



The professional language needs of Economics graduates: Assessment and perspectives in the French context

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Abstract

University graduates across Europe face increasing professional language and intercultural demands. In France, foreign language competence is to be assessed for incoming undergraduates and Master's graduates are required to demonstrate "mastery" of at least one foreign language. Institutions are responsible for defining "appropriate" curricula and for certifying language competence. But the traditional French language learning context makes it difficult for institutions to meet this challenge. The present study thus aimed to assess the professional needs of Economics graduates in order to encourage reflection on curriculum and pedagogical issues. Two hundred and fifty-one questionnaires completed by graduates from 1998 to 2000 revealed a distinct profile for competent language users compared with incompetent users, based on the six-level *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*: high levels of competence were seen to be necessary in all four language skills in varied types of communication with both native speakers and non-natives, and graduates expressed difficulty in meeting their target needs, particularly in oral communication. Graduates' responses were also compared, for a more complete picture, with those of other stakeholders (present students, economics teachers and language teachers) surveyed in an earlier study. Recommendations are made regarding language training for future graduates, as well as suggestions for further research.

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1. Introduction

The European Higher Education Area was created by the Ministers of Education of France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Germany in the spring of 1998. Since then, the number of the participating countries has increased as the geography of political Europe has expanded. The objectives are developing a dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in Europe (the “Lisbon Strategy”), internationalising the workplace and increasing social, economic and political integration across the continent. To this end, the European Commission has adopted a number of measures in partnership with the higher education sector to encourage increased mobility for students and teachers and lifelong learning: among them, the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, the adoption of a diploma supplement qualitatively describing students’ accomplishments, the promotion of cooperation in quality assurance, the elaboration of a transferable credit system (European Credit Transfer System), the promotion of European masters and doctorates, and the creation of European virtual universities. Implementation of these measures varies widely among the different countries, but everywhere the movement translates into increasing demands on both linguistic and cross-cultural awareness and competence.

In France, the Ministry of Education took a major step in the spring of 2002 by reforming the “architecture” of higher education to correspond with practices elsewhere, awarding degrees after three, five and eight years of successful study (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate). Interdisciplinary programmes have been encouraged, and for the first time, qualitative considerations have been spelled out for language learning. Foreign language competence is now to be assessed for incoming undergraduates and “appropriate” programmes set up. Master’s students are required to demonstrate “mastery” of at least one foreign language to earn their diploma, and institutions are expected to provide the means for them to do so. It is also the institution’s responsibility to certify such “mastery” as it sees fit.

Institutions and language teachers in France thus face a new challenge. At the Toulouse *Université des Sciences Sociales*, housing France’s top Faculty of Economics (and one of the best in Europe, according to [Le Nouvel Observateur, 2003](#)), we felt it necessary to thus determine what language needs were felt to be essential for professional life. To obtain as full a picture as possible, the different stakeholders involved in language teaching and learning in economics were surveyed in a large-scale study: students, economics teachers, language teachers and recent graduates. The specific research questions addressed (1) the perceptions of these different stakeholders of professional language needs: level of receptive and productive competence in what contexts, in which languages, in how many languages; (2) self-assessment and the perception of appropriate university language training for the job market; (3) the extent to which the different stakeholders shared the same perspective, i.e., whether students and teachers shared the same vision of “real-life” language needs and whether this matched what was actually encountered by graduates in the field. It is hoped that results will aid not only in local decision-making on questions of language policy, pedagogy and curriculum, but will also contribute to both European¹ and extra-European efforts linking language learning in higher education to the wider professional world.

¹ Socrates Thematic Network Project 3, <http://www.fu-berlin.de/tnp3>.

Readers unfamiliar with the specific language learning context in France, however, may appreciate some insight into the “local” scene. Language learning has been described as paradoxical on all levels of the educational system, with no historical link between secondary and higher education, and rare bridges built between institutions of higher education and the world of work to determine what specific competences should be targeted and in which languages, particularly for non-language majors. In primary and secondary education, official programmes favour foreign language instruction but provide incoherent and insufficient human and material means (Calvet, 1993), with disappointing results. In a study completed in 2002—published by the French Ministry of Education—French 15–16-year-olds were the weakest in English language competence among pupils from eight European countries, and their results were weaker than earlier scores on the same tests given in 1996, despite revised curricula in 1997 (Bonnet, 2004). In higher education, language training for non-language majors has been required since 1973, but such university courses have traditionally suffered from poor integration into curricula, low status and limited human and material resources (Cabezas Gonzales, 1998; Fraser, 1995). More recently in 2000, the outline for a national language certification (*Certificat de compétences en langues de l’enseignement supérieur*) was officially announced, based on the levels of competence described in the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001), in preparation at the same time. Political and practical issues, however, have delayed widespread implementation of this national certification, still in the experimental phase.

Most recently, a study by Educational Testing Service of the use of English in 26 big firms in France² highlighted the clear-cut expectations of recruiters: mastery of English is the *minimum* requirement in 60% to 70% of managerial jobs, and competence in a second foreign language is generally required. A survey published in 2003 following up the careers of Master’s graduates of 1998 at the Toulouse *Université des Sciences Sociales* by the *Observatoire de la vie étudiante* (a structure present in all French universities), raised the question of whether foreign language competence helped in getting a first job. Respectively, 22%, 25% and 33% of graduates in law, business and economics responded affirmatively.³ Finally, at a recent conference on the internationalisation of diplomas and employability at the same Toulouse university in the spring of 2005, recruiters and directors of human resources from companies such as IBM and Airbus insisted on the necessity of a high level of both foreign language—English plus one other—and intercultural skills. At the same time, they lamented the poor showing of many French graduates, speaking in terms of a “national inadequacy.” The University response took the form of a *mea culpa*, making public promises to address the question. Negotiations on language programmes are still underway and concrete advances require a great deal of time and energy.

These examples are, of course, not specific to one university, nor are they even limited to France. Indeed, obtaining strategic political commitment to a coherent research-based language policy is seen to be difficult across Europe. As stated in the recent Synthesis report of the Socrates Third Thematic Network in the Area of Languages,⁴ “only a few countries (such as Finland) have a well-established infrastructure related to compulsory degree language requirements with clear definition of levels and learning outcomes”

² ETS Europe-France, *Etude entreprises grands comptes sur les enjeux de la maîtrise de l’anglais*, 2005.

³ *UTI Magazine*, No. 81 bis, September 2003.

⁴ “TNP3” is a three-year project under the auspices of the European Commission. See site address in Note 1.

enabling employers to have “a relatively good idea of what job applicants can do linguistically on the basis of their formal education” (Thematic Network Project, 2005, p. 13). Consequently, “there is a massive need for many types of action within individual countries as well as across Europe if the aims of making languages play a key role in creating enhanced opportunities for graduates on the European labour market are to be fulfilled” (Thematic Network Project, 2005, p. 16). Insights from the present needs analysis, then, coupled with a picture of French economics students’ actual English language competence, will hopefully enable us to recommend policy, curricular and pedagogical measures aimed at turning, at least in one French context, a vicious circle of dissatisfaction, poor performance and self-recrimination into a virtuous circle of effective language teaching where successful learning breeds further success.

2. Review of the literature

Pertinent needs assessment literature addresses both fundamental and methodological questions in varied contexts. The first concern, however, is defining what is meant by language learning needs as regards language for specific purposes. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) laid the ground work, distinguishing target needs from learning needs. The former include necessities (what the learner must know to function effectively), lacks (what is known compared with what must be known) and wants (perception of what needs to be known), all of which may be viewed from both objective and subjective (learners’) perspectives. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) spoke in similar terms: product-oriented target situation analysis (objective and perceived needs), process-oriented learning situation analysis (subjective and felt needs) and present situation analysis (what learners know). They added the notions of personal learner factors (cultural traditions, attitude, language learning experiences) and of environmental factors (institutional context). Richards (2001) also defined needs in terms of both perceived and present needs and potential and unrecognized needs, and stressed the notion of needs as a subjective construction dependent on learners’ interests and values.

Purely methodological considerations—how to conduct valid needs assessments—determine whether surveys may be used as reliable decision-making tools. Brown (2001) and Crosling and Ward (2002) offered a precise definition of concepts and objectives. Brown (2001), Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) and Richards (2001) discussed survey and sampling techniques. Brown (2001) also thoroughly covered data collection, quantitative and qualitative analysis and reporting findings.

Thanks to their rigorous respect for such methodological guidelines, several authors have provided insight into professional needs in specific contexts.⁵ Holliday (1995), working in a Middle Eastern oil company, stressed the importance of a holistic approach to needs assessment. From an ethnographic perspective based on interviews, taking into account the culture of the organisation and its micropolitics, he was able to make realistic recommendations concerning curriculum, materials development and particularly teacher training. The realisation that a new approach to language training would result in social change was essential. In the context of a university programme preparing students to work

⁵ Strictly limited to reading concerns, the *Journal of Research in Reading* devoted a special issue to international perspectives on reading for professional purposes (vol. 21, 1998). Articles deal with questions of professional text, the reading process, reading strategies, motivation, readability predictors, linguistic and cultural factors and hypertext.

as health professionals in the United States, Lepetit and Cichocki (2002) carried out an in-depth qualitative needs assessment in order to develop a questionnaire for large-scale use. Like Holliday, their analysis was also multidimensional, exploring student profiles, aspirations and course contents. A key finding was that oral skills were among the most important needs identified by students, but that at the same time, language classes emphasised grammar and error correction to the detriment of aural comprehension (Lepetit & Cichocki, 2002, p. 391). Crosling and Ward (2002) explored the nature of oral communication needs and uses in business graduates in Australia in order to better focus undergraduate curricula and assessment, for both native English-speakers and ESL students. Once again, a multidimensional approach considering professional context, cultural values and norms from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives enabled the authors to make concrete policy and pedagogical recommendations. Notably, they found that undergraduate work based primarily on formal presentation skills—a common orientation—inadequately prepared students for the workplace. The authors also contributed to the limited body of research on the question by proposing a typology of professional oral communication. More recently, Chew (2005) reported on the English language skills used by young graduates employed in four Hong Kong banks. Part of a large-scale needs analysis survey carried out between 1997 and 2000, the overall aim, like that of the present study, was to compare what is taught at university to what is needed professionally, in the hope of encouraging more coherent language training. Through interview and questionnaire data, the author highlighted the specific use of English in a multilingual environment—primarily for written communication—and explored sources of communication difficulties (language- and/or content-related) and issues of language training.

Two recent European projects have also addressed the question of professional needs assessment. The QALSPELL project (Quality Assurance in Language for Specific Purposes: 2003–2004), a Leonardo project,⁶ produced an excellent handbook for developing tests to assess students' receptive and productive foreign language skills on the C1 level (advanced) of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. The sample tasks were based on extensive needs analyses carried out among professionals and post-graduate students in the Baltic States (Saar & Uibo, 2004): the nature of language skills used in the workplace was seen to be context-dependent and varied considerably according to specific job status.

In a similar vein, the Third Thematic Network Project in the Area of Languages is currently focussing on the observed “disconnection” of higher education courses from the changing needs in different economic, social and political environments. Sub-project Two specifically addresses the question of language for enhanced opportunities on the European Labour Market. Year three of the project will have drawn to a close at final conference in September 2006 centring on the results of a European-wide consultation of graduates, employers and educational stakeholders. Survey questionnaires explored respondents' personal and academic background, work situation, and work-related language communication skills and competences.⁷ Prior to this consultation, 13 national reports were prepared, and more are due, all focusing on the relationship between languages and employment and examining the implications for language studies. These reports target lin-

⁶ Leonardo is a programme of the European Commission aimed at improving the quality of vocational teaching and training. See <http://europa.eu.int>.

⁷ Questionnaires can be seen at <http://www.fu-berlin.de/tnp3>.

guistic requirements of the European labour market: new demands resulting from greater European integration, qualifications—both formal and informal—of linguistic and intercultural competences, validation of learning, assessment and certification, and cooperation among higher education institutions, public authorities and the world of work.

Project outcomes to date have shown, confirming the previously cited studies, that spoken communication is the most needed language skill, and that language needs are context-dependent (*Thematic Network Project, 2005, p. 11*). More generally, key notions which have emerged are those of multilingualism in the knowledge-based society, the special place of English, intercultural competence, lifelong learning, awareness and involvement of stakeholders (including university graduates), appropriate curricula (including language for specific purposes) and the willingness of higher education to evolve. A year-long dissemination campaign of final outcomes and recommendations is planned upon completion of the project, beginning October 2006,⁸ but this project is indeed “the first determined effort at European level to arrange a structured, comprehensive and continuous dialogue between higher education institutions and other stakeholders about changing and future linguistic and intercultural needs on the European labour market.”

3. Methods

Given its prominence in research, the Economics Faculty of the Toulouse *Université des Sciences Sociales* is acutely aware of the importance of language competence, particularly English. A large-scale needs assessment aimed at clarifying professional language objectives and reflecting on the means to meet them was thus welcomed by the Dean. The project was carried out between 2002 and 2004. The first part included surveys of undergraduates and graduate students (as well as an audit of their receptive skills in EFL), economics teachers and language teachers; results, analyses and recommendations were discussed in *Taillefer (2004)*. The second part of the assessment broadened the scope to include recent graduates. Methodology and results are presented below, and findings will be interpreted in light of results from the first part of the project, as the authors previously cited encourage, in order to approach the same research questions from different perspectives.

3.1. Participants

The first part of the project was based on representative samples of students (672 respondents), economics teachers (30) and language teachers (28) (*Taillefer, 2004*). To ensure a wide enough sampling base of graduates, it was decided with the Dean of the Faculty to contact former students from three academic years at the “Maîtrise” level (four years of higher education), the point at which most students prior to the European Bachelor–Master–Doctorate reform chose either to leave the educational system or to continue with further studies.

Thus, from a total possible sample of 795 graduates (253 from academic year 1997–1998, 285 from 1998 to 1999, 257 from 1999 to 2000) 251 questionnaires were sent in, a return rate of 31.6%, which was felt to be quite acceptable from a single mailing with no follow-up. A slightly higher percentage of the more recent graduates responded: 39%

⁸ See <http://www.fu-berlin.de/tnp3>.

from 1999 to 2000, 32.7% from 1998 to 1999 and 28.3% from 1997 to 1998. This may have been due to invalid postal addresses for more of the older graduates, and/or a greater need for languages expressed by the younger graduates, as will be seen below in Section 4.

The great majority of these MA-level graduates (83.2%), in fact, continued their studies for a fifth year, 17.3% on a research track and four times as many (67.3%) opting for specialised professionally oriented programmes. The average age for the entire sample was 27.6 years, ranging mostly between 26 and 28 years of age, and women outnumbered men (respectively, 60.6–39.4%). Nearly all graduates (95.6%) were native French speakers and 89.6% had chosen English to meet their university language requirement (at the time, a total of 50 hours of class spread over the first two years of higher education). Only 6% had studied Spanish, and 1.6%, German.

The most striking descriptive feature of the sample, however, was the fact that *one half* (50.2%, or 126 individuals) of these graduates in economics reported using one or more foreign languages professionally. English is overwhelmingly the language most often used (91.2%), followed by Spanish for only 4.8%. A second foreign language, in addition to English or Spanish, was cited by 30.9% (39 individuals): Spanish for 43.6% of them, German (23.1%), or English (20.5%). These former students work primarily in banking and insurance (32%), civil service (19%) and media and communication (6%), as financial advisors, consultants, analysts, auditors, project leaders, and customer relations managers. While only 3.5% of the 1998 graduates work abroad, the figure is nonetheless higher than the 2.3% for the whole university.⁹

3.2. Instruments

In order to pinpoint an hypothesised mismatch between the training “supply” and the professional demand, a basic questionnaire was developed to explore five representations pertaining, as seen in the needs assessment literature, to target needs and learning needs in our sample population (students, economics teachers, language teachers, graduates). Perceptions explored were: the context of professional language use (real or projected), the level of receptive and productive competence deemed necessary for professional life according to the six-point *Common European Framework of Reference* scale (represented as “---” for beginner, or A1, to “+++” for mastery, or C2¹⁰), self-assessment on the same scale, the importance of languages in finding a first job and optimal organisation of university language training.

Parallel versions of the questionnaire were worded to address the specific target groups and were then piloted. Only the graduates’ version included questions on personal or professional language training (since that given at the university was known). Thirty closed questions were presented in a four-page “notebook” form (see [Appendix A](#)), with space left for comments. A cover letter signed by both the Dean of Economics and the author, representing the language department, accompanied the survey.

⁹ Data supplied by the aforementioned survey of 1998 Master’s graduates, *Observatoire de la vie étudiante*.

¹⁰ The actual references (A1, A2, etc.) were not given, nor was any explanation of levels. When the study was carried out, the reference system was barely familiar to most language teachers and not at all to the general public.

3.3. Procedures

Postal addresses were obtained from the university registrar's office, and questionnaires were sent out in February 2004 with a stamped return envelope. Replies continued to arrive until the end of June. Mailings, data entry and preliminary analyses were handled by three economics students as an obligatory traineeship in statistics.

3.4. Analysis

Under our direction, the student trainees calculated percentages and compared language use practices (χ^2) and levels of competence (ANOVA), determining possible interrelation of variables. Preliminary analyses were performed with SAS, and completed with Statview for Macintosh, with an α level of 0.05.

4. Results

The findings for the graduates will first be presented in their own right, and will then be compared with the perceptions previously reported on in Taillefer (2004): undergraduates and graduate students, economics teachers, language teachers. Where pertinent, a distinction will be made between the total sample of 251 graduates and the sub-sample of 126 actual users of one or more foreign languages at work. Similarly, where pertinent, the year of graduation will also be taken into consideration, since recency of diploma significantly distinguished between use and non-use of foreign language: less than half (42.3%) of the 1997–1998 graduates are users compared with 46% of the 1998–1999 sub-sample and nearly two-fifths (58.8%) of the 1999–2000 graduates ($\chi^2 = 4.73$, $p = 0.03$). In other words, the need for foreign language competency increased significantly even over just a three-year time span.

4.1. Needs assessment of economics graduates

Participants were asked to answer the questionnaire with respect to the language most often used (Appendix A, question 8), which was, as noted above, 91.2% English and 4.8% Spanish. Questions did not explore professional use of a second foreign language, albeit the case for 30.9% of this sample. For language users, representations are given for, respectively, the context of professional foreign language use, the level of competence deemed necessary and the extent to which respondents felt that they met required levels (self-assessment), and what, if any, language training was undertaken. Representations of the entire sample are given for the importance played by language competence in finding a first job and for questions of university language training.

4.1.1. Context of professional foreign language use

Our sample of 126 users reported similar levels of professional foreign language activity in both formal (meetings, presentations) and informal (daily and social contacts) contexts, respectively 63.2%, 52.8% (question 9). Use in virtual situations (e-mail), however, was greater than in direct contact (including telephone): 75.2% vs. 58.4%. Graduates overwhelmingly responded that they used foreign language in France (81.6%) as opposed to

elsewhere (44%, question 10), but to practically the same extent with native speakers (80.8%) as with non-natives (70.4%, question 11).

Of the different language competences, written skills—reading and writing—were more frequently called upon than oral skills—listening and speaking (question 12): respectively, 79.2%, 66.4%, 60.8% and 53.6%. Assigning numerical values of 0–4 to frequency of use (“never” to “frequent”), analysis of variance (ANOVA) shows the overall difference among frequency to be significant ($F = 9.03$, $p < 0.0001$), particularly distinguishing reading from the rest (Fischer’s PLSD < 0.05). Not surprisingly, the lesser used oral skills were reported to be “often” or “frequently” more difficult than written skills (question 13): speaking 37.6%, listening 26.4%, writing 19.2%, reading 11.2%. On a scale of 4 to 0 (great difficulty to none) the difference was again significant ($F = 11.61$, $p < 0.0001$), again distinguishing reading from the rest (Fischer’s PLSD < 0.05). Reading—the most often used competence and the least difficult—was also deemed professionally the most important (question 14, 84%), but the three other skills ranked closely behind, ranging from 73.6% to 76.8%. On a scale of 1–3 (less important to more so), the difference in perceptions was not statistically significant.

4.1.2. Required levels of competence, self-assessment

Table 1 shows a more specific breakdown of the levels felt to be necessary for each skill (questions 15A–18A) on the six-point scale of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (2001). It is immediately apparent from the boldface figures that economics graduates using foreign language at work felt that high levels of *all four* language competences are necessary, mostly B2–C1 (upper intermediate-advanced), with C2 (mastery) ranging between nearly 15–20%. Total percentages of B2 to C2 accounted for at least 85% of the sample for each skill.

In assessing their own levels of competence on the same scale, however, the graduates felt that they fell short of the mark (*italics*, referring to questions 15B–18B). Reading most closely approached perceived target levels, but for the three other skills, B2–C2 levels accounted for only about 60% of the sample, with non-negligible percentages at B1 level

Table 1

Graduates’ representations (% of total) of levels of language competence necessary in the workplace and self-assessment by skill, according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR)^a ($n = 126$)

CEFR levels	Reading		Writing		Listening		Speaking	
	Necessary (%)	Self-assessment (%)	Necessary (%)	Self-assessment (%)	Necessary (%)	Self-assessment (%)	Necessary (%)	Self-assessment (%)
C2	17.3	13.6	20.0	9.0	17.2	16.4	14.5	7.3
C1	40.0	<i>30.0</i>	30.0	25.5	36.4	20.9	42.7	20.3
B2	36.4	<i>37.4</i>	34.5	29.1	32.7	21.8	33.6	27.4
B1	3.6	10.0	13.6	26.5	10.9	32.7	5.5	23.7
A2	2.7	8.0	0.9	8.1	1.8	3.6	2.7	13.9
A1	0	1.0	1.0	1.8	1.0	4.6	1.0	7.4
Total%	93.7	<i>81.0</i>	84.5	63.6	86.3	59.1	90.8	55.0
B2–C2								

^a A1 Beginner (basic user), A2 Elementary (basic user), B1 Lower intermediate (independent user), B2 Upper intermediate (independent user), C1 Advanced (proficient user), C2 Mastery (proficient user).

(lower intermediate). The gap between the levels perceived to be necessary and those felt to be attained was statistically significant in every case: reading, $\chi^2 = 45.92$ ($p = 0.0002$); writing, $\chi^2 = 99.87$ ($p = 0.0010$); listening, $\chi^2 = 59.53$ ($p < 0.0001$); speaking, $\chi^2 = 49.43$ ($p = 0.0142$).

The last question of the survey—to what extent respondents agreed with the commonly heard affirmation “the French are bad at languages”—also related to self-assessment. More than 30 years of teaching and researching ESP in France has made us acutely aware of this negative self-image as language learners and users. The present sample of nearly 100% francophone users of foreign language at work overwhelmingly agreed with the claim (92.8%, “fully” or “partially”), and as a group, their perspective did not differ from that of non-users. This categorical judgement may be a deterministic “excuse” for poor performance, a self-fulfilling prophecy, or simply an objective statement of truth as Bonnet (2004) suggested. Indeed, there was no significant difference (χ^2) between these graduates’ general perception of the French as language learners and their self-assessed level of competence on each skill.

The experimental protocol did not include testing graduates’ language competence, but the audit of receptive skills carried out in the first part of the needs assessment project, the sub-sample of 101 4th year (Master’s level) students—only a few years younger than the graduates reporting B2–C1, if not C2, levels as necessary—showed just over half to be level A2 (elementary) and just under a third to be B1 (lower intermediate) in both reading and listening. Sixty-seven fifth year students (comparable to the great majority of the graduates sample having pursued their studies) fared only slightly better: just under a third A2, two-fifths B1 and one fifth B2 (Taillefer, 2004). So whatever the impact or explanation of the affirmation that the French are bad at languages, the strong belief in its veracity offers insight into the general French mind set and motivation as language learners.

4.1.3. *Language training*

Regardless of their agreement with this negative self-perception, a majority of the graduates replied that they felt the need to improve their performance in all four skills, ranging from 58% for reading to 65.8% for listening, 66.4% for writing, and unsurprisingly a strong 78.4% for speaking (question 19). What steps did they actually report taking (question 20)? Nearly three-quarters (73.6%) answered that they were “taking action”, 88% of whom said they did so out of personal motivation and 47.8% out of professional obligation. Concrete measures consisted, for nearly 40%, of varied types of courses, for nearly 30% of reading and for 11% of “personal work”. Most of this language improvement activity was said to take place on personal time (70%), with just over half (52.2%), nonetheless, during work time. If the employer financed language training in just over one third of cases (34.8%), the burden fell more heavily on the language learner (44.6%). Considering time and financing issues together, an almost identical percentage (62–64%) reported engaging in language training during working hours at the employer’s expense compared with those doing so on their own time and at their own expense. Continuing language training as a graduate, then, represents a non-negligible investment.

4.1.4. *Foreign language competence and the first job*

In looking at the importance of language competence in finding a first job, the voice of all 251 graduates is once again pertinent, but significant differences distinguished profiles between those graduates currently using foreign languages and those working solely in

French. Thus, while only a minimal average of 14.4% of the whole sample replied that their level of competence in reading actually helped them land their first job (question 22), this corresponded to 28.6% of current language users and for only 0.8% of non-users ($\chi^2 = 40.27$, $p < 0.0001$). The same was true for listening, writing and speaking, where, clearly the more linguistically able candidates had the advantage, ranging from 24% to 28.8% compared with 0.8–2.4% for non-users (χ^2 , respectively, for listening, writing and speaking, 40.96, 32.03, 36.76, $p < 0.0001$). As a corollary, the question was also asked whether one's level of language competence in fact *hindered* employment (question 23). The answer for all four language skills was negative, ranging from 8% to 15.2%, with no difference in replies from users or non-users. Finally, a mere 6.8% replied that having a recognised certification of language competence was a factor in their getting their first job (question 24), regardless of the year of graduation.

So if language competence did help graduates to a certain extent in getting their first job, we wanted to know whether they had felt sufficiently prepared linguistically on entering the job market (question 21). Reading again held a distinctive position, with just over half the entire sample (56.8%) feeling competent enough in this skill, and the difference with those not feeling competent only approaching significance level. For the other three skills, however, a much smaller percentage of graduates felt sufficiently prepared: 35.6% in writing, 28.4% in listening and only 21.6% in speaking, with the linguistic divide between future users and non-users in the workplace already apparent: respectively, writing, 44% vs. 27.2% ($\chi^2 = 12.94$, $p = 0.0016$), listening, 37.3% vs. 20% ($\chi^2 = 10.23$, $p = 0.0006$), speaking 31.2% vs. 12%, ($\chi^2 = 15.19$, $p = 0.0005$).

This generally low level of satisfaction with language competence on entering the job market reflected, unsurprisingly, very limited satisfaction with the specific language training at the Toulouse *Université des Sciences Sociales* (question 25). Only 26.4% felt their language work as students was useful, with a significant difference between future users (36.8%) and non-users (16%, $\chi^2 = 15.15$, $p = 0.0005$).

4.1.5. University language training

In anticipation of such negative feedback, the last part of the questionnaire sought answers to questions of pedagogical organisation as guidelines for change. In most cases, the perspective between foreign language users and non-users was similar. Thus, former students felt strongly (69.2%) that language training should be organised by levels of competence (not the case when the graduates were themselves students, question 26). While project work in teams was favoured by nearly two-fifths of the sample (39.6%), the majority definitely preferred traditional lectures and seminars (61.2%) over “new technology” (guided autonomy), drawing a mere 18%.

Opinion was nearly equally divided over orienting language training toward general language (47.2%) vs. language for specific purpose (43.2%, question 27), but a strong 86% favoured integrating one or more foreign languages into economics courses (question 28). The manner in which to do so was fairly equally distributed among readings (46.4%), written production (39.2%), lectures and seminars (46.8%) and oral presentations (50.4%). The latter was the only case in which users (61.6%) distinguished themselves from non-users (39.2%, $\chi^2 = 12.65$, $p = 0.0018$).

These graduates overwhelmingly felt that the study of one foreign language should be obligatory (94.8%, question 29), and should continue all through university (including a fifth year of higher education, 74.4%). Only 20%, however, favoured obligatory training

in a *second* foreign language. Finally, 58.8% felt that a total of 3–4 hours a week was a reasonable amount of time to invest in language training, including both class time and independent study.

4.2. *The larger picture: graduates, present students, economics teachers, language teachers*

How do the graduates' perceptions compare with those of other stakeholders involved in language learning: present students—future graduates—and economics and language teachers preparing students for professional life? The extent to which perceptions are shared directly influences questions of language policy, curricula and pedagogy. Pertinent comparisons will therefore be made among the different categories of actors.

A first difference in perspective between graduates and students is the perception of how frequently foreign language is/will be used in the workplace. We have seen that while graduates reported making significantly more use of reading than all the other skills, the present students imagined themselves making statistically less use of writing (Taillefer, 2004). In both cases, students foresaw less frequent use of both written skills than graduates (ANOVA F for reading, 26.43, $p < 0.0001$; writing, $F = 10.05$, $p = 0.0016$). Secondly, students deemed reading, writing and listening generally less important professionally than graduates (respectively, $F = 10.36$, $p < 0.0001$; 3.58, $p = 0.0284$; 11.32, $p < 0.0001$). Language teachers, however, significantly felt writing to be less important than did either students or graduates.

Considering specific levels felt to be necessary for each language competence, we have seen that graduates reported B2–C1 in all four language competences, with C2 nonetheless representing 15–20% of those surveyed. As shown in boldface in Table 2, present-day students overwhelmingly set their sights at C1–C2 levels, while both economics and language teachers generally aimed at B2. Reading drew the closest consensus among the four categories, but the variance for all six levels (A1–C2) was still highly significant ($\chi^2 = 70.17$, $p < 0.0001$). Writing was the most diverse ($\chi^2 = 108.28$, $p < 0.0001$), with language teachers minimising the need for this skill professionally, most likely reflecting their limited objectives given the teaching time available. Listening ($\chi^2 = 90.25$, $p < 0.0001$) and speaking ($\chi^2 = 98.56$, $p < 0.0001$) showed language teachers somewhat similar to graduates, with economics teachers imagining the lowest levels of competence as necessary for their students.

Graduates and students shared the same perception of their own difficulties with foreign language: oral skills were said to pose more problems than written skills. But their opinions differed as regards context of use—where and with whom. If both groups saw greater use with native speakers than with non-natives, graduates reported doing so primarily in France (65% with natives, 57% with non-natives vs. students' 42% and 39%), whereas students imagined such activity mainly elsewhere (59% with natives, 50% with non-natives vs. graduates' 39% and 32%).

On a pedagogical level, it was reported above that graduates strongly favoured integrating foreign language into economics courses (86%). The same tendency was shown by the other stakeholders in Taillefer (2004): 68.1% for students, 80% for economics teachers and 86.2% for language teachers. Statistically speaking, the present students' reaction significantly set them off from the other categories (ANOVA $F = 11.11$, $p < 0.0001$). But this contrast is explained by the fact that the student sample consisted mostly of undergraduates (37.6% second year students, 33.9% third year), whose desire for integration was lower

Table 2

Representations (% of total) of levels of language competence necessary in the workplace (B1 and above), for each skill by professional category

CEFR levels	Graduates (<i>n</i> = 126) (%)	Students (<i>n</i> = 672) (%)	Economics teachers (<i>n</i> = 30) (%)	Language teachers (<i>n</i> = 28) (%)
<i>a. Reading</i>				
C2	17.3	34.0	3.3	0
C1	40.0	31.4	36.7	51.6
B2	36.4	20.8	40.0	45.2
B1	3.6	4.9	16.7	3.2
<i>b. Writing</i>				
C2	20.0	33.9	6.7	3.2
C1	30.0	29.5	10.0	16.1
B2	34.5	20.5	46.7	58.1
B1	13.6	5.2	20.0	19.4
<i>c. Listening</i>				
C2	17.2	43.0	10.0	6.5
C1	36.4	19.0	16.7	(22.6)
B2	32.7	21.3	26.7	67.7
B1	10.9	8.2	33.3	3.2
<i>d. Speaking</i>				
C2	14.5	32.3	3.3	6.5
C1	42.7	29.3	13.3	32.3
B2	33.6	19.8	30.0	54.8
B1	5.5	8.6	40.0	6.5

(60%) than for graduate students. Among the latter, 81% of fourth year students, comprising 17.3% of the sample, favoured integration, as did 90% of fifth year students (11.2% of the sample).

5. Discussion

In answer to our research questions, the present study completed the picture of perceptions of professional language needs for French university graduates in economics, bringing to light graduates' representations and comparing them with those of present students, economics teachers and language teachers. A significant distinction was seen between graduates using one or more foreign languages (primarily English) in the workplace and those avoiding the situation. The tendency was more pronounced among more recent graduates. Language users reported engaging in all types of communication, in varied contexts with both native speakers and non-natives. Written skills were seen to pose fewer problems than oral skills, but all four competences were felt to be essential at high levels of proficiency.

These graduates expressed difficulty in meeting their target needs, particularly in oral communication, and their self-image, at least as francophones, was rather negative. Three-quarters of the sample reported dealing with the need to improve by engaging in language training, often at their own expense and on their own time. At the time when this study was carried out, language competence played a role for a limited number of graduates in finding their first job, but this again particularly distinguished between more or less

skilled candidates. The great majority of this sample felt itself linguistically ill prepared on graduation, and several pedagogical recommendations were proposed.

Finally, comparing needs assessments of graduates to perceptions of the other stakeholders in French higher education gives an indication of the pertinence of university language training. More differences were revealed—particularly with students—than similarities. Common perceptions were shared only on the questions of specific language difficulties (primarily oral skills) and integrating foreign language into disciplinary courses. Different views were evident on the frequency of foreign language use, its context, its degree of importance and the level of competence necessary. Generally speaking, students *underestimated* the extent of necessary use and *overestimated* target levels of competence compared with graduates' actual accounts. Economics teachers, on the other hand, tended to underestimate target levels of competence compared with graduates. Language teachers shared more similar views with graduates, although minimising the importance of written communication in the workplace.

This discordance in perceptions of target and learning needs among the different stakeholders, in light of the graduates' feeling themselves linguistically ill prepared for professional life, clearly reflects the very limited interface between French higher education and professional life. Indeed, in the spring of 2006—two years after this study was completed—widespread student protest over employability resulted in the government's engaging a national debate on the link between university studies and the job market.

The present study was undertaken before such action, in one French university, in an attempt to raise awareness of the impact of language teaching and learning on graduates, to encourage coherent reflection on language policy, curriculum and pedagogy. But for our findings to serve as a possible aid to decision-making in more general contexts linking language learning in higher education to the wider professional world, methodological limitations of the study must be noted. These primarily concern the questionnaire itself. Despite extensive piloting, a key informational point was in fact overlooked, that of respondents' actual jobs. The survey carried out by the *Observatoire de la vie étudiante* just before the present one did, however, profile graduates of 1998. It was felt, on discussing the populations involved, that findings could be extrapolated to the classes of 1997–1998 and 1999–2000. Other possible questions could also have explored to what extent study or work placement abroad reflected graduates' intercultural needs and whether job interviews were conducted in a foreign language. More specific questions could also have addressed the particular tasks in the workplace on the model of the questionnaires used in the QALSPELL Project and the Third Thematic Network Project. Finally, more consequential support would have enabled us to follow up non-respondents and to back up selected questionnaires with interviews for further qualitative insight.

6. Conclusion and implications

With the above insights, several practical recommendations can be made regarding language training for future graduates, as well as suggestions to open further avenues of research. First and foremost, university and professional stakeholders must be politically and pedagogically aware of the importance of such needs assessments. This implies a state of mind open to external evaluation and the ability and willingness to question

traditional values and modes of operation. As reported in the TNP3 Synthesis report, “data collected from former graduates about the adequacy of studies and the workplace... is still rarely taken into account in curriculum design to ensure adequate qualification integrating the language and intercultural needs of the labour market” (2005, pp. 14–15). A level of transparent dialogue among stakeholders is required that, like language competence, is not always attained. Yet this is the only way for (a) appropriate institutional policy and curricula to be defined, and (b) discipline area teachers to become fully aware of the role they play in transmitting the appropriate message to their students.

On the institutional level, the notion of “mastery” of at least one foreign language needs to be defined in terms of priority skills and levels of competence. The present study suggests, for economics graduates, that all four language skills are nearly equally necessary, and at a minimum B2 level, i.e., that of a confirmed independent user. But as the literature pointed out, each context has its specificity: “mastery” in the banking sector may not be the same as “mastery” in the health sciences. Further needs analyses in different sectors, such as those being carried out by the TNP3 Project, will provide appropriate insights. Institutionally, at least in France, universities also face the challenge—with no additional resources—of certifying language competence to meet the terms of the new Master’s degree as set out by the Ministry of Education. Very few of the graduates in this study had obtained any sort of certification. Experimentation and research are underway in France and elsewhere in Europe on this question, based on the *Common European Framework*. The role of language for specific purposes—mostly English—is obviously a major aspect.¹¹

The question of multilingualism remains, however: nearly one-third of the foreign language users in this study reported needing two languages at work, and competence in “mother tongue plus two” is a goal within the European Union. Wider use of the Council of Europe’s European Language Portfolio—a self-assessment tool with both language learning and documentary functions—and of Europass—the Council of Europe’s recent standardised language passport and curriculum vitae—should encourage greater awareness of multilingualism and facilitate international recognition of levels of language competence. Again, research is ongoing with the European Language Portfolio¹² and is being further developed.

Setting institutional language objectives translates most logically into curriculum design integrating disciplinary and language components. This type of interdisciplinary approach is not traditional in France, but is being encouraged within the new European-inspired reform. Measures have begun to be taken, but they must be carried further, with both formative evaluation of outcomes and assessment by research. Among such measures are CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)—teaching disciplinary courses in a

¹¹ The French *Groupe d’Etude et de Recherche en Anglais de Spécialité* (GERAS) was founded in the late 1970s specifically to address such research and teaching concerns.

¹² See the Council of Europe site (<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/portfolio/>), the *Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l’Enseignement Supérieur* (<http://www.cercles.org>) and the French *Rassemblement National des Centres de Langues de l’Enseignement Supérieur* (<http://www.ranacles.org>), the latter of which is involved in e-Portfolios.

foreign language, ideally with both content and language objectives. Following the lead taken by Northern European countries, universities elsewhere would be wise to take their experience into account, heeding “warnings” (Hellekjaer & Westergaard, 2003; Hellekjaer & Wilkinson, 2003; Marsh, Marsland, & Stenberg, 2001). Concerns, for example, are language support for both students and teaching staff, intercultural awareness and helping students to understand that foreign language contact is not limited to contact with native speakers abroad, but occurs readily in any European country with speakers of many native languages. This last notion, as discussed above, is particularly important for discipline area teachers in France to transmit to their students.

Integrating language resource centres and the concept of learner autonomy is a second challenge both in language teacher training and in curriculum design. In France, the *Rassemblement National des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur* and the *European Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur* encourage research and exchange examples of best practices. A key notion, recognised for the first time by the French Ministry of Education, is addressing incoming university students at their current proficiency levels, rather than where official programmes say they are supposed to be. Bringing students to “mastery” certification level is possible only in this perspective.

A third way forward on curricular questions is greater coherence for ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) credits. The system was developed within the Socrates programme to facilitate academic recognition by home institutions of study abroad. Credits are supposed to represent the workload for a particular course, based on a clear syllabus. In France (as in other countries), however, this is not always the case, and language credits are often negligible, dissociated from the actual investment required of learners.

Such recommendations, if implemented, will hopefully improve the situation in France, a country which is not alone in facing language learning challenges. But we shall leave the last word to the graduates themselves who spoke in terms of “regretting the handicapping insistence on grammatical perfection to the detriment of oral fluency” and the “frustration at having spent nine years in secondary school and university studying a foreign language and being unable to communicate”. They made a plea for more realistic and motivating teaching oriented to professional life: “I made no progress in class, but improved when I had to do my Master’s thesis with a bibliography entirely in English.” And finally, as two respondents put it: “Language is as important as economics for research and in industry.” “Losing out on a job because of insufficient language skills is very painful.”

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Appendix A. Questionnaire for Economics Graduates

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Year of graduation	1997-1998 <input type="checkbox"/>	1998-1999 <input type="checkbox"/>	1999-2000 <input type="checkbox"/>	N° _____
2. Major :	Economics and Social Sciences			<input type="checkbox"/>
	International Economics and Finance			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Econometrics			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Industrial Economics and Management			<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Did you continue your studies after the M.A.?			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, in what programme?	_____			
Did you successfully complete it?			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Sex	F <input type="checkbox"/>	M <input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Age	26 <input type="checkbox"/>	27 <input type="checkbox"/>	28 <input type="checkbox"/>	29 <input type="checkbox"/>
			30 <input type="checkbox"/>	other <input type="checkbox"/> _____
6. Mother tongue(s) :	French <input type="checkbox"/>	other(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
7. Which foreign language did you concentrate on at university?	English <input type="checkbox"/>	Spanish <input type="checkbox"/>	German <input type="checkbox"/>	Italian <input type="checkbox"/>
				Russian <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you use one or more foreign languages professionally?			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, which one(s), in decreasing order?	1. _____			
	2. _____			

If yes, please answer the remaining questions in function of the language most often used.
If No, continue with question 21.

II. YOUR NEEDS (in function of the foreign language indicated in question 8. Please tick all that is applicable):

A. IN GENERAL...

9. In what context do you currently use your main foreign language?

mostly formal situations (meetings, presentations)	<input type="checkbox"/>
mostly informal situations (social, everyday communication...)	<input type="checkbox"/>
direct contact (including telephone...)	<input type="checkbox"/>
virtual contact (e-mail...)	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Where do you use your foreign language? in France elsewhere

11. With whom do you use your foreign language?

native speakers (for example, English with a native English-speaker)	<input type="checkbox"/>
non-native speakers (for example, English with a Spanish-speaker)	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. How often do you use these different competences in your foreign language?

	Very often	Fairly often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Understanding : Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating : Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

13. Do you have difficulties in using these different competences in your foreign language?

	Very often	Fairly often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Understanding : Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating : Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. How important, in your mind, is professional use of these different competences in foreign language?

	Very important	Mid-level importance	Not very important
Understanding : Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicating : Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. MORE PRECISELY...

Levels of competence in foreign language, as described by the Council of Europe and given below, are ranked from weakest (--) to strongest (+++). In column **A**, please tick the level which, according to you, is necessary to perform efficiently at work. In column **B**, please tick the level corresponding to your present competence.

Please tick only *one* level of competence in *each* column.

15. UNDERSTANDING: Reading

		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can...
---	read simple words and phrases in everyday life		
--	read short and simple texts for gist or for specific information		
-	read texts written in everyday language, or relative to my studies, although rather slowly		
+	read articles or reports expressing a particular point de view as long as there is adequate time		
++	read longer, complex, specialised texts, appreciating differences in style, in a reasonable time frame		
+++	read any type of text easily, even abstract or complex documents, appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning		

16. UNDERSTANDING: Listening

		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can...
---	understand words, basic and familiar expressions in a limited context		
--	understand expressions and common vocabulary relative to my immediate environment		
-	understand key points in clear and standard speech when people speak slowly on familiar topics		
+	understand longer talks and follow complex lines of argument on familiar topics; understand most news programmes in standard dialect		
++	understand extended speech, even when it is not clearly structured, TV programmes, with relative ease		
+++	understand any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, as long as I have time to become familiar with a particular accent		

17. COMMUNICATING: Writing

		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can...
---	write short, specific information		
--	write short, simple notes and messages		
-	write coherent texts or notes on familiar subjects		
+	write clear and detailed texts, reports and essays on topics in my field		
++	write clear, well structured texts, developing my point of view on complex subjects		
+++	write clear, smoothly flowing, stylistically appropriate texts; write summaries or critical reviews		

18. COMMUNICATING: Speaking

		A	B
LEVELS OF COMPETENCE (from weakest to strongest)		Is necessary	I can...
---	say basic expressions, phrases and ask simple questions on familiar subjects, as long as my interlocutor is willing to help me understand and express myself		
--	respond on familiar topics, describe my university course, in simple terms, carrying on very limited conversation		
-	generally explain my opinions or projects; spontaneously participate in conversation on familiar topics		
+	express myself clearly and in detail, actively participate in conversation on topics relative to my interests; spontaneously communicate with a native speaker		
++	describe complex subjects clearly and in an appropriate manner; express myself spontaneously, clearly and easily in professional or social contexts		
+++	describe or argue complex subjects clearly and easily, in an appropriate manner; express myself in any situation in standard, idiomatic language with appropriate nuances; correct myself in a natural way which draws little notice		

19. Presently, in your work, is it necessary for you to improve your...
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| reading comprehension? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| listening comprehension? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| written expression? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| speaking? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
- 20a. Are you taking action to improve your language skills or to maintain your level? Yes No
- b. If yes, out of personal motivation? Yes No
 out of professional obligation? Yes No
- c. If yes, in what way (courses, personal study, etc.)? _____
- d. If yes, on your own time? Yes No
 on work time? Yes No
- is it financed by: your employer
 yourself
 other (identify) _____

III. WHEN YOU GOT YOUR FIRST JOB...

21. Did you feel that your foreign language skills were well enough developed on entering the job market in...
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| reading? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| listening comprehension? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| written expression? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| speaking? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
22. Were you hired especially *thanks to* your level in foreign language...
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| reading? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| listening comprehension? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| written expression? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| speaking? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
23. In looking for your first job, were you *not hired* specifically *because of* your level in foreign language...
- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| reading? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| listening comprehension? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| written expression? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| speaking? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
24. If you obtained *certification* of your foreign language competence (for example, TOEFL, TOEIC or Cambridge exams in English, DELE or ELYTE in Spanish), was this an important element in your first being hired?
 Yes which certification? _____ No
25. Do you feel that the foreign language training you received at Toulouse I was useful? Yes No

IV. In light of your answers to the preceding questions, what would you suggest for foreign language teaching and learning at university?

Concerning *pedagogical organisation* of language teaching,

26. do you feel that language teaching should be set up *in the form of* (you may tick several answers)...
- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| regular classes/seminars? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| guided autonomous learning (possibly on line) ? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| teamwork (projects) ? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| groups by level of competence? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| other: | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
27. Should language teaching be *oriented...*
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| more towards specific economic and professional language? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| more towards general language? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- 28a. Should one (or several) foreign language(s) be *integrated in non language courses* (for example, documents to read in their original language, written production, classes or seminars in foreign language)? Yes No

b. If yes, do you see this integration *in the form of* (you may tick several answers)...

- readings?
- written production (theses, evaluation of a training period, exams)?
- lecture courses /seminars?
- students' oral presentations?
- others? _____

Concerning *practical organisation* of language teaching,

- 29a. should the study of *at least one* foreign language be...
 elective? obligatory?
- b. should the study of *a second* foreign language be...
 elective? obligatory?
- c. If the study of one foreign language is obligatory, do you feel this should *continue through*...
 2nd year 3rd year 4th year 5th year
- d. *How many hours* per week (homework and class time) do you feel it reasonable to devote to
 studying the main foreign language?
 1 2 3 4 5 6 and +

V. FINALLY...

30. It is often said that "The French are bad at foreign languages". Do you...

- completely agree?
- partially agree?
- partially disagree?
- completely disagree?

Further comments and recommendations (on a separate sheet, please).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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