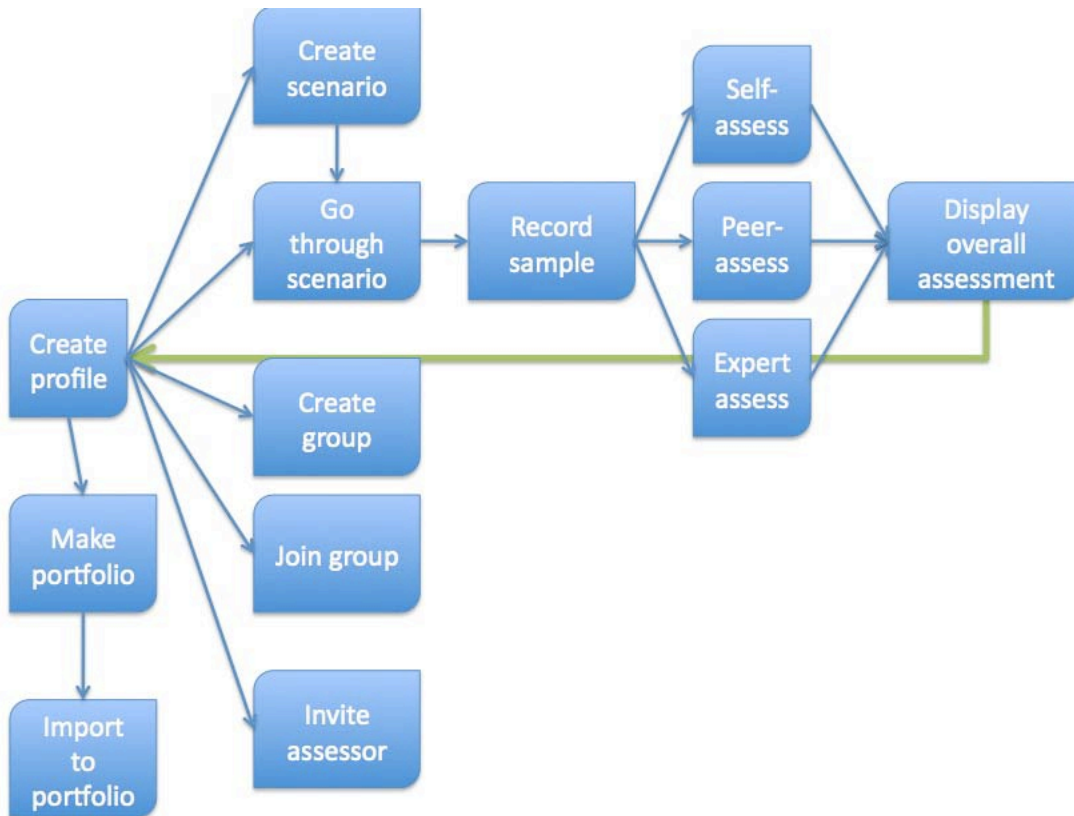


Figure 1 User Workflow

The learner creates a **profile** on the platform, giving an indication of their linguistic and cultural background. This profile can be linked to an individual portfolio outside the CEFcult environment. The learner should have the opportunity to export feedback and results gained on the platform to their individual **portfolio** outside the platform.

On the platform, the learner can go through an existing **scenario** and perform the **tasks** in this scenario, which can include observation tasks and performance tasks. The learner can **record** their elicited behaviour in these tasks through textual or audiovisual means. In observation tasks, learners can make use of a guiding *observation sheet*, which give indications as to which behavioural aspects to look out for. After fulfilling a task, the learner can self-assess their performance according to an **assessment scale** connected to a task. The learner can also invite other (peer or expert) assessors to assess their performance.

In case the learner wants to develop their skills for specific purposes (for example, develop English skills for use in corporate culture), they can start a **group** dedicated to this goal and create scenarios for this context. Other learners interested in achieving the same goal can join this group. In this way, the CEFcult platform can allow for the creation of bottom-up formed learner groups with shared goals.

In this way, a learner can have collected multiple assessments for their performance, and have them displayed on an overview page. This overview can be **imported** back into the CEFcult user profile and learner portfolio.

This user workflow depends on some assumptions on user control and privacy. The learner is the central driving force of assessment on the CEFcult platform: she can work on her intercultural and linguistic skills and actively request feedback from others. The learner always has access to perform self-assessment on her own performance, but needs to give access to others to allow for peer and expert assessment. In other words, the learner is expected to be independent and **self-directed** in their intercultural competence development. The learner determines what to share and what not to, taking control of developing their own portfolio on intercultural competences.

Taking the learner as the starting point for supporting intercultural competence development opens up new possibilities in intercultural competence development. The existing networks on **social networking platforms** such as LinkedIn and Facebook can provide access to relevant peers and experts. User profiles on these sites can also function as part of learner portfolios.

4.2 Required Functionality and Workflow

The entities and functionalities to enable this workflow are illustrated in Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5. The entities required for the CEFcult platform are:

- a **user profile**, identifying and describing learners on the CEFcult platform. All user profiles are combined in a searchable user database. User profiles can be linked to learner portfolios outside the CEFcult platform, or profiles on social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook.
- recorded **video samples** of learners' intercultural observations or performances, connected to learners' user profiles. The samples are always linked to an individual on the CEFcult platform.
- a **group**, i.e. a collection of users who share a same characteristic or learning goal. Users can join groups to find other relevant learners who can become their peer assessors or expert assessors. Groups are shared in searchable group databases.
- a **scenario**, i.e. a specifically designed simulation exercise consisting of observation or performance tasks eliciting intercultural behaviour. Tasks can have supporting documents or media to trigger the learner. Scenarios are shared in searchable scenario databases.

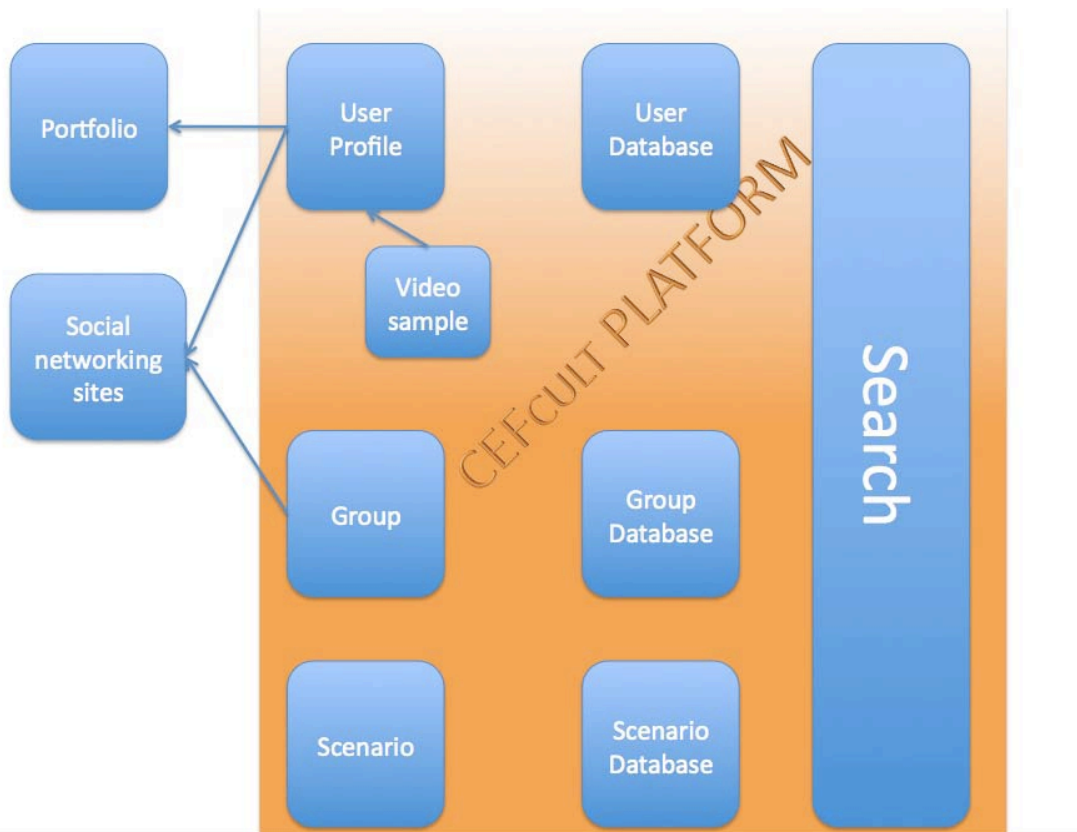


Figure 2 Entities on CEFcult Platform

The CEFcult platform needs to a search module to allow simple keyword and user-generated tag search.

The functionalities on the CEFcult platform should enable users to create their intercultural profiles on the platform, to connect with relevant others, and to give and receive feedback on their intercultural performances from others. Figure 3 shows the functionalities and workflow for users and groups on the platform.

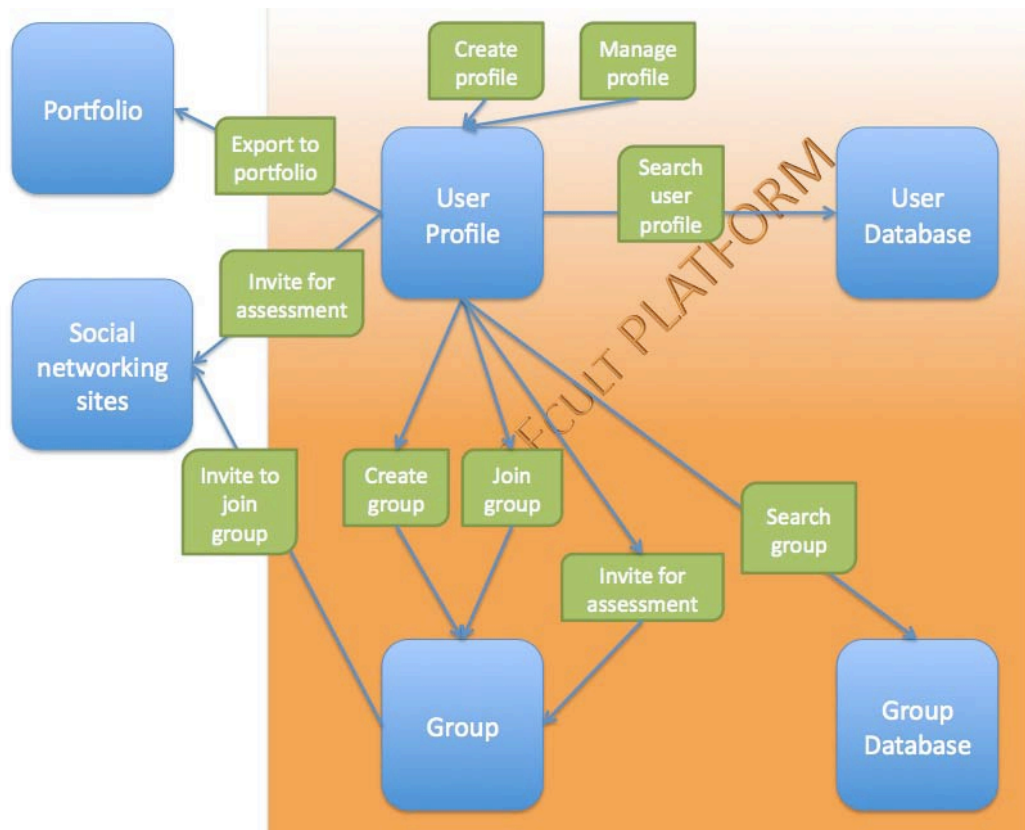


Figure 3 Workflow and Functionalities User and Group

Learners on the CEFcult platform are uniquely identified by their user profile, where they can collect evidences for their intercultural performance and the feedback they receive on these.

They can connect with others by (i) searching for others on the CEFcult platform in the user database, by (ii) creating or joining groups around their individual goals, or by (iii) inviting selected others to assess their performance on the CEFcult platform.

Evidences created on the CEFcult platform and assessments made or received from others on these evidences can be exported to a portfolio outside the CEFcult platform.

Figure 4 shows the functionalities and workflow for users and scenarios on the platform and figure 5 shows the workflow of creating scenario.

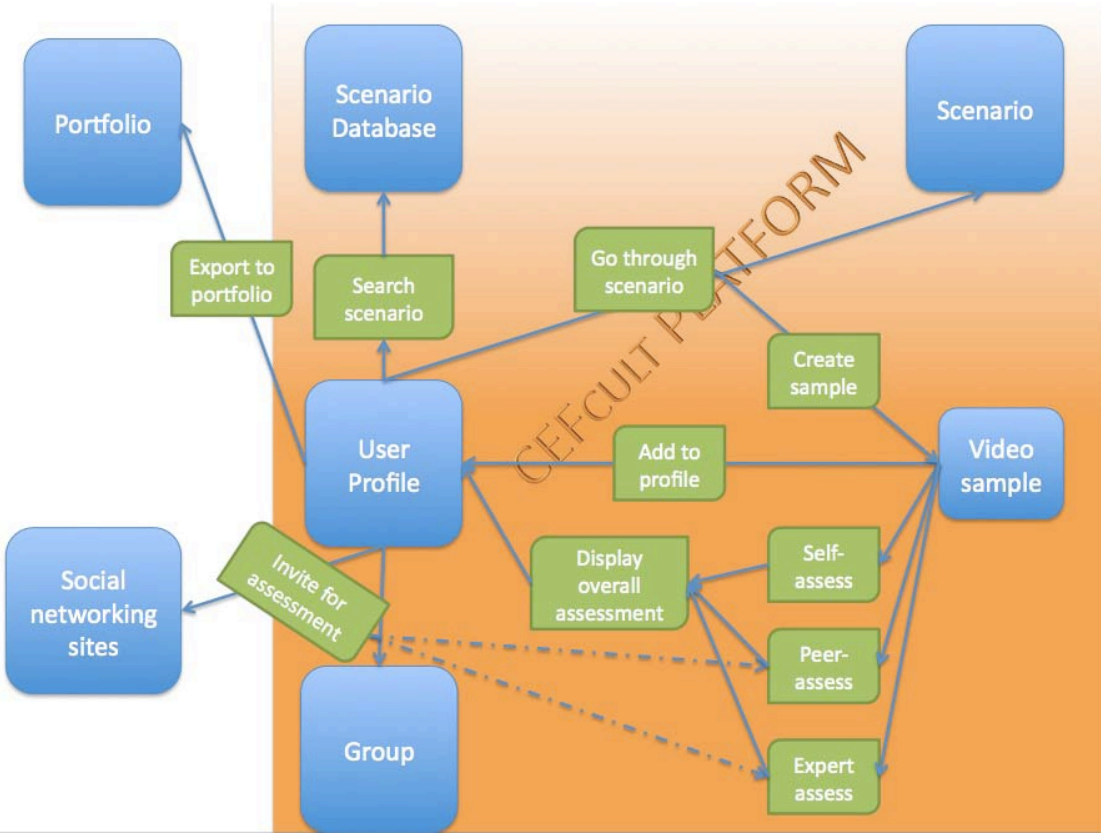


Figure 4 Workflow and functionalities User and Scenario

Users can search for relevant scenarios on the platform, go through them and do the tasks associated with them. The created video samples can be self-assessed against linguistic and intercultural frameworks.

The user can also invite assessors from the groups they belong to or from outside the CEFcult platform, to look at and assess their samples as peers or experts.

The resulting assessments can be combined on an overview page, which users can publish on their profile page or export to their portfolios outside the CEFcult environment.

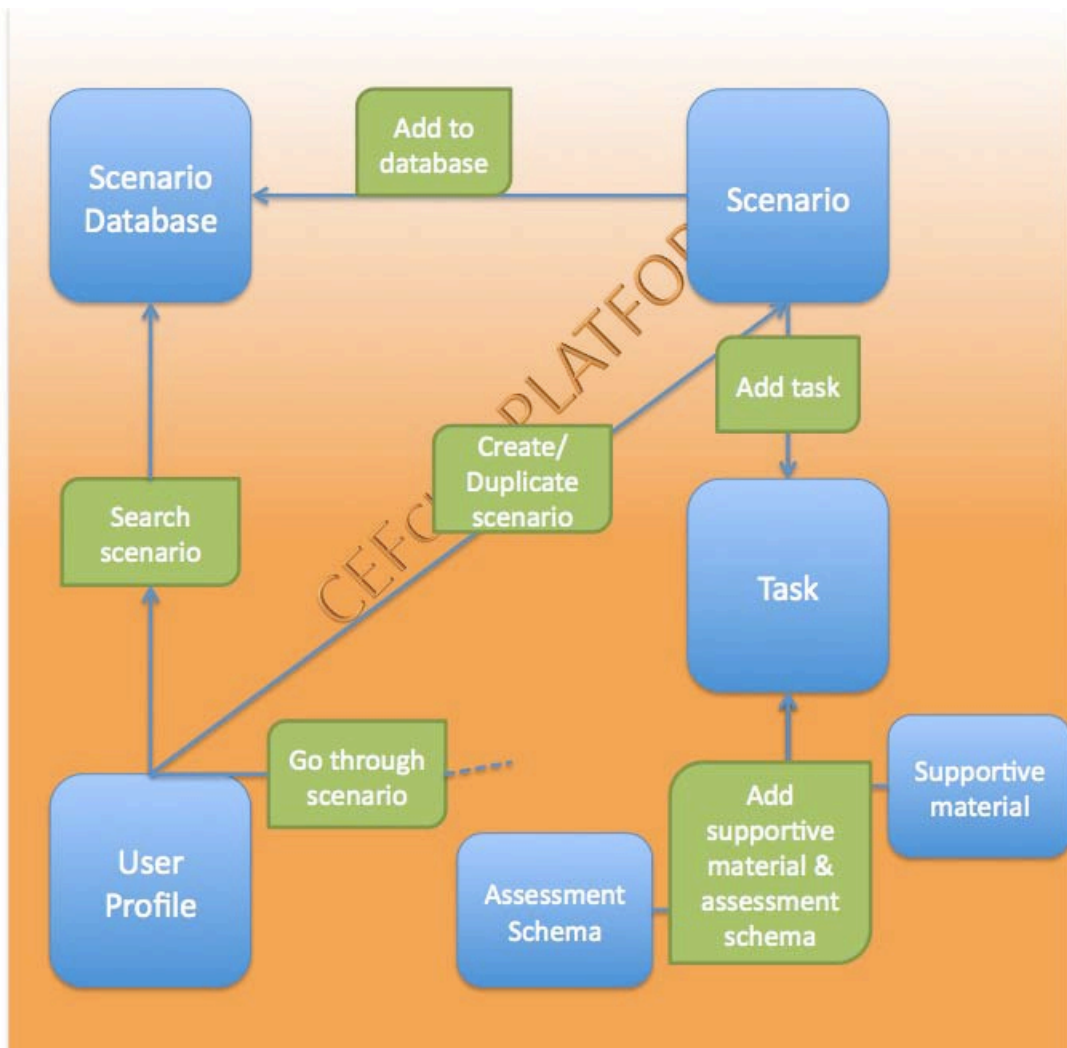


Figure 5 Functionalities and Workflow on creating Scenarios

All users in the system will have the possibility to create their own scenarios or to duplicate and edit existing scenarios from the database.

They will be able to add new tasks to the scenario, including some supportive material (such as guiding documents, trigger audio samples or trigger videos). They will also be able to indicate which assessment schemas or sections of assessment schemas are specifically tested in the task, as a guideline to the assessors and the learners.

5 Conclusion

In this report, we discussed the user requirements for the development of the CEFcult platform. The aim of this platform is to offer an online assessment space where learners can capture their behaviour by going through scenarios and performing tasks that elicit intercultural performance. The samples can then be assessed and rated against intercultural and linguistic assessment scales, by the learner herself or by invited others.

We identified that learning to become interculturally competent is a complex learning activity that requires ongoing learning and assessment. It can occur in formal, non-formal and informal learning settings and necessarily involves interaction with others (social learning). A technological platform aiming to support this type of learning should therefore incorporate available technical solutions for this learning, including learner portfolios, flexible creation and maintenance of audiovisual evidence of intercultural performance, guided tasks to elicit intercultural behaviour and connections and interactions with relevant others.

Finally, we described the entities, functionalities and workflow that are necessary for such a platform.

Annex

Screenshots and first proposal of design interface of platform

References

European Language Portfolio

http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Portfolio/?L=E&M=/main_pages/introduction.html

INCA Project. (2004). Intercultural Competence Assessment Retrieved March 30th, 2010, from

<http://www.incaproject.org/>

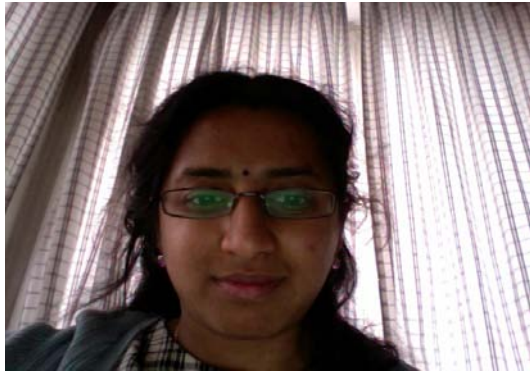
Byram, M., Barrett, M., Ipgrave, J., Jackson, R., & Méndez Garcia, M. d. C. (2009). *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters: Context, concepts and theories*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Council of Europe, *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*,

<http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/AUTOBIOGRAPHY/>

User Profile

User profile: Kamakshi Rajagopal



Name: Kamakshi Rajagopal

Background

L1: Dutch L2: Spanish

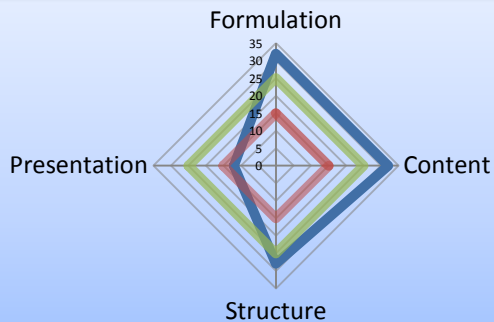
C1: // C2:

Learning Goal: Spanish for use in professional contexts

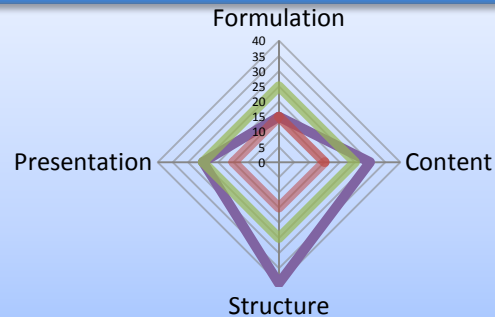
My Contacts  

Lut Baten
Ana Beaven
Chris Valentine

My Assessor Profile 



My Assessee Profile



My Groups  

Professional Spanish
Spanish as L2
Dutch in Professional use

My Samples

Working in Intercultural setting
Task 1



Working in Intercultural setting
Task 2



Job interview
Task 1



Job interview
Task 2



My Scenarios  

Working In Intercultural Settings
Job interview

Make Scenario

Make Scenario

Name Scenario

Description scenario

Instructions for
Assessor
(What is
expected from
learner)

Instructions
for Assessor
(What is
expected
from learner)

Upload supportive documents for scenario



Name document

Browse



Add Tasks

Make Scenario

Name Scenario

Description scenario

Instructions for
Assessor

Instructions
for Assessor

Supportive documents for scenario

Name document

Task



Name task

Description task



Name supportive document

Browse

Name supportive media

Browse

Is this an Observation Task?



Select Assessment Schema

Customize Assessment Schema

Make Scenario

Q1: *Fill in question*

Fill in option concerning formulation

Fill in option concerning structure

Fill in option concerning content

Fill in option concerning presentation

Q2: *Fill in question*

Fill in option concerning formulation

Fill in option concerning structure

Fill in option concerning content

Fill in option concerning presentation




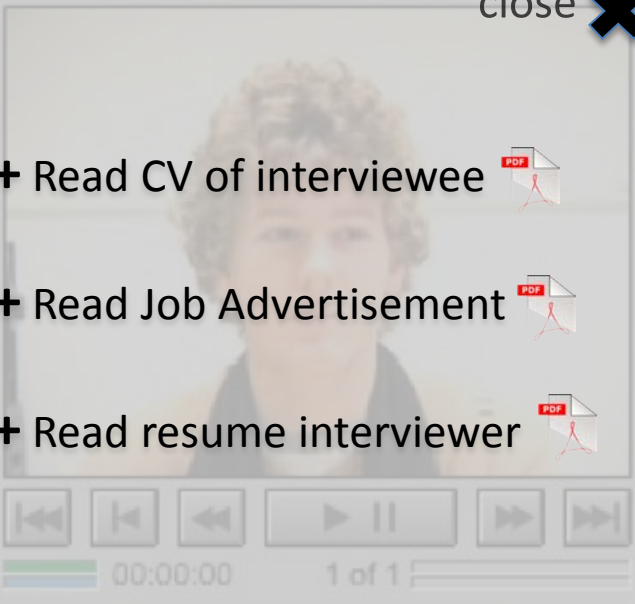
Select Assessment Schema




Customize Assessment Schema

Assessment Page Observation Task

Assessment: observation task

close 



- + Read CV of interviewee 
- + Read Job Advertisement 
- + Read resume interviewer 

00:00:00 1 of 1

Consider how the interviewee starts talking at the beginning of the interview

How does the interviewee move on to describing his suitability for the job?

Does the interviewee take initiative to offer new information or ask his own questions?

How does the interviewee act at the end of the interview?



Save & Print
Observation
list

Assessment schema

Rank the following from 1 (most like me)-4 (least like me)

When he explained his suitability for the job,

- he used a sentence that attracted the attention of the interviewer
- he gave convincing arguments
- he structure of his sentence alerted me
- he presented himself well

Annotations


- applies to entire sample

save & next

save new comment

reset form

Assessment: observation task

close 

Consider how the interviewee starts talking at the beginning of the interview



Save & Print
Observation
list

How does the interviewee move on to describing

close 

+ Read CV of interviewee 

Name: Mark Thompson

Personal Information

Mark Thompson

Birth: 1969 1st of July

Status: Male

Address: San Francisco

Cell Phone: 00 Country-number 123 123 999

E-mail: mark@project-manager.c o m

Employment

DHL ITS 2005 - today

Senior Project Manager, Programme Manager, Portfolio Manager

Company Project planning, Programme management

(1400 IT projects, responsibility for leading 100+ team of Project Managers, 10+ team of Senior Project Managers, budget 2500 M \$)

.....

save & next

save new comment

reset form

Assessment: observation task



Consider how the interviewee starts talking at the beginning of the interview

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Save & Print
Observation
list

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- he structure of his sentence alerted me
- he presented himself well

Annotations

applies to entire sample




save & next

save new comment

reset form

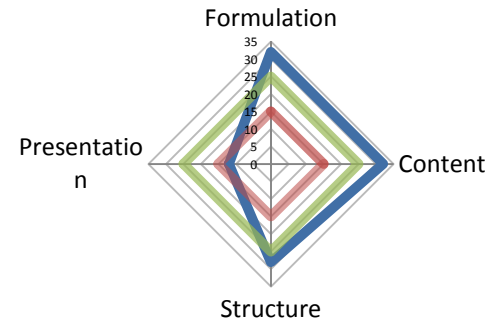
Result Assessment: Assessor profile

close ✕

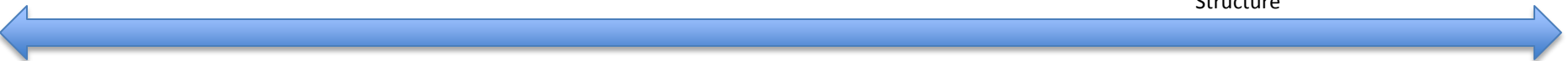
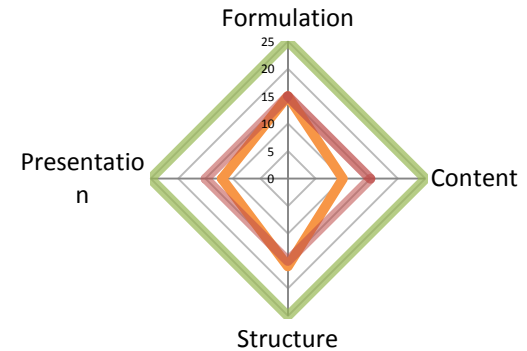
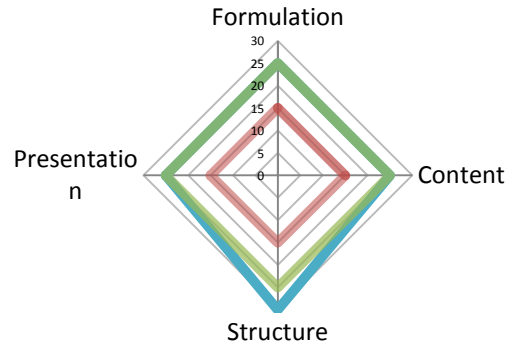
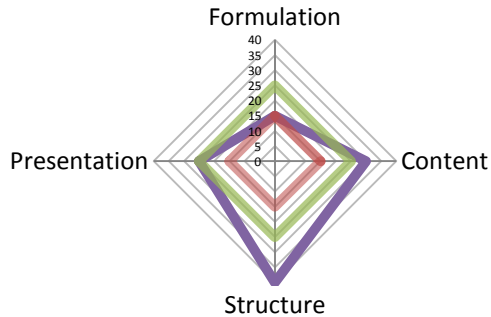
- + Read CV of interviewee 
- + Read Job Advertisement 
- + Read resume interviewer 

00:00:00 1 of 1

My Assessor profile




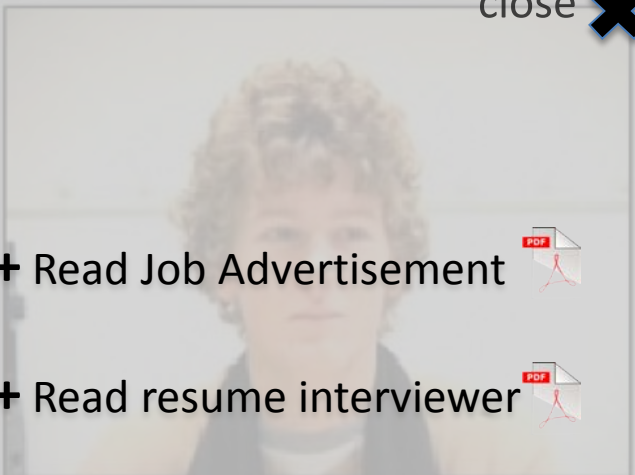
Assessor profiles of others who have done this task





Assessment Page Production Task

Assessment: production task

close 



+ Read Job Advertisement 

+ Read resume interviewer 

00:00:00 1 of 1

Consider how you will open the interview

How will you describe your suitability for the job? (arguments, presentation)

Is there any important information you need to talk about? Do you have any questions for the interviewer?

How do you close the interview?



Save & Print
Observation
list

Assessment schema

Answer the following

The speaker's body language and appearance enhance the effectiveness of the monologue/presentation

- No
- To some extent
- Considerably

This factor is important to me

Annotations

applies to entire sample

save & next

save new comment

reset form

Assessment: production task

close 

Consider how the interviewee starts talking at the beginning of the interview



close 

+ Read Job Advertisement

The Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile is a worldwide federation of Motoring and Touring Clubs, bringing together some 225 organisations on five continents. In Europe, the FIA represents 35 million motoring consumers from 71 clubs and is represented by the European Bureau. Much of our work concentrates on defending and promoting the interests of the members of the national motoring organisations and maximising the societal benefits of motoring for all. With these aims in mind, our work focuses on Road Safety, Consumer Protection, Environmental Protection, the promotion of Sustainable Motoring and tourism. The FIA European Bureau coordinates a pan European platform of national automobile clubs that annually conducts a consumer testing programme that publishes results about the quality and safety of various aspects of Europe's motoring and touring infrastructure and services. It also participates in and coordinates European research projects with other partners, usually fulfilling the role of creating awareness among consumers and raising visibility of the projects themselves. It is looking for a Projects Coordinator to coordinate its projects portfolio

Tasks will include:

- Managing consortia of partners to ensure delivery of project outputs;
- Liaising with and coordinating national automobile clubs' activities
- Project programme administration
 - o organisation of meetings, drafting minutes;
 - o coordinating contractual matters, financial management and reporting along EU rules or rules agreed between the automobile clubs;
- Contributing to awareness raising strategies
 - o by organising events, issuing press communications, newsletters etc targeting different audiences – stakeholders, press, public administrations and government.
 - o Coordination with public policy colleagues on project findings
- Dissemination of project outcomes;
- Management and updating of project website

Requirements:

- Academic education preferably in communication;
- Experience in project management, preferably with EU funded projects;
- Good understanding of European public policy
- Excellent writing and verbal communication skills;
- Perfect command of written and spoken English; other languages a strong asset.
- Team player and ability to work independently: strong organisational and administrative skills.

Assessment: production task

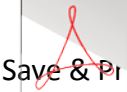


Consider how you will open the interview

How will you describe your suitability for the job? (arguments, presentation)

Is there any important information you need to talk about? Do you have any questions for the interviewer?

How do you close the interview?



Save & Print
Observation
list

Assessment schema

Answer the following

The speaker's body language and appearance enhance the effectiveness of the monologue/presentation

- No
- To some extent
- Considerably

- This factor is important to me

Annotations




applies to entire sample

save new comment

reset form

Result Assessment: Assessee profile

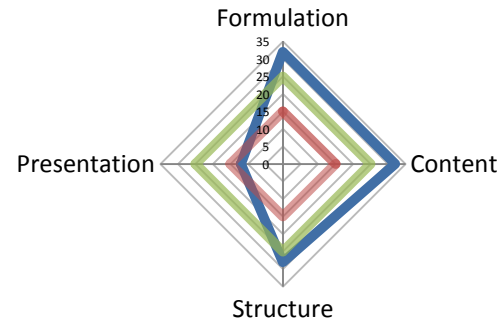
close ✕

- + Read CV of interviewee 
- + Read Job Advertisement 
- + Read resume interviewer 

00:00:00 1 of 1

My overall Assessee profile

Composite of self-, peer and expert assessment



My assessment results of this task

