

Foreign Language needs of
Economics graduates:

Assessment and perspectives
in the French context

I. Context

- European Higher Education Area: “LMD” 2002
 - Bachelor: evaluation of students’ FL level, with “appropriate” teaching
 - Master: “mastery” of at least 1 FL
- Toulouse University of Social Sciences: Faculty of Economics
 - Students: 2nd - 5th year (N = 670, 50%)
 - Economics teachers (N = 30, 38%)
 - Language teachers (N = 28, 80%)
 - Graduates 1997-1999 (N = 251, 32%)
- CercleS 2003, GERAS 2005

II.1 Parallel questionnaires: TNP3 non-language graduates

◆ Personal & academic background
*age, sex, mother tongue, year
graduation, degree, major, FL study*

• +TNP3

- Location
- Study abroad
- Other languages since university

• +UT1

- Further study
- Which FL studied?

II.2 Parallel questionnaires: TNP3 non-language graduates

◆ FL and work situation

*Frequency, self assessment,
FL & employment, adequacy of university
language training, certification*

- +TNP3
- Employment status
- Sector
- Work abroad?
- New language necessary?
- +UT1
- Degree of difficulties
- FL a hindrance in employment?

II.3 Parallel questionnaires: TNP3 non-language graduates

◆ Rating work-related language skills

Degree of competence?

Register and context?

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• +TNP3• 4 levels• Specific tasks• 2 FL• Multicultural contexts | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• +UT1• 6 levels (CEFR)• General use• 1 FL• Steps to improve?• Suggestions for UT1 language training |
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III.1 Results

- 50% (126) 1 or more FL (Eng.); 15% 2 FL (+ Span., Ger.)
- Banking, insurance, civil service, media & communication: financial advisors, consultants, analysts, auditors, project leaders, customer relations managers
- Rapid evolution in use: 1997-98: 42%, 1999-2000: 59%
- Usage:
 - Formal \approx informal (53-63%)
 - Virtual (75%) > direct contact (58%)
 - In France (82%) > elsewhere (44%), NS \approx NNS
 - Frequency: **written** (reading > writing) > **oral** (listening > speaking)
 - TNP3 Synthesis Report, p. 11: given job requirements...
 - Difficulties: **oral** (speaking > listening) > **written** (writing > reading)

III.2 Results

- Levels of competence deemed necessary (CEFR): B2-C2
- Self-assessment: mind the gap! (Table 1)
- Self image: “*Les Français sont mauvais en langues*” (93%)
- Taking action: considerable investment in lifelong learning
- 1st job:
 - advantage of FL competence (4 skills), but no hindrance
 - minimal role of certification (7%)
- Adequately prepared?: **Reading** (57%) > writing (36%), listening (28%) speaking (22%)
- Pedagogical suggestions: competence levels, learning environment, general vs. LSP, 1 FL, CLIL, study time...

IV. Conclusions

- Mismatch of perceived use and real use of FL: frequency, context, importance, levels of competence needed (Table 2)
 - Undergraduates *underestimated* extent of use, *overestimated* target levels of competence (C1-C2)
 - Language teachers similar to graduates (\approx B2, but *underestimated* importance of written communication)
 - Economics teachers *underestimated* target levels (B1-B2)
- Distinct profile of competent/incompetent FL users
- Consciousness raising: face the problem, dialogue
- Institutional language policy: multilingual and intercultural objectives (LMD...), certification
- Curriculum development: CLIL, language centres, ECTS coherency

...the aims of TNP3