

## Project Description

University: Trinity College Dublin

Project (Challenge/Tool/Action): #7: LMS platforms and innovation in English language assessment

### 1. Introduction:

This challenge responds to the need to ensure that English language assessment uses all the tools available in the language classroom which can assist in measuring language proficiency. This includes virtual learning platforms and embedded/compatible applications which ensure the authenticity of language assessment through providing context, choice and multiple forms of language input.

Whilst many innovations have been made in pedagogy, creating learner-centred classrooms which deploy task-based curricula, language assessment has often lagged behind, and traditional language tests are often still used even though they may not capture much of a language learner's repertoire or measure the breadth and scope of their communicative proficiency. However, such tests are seen as reliable and easy to use. In terms of online assessment, whilst the medium may be cutting-edge and delivery gamified, often the test items and response formats embedded in the latest applications are very traditional in nature. Whilst these are attractive and useful in the earliest stages of language learning, they do not sustain learners' attention or meet their language needs in the longer term.

This action attempts to innovate three online interactive formats and tasks (oral presentations, mindmapping and blogging) as contextualised ways of delivering assessment opportunities for teacher, peer and self-assessment, with rating scales that have been constructed using the descriptive apparatus of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In the context of Trinity College's non-specialist institution-wide language modules (which are both credit and non-credit bearing), the E-Lengua team in the university have developed three new means of implementing online assessment within the university's Blackboard Learn environment.

## 2. State of the art:

Innovation in language assessment shifts what is often the final stage of the the curriculum design cycle (summative assessment) to become an integrated part of teaching and learning activities in the classroom (formative assessment), not just assessing language learning, but also assessing *for* learning. In other words, assessment should be viewed from a learner-centred perspective as much as any other part of the curriculum. However, it can be very difficult for many language learners who have been accustomed to a teacher-led classroom to adapt to such a shift. As Little (2007, p. 23) notes, “few learners will arrive at their first class ready to take complete charge of their own learning; for most, self-management in learning will be something they have to learn, to begin with by taking very small steps”. Providing scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976; see also Thomsen, 2003 for discussion of scaffolding the language classroom) allows learners to take control of their own learning through learner involvement in the process of learning, learner reflection and target language use (Little & Ushioda, 1998; Little, 2007). The assessment tools outlined below attempt to respond to this teaching and learning context, and to provide scaffolding throughout the assessment phase of language curriculum design.

For the researcher and test designer, language testing has the aim of providing reliable and valid measures of specific language constructs such as speaking, writing and so forth, and those involved in test design have a dual concern – defining the construct to be measured, and deciding upon the best way of defining or delineating that particular construct. However, this concern is not typically shared by test-takers or those who administer a gatekeeping function based on test results: these end-users generally take scores for granted, and mostly place trust in the validity and reliability of the testing exercise. This is particularly the case for large-scale language proficiency tests which tend to be deployed across the globe for a variety of purposes. However, the life of the test does not begin and end in these scores, but instead it ripples back to language classrooms, where much time is spent in test preparation, and foreword to the school, university or workplace, where decisions are based around test scores often without discussion or understanding of what can be extrapolated from the results, as the newspaper articles cited above help illustrate. Test designers are aware of such effects, and much research has been conducted on the (i) washback and (ii) impact of language tests (Wall 2005; Spolsky 1997; Alderson and Wall 1993).

Washback can be defined as how a test influences the activities which go on in a language classroom before testing, or what Alderson and Wall describe as something that ‘compels teachers and learners to do things they would not necessarily otherwise do because of the test’ (Alderson and Wall 1993, p. 115, their emphasis). Washback can be positive and negative in terms of the types of changes in a curriculum that a test can induce. For example, incorporating spoken interaction into a test is likely to lead to washback in the classroom, and encourage teachers and learners to place more

emphasis on the skills involved in dialogue, listening comprehension and creating appropriate spontaneous utterances. But washback can also be detrimental to learners' competences, by focussing for example on inauthentic aspects of a test or indeed on how to pass the test itself. By creating tests that are authentic, closely related to the target language use domain, and delivered in ways that are clear, fair and transparent, language assessment can create positive washback in the classroom. Our assessment tools aim to create such washback, especially through diversifying forms of feedback beyond just teacher feedback.

The approach to language learning and language use outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference will allowed us to implement innovation in online language assessment, to generate a set of shared assessment and goal-setting instruments, scaled to different proficiency levels, and adapted to various assessment needs. A needs-based, learner-centred curriculum is concerned principally with providing structures and mechanisms to help students learn in a way that best suits their interests, priorities and learning styles, and, above all, to operate successfully in the target language both in the classroom, and in a target language context.

In this E-LENGUA challenge, we focus on specific, action-oriented descriptions of language use, joined-up learning and assessment materials, and embedded self-assessment procedures, as we endeavour to help student language learners to become lifelong language users. The "Can do" descriptor approach of the CEFR facilitates the implementation of self-assessment procedures. Even through the small step of asking students to consider their current language ability before enrolment in an online module, self-reflection can be encouraged from the outset.

Through the design of three innovative real-life assessment activities which will test learners' spoken and written production (an interactive presentation format, mindmapping and Blackboard blog), we attempt to provide viable alternatives which can be embedded in virtual learning environments, used and adapted by teachers, and benchmarked to the Common European Framework of Reference's proficiency levels.

Online language learning and assessment in virtual learning environments allows an opportunity for sustained self-assessment which can be scaffolded by the curriculum designers. It has been argued, supported by research findings (e.g., Rea-Dickens, 2006; Goto Butler & Lee, 2006), that self-assessment embedded in learning, or immediately following, and related to, a particular task (on-task rather than off-task) leads learners to self-assess more accurately. Moreover, detailed and informative descriptions of language competency rather than more abstract concepts of overall progress and effort generally seem to help students to break down the monolith of language learning into manageable skills and subskills, and to identify much more clearly where they have made progress, and to recognise areas of difficulty. In the same way that we learn a language by using the language, we learn most about assessment when we assess, or in the case of the learner, when they are co-assessors and self-assessors.

Multiple and sometimes interchangeable definitions are deployed in the discussion of

e-learning and online educational systems or platforms, including Learning Management Systems (LMS), Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), Course Management Systems or Content Management Systems. Whilst distinctions can be drawn between the names given to some of the commercial applications of these systems, for the purposes of this paper, the term Virtual Learning Environment will be used to refer to types of web-based technology that allow educational courses to be organised, delivered, tracked and assessed through embedded content, interactive applications and online communication and collaboration between learners and instructors. Watson and Watson (2007: 28) describe this kind of online platform as a framework or an infrastructure that “delivers and manages instructional content, identifies and assesses individual [...] goals, and collects and presents data for supervising the learning process”.

The most frequently employed Learning Management Systems in the European Higher Education context are Moodle and Blackboard Learn, with a regional market share at third-level of 57% in 2017 for Moodle, and 18% for Blackboard Learn (Hill, 2017), followed by an increasing number of small educational technology start-ups often eventually acquired by one of the larger companies. Watson and Watson (2007: 30) describe the “powerful potential” of Learning Management Systems, due to four key characteristics of “reusability across multiple contexts”, “generativity” (generating new instruction), “adaptability to meet the needs of individual learners”, and “scaleability to meet the needs of both larger and smaller audiences without significant changes in cost”. These four characteristics mean that LMS represent an important technology in language learning and in Higher Education. However, as Coates et al. (2005: 26) point out in their discussion of the influence of VLEs on teaching and learning, “it is not the provision of features but their uptake and use that really determines their educational value”.

The language assessment activities described below was implemented at Trinity College Dublin through Blackboard Learn, one of the most widely used VLEs in higher education. All Trinity College staff, students and modules are automatically registered in Blackboard Learn, although its use by academic staff across the university – and, most likely, many other universities – varies enormously in terms of purpose (e.g. whether simply using the VLE as a means of storing lecture notes), function (e.g. teaching, assessment, discussion) and regularity. In the university’s institution-wide language programmes, coordinated within the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, a shared template is employed which provides standard information across all modules and suggests possible means of organizing module content, for instance thematically or chronologically. Whilst staff training, including on how to assess in Blackboard Learn and how customise modules, is regularly available, competing pressures on staff time appear to translate into fairly modest use of the VLE. The university is working hard to ensure that the positive affordances of Blackboard Learn are maximised, through, for instance, support for the creation of interactive lesson design. Thus, the goals of the E-LENGUA project provided us with a timely and indeed invaluable opportunity to explore online language assessment in the

university's VLE.

### 3. Target groups:

The immediate target group of learners for the development stage are English language learners studying English at Trinity College Dublin mostly for purposes of advancing their academic studies, whether at a very basic level, or at the highest level for further education purposes. These learners range from those aiming for B2 level proficiency through to those aiming for C2 level, near-native speaker-level proficiency.

Our core target group is modelled on the university students registered at Trinity College in institution-wide non-specialist language modules. The university offers a variety of credit and not-for-credit language modules. Until now, these modules have availed of Blackboard in any systematic way, and assessment methods remain rather static and traditional (reports and in-class oral presentations, delivered in hard copy).

The online assessment tools being developed will be available freely through E-Lengua's repository, to the designers and instructors of English language programmes anywhere in the world, and adaptable to other virtual learning environments beyond Blackboard such as Moodle.

### 4. Methodology:

Three tools were adopted in our efforts to respond to the challenge of a learner-centred and needs-based assessment framework within the LMS/VLUE context: (1) an interactive presentation format for spoken production and interaction, (2) a mindmap format for written production and (3) a blog for written interaction. Each of these formats allow authenticity in assessment topics, authentic and meaningful interaction, scaffolding, and a variety of assessment methods (teacher, peer, self).

#### (1) Pecha Kucha

Assessing Spoken Production Skills in an innovative way which can be deployed for testing learners of all proficiency levels. Our approach to assessing spoken production skills uses the *PechaKucha* approach to testing English Spoken Production Skills (Japanese: ペチャクチャ, translation: 'chit chat'). The PechaKucha approach to presentations employs 20, mostly visual, slides which are shown for 20 seconds each (6 minutes and 40 seconds in total). The format keeps presentations concise and fast-paced, and was first used in Japan in 2003 for multiple presentations by young designers. This approach is increasingly been used in Europe for crowdsourcing, pitches etc. in 'PechaKucha' nights. For the English speaking tests, students are requested to present on any topic of their choice, using this visual slide format as their prompts. These presentations can be delivered synchronously and asynchronously.

One of the online assessment activities designed at Trinity College as part of the E-LENGUA project includes a Pecha Kucha presentation to be uploaded by learners to Blackboard Learn. This activity assesses spoken production skills from the B1 common European proficiency levels upwards. Very much in the same family as presentation styles such as lightning talks or the 'thesis in three' format, Pecha Kucha is a rigid and

fast-moving oral presentation format for individual learners which employs 20, mostly visual, slides which are shown for strictly 20 seconds each (6 minutes and 40 seconds in total). This format keeps presentations concise, fun and fast-moving. It has been described as a kind of visual haiku, a way to deliver a more striking or memorable talk rather than using more conventional presentation methods. Students are requested to present on any topic of their choice, using this visual slide format as their prompts. Pecha Kucha presentations can be delivered synchronously, live or via video calling applications, or asynchronously as a pre-recorded and timed slide/audio presentation which is then uploaded to the VLE for assessment.

### Online English Language Assessment 1: Assessing Spoken Production Skills



#### Pecha Kucha

In this assessment exercise, we use a Pecha Kucha presentation to assess your B1/B2 Spoken Production skills in English. The Pecha Kucha approach to presentations employs 20 visual slides which are shown for 20 seconds each (6 minutes and 40 seconds in total) along with a narrative from the presenter.

Pecha Kucha is a Japanese word (ペチャクチャ) which means 'chit chat'. Pecha Kucha is a fast-moving oral presentation format for individual learners. This exercise asks to you prepare a set of slides in advance, and to deliver a short, timed presentation about your slides. This assessment is designed to allow you to pre-record your presentation in advance and to upload it to Blackboard Learn for review. For this assessment, you are invited to present on any topic of your choice. Below you will find step-by-step instructions to complete this assessment exercise.

Pecha Kucha has been the subject of academic discussion and investigation as a presentation format conducive to fostering student learning and engagement (Beyer, 2011; Beyer et al., 2012; Dunlap, 2011). Klentzin et al. (2010: 160) provide a review of scholarly literature on the use of Pecha Kucha presentations in university instruction. They write:

Potential advantages for the use of Pecha Kucha as a pedagogical technique in the college classroom are evident. Similar to traditional PowerPoint presentations, Pecha Kucha provides students with both auditory and visual modes of instruction in thereby reaching students with two different learning styles simultaneously. Pecha Kucha also forces an instructor to focus on the most relevant information during the strictly timed presentation.

In an empirical study among 67 US college students, Beyer et al. (2012) compared student recall between Pecha Kucha and PowerPoint presentations. They found more favourable student preferences for Pecha Kucha versus traditional PowerPoint peer presentations, and found similar levels of recall and retention of material presented across both formats.

## (2) Popplet

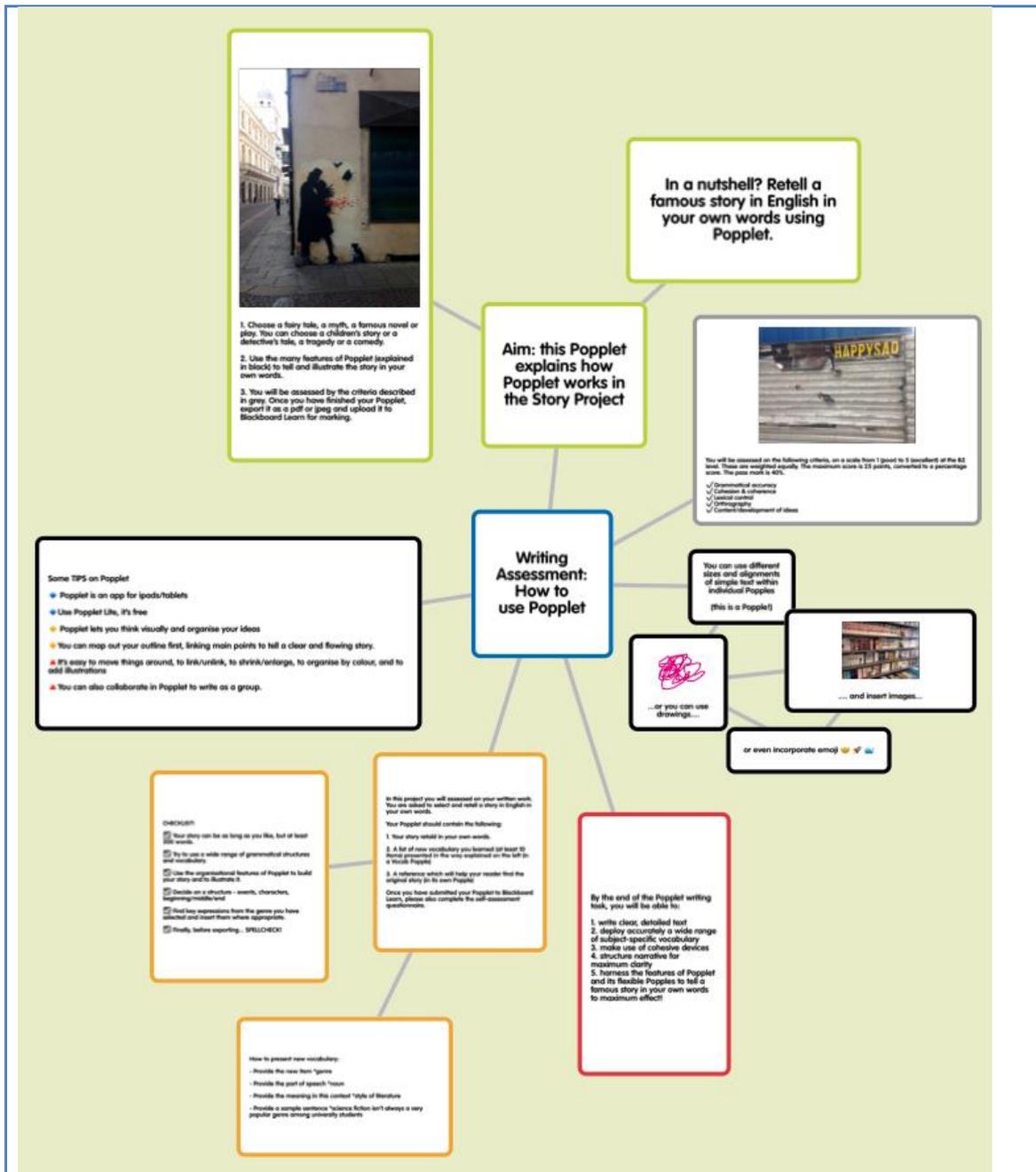
Assessing Written Production Skills through [Popplet](#). It is a Web 2.0 application users to easily create attractive graphic organizers integrating text, images, video etc. to organize and present information. The Popplet application provides a platform for the creation of mindmaps and presentations, incorporating visual supports as well as text. It can be used by a variety of proficiency levels, from A1 through to near-native

speaker, and provides a single platform through which writing can be assessed from a variety of perspectives, enabling peer assessment through the comments feature as well as teacher assessment. It may be used by individual learners as well as collaboratively, and multiple users may develop a Popplet together, and comment on each other's work.

Frazier (2015: 73) describes Popplet as “an innovative, technology-based approach to teaching using an old tool, the graphic organizer, in a web-based platform. Available at no cost for limited use through its website or as an application for iPad tablets, Popplet Lite allows the free creation of 10 Popplets. For further use, there is a modest charge. It requires no additional software, and the sign-up procedure is simple. Creating a Popplet is intuitive and simple: clicking will create a new text box (Popple) that is high customisable. The text boxes can be easily linked and edited, and can contain text as well as a variety of visual formats. Each Popple has a comment box attached for review.

The relevance of this technology-enabled approach to teaching in higher education lies in its simplicity. Instructors are familiar with graphic organizers, the pedagogical approach described is not dependent on any specialized training or professional development, and no software needs to be installed to begin use of Popplet. As a Web 2.0 tool facilitating research-based best practices, Popplet, supports the integration of technology into instruction to enhance organization of content, to engage learners through collaboration, and to provide an innovative analysis and feedback method for students. (Frazier, *ibid*, p. 78)

Below is a screenshot of the explanatory Popplet created for the purposes of its implementation in this project, in the context of TCD's non-specialist institution-wide language programme. Learners are invited to create a Popplet which recreates a famous English story or tale, replacing the former version of this Story project which was simply typed up and submitted in hard copy. In the new iteration of this task, learners create a textual and visual version of their selected story, organised graphically according to how they decide to retell the original story



### (3) Blackboard Learn Blog

Assessing Written Production Skills through Blog functions in Blackboard. A Blog is a personal online journal that is updated regularly and is intended for public viewership online. Blackboard Learn provides a function for enrolled users to view and write blogs. This kind of extensive and interactive writing encourages students to express their ideas clearly in an authentic context and in a social environment. They also provide a way of showcasing students' interests and achievements. Blackboard Learn Blogs comprise the Blog entry function (text, images, links, embedding YouTube videos etc.); the Comments function (remarks or responses to Blog entries made by the assessor and peers). Blogging for assessment purposes in an interactive manner entails selecting the topic in advance, allowing only the owner of the Blog to add Blog entries

but allowing all other class members to view and add comments. The rating scale is provided below under (5). Assessors can grade the quality of the discussion, as well as the number of entries and comments that are made by an individual or the group of learners. Grades for blogs are managed in the Blackboard [Grade Center](#). The Blackboard platform offers accessibility to learner groups with visual impairments, and given the range of students' needs, we will ensure that our tools have textual equivalents or alternative text for content, that screen labels are used appropriately, and that any PDFs are appropriately edited for screen readers and accessible from a range of devices.

### 5. Development of the project:

(A) The first part of project development involved validating a set of rating scales, firstly piloted by small groups of volunteer English language teachers enrolled in the TCD M.Phil. module in Language Testing as part of the validation process. The scales were validated through collaborative discussion, trial ratings of anonymised examples of student work, and through group sorting of the scales by subconstruct and proficiency level (i.e. deconstructed, and reconstructed in groups to see if the reconstruction matched the original.) Further validation occurred in a test trial, where the rating scales were used by language instructors and results scrutinised. These rating scales, both holistic and analytic, for written production and spoken production, are designed to be accessible from a Blackboard or Moodle platform and used across a variety of language proficiency levels. The rating scales have been adapted from the descriptors provided by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, based on an analysis of the target language use domain and the most relevant language constructs.

#### A1-B1 CEFR benchmarked rating scales, Writing Production

	A1	A2	B1
<b>WRITING LANGUAGE</b>	uses simple sentence forms uses limited range of basic vocabulary	Uses basic vocabulary reasonably appropriately. Uses simple grammatical forms with some degree of control. Errors may impede meaning at times	Uses everyday vocabulary generally appropriately, while occasionally overusing certain lexis. Uses simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control. While errors are noticeable, meaning can still be determined.
<b>COMMUNICATIVE ACHIEVEMENT</b>	Produces a simple and short text	Produces text that communicates simple ideas in simple ways.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task in generally appropriate ways to communicate straightforward ideas.
<b>ORGANISATION</b>	Text is consists of short phrases	Text is connected using basic, high frequency linking words.	Text is connected and coherent, using basic linking words and a limited number of cohesive devices.

### C1-C2 benchmarked Analytic Rating Scale, Written Production (Blogs)

	1	2	3	4
<b>Content</b>	The information provided has little or no relation to the topic.	The information provided has limited knowledge about the topic. Overall, it is lacking essential information.	Includes essential information about the content. Subject knowledge appears to be decent.	All information provided is extremely detailed, relevant and appropriate to the content. The topic is presented thoroughly.
<b>Structure &amp; Organization</b>	The main points of the presentation are presented in a haphazard manner. There is no clear or organized structure.	Content is organized for the most part, but is illogical at times. The structure of the presentation is adequate.	Includes a coherent presentation structure, mostly easy to navigate.	Ideas and information are organized and transitioned well. The structure is very easy to navigate.
<b>Grammar &amp; Vocabulary</b>	Grammar structures are not suitable for academic writing. Many spelling errors and uses basic vocabulary.	Several grammar and spelling mistakes. The complexity of vocabulary is inadequate, but does not hinder the overall comprehensibility.	Minor grammar inaccuracies presented. There is a wide variety use of vocabulary, but it is restricted in places.	Grammar structures and use of vocabulary is presented logically. Contains almost no inaccuracies.
<b>Independence of Thought</b>	There is an absence of independent thought. Student's voice is not apparent within his/her presentation .	Independence of thought is evident throughout the presentation, but it is not developed properly.	Independent thought is expressed appropriately. Clear evidence to support the argument should	The independence of thought is executed clearly and is supported accurately and academically. The student fully grasps the subject matter.

### A1-B1 CEFR benchmarked Analytic Rating scales, Spoken Production & Interaction (PechaKucha style)

	A1	A2	B1	B1+
<b>SPEAKING LANGUAGE</b>	only produces isolated words or memorised utterances • cannot produce basic sentence forms	• uses simple vocabulary to convey personal information • has insufficient vocabulary for less familiar topics • attempts basic sentence forms but with limited success, or relies on apparently memorised utterances • makes numerous errors except in memorised expressions	is able to talk about familiar topics but can only convey basic meaning on unfamiliar topics and makes frequent errors in word choice • rarely attempts paraphrase produces basic sentence forms and some correct simple sentences but subordinate structures are rare • errors are frequent and may lead to misunderstanding	manages to talk about familiar and unfamiliar topics but uses vocabulary with limited flexibility • attempts to use paraphrase but with mixed success produces basic sentence forms with reasonable accuracy • uses a limited range of more complex structures, but these usually contain errors and may cause some comprehension problems
<b>DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT</b>	Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	Can use basic turn taking devices in simple and routine tasks requiring a direct exchange of information, feelings and opinions on familiar and routine matters.	Can use simple turn taking devices . in discussion in a familiar situation making relevant points and responding to reach a shared understanding	Can interact with small degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible with little strain for either party.
<b>PRONUNCIATION</b>	Speech is often unintelligible	mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener	uses a limited range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener	uses a range of pronunciation features • attempts to control features but lapses are frequent • mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
<b>GLOBAL ACHIEVEMENT</b>	• pauses lengthily before most words • little communication possible	speaks with long pauses • has limited ability to link simple sentences • gives only simple responses and is frequently unable to convey basic message	• cannot respond without noticeable pauses and may speak slowly, with frequent repetition and self-correction • links basic sentences but with repetitious use of simple connectives and some breakdowns in coherence	usually maintains flow of speech but uses repetition, self correction and/or slow speech to keep going • may over-use certain connectives and discourse markers • produces simple speech fluently, but more complex communication causes fluency problems

**C1-C2 CEFR benchmarked Holistic Rating Scale, Spoken Production & Interaction (PechaKucha style)**

C1	<p>Can handle difficult and even hostile questioning fluently and clearly.</p> <p>Can elaborate on complex topics confidently and articulately to an audience unfamiliar with it, structuring and adapting the talk flexibly to meet the audience's needs.</p>
B2	<p>Can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and respond clearly to questions raised by members of the audience, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression.</p> <p>When asked can give a clear, detailed explanation of presented topics with highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.</p>
B1	<p>Can take follow up questions, but may have to ask for repetition if the speech was rapid</p> <p>Can give a straightforward explanation of presented topic which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision.</p>
A2	<p>Can cope with a limited number of straightforward follow up questions if he/she can ask for repetition and if some help with the formulation of his/her reply is possible.</p> <p>Can give a short explanation of presented topic without giving much detail and without a high level of clarity or precision.</p>

### (B) Pecha Kucha

In the assessment unit in Blackboard Learn, students are provided with an overview of the assessment exercise, and are then invited to watch an embedded video clip which presents an example of Pecha Kucha, selected from the Pecha Kucha website's Presentation of the Day ([www.pechakucha.org](http://www.pechakucha.org)). Next, a structured Learning Widget within Blackboard then guides learners through the assessment activity, with (1) instructions, (2) tips on the three key areas which involve planning and preparation (selecting the images, writing the script, and timing) and finally (3) information on the assessment of the presentation (self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher assessment). This widget provides a table of contents for the learners, and can be easily adapted by teacher-assessors:



### **PechaKucha Assessment Exercise**

-  Instructions
-  Tips on how to select your images
-  Tips on how to create your script
-  Tips on timing
-  Assessment details

Klentzin et al. (2010: 161) address the impact the constraints inherent in this format, including the rigidity of the timing, the need to make swift transitions between many slides whilst maintaining narrative integrity, and the restrictions of a short time frame which may render some topics too complex to address. In the preparation of this task, learners are presented with tips in the Blackboard Learning Widget on selecting images (including issues of copyright, visibility etc.), how to craft a script or story that maintains their listeners' attention, and how to manage the technical details of a timed and pre-recorded slide presentation. These are valuable transferable skills which are gained during the assessment preparation.

The assessment scheme for the Pecha Kucha project is based on a combination of scored self- and teacher-assessment. Self-assessment accounts for 10% of students' overall presentation score, with teacher assessment accounting for 90%. Peer-assessment is conducted through making access to the teacher rubric open to all the class, but this is not formally scored at present. Rather than simply listening as audience members, all learners are encouraged to act as peer-assessors for their classmates' presentations. These steps are implemented through the Blackboard Learn Assignment toolkit. The self- and teacher-assessment materials for the Pecha Kucha presentation involve a checklist as well as an analytic rating scale. The three-point checklist ensures that presentations are appropriately timed, that the slides are visual in nature, and that the narration continues for the duration of the slide show (no 'empty' time). Learners who do not meet these criteria are deducted 10 points per item from their final overall score. In conjunction, an analytic rating scale is used as a basis for scoring spoken production. This rating scale is embedded in Blackboard Learn. Learners achieve a maximum of 20 points, converted to a final percentage score.

Pecha Kucha Rating Scale & Checklist					
Name					
Description	Each Pecha Kucha presentation is assessed using the rating scale below, which assigns a numerical score by category: Phonological Control, Spoken Fluency, Grammatical Accuracy, and Vocabulary Range & Control. These are equally weighted, and a maximum of 100 points is possible. In addition, Pecha Kucha presentations must follow these three guidelines. Presentations will do not do so will be deducted 10 points per item. 1) Presentations should not exceed the time limits (20 seconds per slide, 6 minutes and 40 seconds in total) 2) Presentations should employ visual slides (slides without writing) 3) The narrative presentation should be continuous, and last for the full time of the presentation (no 'empty' time)				
Rubric Detail					
Criteria	Levels of Achievement				
	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Phonological Control	0 to 5 points Almost unintelligible	6 to 10 points Strong L1 accent	11 to 15 points Fair L2 accent	16 to 20 points Good L2 accent and intonation	21 to 25 points Very good L2 accent and intonation
Spoken Fluency	0 to 5 points Very slow and hesitant, frequent stops and starts	6 to 10 points Stilted and somewhat hesitant, but manages to keep going	11 to 15 points Flows reasonably well in spite of occasional hesitations	16 to 20 points Fluent, good expression	21 to 25 points Very fluent and expressive, normal speech tempo
Grammatical Accuracy	0 to 5 points Very little control, grammatical errors impede the message	6 to 10 points Errors frequent, difficulty with complex structures, but message intelligible	11 to 15 points Good control of basic structures, some errors in more complex structures and discourse patterns	16 to 20 points Only occasional errors, mostly in control of complex structures and discourse patterns	21 to 25 points Very few noticeable errors, competent control of complex structures and discourse patterns
Vocabulary Range & Control	0 to 5 points Very limited vocabulary range, errors frequent and impede communication	6 to 10 points Limited vocabulary range, frequent errors. Little or no attempt to use specialist terms appropriate to the topic.	11 to 15 points Good general vocabulary range and control but limited use of specialist terms appropriate to the topic.	16 to 20 points Wide-ranging vocabulary choices and control. Demonstrates clear effort to use specialist terms.	21 to 25 points Very good control of vocabulary, demonstrates mastery of specialist terms appropriate to the topic.

Online language learning and assessment in virtual learning environments allows an opportunity for sustained self-assessment which can be scaffolded by the curriculum designers. It has been argued that self-assessment embedded in learning, or immediately following, and related to, a particular task (on-task rather than off-task) leads learners to self-assess more accurately (Rea-Dickens, 2006; Goto Butler & Lee, 2006). Detailed and informative descriptions of language competency in assessment rubrics, rather than more abstract concepts of overall progress and effort, seem to help identify progress and to diagnose areas of weakness (Carson, 2010). In the same way that we learn a language by using the language, we learn most about assessment when we assess, or in the case of the learner, when they are co-assessors or peer-assessors as well as self-assessors. Self-assessment of each Pecha Kucha presentation is based on the same rubric and checklist as used by teachers. Students are provided with the following information:

*Your Pecha Kucha presentation is assessed by your teacher using five-point scale, (one – very poor to five – very good). You can access a copy of the rating scale used for this project in the Assessment folder in Blackboard Learn. Now, we ask you to assess your own work using the same five-point scale. Please complete the following assessment, and be ready to discuss your self-assessment with your teacher.*

Self-assessment of spoken production is presented in Blackboard Learn assessment rubric as follows:

Name	Pecha Kucha Self-Assessment				
Description	Your Pecha Kucha presentation is assessed by your teacher using five-point scale, (one – very poor to five – very good). You can access a copy of the rating scale used for this project in the Assessment folder in Blackboard Learn. Now, we ask you to assess your own work using the same five-point scale. Please complete the following assessment, and be ready to discuss your self-assessment with your teacher.				
Rubric Detail	Levels of Achievement				
Criteria	Very Poor	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Phonological Control	<b>0 to 5 points</b> My accent was hard to understand.	<b>6 to 10 points</b> I had a strong accent in my presentation	<b>11 to 15 points</b> I had a fairly good English accent in my presentation.	<b>16 to 20 points</b> I think I had a good I had English accent and intonation in my presentation.	<b>21 to 25 points</b> My English accent and intonation were very good in my presentation.
Spoken Fluency	<b>0 to 5 points</b> I was very slow and hesitant, with frequent stops and starts	<b>6 to 10 points</b> I was stilted and somewhat hesitant, but I managed to keep going	<b>11 to 15 points</b> My presentation flowed reasonably well in spite of occasional hesitations	<b>16 to 20 points</b> My presentation with fluent, with good expression overall.	<b>21 to 25 points</b> My presentation was very fluent ,my speech tempo was normal without any hesitations.
Grammatical Accuracy	<b>0 to 5 points</b> I made a lot of grammatical errors that impeded my message	<b>6 to 10 points</b> I made frequent, difficulty errors especially with complex structures, but my presentation was intelligible	<b>11 to 15 points</b> I showed good control of basic structures, but with some errors in more complex structures	<b>16 to 20 points</b> I only made occasional errors, mostly in control of complex structures.	<b>21 to 25 points</b> I made very few noticeable errors, and showed competence in my control of complex structures.
Vocabulary Range & Control	<b>0 to 5 points</b> I had a very limited vocabulary range, with frequent errors that impeded communication with my audience.	<b>6 to 10 points</b> I had a limited vocabulary range and frequent errors, with only a few or no specialist terms.	<b>11 to 15 points</b> I showed a good vocabulary control, but I only used a limited range of specialist terms appropriate to my topic.	<b>16 to 20 points</b> I included wide-ranging vocabulary choices and was control of the vocabulary items. I also demonstrated a clear effort to use specialist terms.	<b>21 to 25 points</b> I showed very good control of vocabulary, and also demonstrated mastery of specialist terms appropriate to my topic.

The assessment checklist is presented as follows:

- Was your Pecha Kucha presentation on time? (20 seconds per slide, 6 minutes and 40 seconds in total)
- Did you use visual slides? (Slides without writing)
- Did your narration continues for the duration of the slide show? (No ‘empty’ time)
- Please note that 10 points will be deducted per item.

In summary, the Pecha Kucha assessment activity is presented within a unit of a Blackboard Learn language module. Using the Learning Widget function in the VLE, an overview of the assessment activity is presented with clear instructions for successful completion. Students pre-record their slide presentation and narrative, and upload these to Blackboard Learn for assessment. Peer-assessment functions in Blackboard mean that all class members are able to view these files as well as the teacher-assessor. Online assessment rubrics are provided as well as checklists.

The Pecha Kucha toolkit will include a complete Blackboard Learn module, with a teachers’ handbook, sample presentation and bibliography as well as the task description and rating scales/scoring grids.

(C) Popplet

As mentioned above, the Popplet Story task represents a new departure for a former writing task that formed a regular part of the assessment scheme for TCD’s non-specialist language modules. During their two-term module, students complete a range of collaborative and interactive tasks, and one of the most popular activities is the Story Project which involves selecting a famous myth or tale and retelling in one’s own words. The section above describes the positive affordances of Popplet in

enhancing the previous version of this task, in terms of flexibility, creativity and collaboration.

The Popplet task is presented as a module in Blackboard Learn. It can be delivered as an individual test of written production or as a collaborative task. It is designed to be part of the formative assessment schedule of the module, performing a diagnostic role in terms of allowing students to receive feedback on their Popplet, but it may also be run as a summative test should conditions be possible (i.e. access to computer terminals/tablets, under exam conditions).

## Story Project in Popplet



1. Choose a fairy tale, a myth, a famous novel or play. You can choose a children's story or a detective's tale, a tragedy or a comedy.
2. Use the many features of Popplet (explained in black) to tell and illustrate the story in your own words.
3. You will be assessed by the criteria described in grey. Once you have finished your Popplet, export it as a pdf or jpeg and upload it to Blackboard Learn for marking.

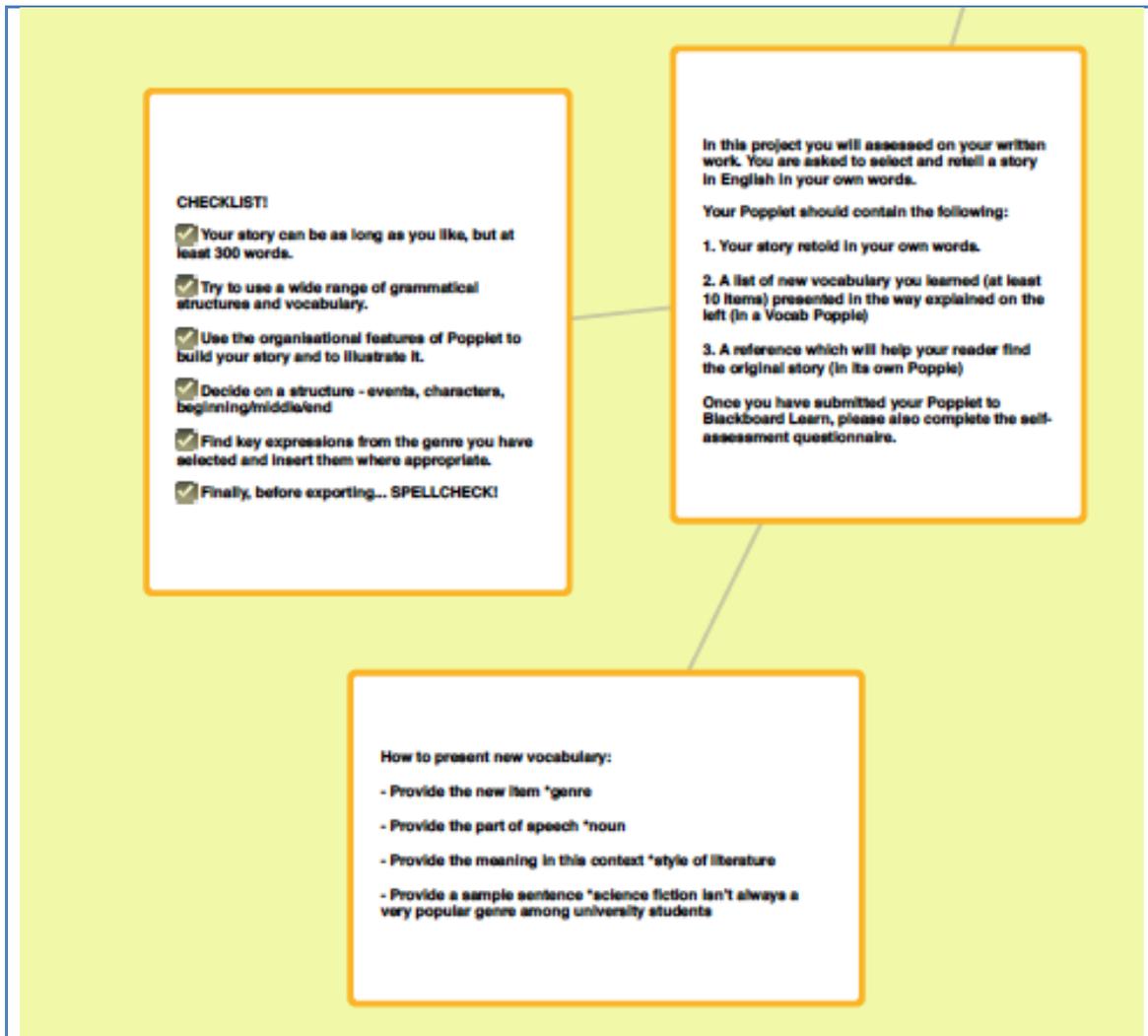
In a nutshell? Retell a famous story in English in your own words using Popplet.

Aim: this Popplet explains how Popplet works in the Story Project



You will be assessed on the following criteria, on a scale at the B2 level. These are weighted equally. The marks

The text boxes in green describe the project's aims in terms of selecting and retelling a story through creating a Popplet.



The Popples in orange explain how the project will be assessed, provide a checklist for students as they plan the task, and set out one key aspect of the project – the inclusion of a structured list of new vocabulary items.

Five learning outcomes of for the task are presented in the pink Popple:

**By the end of the Popplet writing task, you will be able to:**

1. write clear, detailed text
2. deploy accurately a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary
3. make use of cohesive devices
4. structure narrative for maximum clarity
5. harness the features of Popplet and its flexible Popples to tell a famous story in your own words to maximum effect!

Four black Popples demonstrate and explain some of the basic features of Popplet:

The diagram consists of four black-bordered boxes (Popples) arranged on a light green background. The top box contains the text: "You can use different sizes and alignments of simple text within individual Popples (this is a Popple!)". The middle-left box contains a red scribble and the text: "...or you can use drawings...". The middle-right box contains a photograph of a bookshelf and the text: "... and insert images...". The bottom box contains the text: "or even incorporate emoji 🍌 🚀" with a small blue bird emoji below it.

The grey Popple presents the assessment criteria: grammatical accuracy, cohesion and coherence, lexical control, orthography, content and development of ideas.



You will be assessed on the following criteria, on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) at the B2 level. These are weighted equally. The maximum score is 25 points, converted to a percentage score. The pass mark is 40%.

- ✓ Grammatical accuracy
- ✓ Cohesion & coherence
- ✓ Lexical control
- ✓ Orthography
- ✓ Content/development of ideas

## 6. Chronogram:

### 2017

Completed the design phase of all assessment tools (prompts, instruction rubrics, rating scales etc.) and uploaded to VLE. Transforming validated scales into self-assessment and peer-assessment documents.

Research and development activities including focus groups of learners and instructors, assessment trials under test conditions, collaboration with Blackboard support team at TCD. Training workshop open to TCD language instructors in English. Finalising checks regarding use of analytic or holistic rating scales and teacher/learner preferences.

Investigation of assessment tools in practice from teacher and learner perspectives, administration of evaluation tools, investigating scale validity and reliability (e.g. face validity, construct validity, inter-rater reliability etc).

Completion of research and development phase of the assessment tools: creation of full assessment framework and specification for use at large.

### 2018

- Research analysis ongoing, towards final report.
- Publication of results, modules in Blackboard Learn, handbooks and another accompanying outputs
- Revisions of the three assessment tasks following research analysis
- Publication of final results in the public sphere via teacher associations, conference presentations, published articles.

## 7. Dissemination:

Diffusion of the online assessment tasks for VLEs through mailshots, press releases, contact with various national and international networks, including:

- Irish Association for Applied Linguistics (IRAAL)
- One Voice for Languages national campaign group
- Association of University Language Centres (AULC)
- CercleS – European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education
- EALTA – European Association for Language Testing and Assessment
- AILA-Europe & AILA, International Association of Applied Linguistics.

Regarding knowledge transfer and scientific research, the data from the research and development cycles involved in creating, rolling out and validation each test task will be included in the final report, and published research publications, including peer-reviewed journals with a strong impact factor.

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