



WRAB 2023 – Trondheim Norway – February 2023

Constitution of a competency framework

**for the production of reflexive writings:
for a documentation of French students' writing
difficulties**

- a **significant number** of people have difficulties in their studies and in their professional activities due to **poor writing skills** (Boch & Frier, 2017 ; Delcambre & Lahanier-Reuter, 2010)
- no accurate measures of the proportion of students in difficulty
- one of the benefits to be expected from the écrit+ project: enabling such evaluations
- out of 6180 persons tested when entering university (Nanterre, summer 2021)
 - **2145 had less than 50% success**
 - on a test covering cross-curricular writing skills
 - in lexicon, syntax, and text structuring (no spelling)
- **écrit+** psychometric tests conducted on 9149 students between 2019 and 2021:
 - 1/3 have difficulties with skills identified as high school level
 - 1/6 have difficulties with the most rudimentary skills

- Needs for **documentation** = document what these students know and do
= **their difficulties + their ways of operating**

=> **Collection of dysfunctions**

+ Construction of a **grid of errors**

❓ to **classify / differentiate / analyse** the dysfonctions at stake

- **Spiral procedure** :

❓ datas lead to **enrich the grid** = add categories

❓ as the grid is deployed, **other types of dysfunctions are sought**

- Initially, excerpts reported by teachers as dysfunctional (Bloch et al., 2020)
- Then, targeted collections for insufficiently documented problems
- Now, **systematic queries** in student writing corpora

= **about 4300 data collected**

distributed among 327 categories

❓ involve all areas of writing production

lexicon, syntax, contents, positionings, text structure, quotations, tenses, registers, spelling, punctuation

Coordination :

*Tandis que la Pologne obtient plus de 80 % de bonnes réponses **et 90 % en République de Corée***

While Poland gets more than 80% correct and 90% in the Republic of Korea

Word constructions :

*La première lecture des bulles **rendent compte que** cette illustration représente un entretien d'embauche*

Word meaning :

*Une hausse des prix s'en est **accompagnée**. (a price increase **followed** /this was **accompanied by**)*

Relative clause structures:

*un médecin **qui, malgré toutes les prescriptions faites à une patiente celle-ci décède** n'est pas poursuivi*

*a doctor **who, in spite of all the prescriptions made to a patient she dies** is not prosecuted*

Appositions control :

***En tant que successeur**, renforcer le pouvoir de César dont descend Auguste légitimise le pouvoir*

As successor, reinforcing the power of Caesar from whom Augustus descends legitimizes power

□ Seem to affect all language skills

❓ including those **acquired early** + **not limited to writing skills**

❓ many do not correspond to what we know about oral syntax

« Try. Do you think you would say that ? »

❓ more like a **collage of grasped segments**

Connection words :

- *Nous présenterons notre synthèse en trois points [...] et **finalement** nous verrons le rôle de l'enseignant*
= *pour finir* would be better / *finalement* more appropriate for a conclusive summary
- ***Tout d'abord** , il a mis en valeur l'importance de l'Eglise pour Charlemagne, notamment dans la répartition du testament où il accorde autant d'importance à l'aumône qu'à ses héritiers. **Secondement** , par ses dons à l'évêché de Ravenne ainsi que par la mise en vente d'objets au profit des plus démunis.*
= *Tout d'abord* first part of the presentation or beginning of a narrative?/ *secondement* does not exist
- ***Dans un second temps** , Charlemagne est un souverain très occupé et soucieux de son royaume au point même qu'il y laisserait son sommeil.*
= *Dans un second temps* not appropriate for introducing the second part of a presentation

> > > **Announcements of issues/questionnings:** **premièrement, *d'une part, * finalement*

Structuring of a conclusive summary: **au début, *tout d'abord*

Development structuring: **dans une première partie, *dans un premier/second temps*

Narratives: **premièrement, au début*

...

Which explanation(s) ?

- **late acquisitions mainly affected?** (Boch et al., 2020)
- **lifelong learning?** (Frier, 2017, p. 34)
- **language deficits manifesting an unachieved acquisition process?**
 - express themselves like you and me in oral speech
 - + data are for the most part **academic genres** = « advanced literacy »(Boch et al., 2020)
= that children would not produce
- problem of **acculturation** to academic genres? (Boch&Frier 2017; Delcambre&Lahanier-Reuter 2010)
 - **lack of knowledge of the norms of academic genres?**
 - "The essential difficulty lies in the blind application of supposed norms, and in the use of formulas that are assumed to be expected by the academic community " (Pollet, 2004)
- facing a "**major literacy event**"(Jaffré, 2004)
 - = the encounter of a meta-genre **bringing together academic and professional genres** met at University
 - = **reflexive writing**

- **text** elaboration accompanies **knowledge** elaboration (Goody, 1977[1979]; Reuter, 2006; Bazerman, 2009)
 - whether it is to **construct** this knowledge
 - or just to **make it your own**
 - or to reconstruct it for a **reader**
- writing that "involves not only using reading and writing in multiple situations (at university, and subsequently in work situations) but also **thinking and acting through writing** » (Frier, 2017, p. 35)

= High level writing

- "demonstrates the professional's competence, that is ability to evaluate **actions in a situation**"(Bouquet, 2009)
 - surveys
 - annual reports
 - medical expertises for the court
 - judgments
 - grant applications

= require advanced skills **in a specialty area**
AND in written communication

- "set of **situated scriptural practices**, linked to the **exercise of professional practices**, subject to the purpose of rhetorical and pragmatic **efficiency**"(Beaudet et al., 2016)

- Academic writing ? = area of specialty + situated + rhetorical adaptability (Ravid&Tolchinsky, 2002)
= **High level writing**

- "multiple constraints that delimit any written production process: logic-linguistic, cognitive, rhetorical, ethical, temporal and contextual constraints " (Plane et al., 2010)
- "orchestration of multiple operations to solve a problem, etc. " (Perrenoud, 2001)
- "primordial principle of **multi-causality**"; "existence of a multitude of variables"(Lang, p.10)

- "students' writing difficulties [...] dependent on adjustments in their scriptural procedures » (Lang, p.9)

- "phenomenon of attraction from one stable state to another, which consequently causes a period of **disorders** " (Lang, p.150)
 - ❓ **elementary skills falter because of confrontation with this metagenre of reflective writing.**

- Frier's proposition : Work on linguistic skills but **integrating them with reflexive writing tasks**.
- **conceive these skills in relation to the competencies involved in composing such writings.**
- Moving from **errors grid** to **competency framework**

"It therefore seems difficult to me to support a research program in language didactics that would not think about **communicative situations** and would limit itself to describing decontextualized language activities and abilities."(Perrenoud, 2001)

- think of these abilities as **situated abilities**
 - Caught in **situated competencies** = development of reflexive writing

=> Reconstitute the **competencies framework** mobilized for elaboration of reflexive writings



A framework for reflexive writing

- Shift from **dysfunctions and errors** to **competencies for reflexive writing**

- Integrate the errors grid but as an **empirical basis**
= testifying to **situated difficulties**

- Different from the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CECRL)** :
 - difficulties not specific to French as a Foreign Language (FFL/FLE)
 - levels not related to language deficits / elements not yet acquired
but with **difficulties in mobilizing competencies**
in the context of **high-level reflective writing**
 - not declining diversity of communication situations / **focused on reflexive writing**
 - integrating the errors grid already developed
=> **fine definition grain: « clear texts ? »**

=> pronoun without antecedent?
break in continuity?
ambiguous term ?

- 4 general **fields** : WORD/SENTENCE/TEXT/DISCOURSE
 - corresponding to 4 areas necessarily mobilized in the writing process, where one has to:
 - **conceive a content and make it her or his own**
 - **organize a text**
 - **choose words**
 - **construct sentences**
 - Necessarily interacting : form elaboration and content elaboration go together (= reflexive writings)

- Competences ordained on one single action: writing
 - corresponding to **one single generic class of situations** (contra Perrenoud)
 - But ... **situated** = writing task

- For instance, **constructing sentences** implies a global mastery of a situation
 - that is, **having to speak**
 - ... which is done with ... **sentences**.

=> facing this situation, **various resolutions**:

= develop, condense, adjunct, coordinate, antepose, embed, repeat, etc.

Then, **recursive procedure** to determine first the **competencies** that these 4 **fields** cover
= **divide each field in competencies**

- For instance, in the field of **text organization** 4 major competencies:
 - **ensure cohesion of the text**: USE ANAPHORAS
 - **ensure text progression and logical articulations**: CHAIN SENTENCES TOGETHER
 - **ensure general structure** : STRUCTURE TEXT
 - **master inscription in visual space** with paragraphs, typography etc.: ORGANIZE TEXT VISUALLY

- Notice, only the last one is specifically attached to writing

- DISCOURSE :

- *Analyse and structure contents*
- *Identify points of view*
- *Deliver implicits*
 - *+ Master conjugation marks.*

- TEXT :

- *Structure text*
- *Use anaphoras*
- *Chain sentences together*
 - *+ Organize text visually.*

- WORDS :

- *Comprehend words*
- *Develop extended lexicon*
- *Select right words*
 - *+ Master lexical spelling.*

- SENTENCES :

- *Articulate sentence components*
- *Structure sentences*
- *Master modalities and sentence types*
 - *+ Master grammatical orthography.*

- **Competencies** may be linked in turn to the various **capacities** each of them implies
 - Some involving a significant number of them
 - for instance **Anaphoras use** competency involves 11 different capacities from the use of **anaphoric personal pronouns** to the construction of **reference networks** in texts
 - Others a much more limited number
 - For instance, the **Structure Texts** competency includes:
 - 6 capacities relative to particular **genre types**
 - plus 4 general capacities which are :
 - **capacity to design the opening and closing of texts**
 - **capacity to build a coherent plan**
 - **capacity to use relevant connection words**
 - **capacity to give a text its rhythm**
- **Capacities** which each remain relatively general.

- Each **capacity** mobilizes a number of more specific **abilities**
= those observed to be **dysfunctional** in student productions.

For instance, the ability to **use relevant Connection words** refers, as we have seen, to several abilities

- **use for development structuring**
- **use at the beginning of texts for announcements of issues**
- **use at the beginning for announcement of results**
- **use at the end for structuring a conclusive summary**
- **use for structuring narratives**
- ...

- The **errors grid** is thus integrated into the **framework**.

1. decline **situations**

= inverse the configuration favored by Perrenoud for medical competencies framework

- transversal abilities (applying to any situations) => **situated abilities**
- competencies defined by some type of situation => **competencies bound to a generic situation**

2. differ from the language abilities usually identified and taught

❓ it is not a question of using connectors

❓ it is about structuring a development, an announcement or a summary with connectors

⇒ abilities **integrated into the writing tasks** in their varieties.

3. are a matter of **know-how**

❓ and not of rules to know and apply.

4. provide the **ultimate grain** of the framework

⇒ enables **discriminating test**

= may or may not be acquired by an individual.

= which is guaranteed by the fact that they are associated with observed dysfunctions

- **testable abilities => evolutionary capacities**

- "It would therefore be absurd to consider the individual as the bearer of a fixed set of capacities" (Perrenoud)

- The framework is not made for categorizing individuals
 - It is made for guiding the deployment of their competences through experience or teaching..
 - each experience of writing, "each new situation constitutes a potential engine of evolution" (Perrenoud).

- every **capacities** are mobilized in writing tasks

- **capacities = an asset for everyone**

- it is the **abilities** they cover that vary and thus open up a **potential for improvement.**

Scale of difficulty

- **Psychometric measures** of difficulty show that abilities fall on a **continuum**
 - the simplest abilities are acquired by the greatest number of people
 - and so on ...

- Division in **8 levels of difficulty**
 - => allows for the definition of **transitional competency profiles** for each tested individual
 - + also allows to **link abilities of the same level** although related to different capacities
 - ⇒ different issues, from one competence to another, happen to be **comparable** (in level)
(= Boivin & Pinsonneault's comparability criteria, 2020).

From errors grid to framework

- **8 levels** => each capacity can include 8 abilities

Framework contains potentially **4x4xCx8 < 4x4x16x8 abilities**

=> a good measure of the abilities mobilized by reflexive writing

=> complete **errors grid** by :

- **successes**: e.g., stylistic effect/researched vocabulary

- abilities not yet tested:

 - **comprehension** (Bishop et Rouxel 2007)

 - **revision**

 - **planification**

=> to be tested by psychometrie

= **870 different abilities**, 250 of which are related to comprehension

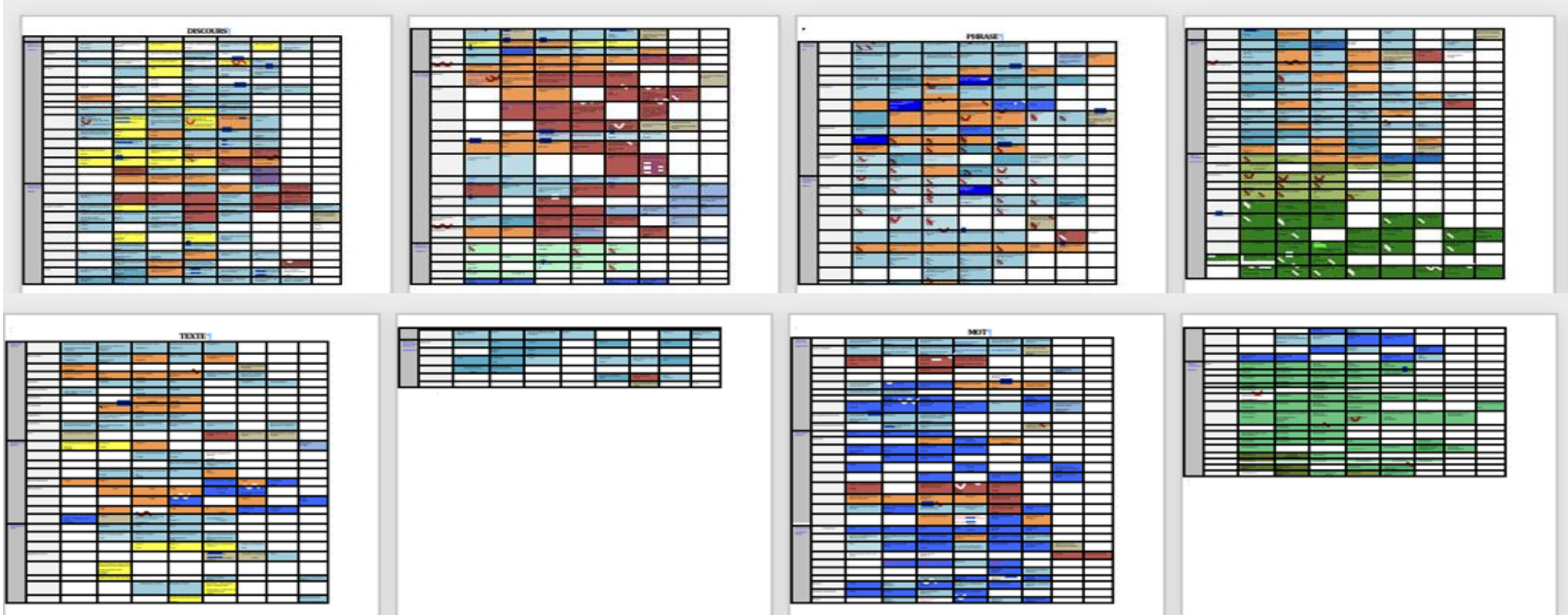
- **empirical adequation** of the framework (Boivin & Pinsonneault, 2020) = adequation to data (errors grid)

- **model adequation** (Boivin & Pinsonneault, 2020) = integration into the competencies framework

= not a particular theory's model

= the model obtained by **recursive decomposition** of fields of competences

involved in reflexive writing



| | | | | | | | |
|---------|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|---------------------------------|
| LÉGENDE | Figures et style | Ponctuation | Correction de la rédaction | Maitrise du vocabulaire (lexique, mots grammaticaux, morphologie) | Retrouver les grandes lignes d'un texte | Trouver des informations dans un texte | Comprendre le détail d'un texte |
| | Savoir restituer le contenu d'un texte | orthographe des conjugaisons | orthographe des mots grammaticaux | orthographe des accords | orthographe lexicale | Orthographe des sons | synthèse de plusieurs acquis |

Focus on Text structuring connectors

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Liens d'exemplification T-Log3 | Liens pour reformulation T-Log7 | Liens d'analogie T-Log2 | Nuances entre types de reformulation T-Log7_2 |
| | Ajout Niveau A (liste) T-Log6 | Énumérations, Successions T-Log9_2 | |
| Liens de conséquence (niveau A) T-Log4 | | Justifications T-Log5 | Liens de <u>conséquence</u> (niveau B) T-Log4-3 |
| Connecteurs variés T-Log9_4 | Utilisation de <u>donc</u> ou <u>alors</u> non logique T-Log9_8 | <u>connecteurs</u> redondants <i>ainsi</i> <i>donc</i> T-Log9_6 | Redondance connecteur et circonstanciel T-Log9_5 |
| Connecteurs pour introduire une conclusion T-Str3_3 | Évaluer un début de texte T-Str0 | Évaluer une fin de texte T-Str1 | |
| Connecteurs pour structurer le texte en plusieurs parties T-Str3 | Connecteurs pour annoncer différents résultats T-Str2_3 | Connecteurs pour annoncer différents moments dans le questionnement T-Str2 | Connecteurs pour faire référence rétrospectivement à différentes parties du texte T-Str2_2 |
| | Trouver le texte qui <u>correspond</u> à un plan T-Str6 | Reconstituer le plan d'un texte Niveau A T-Str5 | Reconstituer le plan d'un texte Niveau B avec introduction T-Str5_2 |



From framework to testing platforms

- division in levels allows the tests to be **adapted to each individual's transitional level.**

= **testing platforms with adaptative algorithm**

= Are tested only abilities of similar levels within an interval of 2 above 2 below

=> between 1 and 5 tests per capacity

- Each one choose the competency to work on

= for each competency a maximum of 16 capacities to test

= some **80 questions at the most**

=> each **question** is the occasion to **evaluate one ability**

but also to **take the measure of what it is about**

+ to **learn + understand + improve**

+ to **acquire** the ability at stake



Tests to develop abilities

The construction of this **écri+ framework** was the occasion to:

- **measure the difficulties encountered by young adults entering university**
- **place them in a dynamic process**
- **attach them to the multicategorical constraints reflexive writing works on**

- **advance the state of knowledge on reflexive writings :**
 - = the network of abilities they involve**
 - = the way to progressively remedy the difficulties encountered by integrating them into situated writing tasks**

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