

## THE PRINCIPLES OF MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING REPRESENTED IN AN EU TRAINING TOOL FOR BORDER GUARDS I.

### A MODERN NYELVPEDAGÓGIA ELVEINEK MEGJELENÉSE EGY UNIÓS HATÁRRENDEZÉSZETI TANANYAGBAN I.

In the 1990s, the Council of Europe defined promoting plurilingualism and greater understanding between member states by the adoption of common action in the cultural field as the main aims and objectives of its language policy. In 2001 the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) was published. It has been serving as an integrated and transparent system of efficient language teaching, learning and assessment ever since, facilitating individual mobility and providing a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, for the work of teachers, course designers, examining bodies and the co-ordination of their efforts. The aim of this paper is to identify the language competences defined by the principles of the CEFR and based on the peculiarities of the special language used in border policing that are to be developed when teaching this specific purpose language.

Az Európa Tanács az 1990-es években általános nyelvpolitikai célul tűzte ki a többnyelvűség, a tagállamok közötti nagyobb egyetértés előmozdítását, a kultúra területén végzett közös tevékenység segítségével. 2001-ben tették közzé a Közös Európai Nyelvi Referenciakeretet (KER), ezáltal létrehozva a hatékony nyelvtanítás, nyelvtanulás és idegen nyelvi mérés integrált és áttekinthető rendszerét, amely elősegíti az egyéni mobilitást, valamint szilárd alap megteremtését a nyelvvizsgák kölcsönös elismeréséhez, a tanárok, oktatásszervezők, a vizsgáztató testületek munkájához, annak összehangolásához. A jelen közlemény célja annak vizsgálata, hogy a KER irányelvei és a határrendészeti szakmai nyelv sajátosságai alapján melyek azok a nyelvi kompetenciák, amelyeket a szaknyelv oktatása során fejlesztenünk kell.

#### INTRODUCTION

From the early 1990s, the Council of Europe discussed the issues of foreign language teaching in a number of documents<sup>1</sup>. They defined the main aims and objectives of the language policy of the Council of Europe, namely to promote plurilingualism, to achieve greater unity among its members and to convert the diversity of European languages and cultures from a communication barrier into a source of mutual understanding and cooperation, through a better knowledge of modern languages, in order to promote European mobility and overcome prejudice and discrimination and by urging the member states to co-ordinate their national policies in the field of modern language learning and teaching.

<sup>1</sup> *Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe: objectives, evaluation, certification.* (Report edited by B. North of a Symposium held in Ruschlikon 1991). -Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1992.  
*European language portfolio: proposals for development.* -Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1997.

*Language learning for European citizenship: Final Report of the Project.* -Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1997.

*'Recommendation no. R(98)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning modern languages'* -Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1998.

GIRARD, D. and TRIM, J.L.M. (eds.): *Project no.12 'Learning and teaching modern languages for communication': Final Report of the Project Group.* -Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1998.

Based on these principles, the Common European Framework of Reference (hereafter: CEFR) was developed in the following decade and was published in 2001, which, by providing a common basis for the description of objectives, content and methods, was meant to enhance the transparency of courses, syllabuses and qualifications in the field of modern languages. Also, by the provision of objective criteria for describing language proficiency, its aim was to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts. [1]

Due to the need to have a common platform and standards, the CEFR has now become a tool universally accepted by language examination centres, textbook publishers, language teaching institutions, language teachers, developers of foreign language teaching programmes and curricula in (and in many other countries outside) Europe. In Hungary, in line with Government Decree 137/2008. (V. 16.), the requirements of the various levels of language proficiency at state language exams are defined according to the CEFR. Also, language exam centres can only get state accreditation after they have proved the Accreditation Board for Foreign Language Examinations that their language testing system and its procedures are compatible with the levels of the CEFR.

Efforts to standardise training courses are also represented in the principles which serve as the basis for the activities coordinated and provided by the Training Unit of FRONTEX, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union. This makes the logical question even more relevant: Are generally accepted recommendations concerning language teaching in Europe implemented in the practices of an EU agency? Thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate how the principles and approaches of the CEFR are manifested in the new e-learning tool for teaching the special language of border policing, titled *Basic English for border guards at airports*.

#### THE COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

Most Hungarian people only know about the Common Reference levels that state accredited intermediate level exams are now called "B2" or that in Europass CVs they need to specify their various foreign language skills on a scale from A1 to C2.

Language teaching and assessment specialists have been traditionally using the terms *Basic*, *Intermediate* and *Advanced* to describe the levels of language knowledge but before the creation of the CEFR it was never explicit what they exactly meant by them, either with respect to one language or when comparing several languages. The developers of the CEFR used descriptors applied in several existing language teaching and assessment systems to define the six levels of proficiency represented in the grid below:

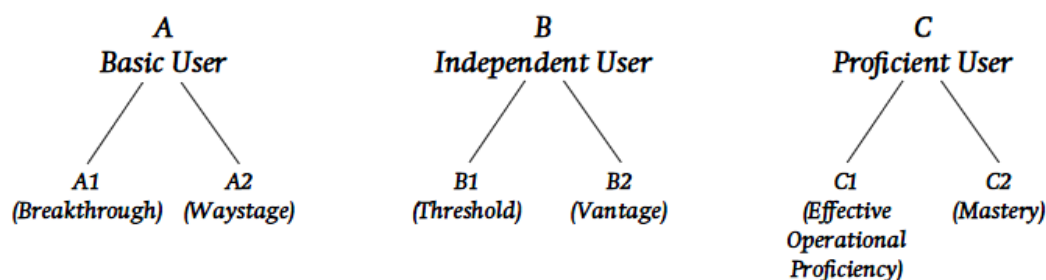


Figure 1. Common Reference Levels<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> [1] Ibid. p. 23

Before elaborating on the descriptions of the various levels, we need to look more closely at the approach concerning language use and language learning adopted by the CEFR, which is based on contemporary theories of applied linguistics.

The concept of communicative competence, underlying the communicative approach to second language teaching was published by Hymes in 1966 (as an answer to Chomsky's theory on linguistic competence) to be followed by extensive research and the development of competence-based models of communication. The most significant steps in the evolution of the concept are represented by Figures 2-4.

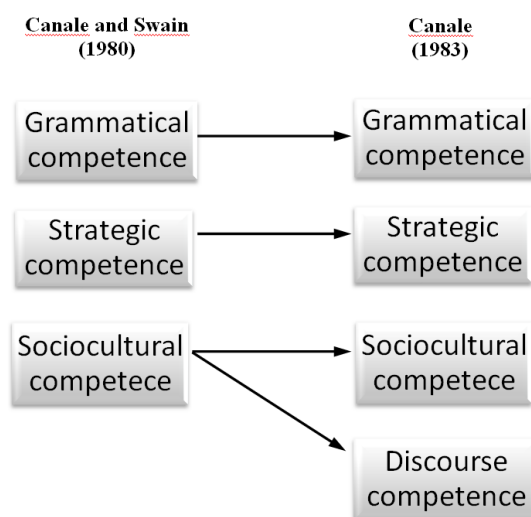


Figure 2. Canale and Swain's models as presented by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurell [1]

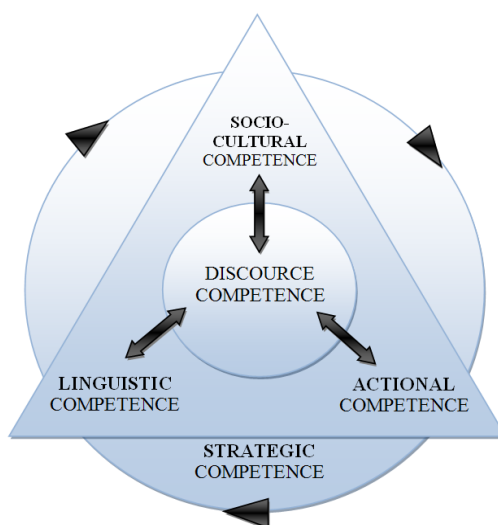


Figure 3. Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurell's Schematic Representation of Communicative Competence<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> [1] Ibid. p. 23

<sup>4</sup> [2] Ibid. p. 10

## HADTUDOMÁNYI SZEMLE

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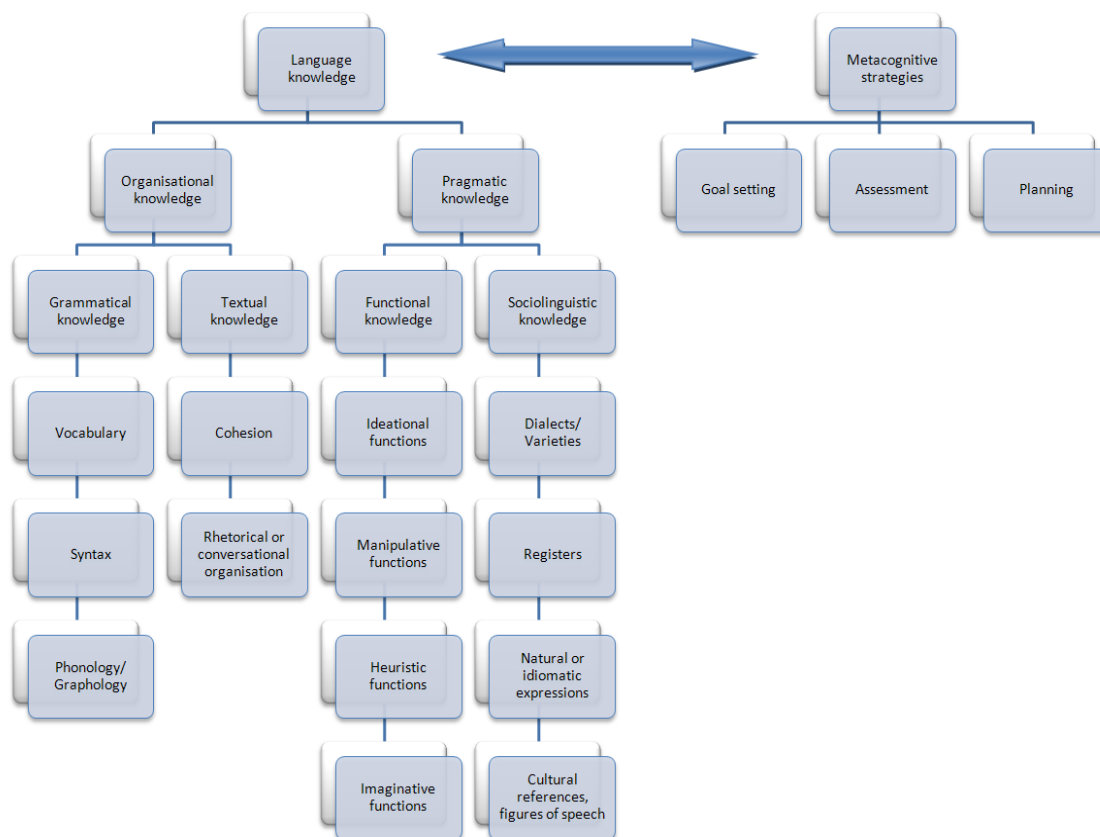
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Figure 4. Areas of language knowledge and metacognitive strategy use by Bachman and Palmer (1996)<sup>[11]</sup> (Chart edited by J. Borszéki)

The descriptive scheme of the CEFR is in fact a synthesis of the above models; it examines the general and communicative competences of the language learners and the strategies they use to activate them. Applying a system approach, it considers language knowledge as a succession of various levels flexibly built on each other (vertical axis) which can be analysed and assessed with the help of the criteria of the descriptive scheme. Besides classifying the general and communicative competences of the language users it also gives details of the categories necessary for typifying language use, i.e. the domains and situations setting the context (horizontal axis).

Adopting an action-oriented approach, the CEFR views language users and learners primarily as 'social agents' who have to accomplish (not exclusively language-related) tasks in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action.

According to the definition provided by the CEFR, *language use*, involving *language learning*, comprises the actions performed by persons who draw on the acquired range of *general* and *specific, communicative language competences* at their disposal in various *contexts* (educational, occupational, public and personal domains and within them, external situations described in terms of various locations, institutions, etc.) under various conditions and constraints to engage in language activities. While doing so, they activate those *strategies* which seem most appropriate for carrying out the tasks to be accomplished. The experience gained during these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences.

By language activities the CEFR means actions during which one or more texts (any sequence or discourse [spoken and/or written] related to a specific domain) are processed (receptively and/ or productively). Competences are the sum

of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions. General competences of language learners and users involve factual knowledge (of the world, socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness), related skills, 'existential' competence and the ability to learn. Communicative language competences comprise linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences. They are summarised in the following table:

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE COMPETENCE		
LINGUISTIC COMPETENCES	SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCES	PRAGMATIC COMPETENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lexical competence</li> <li>• Grammatical competence</li> <li>• Semantic competence</li> <li>• Phonological competence</li> <li>• Orthographic competence</li> <li>• Orthoepic competence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linguistic markers of social relations</li> <li>• Politeness conventions</li> <li>• Expressions of folk wisdom</li> <li>• Register differences</li> <li>• Dialect and accent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse competences</li> <li>• Functional competence</li> <li>• Design competence</li> </ul>

Table 1. Communicative language competences, according to the CEFR. (Compiled by J. Borszéki.)

The CEFR classifies communicative activities and strategies as follows:

#### Productive activities

- oral production (sustained monologue: describing experience/ putting a case, speech, public announcements, addressing audiences, etc.)
- written production (completing forms, articles for magazines/ newspapers, posters for display, memoranda, notes for future reference, creative writing, writing personal and business letters, etc.)

#### Receptive activities

- aural reception: listening (to instructions, media, interactions between native speakers, as a member of a live audience, etc.)
- visual reception: reading (for general orientation, for information, instructions, for pleasure, etc.)
- audiovisual reception: (watching TV, video, films with subtitles, following a text as it is read aloud, using multimedia, etc.)

#### Interactive activities (participants alternate as producers and receivers)

- Spoken interaction (transactions to obtain goods and services, casual conversation, formal/ informal discussion, debate, interview, negotiation, practical goal-oriented co-operation, etc.)
- Written interaction (passing and exchanging notes, memos, correspondence, negotiating the text of agreements, contracts, etc., participating in on-line or off-line computer conferences)

#### Mediating activities

- Oral mediation (simultaneous, consecutive and informal interpretation, summarising information)
- Written mediation (exact and literary translation, summarising gist within L2 [the foreign language] or between L1 and L2, paraphrasing, etc.)

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The strategies needed to carry out various activities described in the CEFR are summarised in the table below:

Strategy category	Production	Reception	Interaction	Mediation
<b>Pre-planning</b>	rehearsing, locating resources, considering audience, avoidance strategies, task or message adjustment	framing, selecting mental set, activating schemata, setting up expectations	framing: praxeogram, identifying information/opinion gap, judging what can be presupposed, planning moves	developing background knowledge, locating supports, preparing a glossary, considering interlocutors' needs, selecting unit of interpretation.
<b>Execution</b>	compensating, building on previous knowledge, approximating, trying out	identifying cues and inferring from them	taking the floor, co-operating (interpersonal and ideational), dealing with the unexpected, asking for help	previewing: processing input and formulating the last chunk simultaneously in real time, noting possibilities, equivalences, bridging gaps.
<b>Monitoring</b>	monitoring success	hypothesis testing: matching cues to schemata	monitoring: (schema, praxeogram, effect, success)	checking congruence of two versions, checking consistency of usage.
<b>Repair Action</b>	self-correction	revising hypotheses	asking for or giving clarification, communication repair	refining by consulting dictionaries, thesaurus, consulting experts, sources.

Table 2. Communication strategies according to the CEFR. (Compiled by J. Borszéki.)

Level descriptions play a key role in various language exams. The methodology, various criteria and the related objectives of language assessment, too, are showcased by the CEFR. It also discusses important issues such as the relationship between language acquisition and language learning, the nature and development of plurilingual competence, general and specific methodological approaches as well as plurilingualism and pluriculturalism, variation in language learning objectives and the principles of designing curricula.

The CEFR has also attracted criticism, mainly for containing level descriptions whose validation was made not on an empirical basis but by combining the relevant elements of previous description scales. Besides, it does not have descriptions for mediation (e.g. translation and interpreting) or the proficiency in languages for special purposes (LSP).

Not being language-specific, it also lacks precise sets of vocabulary items or lists of required grammar constructions for the various levels of a particular modern language.

The authors of the CEFR have always emphasised that the aim of the document was not to prescribe the compulsory use of some rigid, unified system for language teaching and learning. Their intent was to provide recommendations; "Its proper role is to encourage all those involved as partners to the language learning/teaching process to state as explicitly and transparently as possible their own theoretical basis and their practical procedures. In order to fulfil this role it sets out parameters, categories, criteria and scales which users may draw upon."<sup>5</sup>

Still, experts acknowledged the validity of critical views and set the adaptation of the CEFR to individual languages and language teaching situations, with more detailed descriptions of language levels as the next objective. [iv] Based on the guidelines represented by the CEFR, research activities have been going on to define the communicative competences related to the particular language proficiency levels more precisely, good examples of which are the *Profile Deutsch* and *English Profile* projects.

#### SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMMUNICATING IN LANGUAGES FOR GENERAL PURPOSES (LGP) AND LANGUAGES FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES (LSP)<sup>6</sup>

Although within the compass of this paper we can only do it briefly, in order to establish the extent to which CEFR scales can be applied to the LSP environment, we need to examine the special features of communication conducted in languages for special purposes.

Firstly, we need to give an overview of the key concepts applied in this field.

In her book, Kurtán [v] gives a perfect summary of sociolinguistic and applied linguistic research done on the subject matter in the last few decades. Whereas the features of languages for special purposes can be defined by taking communication models (Jakobson, Hymes, Halliday, Biber) as a starting point and defining the peculiarities of LSP in terms of their components, such as setting and scene, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms of interaction and genre [vi], communication in LSP can also be considered as a transaction, interaction and as a language activity manifested in speech acts, in which the cooperation of the sender and the receiver of the message and the knowledge necessary to interpret it have a key role.<sup>7</sup> LSP involve the basic functions of LGP, e.g. ideational, textual, personal, interpersonal, contextual, processing and aesthetic, as classified by Biber<sup>8</sup> or referential, aesthetic, emotive, conative, phatic and metalingual as defined by Jakobson [vii], etc. When defining a certain type of LSP, identifying its typical situational contexts and its discourse community are of key importance. For the latter, Swales provides six characteristics. [viii]

A discourse community:

- has a broadly agreed set of common public goals.
- has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
- uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
- utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
- in addition to owning genres, it has acquired some specific lexis.
- has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise.

Further, Kurtán elaborates on the various definitions of LSP. According to contemporary interdisciplinary approach, based on various interpretations (structuralist, cognitive, functional, stylistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic) linguistics and

<sup>5</sup> [1] Ibid. p. 18

<sup>6</sup> In this paper we will use the abbreviation of this expression for both the singular and the plural form of the noun 'language'.

<sup>7</sup> [5] Ibid. p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> [5] Ibid. p. 20



the related disciplines and specialised branches of science consider LSP as a group language, sublanguage, functional style, language variety or a register. All these interpretations try to define LSP in terms of its divergence from the standard language in terms of focal points provided by quality and quantity criteria at the level of semantics, syntax, grammar, stylistics, text structure and pragmatics. Thus, Kurtán defines the use of LSP as “use of a language for specific purposes by a certain discourse community, which explicitly and clearly reflects the part of reality the community of the given area is concerned with, and the typical manifestation of oral and written communication within this framework.”<sup>9</sup>

Heltai approaches the issue from the aspect of communicative competences. [ix] He states that communicating in LSP involves the communicators using language structures and elements available in a given language to fulfil the function of communication for professional purposes. The communicators’ communicative competences include the aforementioned language elements and the ability to use them in the right and an efficient way when conducting communication for professional purposes.<sup>10</sup> As for communicative linguistic competences, LSP have rules and elements also present in standard languages, but in accordance with their function they show distributional differences as compared to standard languages. Thus, although their most conspicuous element is definitely special vocabulary, including terminology, LSP is not merely the usage of terminology. Distributional differences also apply to grammar and general scientific vocabulary, as well as discourse and strategic competences, rather than sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences (see the Murcia – Dörnyei – Thurrell model in Figure 3). Heltai thinks that the role of pragmatic competence is more limited because communication for professional purposes involves fewer communication functions and the role of indirect communication involving inference is less important. However, he establishes that there might be significant differences between the different LSP. Also, in certain peripheral LSP (e.g. the language used by teachers of foreign languages or by footballers) the use of conative and metalingual functions<sup>11</sup> is more frequent, and they use fewer field specific terms than prototypical LSP, therefore, from the aspect of terminology, standard language and professional connotations within them are more difficult to distinguish.

Accordingly, it follows that sociolects of the same LSP may exist, depending on those communicating, their aims, their shared knowledge as a basis and the extent of professionalism they want to achieve.

The basic combinations of these factors are summarised by Heltai as follows:

Sender (of message)	Receiver	Topic	Language
professional	professional	professional	LSP
professional	non-professional	professional	LSP
professional	non-professional	professional	partly LSP
non-professional	professional or non-professional	professional	not LSP

Table 3. Possible combinations of factors in the varieties of the use of LSP.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> [5] Ibid. p. 50 (Translated from Hungarian by Judit Borszéki)

<sup>10</sup> [9] Ibid. p. 37

<sup>11</sup> [7] Ibid.: The conative function engages the addressee (receiver) directly and is best illustrated by vocatives and imperatives. The metalingual function refers to the codes within which the sign may be interpreted.

<sup>12</sup> [9] Ibid. p. 39. (Translated by J. Borszéki.)



When talking about competences needed for communicating in LSP, we must mention Douglas' interpretation of specific purpose language ability. [x] He emphasizes that "language use in specific purpose contexts involves a complex interaction among the components of specific purpose language ability – all the features of language knowledge, strategic competence, and *background knowledge*",<sup>13</sup> the latter one involving *discourse domains* that the language users need to be able to interpret contextualisation cues, i.e. features of the external communicative context that language users take into consideration when making sense of current input. Douglas thus created the construct of specific purpose language ability, using elements of previous models (see Figures 2-4), especially that of Bachman and Palmer. He also states that we should look upon strategic competence (having key importance in changing situational conditions) as a kind of mediator between the external situational context and the language knowledge supported by background knowledge. Figure 5 below represents Douglas' model:

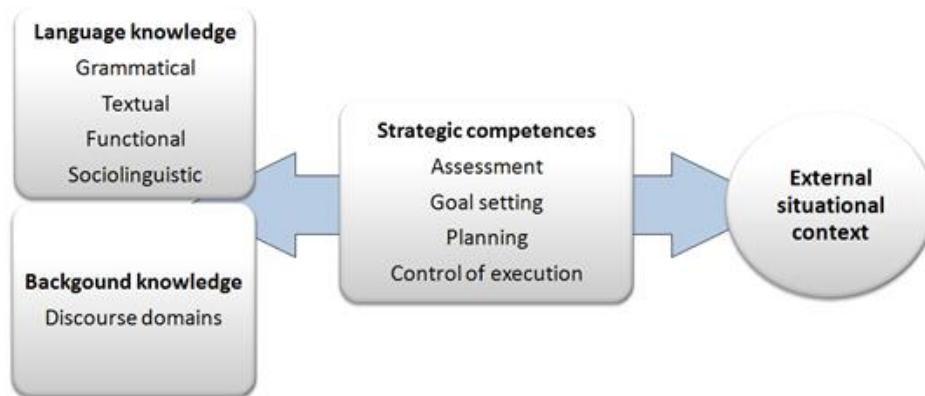


Figure 5. Components of specific purposes language ability.<sup>14</sup>

## SUMMARY

In the first part of the paper we gave an overview of the basic concepts and models related to contemporary theories on communication, language teaching and specific purpose language use, underlying the practices of teaching LSP as discussed in the CEFR and the works of prominent linguists. We identified the general competences language users need to develop for successful communication, the various factors figuring in language interaction, the types of language activities and the key differences between languages for general and specific purposes.

Applying the criteria for defining LSP, and emphasizing that it will need to be proved, following extensive and thorough research and discourse analysis, we can now assume – based on empirical experience – that English for Law Enforcement and within it English for Border Policing (EBP) do exist as languages for special purposes. Border guards and other officials involved in border policing activities constitute a discourse community of EBP, which shows distributional differences in terminology, communicative functions and other language elements as compared to standard English. In the second part of this paper we will focus on two issues; 1. How are the aforementioned concepts of teaching languages for specific purposes manifested in the new e-learning tool for teaching the special language of border policing? 2. What are the sociolects of EBP this tool represents?

<sup>13</sup> [10] Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> [10] Ibid. p. 35. (Graph edited by J. Borszéki.)

Keywords: Common European Framework of Reference, communicative language competence, LSP, border policing

Kulcsszavak: Közös Európai Nyelvi Referenciakeret, kommunikatív nyelvi kompetenciák, szakmai nyelvhasználat, határrendészet

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