

Student mobility, ELF, and the role of language certification

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ELF

- English as a *lingua franca*
- **NNS** – **NNS** *interaction*
- *Context bound, fluid norms*

Certification

- Promotes *mobility*
- *NS certifying NNS*
- Not yet *NNS certifying NNS*
- Or *NNS certifying NS*

The trouble with certification

- Highly structured formats
- Need to avoid taboo topics
- Need to avoid culture bias
- One-size–catches-all constructs
- Unable to take into account local needs
- **Designed for NNS-NS interaction**

An experiment in co-certification



Università
Ca' Foscari
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Since 2005 the University of Venice (Ca' Foscari) has produced a *co-certification* with Trinity College London.

2015: new ISE (Integrated Skills) exam

Reading and writing

Reading comprehension

Summary writing from a range of text types

Free-standing critical writing activity

Listening and speaking

Presentation and discussion of topic chosen by student

Conversation, including a collaborative task

Free standing listening activity

So what about the **co-certification version?**

What has changed in European universities?

- Steady increase in student mobility
- Steady increase in teacher mobility
- Huge increase in ETP/ EMI
- European universities testing grounds for ELF
- Even for stay at homers



How do students use English?

- Reading textbooks and articles (70%)
 - Doing research on the Internet (53%)
 - Watching film and video (23%)
 - **Attending lectures and seminars (21%)**
 - Writing emails (19%)
 - Interacting with foreign students (18%)
 - Interacting with foreign professors (9%)
 - Writing letters (2%)
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- Data from 2010 survey of final year students

2016 new co-certification

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New co-certification construct

*Simplified can-do descriptor for **free standing listening task***

Can understand ‘one-off’ lecture delivered by NNS in English

Features of texts

- Specially written
- Topics ‘peripheral’ rather than mainstream, not appealing to general knowledge (or hard sciences)
- Some discourse features built in (signposting, directly addressing audience, redundancy, hedges and boosters)
- All readers to be NNS from Europe
- Readers’ errors and self corrections to be left

The readers

- Identified by Trinity
- Competent speakers of English living in UK
- Italian, Spanish, French, Catalan mother tongues
- Recognizable NNS accents
- 2 male, 2 female



Reader feedback

Agreed that

- texts were difficult to read
- their readings sounded ‘reasonably natural’

Didn't agree whether

- the texts felt like authentic lecture material
- they had made errors typical of NNS
- NNS listeners would understand better if texts read by NS
- they would have used simpler language if they had given the lecture

Prosodic features

- NNS accents
- Misplaced word stress frequent
- Chunking frequently wrong
- Some syntactical and morphological errors
- Self correction frequent
- Obviously reading

Test taker feedback

Did the speaker speak clearly?	YES 68	NO 1
Did the speaker's accent interfere with your understanding?	YES 11	NO 58
Did the speaker sound like a native speaker of English?	YES 25	NO 44
Compared with the oral examiner, was the speaker		
(a) easier		13
(b) more difficult or		18
(c) neither more difficult no easier to understand?		38

Results

- 64/69 (93%) passed the speaking and interactive listening (with NS)
- 67/69 (97%) passed the independent listening (with NNS)
- 10 distinctions in speaking and interactive listening
- 14 distinctions in independent listening

The benefits

- Validity
- Task authenticity
- Less UK/US centred
- More attentive to local needs
- A sense of satisfaction?

And the challenges?

- Issues of fairness
- Interest of recognizing institutions
- Engagement of examining boards
- *and the productive skills?*