

**MA in Technology-Mediated Language Teaching and Learning**

**Reading, Learn and Leisure: A  
Moodle-Mediated Library**

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## Abstract

Reading is crucial for Vocational Training learners to acquire the necessary linguistic and cross-cultural competences in their professional field. It is also important for them to develop mediation skills, enabling them to summarise documents to their peers or to explain culturally relevant information to commercial partners. This MA thesis focuses on integrating reading skills, the Content and Language Integrated Learning teaching approach, and Moodle technology. The study targets students enrolled in the Advanced Vocational Training Programme in Administration and Finances, who are required to receive English instruction in one module each year. A Moodle-based library, following the extensive reading approach and using authentic documents, is proposed as an effective tool to provide students with a wide range of texts on business English, current affairs, and cultural topics, throughout a complete school year. The library aims to create the conditions that allow for reading anytime and anywhere, increasing exposure to the foreign language extramurally, which is often limited in Southern European countries like Spain. Participants are assessed through various comprehension activities based on PISA programme's three perspectives: literal, inferential, and critical thinking questions. Moodle quizzes cover the first two types, while forum discussions address the last type. A glossary, for vocabulary acquisition, and the Dialang Placement Test, to enhance self-reflection on reading skills, are equally included. The library has been conceived to expand foreign language exposure among vocational training students, to foster their mediation and cross-cultural understanding, and to provide them with a motivating repository of texts and themes useful for their professional field and likely to develop their reading habit.

**Key words:** assessment, CLIL, extensive reading, Moodle, Vocational Training

## Resumen

La lectura es crucial para que los estudiantes de Formación Profesional adquieran las competencias lingüísticas e interculturales necesarias en su campo profesional. También es importante para que desarrollen habilidades de mediación, que les permitan resumir documentos a sus compañeros o explicar información culturalmente relevante a socios comerciales. El presente trabajo de final de máster se centra en la integración de la lectura, el enfoque educativo conocido como enseñanza de Aprendizaje Integrado de Contenido y Lenguaje y la tecnología Moodle. El estudio se focaliza en los estudiantes matriculados en el Ciclo Superior de Formación Profesional en Administración y Finanzas, quienes cursan un módulo en inglés cada año. La biblioteca Moodle, sirviéndose de la lectura extensiva y de documentos auténticos, pretende ser una herramienta efectiva para proporcionarles una amplia gama de textos sobre inglés comercial y temas de actualidad y culturales, durante un curso académico. La biblioteca tiene como objetivo crear las condiciones que permitan la lectura en cualquier momento y lugar, de forma que aumente la exposición a la lengua extranjera en horario extraescolar, que tiende a ser limitada en países del sur de Europa como España. Los participantes son evaluados mediante actividades de comprensión basadas en las perspectivas del programa PISA: preguntas literales, inferenciales y de pensamiento crítico. Los cuestionarios de Moodle cubren los primeros dos tipos, mientras que las discusiones en el foro abordan el último. Se incluye, igualmente, un glosario para la adquisición de vocabulario y la Prueba de nivel Dialang para fomentar la autorreflexión sobre la competencia lectora. La biblioteca aspira a ofrecer una herramienta útil para incrementar el tiempo de exposición a la lengua extranjera de los estudiantes de Formación Profesional, para potenciar sus competencias mediadoras e interculturales y para crear un repositorio de textos y temas útiles en su campo profesional y susceptibles de desarrollar su gusto por la lectura.

**Palabras clave:** AICLE, evaluación, Formación Profesional, lectura extensiva, Moodle

## 1. Introduction

Textuality and technology have always been so intertwined that it is inconceivable to learn one without the other. Over the 5,000 years of their shared history, clay, papyri, parchment, paper and the printing press have been used to record information. Digital devices and digital literature are just the last entry on this long list of tools and techniques, whose enormous potential to enhance the learning experience should be exploited by language teachers.

Using Bax's (2011) terminology, whereas pen, paper and books are normalised media in language learning, online and ICT (Information and Communication Technology) resources have not yet achieved this stage. Besides, despite the substantial progress witnessed over the last decades, CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning), a term coined by Higgins and Johns (1974), has not reached all its potential.

There is plenty of room for improvement on teacher training and on the adoption of powerful resources such as Moodle, the LMS (Learning Management System) chosen for this study. Besides, ICT tools have made a more inclusive approach to learning possible. As Jenn Williams (2013) said in her TED Talk lecture, thanks to them, education might happen "at any time, at any pace, and in any place".

This MA thesis intends to explore how reading, as a language skill and as a lifelong habit, can be enhanced with technology in a vocational training CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Teaching) setting, since, as stated by Plass and Jones (2005), multimedia contents have enriched the act of reading beyond any imaginable limit.

Even though communicative teaching approaches, such as TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) or CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), prioritise orality in face-to-face instruction, reading is the prerequisite that students need to acquire knowledge and to develop critical thinking skills and a better understanding of complex ideas and arguments (Fisher, 2001). As Bruno Le Maire (2021), French Minister of Economy, in a famous speech, said to an audience of secondary school students:

It [reading] will develop your imagination. It will allow you to open up to radically new worlds that you would not have entered without words. It will enable you to better understand who you are, to put words to things you feel and that you do not even know about yourselves.

Along with reading as a language skill, this study will circumscribe itself to a particular technological environment and to one teaching approach. The following are the key terms which will be studied:

- The Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle) is the selected LMS. As stated by Oetomo et al. (2022), its creation has provided both learners and teachers with a platform that allows them to interact in the classroom and outside the school with activities tailored for their interests, needs and learning pace. Besides, it is the one proposed by the Valencian Government (under the name of *Aules*), where the learning context of the MA thesis is located.
- CLIL will be the chosen teaching approach. According to Coyle et al. (2010), a content subject serves as the foundation for language learning. In this context, reading, often through the use of authentic materials, assumes a significant role in facilitating language and content acquisition, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and nurturing critical thinking abilities.
- Another learning philosophy that will be embraced is extensive reading (ER), as defined by Day and Bramford (1998). ER emphasises reading for pleasure and enjoyment, promoting exposure to authentic texts. In contrast, intensive reading (IR), a term coined by West (1953), focuses on analysing the grammar, vocabulary, and structure of a text to comprehend its meaning in detail.
- Out of the different assessment types defined by Black and Wiliam (1998), in accordance with the extensive reading approach, for which assessment is not really essential, the proposed strategies will mainly focus on formative, self- and peer-assessment. Nevertheless, self-correcting quizzes and instructor-moderated forum discussions will also provide an ample array of data for teacher-assessment.

By bringing together CLIL, Moodle and reading, this MA thesis will explore uncharted ways for instructors to offer a vast catalogue of documents that will improve both content knowledge and language competences among students. On a par with it, students will also acquire the digital literacy they need for today's information society, along with the aforementioned critical thinking abilities, such as analysing the reliability of a text and detecting stereotyping or biases, to understand complex ideas and arguments.

There are also external reasons that suggest the relevance of this topic. On the one hand, the most important Spanish education law (LOMLOE, 2020) explicitly promotes the culture of reading amongst students. On the other hand, the most recent PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results for reading in Spain (OECD, 2018) showed that the average score for 15-year-old students was 481, six points lower than the average score of 487 for OECD countries, which makes it clear that this is a domain that needs to be addressed by educators and education officials.

Taking all this into consideration, even a modest study like this one can contribute to identifying good teaching practices to improve reading competences. The initial premise is that CLIL students might attain better scores in knowledge acquisition and reading comprehension if properly motivated by means of a Moodle-enhanced programme that offers meaningful and enjoyable texts and topics.

This MA thesis is structured as follows. Firstly, the necessary theoretical and conceptual framework will be presented, reviewing various approaches and domains such as CLIL, Moodle, ER and assessment. The objectives of the study will then be elaborated, aiming to enhance both reading skills and the reading habit among vocational training CLIL students. The methodology section will provide detailed insights into the utilisation of Moodle resources to establish an online library catering to various content subjects. Additionally, assessment strategies, evaluation proposals, and plans for continuous improvement will be outlined. Lastly, the concluding section will offer a comprehensive synthesis of the key insights and findings of the project.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

While previous research has not specifically addressed all three axes of this MA thesis in combination, there are studies that have explored at least two of them within face-to-face, technology-based, and blended teaching settings, and which provide valuable insights. The findings of previous authors have been categorised into the following subsections: reading and ER, reading strategies, reading development through Moodle, reading development in CLIL settings, and reading assessment.

## 2.1. Reading and ER

This wide exposure to texts comes hand in hand with the ER approach, which consists in providing readers with huge amounts of easily comprehensible texts that will allow them to enjoy the learning process (Day & Bamford, 1998, as cited in Nicolás Román & Garipova Castellano, 2016). Bell (2001) found in a study conducted in the Yemen Arab Republic that students in an ER programme achieved better results in reading comprehension and reading speed as compared to students in an IR programme. On a different note, Robb and Kano (2013) distinguish between replacement and additive ER, the former linked to classroom activities and the latter to extramural learning, which is the one dealt with in this MA thesis, as the library will be addressed to be consulted / used extramurally.

ER is guided by the principles outlined by Day and Bamford (1998). When it comes to implementing an effective reading program, it is essential to provide learners with accessible reading material on a variety of topics. Additionally, empowering them to choose their own reading materials not only promotes engagement and ownership but also contributes to their sense of autonomy in the learning process. Encouraging extensive reading helps to develop reading skills, expand knowledge, and brings intrinsic joy and satisfaction. Furthermore, reading becomes its own reward as learners immerse themselves in the world of books, experiencing the pleasure and fulfilment it offers. Moreover, as a predominantly individual and silent activity, reading provides learners with the freedom to explore texts at their own pace, facilitating deeper understanding and personal connections. Within this context, teachers play a crucial role by providing guidance and support, orienting students towards effective reading strategies, and serving as positive role models. Through their guidance, teachers inspire a love for reading and demonstrate the value and joy that reading can bring to one's life.

ER might be the right approach to foster reading at home for different purposes that go beyond the school curriculum. As reported by Berardo (2006), we read for survival (for everyday tasks like street signs), for learning, and for pleasure, which is reading for no specific purpose, seeking self-gratification. Nevertheless, Oetomo et al. (2022) warn of the importance of setting up a monitoring system for an ER program to be effective. In this respect, Berardo (2006) notes that such a monitoring system might be enriched with IR comprehension activities that require precise information extraction from a text.



Authentic reading materials, which were defined by Wallace (2002, p. 145) as “real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes”, go hand in hand with the ER approach. Berardo (2006) highlights the benefits of its adoption in language learning. Firstly, being real-life texts, readers experience a sensation of achievement that encourages them to look for further reading. Moreover, learners are not likely to encounter the simplified and impoverished language of classroom handbooks, which might be good to teach grammar structures, but not to foster reading skills. Finally, these materials, usually accessed through the Internet, showcase the changes of language use.

## 2.2. Reading strategies

When implementing a technology-mediated reading programme, another important aspect is determining which reading strategies should be taught. According to O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 1), reading strategies are "special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning, or retention of the information", and different taxonomies have been proposed by various authors, such as Brown and Pallincsar (1984), Khaki (2014), and Grabe and Stoller (2002). These taxonomies include strategies such as summarising, questioning, predicting, clarifying, scanning, skimming, and guessing the meaning of new words. It is the responsibility of instructors to select and teach the most appropriate strategies for each student group.

Refsahl (2010, as cited in Nicolás Román and Garipova Castellano, 2016) distinguishes four levels of reading strategies, which progressively go from dependence to autonomy: observing and copying, working with someone, working alone with teacher guidance, and working autonomously. Learner autonomy is precisely the key issue in technology-mediated reading settings.

In line with the notion of learner autonomy, it is worth noting that Little (2012) considered that it does not entail complete independence, but rather to build a relationship of interdependence with peers and instructors. For instance, De Zarobe and Zenotz (2015) concluded that reading strategies tend to be more successful when they lead to some metacognitive awareness, as it is the case with techniques such as predicting, guessing from context, and observing the layout of a text.

In the same vein, it is worth mentioning that Berardo (2006) states that texts are processed in two ways: top-down and bottom-up. The former, based on word-by-word, or indeed letter-by-letter, meaning construction, is associated with novice or poor readers; whereas the latter, which should be fostered by instruction, is linked to a holistic understanding of the text, in which the reader makes predictions that s/he later checks, challenges or modifies as the text is being processed.

Finally, according to Glover (2011), providing students with technical language, such as the CEFR level descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020), helps them develop reflection and metacognition skills. By using these descriptors, students can evaluate their reading proficiency, identify areas for improvement, and take targeted actions to bridge any knowledge gaps. This integration of reading strategies, metacognition, and language descriptors promotes effective language learning and encourages self-directed learning.

### **2.3. Reading development through Moodle**

Building upon the foundation of effective reading strategies, the integration of Moodle further enhances the development of reading skills. According to Deadman (2017), the use of Moodle in reading classes promotes self-directed, motivated, and meaningful learning experiences. The platform's interactive features and tools empower students to take ownership of their learning process, engaging with reading materials in ways that align with their interests and learning preferences. Furthermore, it reduces the burden of teacher preparation by allowing for the reuse of previously designed activities in successive courses. Additionally, Moodle fosters the development of technological skills among students and teachers, equipping them with essential digital literacy for the modern era.

In the same vein, according to Widodo and Slamet (2022), technology-supported environments like Moodle provide a comprehensive system for language learning that includes resource delivery, management, feedback, and assessment. In fact, Oetomo et al. (2022) consider Moodle to be the most popular LMS worldwide due to its user-friendliness and accessibility. Moreover, Bataineh and Mayyas (2017) found that Moodle-mediated instruction improved EFL students' reading comprehension and grammar performance. Overall, these studies suggest that Moodle has significant potential for enhancing language learning outcomes.

Similarly, as noted by Oetomo et al. (2022, p. 3910), “e-learning environments in general boost student learning by giving a wider source of interactions, make content more accessible, provide automated and flexible evaluation techniques and improve literacy technology”. Robb and Kano (2013) also point out that MoodleReader, one of its plugin modules, might be a very attractive and effective tool to put in place such an environment.

Finally, Pasaribu (2020) suggests that Moodle, with features such as forums, is an ideal tool for establishing a collaborative network. It not only helps overcome teacher-centeredness but also offers challenging activities that foster students' critical skills.

#### **2.4. Reading development in CLIL settings**

Within the realm of reading in CLIL contexts, Lamri and Hamazoui (2018) propose that a Moodle-enhanced ER approach could effectively address challenges such as limited instruction time and lack of student motivation. By providing a meaningful catalogue of texts and topics, this approach proves beneficial for both content knowledge and reading competence. In southern European countries like Spain, where students tend to have reduced extramural exposure (Sylvén, 2013) and limited foreign language proficiency (Bulté et al., 2022), CLIL might be the right teaching approach to compensate for these hindrances.

Incorporating reading strategies as scaffolding is crucial in CLIL learning contexts, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development. According to Li and Zhang (2022), this notion represents the gap between students' current developmental level and their potential level, which can be bridged through teacher guidance or collaboration with peers. Various authors (Ball et al., 2015; Coyle, 2007; Van Lier, 1996, 2004; Walqui, 2006; Wells, 1999, as cited in Li and Zhang, 2022) highlight different scaffolding functions that facilitate this progression, which include weaving new information into existing knowledge, contextualising, demonstrating, marking relevant parts of the text, dialogic inquiry, and incidental feedback. As students are given increasingly challenging tasks, they gradually transition from teacher-dependence to autonomy, aligning with the cognitive demands of CLIL settings.

However, Whittaker (2018) advocates for an explicit teaching approach to promote reading among CLIL readers. She emphasises the importance of adequately supporting students during their transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Chall et al. (1990, as cited in

Whittaker, 2018) suggest that without proper support, students may fall behind and struggle to catch up. To facilitate this transition, students need to learn how to read and interpret complex scientific and academic texts, which often differ from the chronological sequence of everyday recounts and utilise devices such as cause-consequence, condition, purpose, and part-whole relationships, as well as sequencing, which are more difficult to master and understand.

In line with Whittaker's (2018) recommendations, CLIL texts should not only be relevant to the content area but also address the linguistic and cognitive needs of learners (Coyle et al., 2010). Therefore, it is crucial to select texts that match the learners' proficiency level and incorporate pre- and post-reading activities that support comprehension and vocabulary development.

In conclusion, CLIL proves to be a valuable approach for fostering reading skills in various ways. Through technology-enhanced ER, it tackles challenges related to limited instruction time and student motivation. The adoption of CLIL as a teaching approach benefits both content knowledge and reading competence. Furthermore, incorporating scaffolded reading strategies facilitates the transition from teacher-dependence to autonomy, aligning with the cognitive demands of CLIL settings. An explicit teaching approach also supports students in effectively reading and interpreting complex academic texts. Hence, by carefully selecting relevant texts and implementing appropriate reading activities, CLIL addresses learners' linguistic and cognitive needs, further enhancing their reading abilities.

## **2.5. Reading assessment**

The reading skills and strategies fostered among CLIL students in a Moodle-Mediated context need to be assessed. Grabe and Jiang (2013) highlight the importance of evaluating individuals' reading abilities and comprehension, which involves multiple dimensions like word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Various assessment methods can be used, including traditional tests and authentic reading tasks. The alignment between the assessment purpose and goals is crucial. Reading assessments should cover both literal and inferential comprehension, focusing on understanding main ideas, making inferences, and analysing text structures. Using diverse text types and considering individual differences and cultural factors enhance the validity and reliability of assessments. Proper scoring criteria and constructive feedback contribute to learners' reading development.

Furthermore, evaluating reading skills has been a significant focus in the literature, and a constant in many standardised placement tests. Alavi and Keyvanshekouh (2012), for instance, used the Oxford Placement Test (Allan, 2004), whereas Shirzad and Ebadi (2019) preferred the reading section of the Dialang Placement Test (Lancaster University, n.d.) to determine the participants' reading proficiency level. Other authors have taken a different approach and developed their own test models. For instance, De Zarobe and Zenotz (2015) utilised metacognitive questions as a measure of improvements in reading skills and the development of self-reflection capacities among participants. Their study focused on the effectiveness of these questions in assessing cognitive growth. In a similar vein, Nieto (2017) proposed a comprehensive model with questions organised into three levels of comprehension. These levels align with the typology proposed by PISA tests (OECD, 2018).

- Literal questions: tapping into global comprehension, distinction of main ideas, identification of cohesive references, spatio-temporal relationships, lexical comprehension, and identification of specific information.
- Inferential questions: analysing recognition of extra-textual relationships and the interpretation of intra-textual context.
- Critical reading questions: revolving around content assessment.

In the realm of assessing reading comprehension, the guidelines provided by Robbins (2023) emphasise the significance of constructing effective multiple-choice (MC) questions, which are widely used for assessing both literal and inferential comprehension. It is important to make sure that only one of the answers is correct and those that are obviously mistaken should be avoided. All answers should be similar in length and its number should be consistent throughout all the questions. Convolved questions should be discarded, the purpose being that the test-taker shows text comprehension. Answers should not depend on having correctly responded to a previous question. Paraphrasing might stop test-takers from just scanning for the solution.

Critical thinking is typically tested through open-ended questions. When correcting them, the principles of good feedback highlighted by Nicol and Macfarlane (2006) can contribute significantly to fostering language learning. In order to help to bridge the gap between what is known and what should be known, it should clarify goals, facilitate metacognition, deliver

qualitative information, build a student-teacher dialogue, encourage motivational beliefs and self-esteem, and have an impact on the instructional practice.

Finally, according to Fernández-Toro and Furnborough (2018), feedback can be provided at different levels to support learners' progress. Firstly, it can be indicated, highlighting areas that require attention or improvement. Secondly, it can be categorised or described, providing a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the work. Thirdly, feedback can be corrective or exemplified, offering specific suggestions and examples for improvement. Fourthly, it can be explanatory, providing explanations and further clarification on concepts or skills. Finally, feedback can include feed forward, that is, offering advice for future actions to avoid errors or build upon existing strengths. By incorporating these various levels of feedback, learners can receive comprehensive guidance and support to enhance their learning and development.

### **3. Objectives and research questions**

After reviewing the existing literature on the stated threefold objective, it can be concluded that the interaction between technology, reading instruction and CLIL has often led to positive outcomes. However, there appears to be a gap in the literature concerning the combination of all three elements in the same educational setting. This gap is what the present MA thesis aims to address through the following research questions:

1. What kind of reading catalogue should be compiled in an asynchronous environment for vocational training CLIL students?
2. What Moodle resources should be utilised to support reading instruction?
3. How can monitoring and assessment systems be implemented effectively to evaluate both students' progress in reading and the library's success?

## **4. Design, development and implementation proposal**

### **4.1. Language learning context**

The target student population of this MA thesis are those enrolled in the Advanced Vocational Training Programme in Administration and Finances (AF), which in the Spanish education system, caters to adult learners seeking to expand their knowledge and skills in this field.

Enrolled students typically fall into three sub-groups: recent Baccalaureate graduates, individuals aiming to enhance their employability through education after job redundancy, and working professionals willing to improve their skills while combining work and studies. Unlike their secondary school counterparts, vocational training students gain valuable real-life experiences to enhance their English language skills. This includes work-based training, where students complete an internship in a real company, and the dual programme, which combines tailored syllabus instruction with work experience.

The school for which this proposal has been conceived is located in a town of almost 30,000 inhabitants in the Valencian Community. It is one of its six secondary schools (along with four privately-run centres and another public one). It has 12 groups of Compulsory Secondary Education (grades 7 to 10), six groups of Baccalaureate (grades 11 and 12) and 16 groups of Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Vocational Training Programmes (VTPs), encompassing the following professional sectors: administration and management, agriculture, electricity and electronics, mechanical manufacturing and installation and maintenance. All VTPs have just one class for every of the two levels into which they are divided.

According to the legal framework (Conselleria d'Educació, Cultura i Esport, 2015), AF students receive dual English instruction. In their first year, they have an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) subject, and they are also taught one content module in English each year. To accommodate the challenges of this CLIL approach, these modules are allocated an additional three teaching hours in the first year and two hours in the second year. Depending on the hour allocation of the different modules, this can amount to up to 12 hours per week in the first year and seven hours per week in the second year of English instruction. They are expected to attain a C1 CEFR level.

Regarding the teaching staff, those teaching in English are, therefore, divided into EFL or CLIL instructors. The former take care of the English subject taught in the first year and the latter of the modules taught in English in the first and second years. The school has six EFL teachers and six AF specialist teachers.

It should be noted that CLIL instructors must have a CEFR B2 proficiency level in English. If a content teacher lacks this certification, the EFL teacher's weekly hours increase from three to six in the first year, and a dedicated two-hour EFL subject is added in the second year.

#### **4.2. Learning profile and needs**

The legal framework also specifies the linguistic contents these students are expected to have acquired by the end of their training. Table 1 shows them classified within the four modes of communication described by the updated version of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (Council of Europe, 2020).

**Table 1***Linguistic Contents for VTP in Administration and Finance Classified According to CEFR Modes of Communication*

Reception	Production	Interaction	Mediation
Understanding everyday and professional oral messages, such as conversations, presentations, and speeches.	Expressing oneself orally in everyday and professional contexts, including those related to business, transport, and logistics.	Engaging in oral professional interactions, such as financial negotiations, administrative meetings, logistics coordination, transportation planning, and discussions related to international business, including those in English-speaking countries.	Facilitating communication between speakers of the target language and speakers of other languages or cultures in the context of business, transport, and logistics.
Understanding and interpreting written texts, financial statements, administrative reports, and business correspondence in the field of finance, administration, logistics, and transport.	Producing written texts, such as financial reports, business proposals, administrative documents, transportation plans, and logistics reports, while adhering to communication norms and conventions in finance, administration, logistics, and transport.	Engaging in written interactions, such as drafting financial reports, preparing administrative documents, exchanging emails for logistics coordination, developing transportation plans, and participating in written discussions related to international business.	Translating and interpreting financial and administrative information, logistics and transport documentation, and communication between parties involved in the industry.
Using English as a lifelong tool for professional personal development, and for intercultural understanding.			

Hence, the underlying rationale for this second language instruction is multifaceted. By honing their proficiency in written and spoken English, students can enhance their fluency and communication skills. This, in turn, grants them broader access to the latest advancements and innovations within their field, not only in English-speaking countries but also globally. Additionally, developing their English language abilities expands their potential for mobility, opening up new opportunities and horizons.

It is evident, therefore, that AF students are expected to develop a diverse set of communicative competences, encompassing skills in handling commercial texts, guiding international visitors, and engaging in social activities such as sharing a meal with them. With a specific emphasis on reading, these competences serve as a gateway for AF students to transform the English language into a lifelong tool for professional growth, personal enrichment, and to foster intercultural understanding.

#### 4.3. How the application will be developed

Taking into consideration the special needs of AF students, the Moodle-based application named *Reading, Learn and Leisure* intends to offer them an asynchronous repository that can be accessed at any time and everywhere, which might turn out to be especially useful for those who study and work.

It has already been argued that ER is the teaching approach that best suits the design of this virtual library. In addition to offering a diverse range of topics, a key principle guiding its design is to provide an extensive catalogue of English documents, ensuring ample exposure to a variety of materials. By incorporating the concept of top-down processing, the virtual library



aims to address the issue of reduced second language extramural exposure, promoting both language skills development and overall reading comprehension.

Finally, this Moodle-mediated text repository will also be conceived to teach reading strategies, which will be graduated along the lines of the three types of comprehension questions used by PISA exams (OECD, 2018) and commented by Nieto (2017). Table 2 relates question types, reading strategies, and what Moodle resources will be useful to implement them.

**Table 2**  
*Comprehension Question Types, Reading Strategies and Moodle Resources*

Question type	Reading strategies	Moodle resource
Literal	Understand title and headings. Guess the meaning of new words. Identify key details and facts.	Quiz questions Glossary
Inferential	Make predictions based on contextual cues. Draw conclusions by combining information from different parts of the text. Look for implied information that is not explicitly stated. Use background knowledge to make inferences. Clarify unclear parts	Quiz questions
Critical	Analyse the author's tone, perspective and purpose. Evaluate the reliability and credibility of the text. Consider multiple perspectives and interpretations of the text. Formulate one's own opinion on ideas extracted from the text. Identify biases and assumptions present in the text.	Forum discussions

By means of a bulk enrolment process, all AF students will be aggregated to the user list. Once logged in, a complete catalogue of texts and themes will be at their disposal, which will be enlarged with the suggestions from both teachers and the most engaged students.

#### 4.4. Moodle resources

The Moodle resources for the text repository include the Library section with three books titled, respectively *Business*, *Current Affairs*, and *Leisure*. Comprehension quizzes, a glossary, and forums will facilitate learning and engagement. In addition to addressing critical thinking questions, the forum discussions will also provide a platform for students to engage in metacognitive reflection based on their placement test results. Moreover, the forums will serve as a vehicle to share valuable information with readers and teachers through a newsletter, keeping them updated on new materials and resources. A survey and a rubric based on learning outcomes will be used for stakeholder feedback and assessment.

##### 4.4.1. Placement test

In order to know participants' CEFR level, when first accessing *Reading, Learn and Leisure*, and also at the end of every term, learners will be asked to answer the Dialang Placement Test (Lancaster University, n.d.), which, through a quick word recognising quiz, a self-evaluation questionnaire and a skill-tailored test, informs students about what reading level they have. As

will be seen in the assessment section, students will be asked to evaluate the obtained data against the reading scales proposed by the CEFR.

#### 4.4.2. Library

Students will be able to select texts from the library section, which offers a range of topics including business English, current affairs, and leisure subjects such as travel and food. To ensure copyright compliance and readability, priority has been given to public and open providers. Regular updates on new texts will be shared through a Moodle newsletter, encouraging subscribers to recommend texts in the forum. This curated collection effectively addresses students' communicative needs, with a focus on business English for their professional domain, coverage of current affairs to broaden global knowledge, and leisure readings to promote cultural and social skills essential for interacting with international visitors.

Six texts have already been inserted into the three sections of the library. They constitute a sample of what the repository will look like when it reaches its ideal size of around 30 readings, calculating a text per week for the most motivated readers. All of them have been sourced from BBC News, whose sharing conditions do not ban their pedagogical exploitation in non-for-profit public schools. When selecting the materials, careful consideration has been given to their alignment with the CEFR B2 or C1 level requirements, as well as their potential to further enhance the linguistic and cultural skills previously described. Table 3 shows the adaptation of the CEFR used to evaluate a given text's level.

**Table 3**  
*CEFR Descriptors to Classify Texts*

	<b>Range</b>	<b>Coherence</b>	<b>Accuracy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Argument</b>
C1 level	Covers a wide range of topics, including complex and specialised subjects.	Has a clear and coherent structure, with well-developed arguments and logical connections between ideas.	Demonstrates a high level of grammatical and lexical accuracy.	Provides detailed and nuanced descriptions, including analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.	Presents well-developed arguments, supporting them with strong evidence, critical analysis, and persuasive reasoning.
B2 level	Covers a range of everyday and familiar topics.	Has a clear structure with a logical flow of ideas.	Demonstrates a reasonable level of grammatical and lexical accuracy.	Provides descriptions and recounts of events, experiences, and personal opinions.	Presents simple arguments and supports them with basic evidence and reasoning.

*Note.* Adapted from Council of Europe (2020, p. 173).

To give an example, the first text in the 'Business' section about the UK winning the battle with Spain to host an electric car battery plant (Jack, 2023) exhibits a specialised vocabulary range related to the automotive industry. Its coherence is evident through logical organisation, with every paragraph presenting different aspects. Accuracy is shown through fairly sophisticated grammar resources, like "Although the deal has yet to be signed", and "The

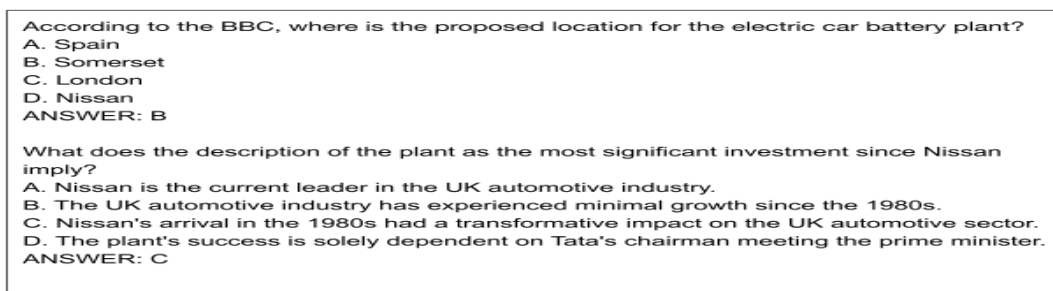
government has been criticised for lacking [...]”. The text also provides a descriptive account of the situation, analysing pros and cons, and, finally, the argument is well-developed by outlining the potential achievement for the UK government and the challenges it faces.

#### 4.4.3. Questionnaires

Every single text has been provided with an accompanying questionnaire, for which the chosen Moodle resource has been the ‘Quiz’ function, whose questions are stored in the so-called ‘Question bank’. To simplify the process of question creation, an Automatic Import of Knowledge Exam Notation (AIKEN) template will be used, allowing for easy design and bulk upload of questions to the question bank. Figure 1 shows the layout of the template used, which consists of a plain text document in which the question itself, the multiple-choice options, and the one marked as correct (ANSWER: ...). Once uploaded and labelled with the title of the concerned text, they can be transferred to the questionnaire.

**Figure 1**

*An AIKEN Template to Design and Upload Comprehension Questions*



To elaborate the questions, the guidelines proposed by Robbins (2023) have been taken into account. Likewise, considering the aforementioned PISA typology, the questions fall into the literal and inferential categories, to which some items targeting specific vocabulary have been added. The following examples have been extracted from the quiz about the Connecticut witch trials (Debusmann, 2023):

- *How many people were accused of witchcraft in colonial Connecticut?* (literal question)
- *Based on the information in the article, why did the senator Rob Sampson vote against the move to exonerate those convicted of witchcraft?* (inferential question)
- *What does the term “exonerate” mean in the context of the article?* (vocabulary question)

#### 4.4.4. Book Club

The *Reading, Learn and Leisure* library is equipped with two Moodle Forums. The first one, titled *Reflecting on my reading skills*, is proposed to students to self-assess their level

immediately after having answered the Dialang Placement Test, and again at the end of every term. In line with the proposal by Glover (2011), to enhance their familiarity with technical language and improve their metacognitive capabilities, a link towards the latest online version of the CEFR has been inserted, with the instruction of scrolling down to page 53 and having a look at the reading scales.

The second forum is called *Recommendations*, where students are invited to share their opinions on their readings, both in the Library section and elsewhere, or to summarise their main ideas. This is the space that addresses critical thinking questions, the third type defined by OECD (2018). Students are also expected to reply to one of their peers. To scaffold how learners can answer, the questions illustrated in Figure 2 have been introduced in the first post of the forum. Additionally, the Moodle platform will be utilised by the curator teacher to publish a monthly newsletter, keeping students informed about new texts that have been added to the platform.

**Figure 2**

*Guidelines for Critical Thinking Forum Posts*

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- Are there any any generalisations about business professionals or cultural groups in the text?
- Did you notice any unfair assumptions based on gender, race, ethnicity or any other social categories?
- Can you identify examples of inclusivity, diversity and equality?
- Are the sources and data used by the author trustworthy?

As will be seen in the assessment, section participation will be promoted with a double evaluating framework, by setting compulsory and voluntary posts as assignments for every school term. Additionally, peer replies will be incentivised, and the curator will interact frequently, emphasising that the tone should be positive and constructive, which aligns with the already commented basic principles outlined by Nicol and Macfarlane (2006).

#### 4.4.5. Glossary

This space, built upon the homonymous Moodle resource, will focus on business English, aiming to foster vocabulary acquisition. In order to facilitate participation, participants will be able to contribute with new entries that must be linked to the source text, be it from the Library section or from elsewhere. The course curator will act as a moderator deleting or correcting entries when necessary and marking every participation with one point, as can be seen in Figure 3, where an entry by a fictional user has been rated.

**Figure 3**  
*Glossary*

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### Supply chain

by Jotsoa Lupus - Sunday, 11 June 2023, 4:14 PM

The sequence of processes involved in the production and distribution of goods or services, from the acquisition of raw materials to the delivery of the final product.

Source: *Jaguar Land Rover-owner to pick UK over Spain for giant car battery plant*



Count of ratings: (1) 1

## 4.5. Access to the application

For the purposes of this MA Thesis, a CloudMoodle site will be used to host the course devoted to *Reading, Learn and Leisure*, which is open to guests.

- Application URL: <https://edorta.moodlecloud.com/course/view.php?id=6#section-5>

However, as some of its features, such as answering the quizzes and adding entries to the Glossary, are accessible only to registered participants, a fictitious user has been created to enable access to all interactive contents. To log in with it, the following profile should be registered at the top right corner.

- Username: Jotsoa
- Password: Lupus

## 4.6. Why the application is important for language learning

The Moodle library described in the previous paragraphs holds significant importance for language learning due to several reasons. Firstly, it provides a comprehensive collection of reading materials, carefully categorised by topic and CEFR level. This extensive catalogue ensures ample exposure to English documents, offering learners a diverse range of texts to engage with, supporting the receptive mode of communication.

Additionally, the integration of reading strategies like summarising recommendations, questioning, predicting, and clarifying enhances learners' comprehension skills. These strategies promote active engagement with the texts, encouraging deeper analysis and critical thinking. Learners are also supposed to utilise additional resources such as the glossary, enlarging one's vocabulary and promoting autonomy in language learning.

Likewise, the incorporation of Moodle quizzes and interactive activities further strengthens language acquisition. The quizzes provide opportunities for learners to assess their understanding and receive immediate feedback, reinforcing their knowledge. The forum module fosters collaborative learning environments, allowing learners to engage in discussions,

share insights, and develop a sense of community, enhancing the interpersonal mode of communication.

Overall, the Moodle library serves as an invaluable language learning tool, offering a diverse range of materials and promoting self-assessment. It facilitates the development of effective reading strategies and fosters interactive and collaborative learning environments. Through the library, learners actively engage with English texts, improving their language skills in all modes of communication, including mediation. Moreover, it cultivates a genuine passion for reading in the target language.

#### **4.7. Competences developed by the application and learning outcomes**

Focusing on the competences that might be developed by this reading repository, the following list compiles those that are aligned with the CEFR descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020) and their related learning outcomes:

- Reading comprehension skills will be honed through two categories: "information and argument" and "leisure" reading. The former involves interpreting and analysing AF-related texts, while the latter fosters reading as an enjoyable activity. By engaging in both types of reading, students will enhance their ability to critically analyse texts, benefiting both their academic pursuits and personal growth.
- Vocabulary acquisition: it is enhanced through extensive exposure to reading materials, allowing learners to expand their lexical repertoire and to develop skills in collocations and lexical chunks (CEFR, 2020, p. 132). As a learning outcome, participants will improve their ability to effectively use and associate words in authentic contexts.
- Mediation and cultural awareness: it is fostered by providing opportunities for cross-linguistic mediation and exploration of diverse topics. By actively participating in the platform, students will develop the necessary skills to effectively mediate and navigate intercultural communication. This will enhance their cultural awareness and contribute to successful intercultural interactions.
- Information literacy and research skills: They are narrowly linked to the previous competence; readers will acquire techniques to distil the information they are seeking with a critical view on the providing media.
- Digital literacy and online communication skills: the updated version of the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) has brought to the fore this kind of communication. As part of the language learning process, learners will exercise their use of the chosen LMS and will fine-tune capabilities necessary for the special features of machine-mediated registers, such as redundancy and reformulation, and skills to express oneself diplomatically.

- Self-directed learning and autonomy: as stated by Pasabiru (2020), Moodle enables learners to plan, execute and evaluate their own instruction. Consequently, students will be able to enhance their time-management and organisational skills.
- Problem solving: reading articles on their professional field will equip students with a broad palette of ideas to contribute to collaborative decision making with suggestions and alternative points of view. Learners are, therefore, expected to be able to actively participate in collaborative decision-making processes, offering valuable suggestions and alternative viewpoints.
- Reflective thinking and metacognitive strategies of reading awareness: thanks to the placement test, self-scoring quizzes and to peer- and teacher-feedback, students will develop reflective thinking and metacognitive strategies.

## 4.8. Implementation proposal

### 4.8.1. Implementation calendar

Table 4 illustrates the implementation calendar to set up and manage the application throughout a school year, by clarifying its most important milestones and who should carry them out.

**Table 4**  
*Implementation Calendar*

When	What	Who
September - 2nd week	<b>Teaching staff meeting:</b> Instructors hold a meeting with EFL and CLIL teachers to decide on a first selection of texts and topics to be used in the programme.	CLIL and EFL teachers
September - 3rd week	<b>Initial collection of texts:</b> EFL and CLIL teachers gather the selected texts and create accompanying comprehension questionnaires for each text.	CLIL and EFL teachers
September - 4th week	<b>Publication on <i>Aules</i>:</b> the curator teacher publishes the selected texts and accompanying questionnaires on the <i>Aules</i> platform to be accessed by students.	Curator teacher
October - 1st week	<b>Presentation to students:</b> <i>Reading, Learn and Leisure</i> is presented to AF students with a hands-on session to show how it can be accessed and what kind of resources are at their disposal	CLIL and EFL teachers
During every term	<b>Ongoing activities:</b> Students engage in reading the assigned texts, answering questionnaires, participating in the Book Club, and contributing to the glossary. Minimum monthly participation: one text (with corresponding quiz), two forum posts, a reply to a peer, and 5 glossary terms, which counts for 25% of the EFL term mark and 10% of the CLIL subject mark. Further participation is rewarded with up to an extra point in both EFL and CLIL subjects.	Students
Every month	<b>Newsletter:</b> The curator teacher will utilise the <i>Recommendations</i> thread to publish a monthly newsletter, which will serve as an announcement platform for new texts added to any of the three sections of the Library.	Curator teacher
End of every term	<b>Evaluation of student progress:</b> The curator teacher evaluates students' logging time, questionnaire scores, glossary entries, and forum posts. S/he shares the resulting rapport with the EFL teacher (if different) and with CLIL teachers, so that they can count it in their respective assessments.	CLIL and EFL teachers

**Table 4**  
*Implementation Calendar*

End of the school year	<b>Final report:</b> To assess the program's effectiveness, satisfaction questionnaires are distributed to all stakeholders, including teachers and students, to gather feedback. The report incorporates an analysis of various indicators, such as participation and completion rates, as well as potential grade improvements in both EFL and CLIL subjects. The curator teacher synthesises these facts and figures into a comprehensive final report, which serves as a valuable resource for refining the design of the platform.	Curator teacher CLIL and ESL teachers Students
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#### 4.8.2. Role of teachers and learners

As has been seen, there are two teacher profiles involved. The EFL instructor will assume the tasks such as selecting texts, uploading AIKEN questionnaires, moderating forums with feedback comments, and publishing a monthly newsletter to announce new titles. On the other hand, CLIL teachers will also contribute to text selection and the design of accompanying AIKEN questionnaires, and to present and promote the platform among their students. Both EFL and CLIL students will utilise data from the Moodle platform for summative assessment purposes.

Finally, students will be actively engaged in completing the placement tests, answering the quizzes, participating in both forums, both with their own posts and with replies to peers, and contributing to the glossary.

### 5. Assessment proposal

#### 5.1. Formative and summative assessment

*Reading, Learn and Leisure* will be co-managed by EFL and CLIL teachers, incorporating a dual assessment approach. Students will be required to read at least one article per month, complete the accompanying questionnaire, write five glossary entries, publish a post at least once every two weeks in the Book Club forums, and reply to a post by one of their peers. These activities will represent a 25% of the English mark and a 10% of the CLIL subjects.

Additionally, they will be invited to read more articles, to write more forum entries, and to contribute to the glossary. The resulting mark will be up to one point that will be counted as an extra bonus in both ESL and CLIL subjects.

Unlike quizzes, which are self-graded, forum comments and the glossary contributions will have to be monitored by the curator, who will provide feedback throughout the term. No marking or grading will be given until the end of the trimester, because, as noted by Nicol and Macfarlane (2006), for feedback to be effective, it should be temporarily separated from summative assessment. A Moodle rubric (see Figure 3), based on the learning outcomes detailed in Table 3, will be used to decide the Book Club forum participation mark.



Additionally, teacher comments have also been previewed, which will fall under the category of “feeding-forward”, outlined by Fernández-Toro and Furnborough (2018), so that learners receive hints on how to improve their critical analysis skills in future readings.

**Figure 3**

*Rubric for the Book Club Forum*

Comprehend and interpret written texts of various topics and difficulty degrees	Very poor 0 points	Poor 2.5 points	Fair 5 points	Good 7.5 points	Excellent 10 points
Enhance their vocabulary range and show ability to use new words	Very poor 0 points	Poor 2.5 points	Fair 5 points	Good 7.5 points	Excellent 10 points
Negotiate meaning across languages and cultures	Very poor 0 points	Poor 2.5 points	Fair 5 points	Good 7.5 points	Excellent 10 points
Analyse and evaluate texts and formulate well-supported arguments.	Very poor 0 points	Poor 2.5 points	Fair 5 points	Good 7.5 points	Excellent 10 points
Locate and evaluate information from various sources.	Very poor 0 points	Poor 2.5 points	Fair 5 points	Good 7.5 points	Excellent 10 points
Use effectively the Moodle platform and engage in online communication with proficiency and respectfulness	Very poor 0 points	Poor 2.5 points	Fair 5 points	Good 7.5 points	Excellent 10 points
Manage their time and use the library resources	Very poor 0 points	Poor 2.5 points	Fair 5 points	Good 7.5 points	Excellent 10 points

## 5.2. Assessment of the application

To evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of this virtual library, different instruments will be devised to obtain qualitative and quantitative data. The first parameter that will be considered is user engagement by measuring logging times and participation rate in the different resources (questionnaires, Book Club and glossary).

In accordance with the ER theory, active participation will be encouraged through a bonus-based incentive system. The underlying philosophy behind this approach is to foster a sense of self-reward, as readers will discover that the more they engage with the library, the more fulfilling and enriching the activity becomes.

To glean the opinion of the different stakeholders (students, EFL teachers or CLIL teachers), a Moodle survey will be conducted, illustrated in Figure 4. The activity type on which it has been built is ‘Feedback’, whose questions are mainly closed-ended. Aiming to receive anonymous answers, question 1 is the only one addressed to identify the respondent role (dual programme student, regular student, internship student, CLIL teacher or EFL teacher). The remaining multiple-choice questions present a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for “totally disagree” to 5 for “strongly agree”. Its questions encompass topics such as the perceived teaching-learning potential, logging frequency, or the evaluation of the library,

questionnaire, Book Club and glossary resources. Additionally, two open-ended questions have been added where respondents can propose other topics and write and answer a question they miss in the form.

**Figure 4**  
*Evaluation Questionnaire*

Another source of information is the impact of the intervention on learners' English and content subject proficiency by examining if participants' reading comprehension has ameliorated. In addition to student official grade records, a comparison between the results of a placement and final Dialang test might yield significant information. It should be noted, though, that the results in this test will have no impact on the student's mark.

## 6. Conclusions

*Reading, Learn and Leisure* has been conceived as a Moodle-mediated tool whose texts and topics intend to address the professional demands of AF students. Proposed under the ER approach, its catalogue of authentic documents aims to provide these students with the linguistic skills, cross-cultural competence and critical thinking ability they need to act as communicative mediators with peers and commercial partners. Additionally, by means of its self-graded quizzes and instructor-moderated forum discussions, self-, peer- and teacher-assessment will be possible.

The successful implementation of this repository hinges on student engagement and the time commitment of EFL and CLIL teachers who will curate relevant articles to capture learners' interest. Teacher training in utilising Moodle effectively will also be essential. By dedicating effort to article selection, activity design, feedback provision, and listening to student input, the potential for success is significant. Notably, the library's impact could be measured through improved performance in English language skills and subject areas taught in English.

Moodle is a user-friendly environment, whose facts and figures are easily accessible to stakeholders. To ensure that both student use and higher marks come hand in hand, a continuous improvement cycle should be established. The platform ought to be perceived as a cornerstone of the instruction in and of English, and as a second-to-none tool to acquire the necessary contents and competences. Data ranging from document selection, to log in rates, to quiz scores, and to the evaluation survey, should be analysed at the end of the school year as food for thought on what can be ameliorated.

The selection of text and themes within the domains of business English, current affairs and leisure is probable, along with the adoption of the three levels of comprehension questions (literal, inferential and critical thinking) are probably two of its assets. Nevertheless, nothing should be carved in stone, and topics and activity types should be put to the test to find out what really is contributing more to enhancing reading skills.

The library might be an alternative instrument to address both the reduced extramural exposure to the target language and the low foreign language level of southern European students. From it, they can develop cultural and linguistic literacy and embrace reading as a diehard habit, as a lifelong companion which will provide them with learning and leisure, with knowledge and pleasure.

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