



## ***Inglés de Negocios***

### **The Development of Independent Language Learning (ILL)**

In the 1980's educational language researchers became interested in looking for new ways to teach a foreign language. In some countries students were studying a language for 6 years in high school without much gain, and then even after studying the same language at the university level for four or six more semesters, they still couldn't speak it very well.

Up to this point the emphasis in language teaching had been put on grammar or a structural approach. Researchers began experimenting with Communicative Language Learning (CLL). In this approach students interacted with each other speaking and listening in practical, everyday situations. Then in the 1990's teachers began using an eclectic approach with a combination of the two above methods, and others as well.

Independent Language Learning (ILL) is an example of the eclectic method but with the student in charge - it's where a learner chooses learning strategies and activities that are successful for them. For example, students can combine various aspects of a structural grammar approach with CLL as it suits them. ILL can both be used when you're taking a course for extra practice or studying completely on your own.

#### **An Important Language Learning Ladder**

An important event for ILL occurred in 1996 when the Council of Europe completed the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). For the first time the language learning field had (1) a comprehensive list of skills that someone needs to master to improve their foreign language ability, (2) as well as a list that even children could understand and relate to.

The CEFR is a language scale/ladder that divides the European languages in use today into three basic levels of difficulty (A1-2; B1-2; & C1-2) with a number of learning objectives for each level. It also divides

the languages into five categories – reading, writing, listening, spoken production and spoken interaction.

The learning objectives in the CEFR are translated into ‘I can do’ statements according to their level of difficulty and category. These statements describe what people do with a language. The learning objectives begin with ‘I Can...’. For example:

‘I can describe myself, my family, and other individuals in simple terms.’- A2. (Global Language Portfolio-1) I can explain my point of view on a proposed plan of action, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.’- B2’ (Global Language Portfolio-2)

The advent of the CEFR has changed language teaching and learning substantially. It enables students to do meaningful self-assessments and more accurately measure what they’ve learned and determine what they want to learn next. The self assessments are done by checking off language objectives under the different categories until they become too difficult to do, and then assign yourself that level of competence.

The CEFR is also used by many publishing companies, language researchers, and language teaching professionals as a basis for their texts, studies and curriculum.

### **The European Language Portfolio**

In 2001 another important event happened for ILL. This year the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe finished developing the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and began using it for studying the languages present in Europe today. The term ELP refers to both the portfolio itself and a language learning approach which uses the portfolio as a learning tool.

The language portfolio is used by teachers at all levels to help their students learn more independently and eventually autonomously. As its goal is self-reliance, it is an avenue towards ILL and ILL itself.

The ELP is used in the EU for all levels of education from grades 1-16 and adult education, and it is gaining in popularity around the world. Today the language portfolio under different names is being used in many parts of North America and to a certain extent in Japan. It’s also beginning to gain popularity in S. America in countries such as Columbia.

## **The Three Sections of the ELP**

First is the *Language Passport*, which is a summary a person's language abilities. In the case of the score on an international exam, it provides proof. In Europe people use a condensed version of the Passport as part of their Europass Language Passport. This document, the Europass CV, and several others form the 2012 European Skills Passport (ESP). The ESP is the Internet job application prerequisite for EU citizens who are applying to work in EU related countries.

Second is the *Biography*, which shows where you are on the **CEFR** language learning ladder, indicates some of the ways you like to learn best, and contains self-assessments not only for the basic language skills of reading, writing, listening, spoken production, and spoken interaction, but also for intercultural competence.

Third is the *Dossier*, which is similar to an artist's portfolio - it has examples of a student's best work such as course exams, essays, and audio/video recordings and is connected to 'I Cans' from the Biography Section.

## **How do the CEFR and Language Portfolio work Together?**

Learning to speak a second language isn't so simple. Before carrying out a process, people often like to understand the tools at their disposal to do it. For this reason it helps if the students learn about their preferred learning styles and study strategies and what other study skills are available for them to use.

This helps them to be reflective about the process and to figure out where to begin. To see a summary of study skills for adults, please look at the Global Learning Portfolio site at [http://glp.elenes.com/bio\\_howilearn.html](http://glp.elenes.com/bio_howilearn.html). and click on 'How Do I Learn' at the bottom of the page.

To know where to begin, you also must know what you want to learn. This can be done by carrying out a 'needs analysis' and CEFR self assessment to determine the 'I Can' that you want to focus on. Then you can use tools such as a 'language learning log' and an 'action plan' with the GLP study skills and the learning materials you have chosen from the Internet or a text to begin studying.

For classes, the teacher can work with the students to lead them through the process. Students working on their own will have hopefully learned the above process. After the students have learned their 'I Can', they can record their gains in the Biography Section of their ELP and put their work in their Dossier if it's significant. The Dossier materials are connected to 'I Cans' in the Biography by various forms. The students record a summary of their language gains in their Passport if they are significant.

### **Online Self-access Learning (SALL)**

ILL has continued to grow since 2001 and is composed of different types of approaches. One of them, for example, is called Online Self-access Learning (SALL). SALL comprises one of the main ways that participants in the **AOK EFL E-Learning Workshop** can access study materials, and it's a popular way to do ILL. In 2010 the Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in Japan began the SiSAL Journal for 'Studies in Self-Access Learning'. The journal is available at: <https://sisaljournal.org/issues/>. At KUIS ILL students can access material on the Internet and also on the KUIS Intranet.

### **How is ILL used Today?**

For many it's driven by the language portfolio system of learning (the ELP Approach) and enhanced by SALL and technological advances. It's possible for university level students in some countries to receive training in ILL, study languages on their own, and then take an exam and receive credit for their work at a university without taking a class. Today many universities around the world have a variety of different types of ILL centers to teach and aid self-directed learning.

### **How is JBK involved in ILL?**

The goal of **JBK** is to both expand the use of ILL and to encourage a large, non-profit organization such as UNICEF to offer a comprehensive ILL website that university and adult education students around the world can use. This way younger students and adults who have finished their formal studies can more easily learn about and take advantage of ILL.

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