From the Editors

ADAPTING TO THE CEFR IN ELT: EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE COMPETENCE

This issue includes articles concerning different approaches to tackle the impact of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) on English Language Teaching (ELT) and assessment. Special attention is paid to the assessment of language competence in a higher education context. The use and impact of evaluation and assessment results is of paramount importance when these results are a prerequisite, for instance, to start postgraduate studies or to be able to ask for a job where a specific level is required.

In this context, validity and reliability of standard tests and their alignment to the CEFR levels and placement tests in higher education institutions are key concepts within the European framework. Due to the fact that the English language has an important impact as a tool for communication worldwide, most research in defining the different CEFR levels and evaluating their description (and how this description is understood and applied) refer to the English language. But the application of such levels to other European languages is also relevant particularly if we want to establish a clear language reference that may be understood and shared among languages. Thus, we may talk about the comparison of educational achievements across countries and in different parts of the same country as well as among languages.

Another important issue within the CEFR context is the modes in which assessment and tests are carried out, depending on the institutional media. Multimodal means of assessment, online assessment or in situ assessment may also determine the way levels are measured and accessibility for test takers.

In the first article presented in this volume **Pikabea, Lukas and Figueras** survey the different models that have been used in order to certify Basque language levels

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/LanguageV.2014.6.1

according to the European framework, and the number of itineraries a test taker may choose to be able to obtain a certified level. In order to do so, they combine a number of tools in their study including technical qualitative analysis, interviews with people responsible for the management of test administration within an institution, and questionnaire design to gather data, among other procedures. The importance of their exhaustive research is to establish a framework for the validation of the existing accreditation systems for Basque that accounts for an analysis of whether the specifications for fluency in the language that allowed test alignment with the CEFR were properly followed in the different accreditation institutions. Finally, they put forth a proposal for adaptations where necessary and monitoring of such adaptations.

Papageorgiou deals with the issue of how different assessment tools around the world are aligned with the CEFR levels, that is, (1) how assessments are brought into alignment with other existing standards and frameworks and (2) how assessment results are interpreted when compared to another assessment frame. Papageorgiou also identifies those areas that still need refinement in relation to the CERF levels, such as why and how these levels are selected in policy making or the fact that two tests are assessed as belonging to a same CERF level do not necessarily have the same content or level of test difficulty. The relevance of developing adequate alignment tools and theories cannot be emphasized strongly enough.

In his article, *Measuring the impact of CLIL on language skills: a CEFR-based approach for Higher Education,* **Jiménez-Muñoz** discusses the difficulties faced by CLIL instructors when applying CEFR criteria. Issues like the lack of English language level on the part of the students that get enrolled in a CLIL classroom at university level; the need of developing specific skills to teach through a second or foreign language; the lack of financial means to accomplish all instructional purposes, both language and content ones; and the way instructors overcome these problems, are evaluated. The relevance of this study lies in the analysis of results based on tools that aim at evaluating student progress after a CLIL experience in a way that fits the university time schedules, adjusting to university terms and their timing.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/LanguageV.2013.5.1

In the fourth article of the volume, **Beinhoff** deals with the relevance of developing a European framework for language evaluation focusing on the representation of speech development -particularly perceptive skills- in the CEFR level descriptions. According to this author, vagueness is a feature of the speech-related CEFR sections and related level descriptions so that assumptions made therein -the supposed linear progression between levels amongst them- have not been sufficiently tested yet. By presenting an exploratory study on speech perception in language learners this paper investigates what kind of influence listeners' levels of proficiency in the second language and their L1 backgrounds have when perceiving intelligibility. The results break new ground by identifying that proficiency levels and L1 background do (although not always) influence intelligibility and partially confirm the idea of a linear progression as proposed in the CEFR.

The volume also includes a final article entitled "Motivation and constraints of illocution in the lexical constructional model: the case of the *Aux NP* construction", in which its author, **Del Campo**, addresses the motivation and constraints of illocutionary meaning production. By analysing the realization procedures of the *Aux NP* construction in relation to their potential to exploit the semantic base of requestive acts, the author explores how our knowledge of illocution is understood in terms of high-level situational models which are activated to produce speech act meaning, and the way such operations motivate the conventionalized value of linguistic expressions. As a result, always within the framework of the Lexical Constructional Model (LCM), a comprehensive understanding of the constructional nature of illocutionary meaning on the basis of naturally occurring data is provided.

Finally, **Annemieke Meijer** reviews the volume *English-Medium Instruction at Universities*, authored by Doiz, Lasagabaster and Sierra. The reviewer presents this five-part volume as "an interesting and timely addition to the growing literature on the use of English as the language of instruction at universities in non-native contexts", in which a varied picture of current issues and practices is provided by means of contributions from eighteen authors from many and diverse countries. The selection, even though a bit arbitrary somehow, is highly interesting not only because of their

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/LanguageV.2013.5.1

diversity but also because of the unexpected connections established, all contributions adding thus to the overall picture.

Mª Carmen Campoy-Cubillo
Nuria Edo-Marzá
Editors
Universitat Jaume I, Spain

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.6035/LanguageV.2013.5.1