

"The specifications for French of levels C1 and c2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages".

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### Context

This research falls within the working framework of the Council of Europe's Division of Linguistic Studies, and, more precisely, that of participation in the RLD -i.e. Reference Level Description- (Symposia held in Rüşchlikon, Switzerland, 1991, and Strasburg, 2005). It follows the publication, in 2001, of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, henceforth referred to as the *Framework*, a document that is enjoying growing success in non-European countries (as for exemple Mexico), which promotes the teaching-learning of foreign languages based on:

- a so called action perspective, which conceives of the language user as a social being who interacts with others in a given context to carry out tasks.

- a competency-based approach that encourages the structuring of the teaching-learning process in terms of "being able to" rather than in terms of traditional descriptions whose content is linguistic.

- a competency description with 6 levels -A1, A2, B1, B1, C1 and C2- expressed in terms of descriptors.

It also follows upon the preliminary *Threshold Level* studies (Van Ek, 1975) pertaining to the English language, and the *Niveau Seuil* ones (Coste *et al*, 1976) pertaining to the French language, plus some thirty versions published subsequently- and completes the publication of "Référentiels pour le français, niveau B2" (2006), "Référentiels pour le français, niveau A1.1" B2" (2007), "Référentiels pour le français, niveau A1" (2006), "Référentiels pour le français, niveau A2" (2008), and "Référentiels pour le français, niveau B1" (pending publication). The teaching tools are not course or exam syllabuses (which would require concrete contextualization), but non-prescriptive reference documents which set out to describe the set of contents that one might expect a speaker of French as a foreign language (FFL) to handle at a given level.

At present, the German-language team, *Profile Deutsch* (2004), the Spanish-language one, *Programación Curricular del Instituto Cervantes* (2009), and the Italian-language one, (2010) have just produced a description of levels A1-B2, and the British team is about to produce a complete *English Profile* description. Likewise, the German and Spanish teams have presented a series of descriptors for the levels C1 and C2, albeit without including any content description.

From a more prospective point of view, levels C1 and C2 of the *Framework* are strategic levels in the educational structure underpinning the teaching-learning of languages, since they potentially constitute teaching, translation and research levels.

### Problems

The aim of this study, then, is to propose, from a teaching point of view, a specification of the functional, notional, grammatical, spelling and intercultural contents that constitute levels C1 and c2 of the *Framework* with regard to French. Time has not allowed us to describe the phonetic and phonological contents, which should be addressed by additional studies.

Since the *Framework's* levels are inclusive ( $C2 \subseteq C1 \subseteq B2 \subseteq B1 \subseteq A2 \subseteq A1$ .), this study is based on the existing Level-B specifications, and particularly on the Level-B2 one, to which, nonetheless, it will not recur. Hence we have described the contents of levels C1 and C2 that do not appear in level B2.

If one accepts the proposition that learning a language (either a foreign one or a mother tongue) takes a whole lifetime, it might seem paradoxical to want to draw up an inventory of forms pertaining to the final, C2, level. In the notional domain, for example, it is difficult to quantify the amount of words available and, as Mitterand remarked (1992: 7) "No inventory has yet been made of all the different working forms in contemporary French. [...] and, in its perpetual race to keep up with lexical development, lexicography inevitably loses: it will always be outdistanced by the last neologism to appear". If we establish a symbolic continuum ranging from A1 to C2, the said continuum should be depicted as an unfinished line that is closed at the A1 end and open at the C2 end. Hence, in this study, without attempting to come up with an exhaustive inventory, we have likewise proposed a series of cut-off points delimiting the boundary between B2 and C1.

In short, the defining of contents from a teaching point of view can lead to the description of an ideal speaker or learner, which would doubtless be nothing other than the result of normative and/or institutional depictions of that which it describes. In order to attenuate this failing, we have preliminarily established that:

- the heterogeneity of the profile pertaining to every speaker (his receptive or productive, oral or written competencies) means that one can attain a C level in a language activity (e.g. oral comprehensibility) without necessarily reaching the same level in another activity (e.g. written production).
- native-speaker competence cannot be seen as an aim to be achieved, even though it may be operative in certain cases; on the one hand, there are over 180 million native speakers within the French-speaking geographical territories, which implies numerous regional or social variants, while, on the other hand, there is no reason not to think that a non-native speaker could surpass the linguistic level of most native speakers (which is, for example, easy to demonstrate with regard to spelling). The notion of "highly educated native speaker" will not be further adhered to in view of its lack of conceptual stability.

Finally, neither this proposed specification, nor those pertaining to the preceding levels, should in any be deemed prescriptive. It takes into account the diversity of linguistic contexts of use (which it specifies), in order to permit didactic contextualization at the moment of drawing up a teaching program, creating a method, or producing an examination.

### **Methodology**

We have relied on several sources in order draw up to this specification:

- the existing criteria both for French and for other languages.
- an analysis of the written- and spoken-production corpora identified as pertaining to level C1 or C2 by the European language-proficiency certifiers.
- research on language acquisition
- analysis of the verbal material (lexical, grammatical, etc.) that has not been included in the preceding criteria.

Using all of the above, we have been able to establish content lists, back-to-back with the Framework descriptors, whose structure complies with the stipulations of the DNR program, and thus assuredly with the preceding sets of criteria:

- discourse-genre inventories
- function inventories
- general-notion inventories
- an inventory according to morphosyntactic categories and enunciation structures – i.e. grammar
- an inventory of graphic features
- a description in terms of competencies
- an inventory of learning strategies

### Structure of the study

Our study is divided into three parts.

#### PART ONE: THE PRELIMINARY STUDIES

- A theoretical clarification of the problems of referent construction, especially with regard to foreign-languages, defines the general conceptual framework of the study.
- An analysis of the work of the acquisition theorists enables stress to be placed on the main developmental stages in learners at the advanced levels (mastery of lexis, acquisition of morphosyntactic forms, etc).
- An analysis of the corpora of learners in institutional environments, and also of the methods for teaching French as a foreign language (FFL) and the specialized literature on the different known stages of the teaching-learning process enables us to identify the cut-off points delimiting B2≠C1≠C2≠+.
- The establishment of yardsticks (e.g. understanding of the implicit content of word plays, mastery of collocations) will enable us to fine-tune this analysis so as to make the main features of each level stand out, in accordance with duly specified theoretical contingencies.
- The data this obtained will enable us to partially determine levels C1 and C2, but not suffice to define level C2+.

#### PART TWO: PROPOSALS FOR THE SPECIFICATION OF THE FRAMEWORK'S C LEVELS

- Based on the above, we propose to evaluate the different combinatory and fixed components of the French language that are most representative of the C levels in accordance with the nomenclature established in the DNR-project framework.
- Likewise, we propose to specify the functional, grammatical, morphosyntactic and socio-linguistic contents, and also the strategic competencies, that can define the C levels.
- We put forward hypotheses in the form of competency descriptors, also based on the Framework structure (e.g. general linguistic range/vocabulary range), which will be completed by an empirical analysis of the possible considerations. In effect, we assume that the corpora studied at the C2 level (generally consisting of written and oral production in the DALF (i.e. the "Diplôme Approfondi de Langue Française" or Diploma in Advanced French-language Studies) are not necessarily representative of this levels full range. Hence, for level C2+ our proposals are based on input considerations.
- These hypotheses were presented to a representative panel of teachers who commented on their formulation in accordance with the methodology described in the *Framework* (Appendix B).

#### PART THREE: DIDACTIC PERSPECTIVES

The last part is devoted to the didactic paths to which a given approach can give rise (e.g. discourse features for the drawing up of summative evaluation tasks in written production at level C2, or discourse features for the choosing of written comprehension texts at level C1).

## What we know about level-C speakers

We have access to few information sources about speakers who reach level C in FFL. The first such source pertains to students who pass the official certification exams in French (DALF C1, DALF C2 and the TCF (“Test de connaissance du français” or Test of French Knowledge) levels 7 and 8, but these statistical data (age, sex, linguistic and geographic origins, profession, etc.) are primordially a reflection of the attractiveness of our language in migratory terms (Mediterranean Basin, Eastern Europe) and of its social value in certain contexts (employability, mobility, money market, visa, etc.).

The second source consists of the work of acquisition theorists who have focused on the advanced levels. Generally comparative (L1/L2), the studies on the acquisition of grammar enable us to list certain capacities pertaining to the advanced levels (Véronique *et al.*, 2009). For example, we will sustain that, unlike lower-level learners of French, advanced-level ones are able to:

- acquire the gender marker, particularly in specific contexts of adjective agreement.
- handle anaphoric relationships, even in cases of dislocation or double pronominalization.
- master coreferential values in imperfect aspects.
- insert prepositions correctly.

In the sociolinguistic domain, the learner can use standard marked variants, but it would appear difficult for him/her to go beyond this threshold and master native-speaker use of broader registers that include non-standard variants (Lyster, 1994). We will also sustain that no survey has been able to establish an age limit beyond which the C-level listening/speaking competencies would be unattainable, outside the normal language-development stages (Schlyter, 1997, Gayraud et Martinie, 2004, Lenart 2006).

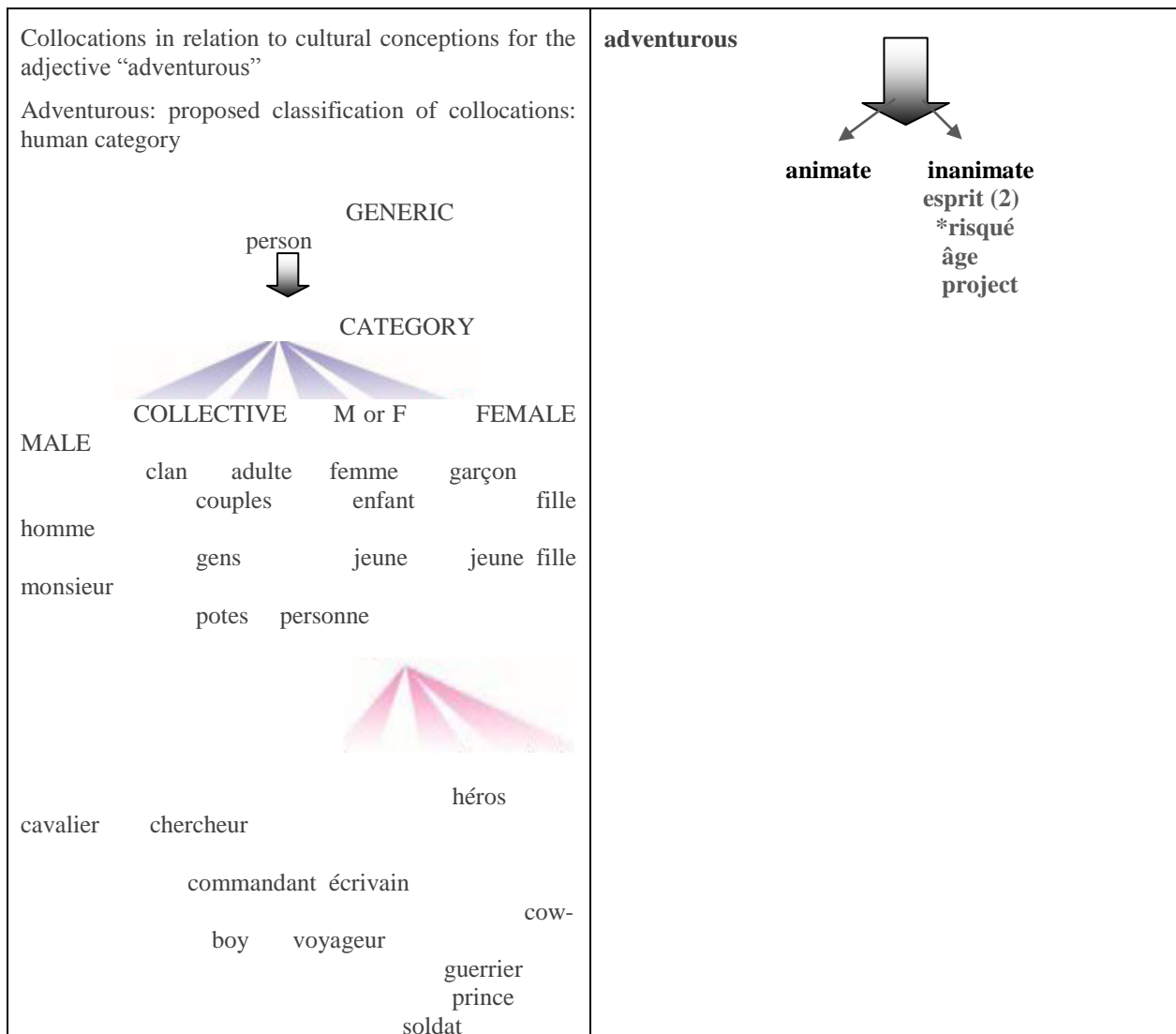
Next, in order to round out these data, having likewise focused on what teaching specialists generally expected at these levels, we then carried out first a diachronic, and then a synchronic, study of the different available methods or exercise types, and also of the different official examinations that exists at these levels, both in French and in other foreign languages, finding that the advanced levels have long been associated with knowledge about, and mastery of, a certain factual body of expert learned knowledge about both the language (dictation, logical analysis, vocabulary, etc.) and the country to which it pertains (civilization, literature). This conception more or holds true, depending on the countries in question, with significant variations in the contents of the different official language examinations.

A comparative multilingual study of the Council of Europe’s exemplification of oral-production levels further refines these variations. Based on the stipulation identification of key words that made it possible to establish classifications for speakers in 5 different languages in a benchmarking seminar held in 2007<sup>1</sup> the CIEP (“Centre International d’Etudes Pédagogiques” or International Center for Pedagogical Studies) in Sèvres, this analysis lists the common features among level-C speakers:

<b>RANGE</b>	<b>ACCURACY</b>	<b>FLUENCY</b>	<b>INTERACTION</b>	<b>COHERENCE</b>
Varied, refined lexical repertoire, conveying finer shades of meaning precisely to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate	Insignificant errors: correct syntax, even in complex sentences, coherent grammatical control and	Some tension. Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, switching register and using	Meaningful pauses and expressive intonation. Interacts with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal cues. Carries on the	Can create discourse making frequent use of a variety of organizational patterns and subtly introduced idiomatic

<sup>1</sup> (The source for all these commentaries is: [http://www.ciep.fr/es/publi\\_evalcert/dvd-productions-orales-cecrl/docs](http://www.ciep.fr/es/publi_evalcert/dvd-productions-orales-cecrl/docs)).





This analysis would seem to indicate that non-native speakers of French set up far fewer collocations than native speakers of French for a given base, in terms both of amount and of diversity. Certain non-native speakers of French even proposed unsuitable terms – something that never occurred in the case of native French speakers. This analysis leads one to believe that vocabulary is composed, to no small extent, of shared knowledge and representations based on ready-made word strings to which non-native speakers do not always have access. This would seem to confirm the breadth of continuum C2, at the very least in the specific domains of lexical scope and mastery.

### Proposed specifications for the French pertaining to levels C1 and C2 of the *Framework*

#### From the description of discourse genres to the recording of forms

After Bakhtine (1984: 285), we hypothesize that "...the forms of the language and the forms pertaining to different types of enunciation -i.e. the different discourse genres- are experienced, and enter our consciousness, jointly without the close linkage between them being broken"; it turns out that the speaker is not defined solely by his/her multilingual competence -understood as the ability to communicate linguistically and interact in two languages- but also by his/her discursive repertoire – i.e. by the ability, which varies according to the speaker and the language-learning stage that he/she has reached, of using the different genres of verbal communication, employing them according to need.

Hence the specification of this socio-discursive behavior (Bronckart, 1996) becomes the main prerequisite for identifying the discourse genres that could typify levels C1 and/or C2 in terms of the potential contexts of language use. Since the discourse genres are characterized by ethnolinguistic regularities or ways of speaking and writing that are adopted and legitimized by the language communities in question, they can also be equally well described in terms of content as in terms of (linguistic, social and cultural) constraints. Therefore we are not looking for THE level-C SPEAKER with ideal competence in the set of potential fields of language use, but, rather, for level-C SPEAKERS who are competent in certain domains and contexts, and, in this regard, share the point of view of the German-speaking team (and subsequently of the English-speaking team), which deems the notion of speaker profile to lie at the center of all classificatory endeavors.

The specification that we propose is based on the building of a model of the language described in the *Framework* (:16-18) and on the work of Bachman (1990), who distinguished between:

General individual competencies:

- Knowledge
- Know-how
- Learning ability
- Existential skills

Linguistic-communication competencies:

- Linguistic competence
- Sociolinguistic competence
- Pragmatic competence

Oral and written language activities:

- Reception
- Comprehension
- Interaction
- Mediation

We deem it necessary to point out that, at the present stage, this model, which itself is based on the work of Canale and Swain (1979), isolates the multilingual and multicultural competence that the *Framework* does, nevertheless, describe (129). Inspired by the work of Paradis (1997), the approach that we advocate does, however, assume that the mastery of several languages is probably not achieved by the superimposition or juxtaposition of different competences, but, rather, as a single, composite complex competence on which the user can draw in order to build his/her discourse repertoires. Although no model allows us, today, to categorically assert that this is a matter of a life skill or a linguistic-communication competence (Byram, 2003), nevertheless it seems to us that intercultural competence is a major trait in level-C speakers, and consequently we propose a specific description of it.

### **Discourse genres specific to level C**

Even if the level-C speaker/learner is seen as being able to use the language in every type of situation, the effort necessary to achieve this level of proficiency leads us to think the relationship between him/her and the target language or its receptor community or communities makes it possible to specify a certain number of situations and contexts of use distinct from those pertaining to the previous levels. Settled in a French-speaking country, the speaker/learner can have access to French in every personal, public, professional or education sphere. It will vary according to the situation and depending on his/her life plan and the status resulting from it, the extent to which s/he ventures into professional spheres (expatriate employee, diplomat, immigrant, journalist, etc.) or educational circles (pupil in a junior or senior high school, university student, teacher, etc.), and his/her personal situation (married, exiled from his/her home country, etc.)

Based on this brief contextual analysis, we have established a set of specific discourse genres, to be placed back-to-back with the *Framework* scales, of which the following is an extract:

<p><b>Listening comprehension</b></p>	<p>Long, complex, argumentative speeches (proselytizing and political discourse, sermons, exposés, talks, teachers' courses, thesis defenses, legal indictments, argument and declarations).</p>
<p><b>Reading</b> to obtain information and argue</p>	<p>Daily press or newspapers (journals, weeklies, monthlies...) both on-line and in printed form: headings, sub-headings, summaries, bylines, introductory paragraphs, first pages, section headings, international, national, regional or local news: politics, society, economics, arts and entertainment, science, sport. Maps, signs, sketches, numerical and statistical information, brief news, editorials, notices, points of view, reports, conversations, interviews, miscellanea, readers' letters, classified ads, weather, stock ratings, TV programming, household matters, horoscopes, cartoons, humorous drawings, publicity, sponsored articles, surveys, sports, satirical articles, other publications such as women's, children's, teenage and specialized magazines. Specialized articles (cars, science, arts, history, archeology, science, esoteric matters...), guidebooks, advice on diet, beauty care, personal relationships, family matters, work, vacations, gardening, decoration, hobbies. Specialized scientific publications: medicine, ophthalmology, neurosurgery, linguistics, livestock, etc. Dictionaries, encyclopedias, language dictionaries, manuals, text books, monographs, summaries, travel-guides, aide-memoirs, précis, tracts. Proceedings of symposia or congresses, colloquiums, studies, research, papers, theses, memoirs, essays, book jackets, morals, syllogisms, soliloquies, tautologies, memoirs, chronicles, journals, biographies, personal diaries.</p>
<p><b>Oral interaction</b> Discussions and formal meetings</p>	<p>Balance sheets, participation in general assemblies, political meetings (at the local or national level), partners' meetings or militant gatherings, international meetings, diplomatic encounters (bilateral or multilateral), business meetings, boards of examiners, team meetings, debates, court hearings and/or formal hearings.</p>
<p><b>Oral production</b> Switching smoothly between speaking and listening</p>	<p>Sermons, legal indictments and pleading, exhortatory speeches, orders (military or to a class), public speeches to familiar or friendly listeners, thanks, vows, toasts, best wishes, expressing sympathy, condolences, laudatory remarks. Public communication with professional listeners: political (borough council, local or national assemblies, political-party or union meetings), militant gatherings (of religious groups, unions or associations), participations in organized debates, lengthy interventions in meetings, proselytizing speeches (electoral campaigns, sermons, militant speeches, union meetings). Teachers' courses, talks, videoconferences, first-hand accounts, dramatic monologues, recitals, sustained reading out loud (in class or on a stage), radio broadcasts, recorded messages, soliloquies, prayers, etc.</p>

A level-C speaker should, then, be capable of attaining the linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociolinguistic mastery pertaining to each of the discourse genres described, within their communities and contexts of use. In view of the above remarks, we will now proceed, based on the existing descriptions of these discourse genres, to establish a set of forms in accordance with the structure described above and focusing exclusively on those that do not appear in the B2 specifications.

**Regarding argumentative intention and its illocutionary institutionalization: a descriptive approach to functions.**



The discourse genres make use of certain fixed functions which underpin them. For example, in horoscopes one finds predictions, warnings or advice.

For example, it is clear from the above chapters that argumentation is the common denominator of various discourse genres such as legal pleading and debate, which one logically finds in the official European examinations. While this function is clearly not the only one characterizing level C (we have likewise analyzed other perlocutionary and illocutionary functions such as narrating, describing and summarizing), it nevertheless serves very well to illustrate our approach.

Argumentative discourse does not, strictly speaking, seek to prove anything; it rarely provides evidence, does not demonstrate anything, and does not really adhere to the principles of logical reasoning. When a speaker says "the barometer has dropped, so it's going to rain", the value of "so" is not the same as in a syllogism. The relevance of this reasoning has to do with knowledge about the world that might otherwise take the form of a statement such as "My knee aches, so it's going to rain", or "The clouds are coming in from the sea; it's going to rain", etc. "So arguing has to do with giving reasons for this or that conclusion" (J. Moeschler, 1985: 46), and the validity of an argument will depend on how forceful it is perceived to be. The *Framework* holds that the ability to argue is acquired starting at level B in situations of sustained monologue (:):

<b>SUSTAINED MONOLOGUE: arguing (e.g. in a debate)</b>	
C2	No descriptor available.
C1	No descriptor available.
B2	Can develop an argument methodically stressing the meaningful points and elements. Can develop a clear argument, elaborating on and supporting his/her points of view with secondary arguments and relevant examples. Can logically link his/her arguments. Can explain his views on a problem citing the advantages and disadvantages of different options.

To sustain this hypothesis, it helps to accept that discourse genres such as sermon, political discourse or legal indictment pertain to this level. The analysis that we have made of corpora and FFL methods appears to indicate that our aim is an ambitious one in didactic terms, and a reductive one in descriptive terms. The mastery of argumentation cannot, indeed, be limited to the clear and relevant linkage of points of view and meaningful examples, and even less to monologue situations. Furthermore, since the *Framework* (:52) tends to specify the argumentative potential of speakers in solely terms of their ability to prioritize arguments (salient points, points of detail, secondary arguments, examples, etc.), we, for our part, suggest that it is also necessary to specify the discourse choices that the speaker is capable of making, taking account, within the more enormous framework of a theory of enunciation, of the fact that discourse meaning is built around a set of instructions that enable us to identify the way the argument is going and predict the act's conclusion.

These choices can also have a bearing on the decision to resort to axiological arguments that function at the level of meaning (*car/old jalopy; home/home sweet home*) and may depend on adding specific meaning reinforcers (e.g. the French pejorative suffixes *ard* and *asse*), or on a set of clichés or commonplaces pertaining to a particular discourse community (and hence exclusive) whose essential function is to posit a certain number of causal relations, connectors or subjectivity-adding features in the language. Hence the apparent contradiction of an enunciation such as *I like bad movies* consists in the idea that one should not like bad things, though all we have to do to render the said adjective acceptable is to express doubts about the axiological value of the adjective, saying "I like **bad** films" (which can be accompanied by a certain type of intonation when spoken), and thus changing the meaning to something like "I like movies that the general public considers bad, since I don't agree with the almighty general public".

Finally, good arguers are well aware that all arguments are defined in terms of effective or potential counter-arguments; resorting to connectors can anticipate their value, as in the answer "Even Achille came!", to the question "How was your evening?", which sets the stage for an appreciative polyphonic rendering of "Achille".

Since he must be able to facilitate a discussion in a working group, motivate a group of speakers to pursue common aims, help clarify points of view and opinions, motivate people to seek consensus, or ensure that his own arguments prevail, a level-C speaker should be able to:

- master connector grading to suit his argumentative intentions.
- resort to the use of such argumentative operators as axiological statements.
- master the institutional rules of argumentation (obligation to conclude, commonplaces, etc.) - be aware of, and resort to, the implicit potentials of these elements (axiological arguments, operators, connectors, etc.).

This approach implies a much more extensive vision of the concept of argumentation than the one underpinning the *Framework* – one extending to the very illocutionary act that we deem to be of an institutional nature insofar as the transformations that it brings about derive from respecting or violating the rights, obligations and norms that define the institution of language. The work of Austin (1970) and Searle (1972) have made it possible to establish the following felicity conditions:

- propositional content that indicates the nature of the speech act: proposition/assertion, propositional function (closed question), speech act (promise) or interlocutionary act (order, request).
- the speaker's knowledge (or interpretation) of the abilities, interests and intentions of the interlocutor and also the nature of the rapport between the interlocutors.
- a psychological state in the speaker that indicates illocutionary sincerity (e.g. to assert means *to believe*, and *to order* means *to wish*).
- an obligation on the part of the speaker or interlocutor regarding the enunciation of speech the act in question, which is in keeping with the illocutionary aim.

Whether they be representative (assertions of an informative nature), directive (orders, requests, questions, requests for permission), commissive (promises, offers), expressive (congratulations, excuses, thanks, complaints, greetings) or declarative (declarations, condemnations, namings), these acts involve intentional aspects (linked to the speaker's illocutionary intentions), conventional (linked to conditions of use and the type of acts that can be inferred based on an "ideal" conception of the linguistic activity, shared to a greater or lesser extent by the interlocutors) which constitute complex constraints. "The intention linked to a language act or a discourse is never completely accessible, and the means whereby we are able to recognize the illocutionary meaning of an enunciation are often determined by non-linguistic factors such as context, perceived state of credulity, etc." (J. Moeschler, 1985: 33). For example, added to literal interpretation (or formulation) is a set of possible implicit meanings. Three types of statements carrying underlying or implicit discourse meaning convey implicit intentional meaning:

- a purely illocutionary type, when the speaker carries out an implicit requesting act with the help of an assertion (e.g. when a host says "Wow, it's already midnight" as way of asking his guests to leave).
- an ironic type where the value of the statement is opposite to the asserted content (e.g. when the abused employee complains about his boss saying "Thank you sir: you're really very kind").
- a gradual type where a quantitative marker modifies an assertion, augmenting or diminishing it (e.g. when we say "This book is a bit difficult" when referring to a work that we frankly find hard to understand).

These enunciations constitute deliberate calculations by the speaker, who can, at all times, deny (or cancel) the implicit speech act that he has performed without changing the literal meaning of the statement, which enables him/her to face a conflictive situation without losing face. However, they can also result in blunders (the statement "This soup needs salt" can be interpreted as a reproach or a request). The level-C speaker, who is capable of understanding these types of hidden meanings, can equally well

become aware of his/her mistake and remedy it by asserting that this wasn't what s/he meant. This kind of interpretative calculation, posited by H.P. Grice in his conversational maxims, rests on two hypotheses:

- a cooperative principle which stipulates that the conversational contribution of each participant should match the attempts of the other interlocutors depending on the stage in the conversation and the aims and directionality of the exchange.
- four contributory principles: quantity, quality, relevance and clarity.

For J.C. Anscombre and O. Ducrot (1981), and from the enunciative point of view, linguistic marking constitutes the footprints of a discourse law that allows us to infer implicit meaning (thus recourse to the verb *be able* often conveys more of a requesting meaning), and we believe that it is useful to include, among the functional competencies described for level-C speakers, an ability to identify the subjective components of language (euphemisms, register switching, enunciative polyphony, etc.) and use them as needed. Naturally, this competence could not be achieved in a foreign language were it not present in the native one, and this fact constitutes an important feature in the profile definition of this/these speaker(s).

This expanded conception of argumentation, and even more expanded conception of functional competence itself, enables us to structure the research further research into the specific grammatical, lexical and sociolinguistic specifications of level C. Nevertheless, in addition to the commonplaces already mentioned, argumentation, whether it be in monologue form (political speech, sermon, indictment, talk, etc.) or interactive (conversations in bars, debates, meetings, etc.) has a specific cultural element. Its models are not universal and we must complete this specification by taking stock of its ethnolinguistic dimensions.

Hence the discourse of proof is heterogenous. After C. Plantin (2005: 84), it performs the alethic function of establishing the truth of uncertain or contested facts or relationships, the explicative and epistemological function of increasing and affirming knowledge, the rhetorical-psychological function of inspiring confidence and convincing, the dialectic function of reaching conclusions, and the social function of eliminating doubt and questioning by founding itself in justified beliefs or legitimate consensus.

In the Western world, hypothetical-deductive reasoning based on axiom versus theorem appears to be considered an ideal evidentiary form. The validity of an affirmation is based on the validity of its premises, the elimination of certain forms of interference or even the form of conceptualization adopted. However, it finds its expression in a discourse genre with rules that are mutable and conventional, the flouting of which can result in de facto refutation by the community. Thus, in scientific language, the footsteps of enunciation and interlocution seem to be disappearing, along with certain appreciative verbs, while synonyms or fuzzy terms are being replaced by less polyphonic, more stable terms that are based on general construal. Personal dimensions are eradicated in order to confer *ad verecundiam* authority on the argument (J. Locke, 1690): French edition, 1989), imbuing the speaker with a certain degree of dignity that discourages contradiction.

This is not the case in all societies. In the Islamic theological-judicial tradition, in the Tibetan codification governing argumentative debate, and in numerous African speech traditions, a very different view prevails. For example A.W. Khallaâf (1942 in C. Plantin, 2005:109) cites ten sources of argumentative legitimacy in the Moslem argumentative tradition: the Koran, tradition, consensus, analogical reasoning, the expert opinion of a judge, common interest, customs, the presumption of continuity, the laws of the monotheist peoples and the opinion of the companions of the prophet. This stress on exegesis entails a correct reading of the holy book, which results in particular attention being paid to linguistic and grammatical rules; it follows that the best argumentative inference is often deemed to be semantic inference, and that problems whose solution depends on monologue-based argumentative wisdom of Moslem speakers are solved based on a limited set of central cases, without any obligation to come up with generalized tenets.

Hence, the argumentative competence of level-C speakers can equally well be expressed in ethnolinguistic terms: i.e. an interpretive commonplace component, marking by ideological orientation, comprehension of long, complex fundamental texts, awareness and interpretation of the status of the protagonists and of the roles and relationships involved and what is at stake.

Having set out this analysis of pragmatic competence, we can use it as a basis for establishing the verbal contents that enable it to manifest itself.

### General and specific notions

The dictionary or thesaurus partially meet the challenge posed by a language's lexical continuum, but they mainly constitute useful didactic tools for achieving comprehension and mastering forms. An onomasiological approach based on semantico-referential categories enables us to index and classify lexical items into categories or sub-categories that allow us to contemplate the production of new means of consultation in keeping with the genres and functions specified (quantity and speed, or professions, ideas or economic realities). This is what was done in the preceding levels, though nevertheless with significant limitations, since the terms have still not been fully indexed, in all their multiple meanings, into separate categories.

At level C, this approach is not very feasible, unless one is prepared to imagine classification into finite semantic lists. This is what we set out to propose by specifying 8,000 locutions according to the categories already cited (Appendix 2), in order to provide with a tool that enables them to make good the deficit in the mastery of fixed idiomatic expressions observed when analyzing the corpus. This is impossible due to the single-morph terms, and we have proposed a specification of elements that would make it possible to build compound forms that can serve as performance indicators for the C levels: affixes, compound nouns, neologisms, abbreviations, etc.

Hence, for instance, a level-B speaker is sure to know the *-able* construction whereby s/he indicates that the action expressed by the verb can occur or be done (e.g. *eatable* = capable of being eaten, *likeable* = able to be liked), but, unlike a level-C speaker, does not know -if one can go by most of the text books examined- that certain constructions with *-able* are not possible: e.g. *\*abattable* [fellable], *\*accusable* [accusable] or *\*digérable* [digestable]. Unlike speakers at the preceding levels, a level-C speaker is aware of connotative value and can employ it for ending words depending on the suffixation: *-ir* meaning the entering of the subject or object into a given state (*jaunir* [to yellow], *blanchir* [to whiten], etc), *-ifier* or *-iser* to denote modicatory action (*amplifier* [to amplify], *égaliser* [to equalize], or *-iner* indicating reiteration (*piétiner* [to trample])). S/he knows the pejorative suffixes (*-asse*, *âtre*) that are so incompatible with scientific discourse, and also those denoting stability (*-lithique*, *oïde*, etc.).

We can, then, come up with a provisional specification of the affixes:

<b>B2:</b>	able to understand and use the suffixes that occur most frequently in his domain.
<b>C1:</b>	able to understand and use a wide variety of suffixes, including ones beyond his domain.
<b>C2:</b>	able to understand and use most suffixes; he infers their value and is masters their use.
<b>C2+:</b>	able to analyze suffixation rules and find equivalences in his/her mother tongue.

And this approach also allows us to classify affix forms:

Suffixes for the formation of pejorative or familiar adjectives	Example	Semantic classification
-asse	blondasse [insipidly fair-haired]	6.1.4 physical characteristics
-âtre	bleuâtre [bluish]	6.1.4 physical characteristics

-aud	-noiraud [swarthy]	6.1.4 physical characteristics
-dingue	-sourdingue [pejorative word for 'deaf' ], lourdingue [clumsy, oafish]	6.1.4 physical characteristics
-in	-blondin [fair-haired]	6.1.4 physical characteristics

The same approach has enabled us to specify the ability to understand/produce neologisms such as *ingénieur-qualité* [quality engineer] and *industrie-pilote* [pilot industry] to "satisfy the need for quick, effective communication between experts or people belonging to the same socio-professional group". (E. Kelemen, 1996: 54), based on truncations such as *prof* [teacher], *sous-off* [petty officer], *bac* [baccalaureate], *perm* [permanent employee], *mob* [mobile phone], *senass* [fantastic] or *aprém* [afternoon], or acronyms such as *HLM* [*Habitation à loyer modéré* or low-rent dwelling].

As in the case of foreign terms, recourse to accepted terms in contemporary French can produce a certain number of distinctive level-C indices that we have attempted to put together:

- Awareness that is implicit in C1 can become explicit in C2, since a word such as *kibboutz* [kibbutz] that still sounds foreign if only applied to a feature of a different civilization becomes Gallicized as soon as one can attach French affixes or suffixes to it: *volleyeur* [volleyball player] or *dribbler* [to dribble] or even a French plural marker, as in *speakers*, reporters.
- Implicit awareness, at level C, of the perlocutionary and connotative impact of keeping foreign-language plural forms such as *concerti*, *scenario*, *ladies*, *gentlemen* and so on, since they do not obey the rules for making French plurals.
- Understanding and production of neologisms based on inferences and foreign suffixations: *coaching*, *zapping*, *forcing*, *timing*, *engineering*, etc.
- The use of foreign terms as a rhetorical device for stressing modernity (to be *in* or to be a *has-been*) or being part of a community, either to provoke people or to talk jargon. As the lexicographer, L. Guilbert (1973:13) remarks, "...the purpose of a writer's using such a novel expression is to make his thoughts clear to the interlocutor - i.e. his/her public. It is, then, the speaker who creates the neologism, but he does so as a member of a community with the attention, whether avowed or not, of enriching communication. At one and the same time, the interlocutor is a party to this creation, since it is aimed at him/her. Hence, the formation of a neologism is not just an addition to the abstract system of *parole*, but also an individual act of speech pertaining to *langue*."

In terms of lexical mastery, the level-C1 speaker knows how to avoid the clumsiness of irritating repetition, using synonyms, referential pronoun structures or paraphrasing (hence s/he can use the word *peril* to avoid repeating the word *danger*, or the word *inattendu* [unexpected] instead of *imprévue* [unforeseen]). We will hypothesize that this speaker also masters the semantic variants of terms that are generally synonymous but not always interchangeable for semantic reasons (*impolis* [impolite], *malapris* [ill-mannered] or *insolent* [insolent]) or for morphological ones (*louer* [to praise], *louanger* [to flatter] but not *\*elogier* [to eulogize]). Likewise, s/he establishes a subtle link between synonymy and metaphor, having enough metalinguistic awareness to establish a link between *loup* [wolf] and *être cruel* [to be cruel] in expressions such as *L'homme est un loup pour l'homme* [Man is a wolf to his fellow man] or *L'homme est un être cruel pour l'homme* [Man is cruel to man].

The C2-level speaker is able to handle this (para)synonymy which works only in certain types of enunciations, while also being able to understand and establish global synonymy between a word and a phrase, something, as J. Rey-Debove (1978:121) remarks, works for every word: "Synonymy between two words is rare, but synonymy between a word and a paraphrase works for all words: dictionary definitions are a good example of this". In his technical domain, the C2-level speaker has command of the absolute synonymy of doublets derived from Greek or Latin: *ictère* [jaundice]/*hépatite* [hepatitis] or *archilèxème*

[archilexeme]/*hyperonyme* [hyperonym], or of synonymies deriving from diachronic evolution: *migraine* [migraine]/*céphalée* [cephalitis]. He also has mastery of synonymies between doublets stemming from the same Latin root that have entered common useage and ones with XVI<sup>th</sup>-century classical origins: *frêle* [frail]/*fragile* [fragile], *écouter* [listen]/*ausculter* [auscultate], etc., while being aware that, from the semantic point of view, they are not exactly the same and that the choice of terms has an impact in terms of the socio-cultural or stylistic parameters foreshadowed in C1, but mastered in C2.

For instance, this enables him/her to run through the items in the semantic filed pertaining to *ivresse* [drunkenness]: *ivre*, *soul*, *enivré*, *bourré*, *cuit*, *pété*, *plein*, *rond*, etc., or being aware of taboo words: "...the word that society as a whole advises us to avoid due to a more or less conscious identification of the name with the 'thing' named" A. Niklas-Salimen, 1997: 112). Either *décéder* [expire] or *disparaître* [disappear] are preferable to the word *mourir* [die].

We think that the level-C speaker, unlike the level-B2 one, understands, and, at the C-2 level, adequately produces word plays, puns and other word games within a given discourse community. In context s/he is equally able to understand the coreferential meaning of the headlines in the satirical magazine, "Le Canard Enchaîné", or the double meanings of a night-club comedian (as we have been able to verify by citing the phrase "la politique du pitre" [buffoon politics] and other puns to certified level-C speakers), and is also capable of using language poetically, employing metonymy, transposition, synecdoche and other stylistic devices; in a bar, s/he understands expressions such as *Le jambon beurre a renversée sa bière* [The ham and butter has spilled his beer] and, at level C2, probably also has an awareness of metalanguage that enables him to pretty well understand the construction and probably produce a correct equivalent in his/her own language.

In the grammatical field, his/her command of genre is an interesting indicator, as the studies in language acquisition have pointed out. In the case of advanced-level learners, the performance of a complex verbal task, especially an oral one, seems to lead to a cognitive overload that makes the handling of genre especially unstable. Based on a corpus analysis of native-English at the advanced and intermediate levels, M. Prodeau and C. Carlo (2002:170) hypothesize that "...the loss of genre ...[would be due] ...to cognitive overload at the moment of using it: planning operations should be carried out together with formulation operations and this leads the non-native speaker to choose a genre by default". Furthermore, we note that non-native speakers often become perplexed, as do many native-speakers, when faced with certain nouns such as *entracte*, *esclandre*, *orbite* and *épitète* that begin with a vowel, only being able to clarify matters through experience or recourse to a reference book. The same is true for proper-noun gender -*Paris est beau* or *Paris es belle*- or for terms such as *mannequin* which can denote a shop-window dummy or a woman, or *sentinelle* which can denote a watchtower or a man, as well as *canaille* [rabble/scoundrel], *crapule* [dissolute mob/scoundrel] or *fripouille* [rotter/riffraff], or *grenouille* [toad/bigoted churchwoman], not to mention the husband of the *grenouille*, who is not a *crapaud* [toad].

Finally, in the area of morphosyntax, s/he is aware that one does not say \**Quelle maison carrée!* [meaning something like "What a square house!"], but that *Quelle splendide maison!* [what a square splendid house] is acceptable, meaning that s/he is capable of understanding that *carré* is utterly objective while *splendide* is essentially subjective, and that one but not the other can be used as a superlative expression. From this we deduce that the perception of classification is also a good indicator of level-C competence.

### **Mastery of form, grammar and spelling**

Just as we did for lexis, we have attempted to define the set of complex language features that might denote level-C competence and would not be present in level B2. Here we will limit ourselves to giving a few examples on which our hypotheses regarding specifications are based.

With regard to verbs, a level-C speaker can choose between indicative and subjunctive *-je ne crois qu'il viendra/vienne-* based on his/her interpretation of the circumstantial dependent clause. He knows archaic forms such as *aux Dieux ne plaise, fasse de ciel*, etc., or assertive one such as *soit un triangle isocèle*,

knows how to substantivize the infinitive *-le dire du locuteur devient parole-* and knows the complex rules that govern statements such as *Il se laisse guider PAR son intuition, il se fait aimer DE tous*; he masters the feature of aspect and grasps that the choice between present-perfect and imperfect depends on how s/he wishes to depict the event in question. S/he knows how to transpose tenses, recounting past events in the present tense using sentences such as *Le 14 juillet 1789, les Parisiens prennent la Bastille. Ils guillotinent leur roi quelques mois plus tard.*

The "handling of punctuation" (V. Dahlet, 2003:19) at level C is an operation that has more to do with syntactic considerations than with semantic ones, and in this regard constitutes a relatively observable level indicator: the use of capital letters in sequential forms, the insertion of sings or delimiters in dialogue, the metonymic use of quotation marks, etc.

When using pronouns, s/he is able to manage endophora, double-pronoun and infinitive forms, and even dative forms such as *Il me lui a fichu une de ces claques*, or hypocoristic forms such as *Alors, on a fait la fête?*, while, in the area of cataphora and anaphora his/her use of stress placement enables him/her to differentiate between *Jean a aussi bu une bière* (another person has drunk a beer) and *Jean a aussi bu une bière* (Jean has drunk something else).

A level-C speaker is also able to make use of the phonological, historical, etymological, morphosyntactic, morpho-lexical and discriminative features of French in order to spell the words that s/he uses correctly, though s/he is not necessarily a champion speller (though such people do exist), he can spell a proper noun such as *Don Juan* that is used as a common noun, pluralize or gender-mark compound nouns –*des robes rouges* as against *des robes rouge sombre* [red dresses vs. dark-red dresses], *des timbres-postes*, *des nouveau-nés-* and can also distinguish between *fatigant* and *fatigant*, *convergent* and *convergeant*, to give just a few examples.

An appendix is attached summarizing these specifications. From our research, we conclude that an upper-level grammar is not only feasible but also desirable, so long as functional and notional contributions are stressed so as to make it clear that an action-based didactic approach cannot be satisfied with a descriptive focus.

### **The sociolinguistic competence of the level-C speaker**

Since we describe him/her as a skilful speaker capable of linguistic flexibility and careful to adjust to the codes of the socio-discursive community in which s/he settles, the level-C speaker possesses the acute sociolinguistic competence that we have defined on 5 levels:

- social-relationship markers
- politeness rules
- expressions of popular wisdom
- register differences
- dialects and accents

Thus, for instance, the level-C speaker perceives and makes use of the effects of the familiar use of the pronoun *tu* in a company, adopts language and gestures -accents, utterances, loudness, length of sentences and pauses, implicitness of responses, gestures and facial expression, posture, etc.- in keeping with the knowledge, beliefs and values that s/he attributes to his/her interlocutors. S/he takes stock of social-class markers, with their induced values, inverse silent-*e* marking *-les mec eud' la rue-* incorrect liaison –*ceux qui-zont dit ça-* or the simplification of complex consonant groups *-entre quat zieux-* and is able to code-switch in accordance with discourse norms (which we also describe in the detailed classifications). Likewise, we hypothesize that this competence is playing an ever greater role in the definition of the *Framework's* contents the nearer one gets to the upper levels. This seems to us to be all the more so in the domain of intercultural relations.

### **Intercultural competence**

A grammatical, phonetic or pragmatic error committed by a non-native speaker, or more or less identified as such by his/her interlocutors, very seldom results in serious misunderstanding. If the error is sociolinguistic in nature, for example the unfortunate use of the familiar *tu* pronoun, the misunderstanding can have more serious consequences, involving police intervention for example. However, if the error is of an ethnolinguistic kind -a behavioral one involving violation of personal space, walking along the street hand-in-hand with someone of the same sex, or interpretative one such as construing a social trait in the light of particular values (as in the case of the recent problems regarding dress codes in public places), the mutual misunderstanding that can result from this "hidden dimension" (E.T. Hall, 1971) can lead to deep rifts that a certified level-C speaker should be able to anticipate and, if possible, deal with.

"Learning a language also means being able to perceive class systems whereby a social community functions and, hence, anticipating what will happen in a given situation (i.e. which behaviors should be adopted in order to set up a suitable relationship with the protagonists in the situation", writes L. Porcher (1981). Thus we consider that communicative competence in a foreign language includes the intercultural competence (defined in terms of the know-how and existential skills that favor contacts and exchanges with different cultures, allowing appreciation and development in such diversity) that allows a user of the language to identify, understand and accept the workings, whether explicit or not, of the discourse communities in which s/he evolves, in order to set his/her own cultural, discourse, pragmatic, linguistic and sociolinguistic competencies, which will enable him/her to comprehend and produce the texts that will best fulfill his/her intentions or meet his/her needs.

We divide this cultural competence into five components:

- action-based, defining a socio-pragmatic ability to act
- ethnolinguistic, permitting the envisagement of a "verbal living together"
- relational, defining the verbal attitudes and competencies required in order to suitably handle interactions relating to cultural and social matters
- educational, having to do with evaluative processes that can set in motion ethnocentric or acculturative reactions.

Theory-wise, we are dealing with transversal generic dimensions that are independent of a given language. For its part, the American Association of Teachers of French (ATTF) hypothesized the existence of general components, rounded out by a dimension focusing on the French language in particular, entitled Knowledge of French-speaking Societies, and based on two major axes, "the ability to observe and analyze a culture" and "communication in a verbal and non-verbal culture, in *Understanding Culture* in 1996.

The temptation to resort, like the ATTF, to a description focusing on the particular traits of a society, can be very great, but as G. Neuner points out (in Byram *et al*, 2003: 59), "...such a description runs the risk of forming a somewhat static view of the society, conceiving of it as a set of hierarchically structured cultural, social and personal systems. In such a conception of the social system, norms and values are defined in terms of the dominant cultural system, then being transferred to the social system as institutions, and subsequently to the personal system, which governs individual action and behavior in terms of established rules. [...] in contrast with this position, the social theory of symbolic interaction distinguishes between the social identity that we acquire as members of a specific group and our individual identity."

Given that "...each person is equipped with a series of identities [...] that s/he activates either sequentially or simultaneously according to context" (S. Gruzinski, 2001: 12), we prefer to define the level-C speaker as a cultural ferryman capable of asserting, and even lending significance to, the reality built from the understanding gained from living in, and understanding, his/her own native culture, and of doing the same thing in the target culture. Not at all Utopian or purist, this approach, which willingly separates values and competencies, enables us to divide cultural competence into the aforesaid 5 dimensions with type descriptors:



*"Is capable of irreversibly adopting target-society behaviors and thoughtfully managing a social and cultural identity consisting of multiple relationships".*

Conversely, we have not attempted to describe the cultural traits that could characterize French society/the French societies. We prefer to retain the capacity to *read the historicity of places*, rather than specifying a historic socio-cultural knowledge that would allow a given user to understand, for instance, reference to the two world wars in honor of whose dead we have built monuments.

### Learning strategies

If we conceive of strategies as "the most commonly used way to mobilize and balance the resources of a language and make use of strategies and operations in order to meet communicative demands in context and successfully tackle the task of in the most economic way possible" (*Framework*: 48) , no in-depth study will enable us to make an exhaustive list, or even to imagine a taxonomy of learner levels.

At the very most, we can refer to studies of "good learners" and acquisition research into the cognitive development of learners. "Good learners", those who succeed, have been the subject of various studies in the West. One knows that they are able to adopt an active approach to the learning task, to understand that the target language is a communicative tool whose system differs from that of their own language, which entails a certain degree of empathy towards the object of their studies, and that they are concerned about attaining correct usage of the language code. One also knows that they are able to meet the expectations of the system, and that a good learner can only be an effective speaker in the domains in which the system has prepared him/her.

The level-C speaker does not always learn French in a controlled learning context and this description can be rounded out by three levels. Certain competencies in the level descriptions:

- metacognitive: anticipation, planning, general attention, selective attention, self-management, self-regulation, problem identification, self-evaluation.
- cognitive: repetition, resource use, classification, note-taking, deduction, induction, substitution, elaboration, summarizing, translation, knowledge transfer, inference.
- socio-affective: clarification, checking, cooperation, control of the emotions, self-reinforcement.

### Conclusion

1. Analysis both of the corpus and the structure and contents of the European level-C certifications enables us to establish a separating threshold between C1 and C2. It is based on this that the certifiers grant the C2 diploma. Yet, in the case of this level in French, it is clear that the specified continuum is much broader than that generally produced by C2 DALF candidates.
2. In order to take stock of this divide, which we suppose also occurs with other languages, it is useful to contemplate the specification of a C2+ level that will pertain to the most advanced social functions where the French language can, at one and the same time, an object of study and a relational vector (translator, interpreter, FFL specialist , writer of specialized essays in French, diplomat serving in our country, writer, etc.), but we do not deem it convenient to propose a level D.
3. What distinguishes the C levels from the B levels is a greater awareness of sociolinguistic and socio-cultural phenomena.

4. Nevertheless, while these sociolinguistic and socio-cultural phenomena are important, knowledge and pragmatic competence pertaining to the functions (argumentative, jussive, conversational, etc.), to verbal notions and forms (grammar, lexis, etc.) have been identified which differentiate level C from the preceding levels and enable us to justify the gap between C1, C2 and C2+.
5. Even if there is no scientific way of disproving the hypothesis that a speaker able to master the set of competencies and contents specified for a given level does exist, we should remember, especially in the case of levels C and C2+, that the notion of attaining total success in language learning is inconceivable, and that it hardly seems possible to achieve a homogeneity of competences according to language activity. These assertions make the notion of a profile that not only allows us to account not only for the heterogeneity and diversity of language users in the base, but also for user exit profiles after guided learning. It is by taking this heterogeneity into account that we can ensure the didactic feasibility of a given index in which the notion of an ideal speaker (even a native one) must be entertained circumspectly.
6. Acquisition research would appear to corroborate the existence of a threshold, hard for speakers of French as a foreign language to cross, that would distinguish them from native or second-language speakers; for instance, this threshold manifests itself in the mastery of the substantive genre. Our study of collocations appears to indicate, even if it was not carried out on representative samples, that level-C speakers generate much fewer semantic linkages than native ones.
7. Given the above, it is impossible to envisage level-C2+ guided learning, even if certain competencies (above all the socio-cultural ones) appear to be out of reach without an at least partial immersion in context.
8. It is all the more possible to observe the constituents of the C levels and evaluate them.
9. New rapprochements between research into the *Framework* and research into acquisition are desirable and will be of more interest to the extent that they validate our hypotheses with regard to the C levels. To supplement the orientation chosen by the authors of *English Profile*, who analyze an enormous corpus of productions at these levels, we might, for example, imagine, based on the proposals of Devitt (2004:9-15), subjecting speakers indentified as being at the C levels by the certifiers to the tests habitually used by acquisition researchers.
10. Since they are easy to implement and offer the comfort of consultation where users need it, the French indexes should be made available on-line. They should be open to regional variations that are still largely underexploited and be linked to the other European projects.
11. Level C2 is probably unstable; a given speaker may attain it, then lose it if he does not practice the language regularly, or if s/he finds him/herself in a discourse context (regional or social variation) different from the one s/he is accustomed to. Yet s/he might not lose the acquired meta-linguistic predisposition enabling him/her to adapt to new contexts quickly.

A summary of our specification hypotheses, in the form of competence descriptors illustrated by examples from the corpuses studied should enable the community to validate (or not) the contents in question. A panel of 20 teachers who have proposed certain modifications (from Mexican branch of the IFAL and the Sèvres International Center for Pedagogic Studies. The following is a brief illustration:

	B2	C1	C2	C2+
affixes	Can understand the general meaning of words relating to his/her domain and to general themes based on their affixes. Can make suitable use of the most frequent affixes.	Can understand the exact meaning of a large range of words based on their affixes, including ones outside his/her specialist domain. Can use them adequately.	Can understand the meaning and value of most compound words based on their affixes. Can use them suitably and master their effects on recipients.	Can analyze suffixation rules and find equivalents for his/her native language, as well as creating new terms.

### **B2 illustration.**

"Our association is convinced that it is **essential** to preserve traditions of **diversity** without eschewing **modernity**". "The **transportation** of goods should not cause ecological damage".

### **C1 illustration**

"The idealization of modernity is dangerous". "the building of a rich heritage is intangible". "an inexhaustible source of beauty". "This association **satisfactorily** shows that this cooperation is indispensable".

### **C2 illustration**

"Our association is convinced that it is essential traditions of diversity without eschewing modernity". "The transportation of goods should not cause ecological damage".

### **C3 illustration**

"our **irresponsibility** leads to **ecocidal** overconsumption". "**Bioclimatology** brings precious benefits"

## **General Conclusions**

P. Dahlet (2008, in P. Martínez, D. Moore, V. Spaeth: 85) says, referring to the notion of native speaker that "it seems to be saturated with stereotypes inherited from the Enlightenment and rationalism, resting on the dogma of a language separate from all others, the myth of a pure, stable, authentic, incorruptible speech monad". Doubtless this attempt at specifying the C levels of the *Common European Reference Framework for Languages*, which builds a linguistic and didactic monolingual framework for French, is not exempt from vain seeking after the holy grail.

Nevertheless, the C-level speaker, above all others, has achieved, in his/her learning of French, a transformation that is not in keeping with the univalent, functional orientation of conventional approaches. S/he has cut the umbilical cord tying him/her to the comfortable certainties of the mother tongue, which nourish him with a sole value in the best of all possible worlds, and has managed to build a vision that is plural and unstable, but always in movement due to the effects of the instances of speech that surround it.

This competence has not been specified, and no descriptor can summarize it. The often idealistic vision that we often had of multilingualism as a creator of peace and development lends strength to our didactic project. However, it should not make us forget that it is not the product of a balanced project where knowledge and competencies would be built side by side in both the foreign and the native language. A didactic project that sets out to master all the contents specified in this research would lend strength to the noxious idea of a happy, ideal multilingualism, blocking out the processes and seeing only the results.

Since we have sustained that most speakers can only partially attain the levels specified in one or other of the language activities described, or pertaining to one or other of the communicative competencies, we also sustain, in this our prospective and provisional conclusion, the idea that the speaker cannot be envisioned as a person who transcends the linguistic and mental barriers that ordinary mortals cannot breach. Since borders can also invite us to travel, the real acquired competence of the level-C speaker should be an ability to understand the other without diluting the self. This "language transformation" (P.Dahlet, 2009) is at the heart of this research.

Thus the building of this monolingual framework can only be envisaged based on a comprehensive language-teaching vision, and new descriptive tools, this time multilingual ones, should soon see the light of day, failing which the old demons could get out of the bottle and gain the upper hand again.

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