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## Experience in Implementing the European Language Portfolio (ELP) with Turkish Adult Learners<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The article sets out to highlight the principles and goals of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), which is designed to promote life-long foreign language learning and to strengthen intercultural experiences at all levels of education. The ELP's origins are discussed and its relationship to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), another basic Council of Europe tool, is clarified. The ELP's two main functions are presented and its three obligatory components are described in detail - i.e. the Language Passport, the Language Biography and the Dossier. The impact of the ELP on foreign language learning and teaching across Europe and beyond is also discussed, as well as the ELP models and their implementation. Finally, the principal design features of the adult ELP are described.

**Keywords:** European Language Portfolio (ELP), Life-long Foreign Language Learning, Intercultural Competence, The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), Adult ELP.

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# Türk Öğrencilerin Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu'nu (ADP) Kullanım Deneyimleri<sup>1</sup>

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## ÖZET

Avrupa Konseyi, ortak kararlarla tüm üye devletlerdeki eğitim sistemlerinde ortak uygulamalara dayalı Avrupalı bir eğitim sistemini yaygınlaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu yaygınlaştırma politikası içerisinde ortak bir sisteme dayalı yabancı dil öğretimi, öğrenimi ve yabancı dil öğretmeni yetiştirme uygulamaları da yer almaktadır. Yabancı dil öğretimi uygulamalarında ortak bir çerçeve program olarak "Avrupa Dilleri Öğretimi Ortak Çerçeve Programı" (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), yabancı dil öğrenenlerin dil yeterliklerini standart bir biçimde kayıt altına almalarına ve gerektiğinde beyan etmelerine olanak sağlayan "Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu" (The European Language Portfolio) geliştirilmiştir. Bu ortak Avrupalı sistemin sağlıklı biçimde yaygınlaşması ve standart uygulamalar haline gelmesi için Fransa'nın Strazburg kentinde bulunan Avrupa Konseyi Dil Politikaları Birimi ve Avusturya'nın Graz şehrinde bulunan Avrupa Modern Diller Merkezi çalışmalarını sürdürmektedir. Bu çalışmada, yabancı dil öğrenen öğrencilere dil yeterliklerini kazandırılmasında ortak Avrupa standartlarının nasıl yansıtılabileceğine ilişkin konular ele alınmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yabancı Dil Öğrenimi, Avrupa Dil Portfolyosu, Avrupa Dilleri Ortak Çerçeve Programı.

## 1. Introduction

The ELP is a concrete attempt to harmonise foreign language teaching activities within the European context and to improve the quality of communication amongst European people, who have different languages and cultural backgrounds. The ELP is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe (Council of Europe 1998; 2001 as cited in Mirici, 2008). The CEFR describes foreign language proficiency levels as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. Each level has verbal descriptors in the form of can-do statements relating to five language skill areas; listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing (Mirici 2000; North 2000; Little 2005). The ELP allows learners to monitor their own learning process on a life-long basis as well as to develop respect for cultural identities and diversity. It takes its roots from the principles of learner autonomy and self-assessment in the language learning process (Holec 1994, Council of Europe 1998; Glover et al. 2005 as cited in Mirici, 2008). It is believed that this project will enhance transparency of course content, syllabuses and qualifications, will promote international co-operation in the field of modern languages and in turn plurilingualism and intercultural understanding. In this aspect it can be considered as a tool which promotes cross cultural and international approaches in the curriculum development. Furthermore, it can be considered as a tool which promotes developing communicative skills to express oneself and understand others as well as to develop personality for intercultural awareness and to respect otherness both as a learner model and as a representative of a particular culture.

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a new version of the traditional portfolio system in language learning. Different from general portfolio systems, the ELP has three components which encourage learners in lifelong learning and intercultural awareness. Moreover, it is a document where the learners can reflect on and record their language learning process and intercultural experiences. Since the learners themselves assesses their learning, the pilot studies show that the ELP also promotes learner autonomy and encourages lifelong learning (Schärer, 2002).

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a self-assessment tool which enables users to record their intercultural experiences and linguistic achievements gained both inside and outside a formal classroom setting during the process of learning the target language (Mirici, 2015). The ELP, which is a document

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whereby language learners can possibly keep record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experience whether at school or outside school (CoE, 2001. Mirici , 2015a: 2 as cited in Mirici & Kavaklı, 2017) states that the ELP enables learners “to monitor their own learning process on a life-long basis as well as to develop respect for cultural identities and diversity”.

The European Language Portfolio was first conceived of together with the CEFR at the Council of Europe symposium held in Rüşchlikon, Switzerland, in 1991. The ELP was actually developed and piloted by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg from 1998 until 2000. It was launched on a pan-European level during the European Year of Languages as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and learner autonomy (Little, 2009).

According to Mirici (2008, p.1), “the ELP is a concrete attempt to harmonize foreign language teaching activities within the European context and to improve the quality of communication amongst European people, who have different languages and cultural backgrounds.” The ELP is based on basic principles such as reflective learning, self-assessment, learner autonomy, plurilingualism, intercultural learning, which enables to foster skills for life-long learning. Furthermore, as Glover, Mirici and Aksu (2005, p. 90) stress, the ELP encourages language learning through reflection, self-awareness, and motivation. Additionally, Little (2005) asserts that effective use of the ELP is possible if learners use checklists, in which target skills is specified with “can do statements” of each skill based on CEFR.

Little (2001a) points out five essential facets of the ELP:

1. Self-assessment motivates learning.
2. Learners can use checklists so as to plan and monitor their own learning.
3. Learners can create individualized learning plans.
4. Reflecting on a regular basis is of significance for an effective ELP use.
5. Learners are required to build a personalized dossier.

According to the Council of Europe (2006), the ELP;

- is a means to foster plurilingualism. Users can add their language and intercultural learning experiences to the ELP irrespective of where the learning takes place. Similarly, learners can record all learning experiences and competences in many languages. As a basic rule, the ELP supports learning more than only one language.
- is the property of the learner; that is to say, the ELP belongs to the individual not only literally but also metaphorically. The owner of the ELP is responsible for filling it after any support s/he receives from any institution. Particularly, individuals need to fill in the self-assessment part regularly since this is required for an effective use of the ELP.
- attaches importance to learners’ linguistic and intercultural competences and experiences even if it is not originated from a formal classroom context.
- is a tool to promote learner autonomy. In a classroom context, individuals can plan, monitor, and make an evaluation about their own learning by means of the ELP.
- has not only a pedagogical function in terms of guiding and supporting learners’ language learning processes but also has a reporting function in terms of recording language proficiencies across languages. The aforementioned functions do not depend on each other. The ELP should have a central role in learners’ language learning processes in order to carry out its reporting function properly. However, the ELP’s pedagogical function partly relies upon the fact that it presents learners the vehicles by which they can keep record of key features and events for their language learning and using experience.
- is based on the CEFR with direct references to the common levels of language proficiency. Validity of the ELP’s reporting function depends upon whether or not it coherently and consistently adopts the CEFR’s common reference levels. The aforementioned levels are described in the self-assessment grid, which any ELP needs to include. The ELP, designed for very young learners, is exception to this general rule. A given ELP is required to involve suitably constructed and thorough checklists which help holders evaluate their language skills based on the common levels. For younger learners, a simplified version of self-assessment grid can be designed, but it is suggested that the standard grid is made available to teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

- supports learners' self-assessments and keeping the record of the assessments by instructors, administrators, and examination institutions. Learners' self-assessments should not depend on teacher assessment (Council of Europe, 2006, p. 9-10)
- has brought the CEFR's **action-oriented** and **learner-centered approach** directly into the language classrooms
- stimulates **lifelong language learning** in a spirit of tolerance and respect for **cultural and linguistic diversity**.
- empowers the learner by transferring the responsibility for language learning **from the teacher to the language user**
- Each section of the BEDAF ELP has been developed purposefully to enable the owners to implement three principles of CEFR in their language learning process.
- In this way, they will be able to record and reflect their **linguistic** and **intercultural attainments and experiences** in any language whenever and wherever needed.

There is more than one type of ELP available for different kinds of learners. One single ELP would not fit for all learners due to various factors, especially when the age factor is taken into account. Schneider and Lenz (2001) express the reasons why there are varying ELP models as age of learners, special groups, and varying environment and cultures. Accordingly, three models of ELP have been suggested based on age: childhood (about 12), adolescence (about 12-20), and adulthood (Trim, 1997a, cited in Koyuncu, 2006).

No matter how many different types of ELP exist, every model of ELP should refer to the six levels of competence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), in which learners are described based on their proficiency levels, as basic users (A1-A2), independent users (B1-B2), and proficient users (C1-C2).

As for the major goals of a given ELP, the council of Europe (2006) states that each ELP should:

- promote the diversity of culture and language
- foster intercultural competence and the promotion of intercultural awareness as well as intercultural learning.
- help language learners have recognition of and take part in the linguistic and cultural diversity which are crucial for their European heritage (p. 8).

Furthermore, the ELP depicts the Council of Europe's (2006) concerns about:

- increasing mutual communication among Europeans,
- respecting cultural diversities as well as various lifestyles,
- assuring and fostering the diversity of culture and language,
- supporting the idea of plurilingualism as a life-time process,
- the improvement of the individual learners of any languages,
- the improvement of the capability for learning language(s) independently,
- having transparent as well as coherent programs in language learning institutions,
- describing language competences as well as qualifications clearly so as to render mobility much easier (p.8-9).

## 2. Functions of the ELP

The ELP has three pedagogical focuses. It is intended to foster the development of learner autonomy, promote intercultural awareness and intercultural competence, and encourage plurilingualism. And it has a reporting as well as a pedagogical function since it provides concrete evidence of language learning achievement that complements the grades awarded in tests and examinations. The Council of Europe developed the concept of a European Language Portfolio (ELP) in parallel with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe 2001), and the ELP is linked to the CEFR by its "I can" checklists, which are derived from the descriptors in the CEFR's illustrative scales. The idea was that by supporting the development of learner autonomy, intercultural awareness and plurilingualism, the ELP would help to communicate the CEFR's ethos to language learners (Little, 2016).

### 2.1. Pedagogic Function

Pedagogic function of the ELP is related to the first objective of the ELP, to put it in another way, it refers to motivational dimension of the ELP. The pedagogic function of the ELP is related with the process allowing learners to identify their learning objectives, to monitor and modify the process of learning, to reflect on their learning via self-assessment tables and grids provided in the ELP itself. Pedagogic function helps the Council of Europe in its objective to promote learner autonomy and life-long learning (Gonzalez, 2009). Schneider and Lenz (2001, p. 3) describe pedagogic functions of the ELP as follows table 1.

**Table 1**

Pedagogical Functions of the ELP (Schneider and Lenz, 2001, p. 3)

The ELP;	
promotes motivation of learners so that they can;	Improve their communication competence in various languages
	learn additional languages
	seek out new intercultural experiences
encourages and helps learners so that they can;	reflect upon goals, and ways of learning, and accomplishments in language learning
	plan their learning
	learn in an autonomous way
motivates learners to promote their plurilingual and intercultural experience by means of;	contacts and visits
	reading
	use of the media

The **pedagogic function** can be further described in the following terms:

- Enhance the motivation of the learners
  - to improve their ability to communicate in different languages
  - to learn additional languages and
  - to seek new intercultural experiences
- Incite and help learners
  - to reflect on their objectives, ways of learning and success in language learning,
  - to plan their learning and
  - to become more autonomous in their learning
- Encourage learners to enhance their plurilingual and intercultural experience

### 2.2. Reporting Function

While the pedagogic function of the ELP use focuses on the learning aspects, its reporting function leans on the “can do” dimension in the language learning process concerning with linguistic and intercultural abilities based on the CEFR descriptors. Little and Perclova (2001) posit that rather than replacing the certificates and diplomas obtained from formal processes in formal contexts, the objective of the reporting function is to consolidate those certificates and diplomas by providing extra data as to the holders’ experience and evidence of their additional language accomplishments. Reporting function is in parallel with the Council of Europe’s aim to facilitate mobility of individuals and associating local and national language qualifications with standards concurred on an international scale.

The **reporting function** can be summed up as follows:

- The European Language Portfolio aims to document its holder's plurilingual language proficiency and experiences in other languages in a comprehensive, informative, transparent and reliable way. The instruments contained in the ELP help learners to take stock of the levels of competence they

have reached in their learning of one or several foreign languages in order to enable them to inform others in a detailed and internationally transparent manner.

- There are many occasions to present a European Language Portfolio which is up to date, for example a transfer to another school, change to a higher educational sector, the beginning of a language course, a meeting with a career advisor, or an application for a new post. In these cases the ELP is addressed to persons who have a role in decisions which are important for the owner of the Language Portfolio. A learner may also be interested in having such documentation for him-/herself (Little, 2009).

European Language Portfolio (ELP) is similar to the general portfolio system which is used in the education system. The ELP was designed based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe. It was designed by the Council of Europe as a project of 'Languages Learning for European Citizenship' in 1989-1996. The aim of CEFR is to provide a method of assessing and teaching all languages in Europe. Six reference levels were developed and became standard for grading individual's language proficiency. These levels will be mentioned in detail in the Language Passport section (Council of Europe, 2001; Schärer, 2000).

To reflect the Council of Europe's concerns about language learning the ELP was developed. All of the major concerns of the Council of Europe modern languages projects since the 1970s are reflected in the ELP. These concerns are:

- the deepening of mutual understanding among citizens in Europe
- respect for diversity of cultures and ways of life; the protection and promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity
- the development of plurilingualism as a life-long process
- the development of the language learner
- the development of the capacity for independent language learning
- transparency and coherence in language learning programmes
- the clear description of language competence and qualifications in order to facilitate mobility (Council of Europe, 2004; p. 2)

Different ELP versions were designed by different countries. ELPs were first designed in Switzerland, Germany, and France in the mid-nineties (Schneider & Lenz, 2003). Over 15 Council of Europe member states piloted different models between 1998 and 2000. In 2001, the European Year of Languages, the ELP was put into practice throughout Europe (Schneider & Lenz, 2003). Little (2002a) states that the ELP was designed according to following beliefs of the Council of Europe:

[...]language learning should have a communicative purpose; it provides as a means of reporting second/foreign language proficiency that transcends the limitations of national system of grading; it encourages learners and authorities of all kinds to value partial competence; it emphasizes the importance of plurilingualism and cultural exchange; and it supports the development of learner autonomy, partly out of a commitment to democracy in education and partly because learner autonomy is the most likely guarantee of lifelong learning (Little, 2002a; p.188).

Three types of ELP were developed: for young learners (10-12 years), for the learners who are at the stage of obligatory schooling (11-15/16 years) and for young people and adults (15/16 and over) (Schneider & Lenz, 2003). Different types of ELPs have been developed and validated. Meister (2005) points out that the ELP can be used by all ages, so there are different types of portfolio at schools and educational levels appropriate for each age and level groups but based on the same beliefs of the Council of Europe (Meister, 2005).

The ELP is the responsibility of the learners. Therefore, Meister (2005) reports that volunteer learners use the ELP in their language learning at school across Europe. The learners decide when and how to work with the ELP. It depends on the learners how often they update their ELPs or their language passports. However, it is vital to use the ELP effectively, and this is possible with the effective usage of the checklists, where objective of language learning are in items according to each skill based on CEFR (Little, 2005). Thus, Little and Perclova (2001) states that selfassessment is included to show that the ELP belongs to the individual learner.

### 2.2.1. Reflection in the ELP

One of the aims of the ELP in its reporting function is to enhance reflective learning. With the help of reflection, which is one of the components of a portfolio, the learners can think and evaluate their learning processes. Reflection is vital in terms of promoting lifelong learning which is one of the goals of the ELP, as well (Pakkila, 2003). It gives the learners the opportunity to monitor their progress, discover suitable learning techniques, and develop self-awareness and meaningful self-assessment.

The ELP supports three kinds of reflection: planning (learners reflect before they engage in a learning activity or a communicative task), monitoring (while they are doing that particular activity), and evaluation (after doing the activity) (Little & Perclova, 2001). The planning is done by deciding on the learning goals in the biography; doing a particular activity requires learners to monitor their performance, and the learners select materials to include in the dossier, review learning goals in the biography, go through their language passport and evaluate themselves. Since, the ELP provides the learners to reflect on their own language learning process and progress, it develops students' self-confidence. However, it is especially the Language Biography that includes the processes rather than products. That reflection on learning processes improves learning outcomes as well as the language learners' ability and motivation to learn languages is the key in the Language Biograohy (Schneider & Lenz, 2003). Thus, both the traditional portfolio and the ELP include reflection as components so that they can promote self-directed learning.

The ELP is used on voluntary basis; however, for reflective language learning to become a habit for students, it is necessary to use the ELP frequently in language learning and integrate it within language curricula. It should not be "extra" work. The dossier is important since it provides the students "ongoing reflective learning" and self-assessment (Kohonen & Westoff, 2003; p. 29). The students reflect and asses their works, they include in dossier, because the tasks should be carefully carried out and be the representatives of the objectives they chose from the biography.

## 3. Components of the ELP

The ELP promotes the basic tenets of reflection, motivation and self-reflection. To attain these, the ELP makes use of its three components, namely the language passport, language biography and dossier. To elaborate, the language passport embraces learners' knowledge of languages and experiences upon language learning processes. On the other hand, by means of language biography, learners are enabled to portray and ponder on their skills and knowledge. Finally, learners have the opportunity of recording and/or collecting their achievements via the dossier. Herein, it is to be noted that the self-assessment scales exploited by means of common reference levels are the pavements for the ELP. Therefore, the CEFR and ELP are thoroughly in interconnection (Mirici & Kavaklı, 2017).

Different from other portfolios, the ELP has three main sections which are the language passport, language biography and the dossier. Each part shows the students' language learning process with different documents and records. Since the ELP includes level descriptors from the Common European Framework, the students can also assess themselves according to these descriptors (Council of Europe, 2001; for the descriptors see Appendix 11). The language passport and biography focus on the reporting function of the ELP with regard to "the criterion-referenced levels of proficiency, adding the tool for documenting significant linguistic and cultural experience" (Kohonen & Westoff, 2003; p. 7).

### 3.1. Language Passport

The language passport is the section where the learners can provide an overview about their proficiency in different languages. As the document called "Principles and Guidelines" suggests, learners complete their passports in terms of skills and the common reference levels defined by the Common European Framework (CEF). The learners state their formal qualifications and language competencies, and their learning experiences. These include self-assessment, teacher assessment and assessment by educational institutions. The passport should state on what basis, when and by whom the assessment was

done (Council of Europe, 2004). There are descriptors for each skill and level according to the Common European Framework in the ELP. The skills in the ELP which the Language Passport addresses are defined as understanding (Listening and Reading), speaking (spoken interaction and spoken production), and writing. The levels are determined by the Council of Europe's Common European Framework. The levels are basic users (A1: Breakthrough and A2: Waystage), independent users (B1: Threshold and B2: Vantage), and proficient users (C1: Effective operational proficiency and C2: Mastery) (Council of Europe, 2001). The language passport is the major instrument for presentation of the learners' language level. It is generally briefer than the other parts of the ELP because its aim is to give an overview of language learning at a glance. In other words, language passport summarizes the language biography (Schneider & Lenz, 2003).

The language passport part shows in which languages and to what extent the learner can fulfill the language requirements. Language passport is comprised of:

- a profile of language competences based on the CEFR,
- a curriculum vitae of language learning and intercultural experiences,
- a record of certificates as well as diplomas (Koyuncu, 2006)
- According to CoE (2006), the language passport part of the ELP:
  - provides a summary of the learners' proficiency levels in various languages; the summary of the proficiency is defined taking the skills and the common reference levels in the CEFR into account;
  - records formal qualifications and gives information about language skills and important language and intercultural learning experiences;
  - involves data as to incomplete and particular competences. Language passport should let learners keep record of their partial competences, that is to say, being able to read a language but not necessarily being able to speak or write it, as well as particular competences, that is, it leaves some space so that learners could jot down their own description of their capabilities.
  - is used for self-assessment, instructor assessment and assessment of educational organizations and exam centers. The questions of "who assessed it, when is it assessed, and based on what criteria is the assessment carried out" should be specified (p. 13).

To sum up, the language passport informs the readers about the learners' competencies in one or more languages according to CEFR.

### 3.2. *Language Biography*

The language biography enables the learners to include their involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing their learning process and progress. In the 'Principles and Guidelines' of the ELP, it is reported that the learners are encouraged to state what they can do in each language. They also give information about their linguistic and cultural experiences they have had inside and outside their language classes. From a pedagogical aspect, the language biography section focuses on reflective processes which can be considered a connection between the language passport and the dossier (Council of Europe, 2004).

The language biography includes some checklists based on the self-assessment grid. The checklists help the learners to identify what they know and what they need to know. Schneider and Lenz (2003) emphasizes that in these checklists, there are "I can do..." statements related to each skill (see 12). Learners tick the boxes about the ability related to a skill which they can do. If there is an item they cannot do, they mark it as a priority for learning, and based on this, they can set their objectives for learning (Schneider & Lenz, 2003). Hence, the 'can-do' statements help the learners to assess themselves and see their language learning progress.

According to CoE (2006), the language biography:

- makes it easier for students to plan, to make a reflection upon and to evaluate their own learning process as well as their progress,
- motivates learners to express what they are capable of in any languages, and to write any experiences related to language as well as culture which may be attained in formal or informal settings,



- is designed to foster plurilingualism, in other words, learning not just one but a number of languages (p. 13-14).

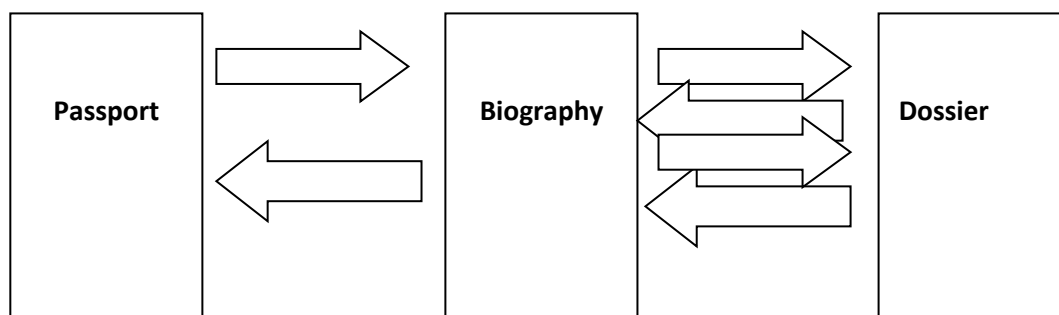
According to Stockmann (2006), despite its simple form, the language biography increases awareness of what learners are capable of in languages they are learning and what they need to learn. As Little (2005) states, the progress and development of competences and accomplishments of a given learner in foreign language can be tracked by means of the biography component of the ELP. The language biography can be comprised of some components such as:

- a personalized and quite detailed biography which includes L2 learning, experiences in addition to socio and intercultural experiences,
- checklists in relation to the common reference levels,
- checklists or any forms of descriptions of language competences which may not refer to the common reference levels,
- planning means; e.g., individualized descriptions of goals (Schneider and Lenz, 2001, p. 20).

### 3.3. Dossier

The dossier is the section where the learners can keep the materials which demonstrate their achievements or experiences in the Language Passport or Biography. In this sense, it is like a portfolio of an artist. According to the 'Principles and Guidelines' learners can include letters, project works, memoranda, brief reports, and audio or video cassettes which show their proficiency in the language in the ELP (Council of Europe, 2004). With the dossier, the students get the opportunity to record their works and present them. The dossier gives the students the opportunity for selecting relevant learning documents of their own learning and illustrating their current language skill or experiences through authentic personal documentation (Kohonen & Westhoff, 2003).

There exists a relationship between the dossier and other sections of the ELP, i.e., the biography, and the passport



**Figure1.** The Relationship among Components of the ELP (Adapted after Little and Perclova, 2001, p. 16)

In their explanation of the figure, Little and Perclova (2001) state that the language passport can be introduced first of to challenge users so that they can reflect upon their linguistic identities and the language they have learned. Secondly, they can pass to the biography, thus setting personal learning objectives. All the documents related to their achievements can be gathered in the dossier and assessed in the biography, which leads to setting novel objectives. The very same procedure can be repeated till a given course is completed, when users go back to the passport and update their self-assessments. This approach became successful with refugees after an intensive English course which took five months in Ireland.

The dossier offers learners a more individualized and effective way of collecting, piling, and combining formal or informal documents showing the language development of the holders.

#### 4. Self-Assessment in the ELP

ELP aims at encouraging self-assessment since it has an important role in enhancing lifelong learning. Self-assessment gives the students the opportunity to be directly involved in learning (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). The reporting function of the ELP encourages students' self-assessment of their language learning processes (Kohonen & Westhoff, 2003). Students can experience self-assessment with the descriptors and the 'can-do' statements. By using the self-assessment grid, the students can gain insight into their language learning profile which can also enable them to see their strengths and weaknesses in improving the four skills in language learning (Schneider & Lenz, 2003). This feature of the ELP encourages the learners for lifelong learning.

Self-assessment is essential in the ELP because without it, the students cannot monitor their own language learning processes (Little, 2004). Thus all the sections in the ELP promote self-assessment: the language passport, the biography, and the dossier. Little and Perclova (2001) describes the functions of the ELP in terms of self-assessment in the following way. The language passport in the ELP requires the learners to assess themselves according to the scales and descriptors from the CEF.

The biography helps the learners to set objectives for their own learning which is possible only if they regularly assess their own progress in language learning, functions as a promoter for self-assessment. Little and Simpson (2003) states that the goal-setting and self-assessment checklists in the language biography have a formative function because they are developed to accompany learning from day to day, week to week, and month to month. Hence, the learners engage in self-assessment process by using the ELP, and gradually approach to autonomous learning. The dossier enables the students select material which can also be accomplished by means of self-assessment. Self-assessment overlaps with the Common Europe's concern to enhance autonomous lifelong learning and "reminds us that the ownership of the ELP always lies with the individual learner" (Little & Perclova, 2001; p. 53).

#### 5. The relation between the ELP and the CEFR

By treating language learning as a variety of language use (Council of Europe 2001: 9), the CEFR clearly implies that use of the target language should be central to the activities of the language classroom. What is more, its use of "can do" descriptors portrays the user/learner as an autonomous social agent; and recognizing that learners themselves are "the persons ultimately concerned with language acquisition and learning processes" (Council of Europe 2001: 141), the authors commend autonomous learning:

Autonomous learning can be promoted if "learning to learn" is regarded as an integral part of language learning, so that learners become increasingly aware of the way they learn, the options open to them and the options that best suit them. Even within the given institutional system they can then be brought increasingly to make choices in respect of objectives, materials and working methods in the light of their own needs, motivations, characteristics and resources. (Council of Europe 2001: 141-142)

The ELP was devised partly in order to support these processes (Little, 2016).

It is important to point out that the Council of Europe has a long-standing commitment to learner-centredness and the democratization of education, which ultimately derives from its foundation document, the European Convention on Human Rights. In the 1970s its first modern languages projects were carried out under the aegis of the Committee for Out-of-School Education. This meant that they focused on adult learning and were informed by the ethos of the committee's major project, Organisation, Content and Methods of Adult Education. The final report on the project (Janne 1977), argued that adult education could no longer be seen simply as a way of filling in the gaps left by compulsory schooling. Rather, it should be "an integral part of the process of economic, political and cultural democratisation", an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man and, in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of man "product of his society", one moves to the idea of man "producer of his society" (Janne 1977, p. 15).

By implication these sentences align adult education with two of the Council of Europe's foundational values, democratic governance and human rights. In accordance with these values, Janne's report argues that adult education should be shaped by four objectives: equality of opportunity, responsible autonomy,

personal fulfilment, and democratisation of education (Janne 1977, p. 17). Clearly, the last of these objectives implies the active involvement of the learner, which requires the exercise of responsible autonomy, which in turn entails self-management. This helps to explain the project's belief that adult education should be based on "self-learning", which the report contrasts with "self-teaching". Whereas self-teaching is defined as a solitary process unsupported by an institution or a teacher, self-learning "generally refers to the practice of working in groups, and to the choice by participants of objectives, curriculum content and working methods and pace" (Janne 1977, p. 27). This general orientation helps to explain the interest in self-assessment (Oskarsson 1978) and autonomous learning (Holec 1979) that informed the early modern languages projects; it also explains the official hostility to formal tests and exams (Trim in Little & King 2014). The concern to "democratize" language education underlay pioneering work on needs analysis, the insistence on making learners active agents of their own learning, and the belief that decisions should be taken as close as possible to the point of teaching/learning (Trim 1978).

## 6. Conclusion

In a globalized world, language learning is more important than ever. Without communication between speakers of different languages there can be no political and cultural exchange and no mutual understanding. The CEFR has become the accepted international "metric" for language testing and is widely used by ministries of education to specify the language learning outcomes pupils and students should achieve. But the pedagogical implications of the CEFR's view of language learning, embodied in the concept of the ELP, have mostly been ignored. The CEFR defines language learning as a variety of language use, treats the language user/learner as an autonomous social agent, and assigns a central role to monitoring in the development of proficiency, which implies reflective learning. If we accept this view we shall believe that the most successful language learning environments are those in which, from the beginning, the target language is the principal channel of the learners' agency: the communicative and metacognitive medium through which, individually and collaboratively, they plan, execute, monitor and evaluate their own learning. This is the essence of language learner autonomy. It is also the truth we must embrace if we want our learners to develop a plurilingual proficiency that is part of their identity. In this end, the ELP was designed to promote learner autonomy and support the development of plurilingualism and intercultural awareness.

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