

# New Tools for the Integration of Transversal Skills in Modern Teaching Practice

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## BOOK of abstracts

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# Table of Contents

<b>Monica TILEA, University of Craiova:</b> <i>TRANSMOD: Goals, Challenges, Results</i>	5
<b>Oana-Adriana DUȚĂ, University of Craiova:</b> <i>A Questionnaire-Based Approach of Transversal Skills in Romania, Norway and Iceland</i>	6
<b>Jón Freyr JÓHANSSON, Bifröst University:</b> <i>Transversal Skills and Bifröst University - Practice vs. Statements</i>	7
<b>Patrick MURPHY, Nesna University College:</b> <i>Problem based learning and transversal skills: Decoding an authentic text through visualization</i>	8
<b>Anca BĂNDOI &amp; Marian SIMINICĂ, University of Craiova:</b> <i>A Teaching Approach on the Need to Develop Transversal Skills in Finance Students</i>	8
<b>Cătălin BARBU &amp; Liviu CRĂCIUN, University of Craiova:</b> <i>The Development of Management and Marketing-Related Transversal Skills in Entrepreneurial Education in Romania</i>	9
<b>Anca TĂNASIE, University of Craiova:</b> <i>International Business: the Enhancement of Transversal Skills in International Contracting and Negotiation</i>	9
<b>Anne-Lise WIE, Nesna University College:</b> <i>Working with transversal skills with nature as the learning arena</i>	10
<b>Daniela DINCĂ, University of Craiova:</b> <i>Transversal Skills Developed through Project-Based Learning (PBL)</i>	10
<b>Florentina ANGHEL, University of Craiova:</b> <i>Literature Classes – A Way to Prepare Students for Life by Developing Transversal Competences</i>	11
<b>Patrick MURPHY, Nesna University College:</b> <i>Legitimizing the Subject English in a Location Based Context: Application of Cross-curricular and Transversal Skills</i>	11
<b>Sorin CAZACU, University of Craiova:</b> <i>The Importance of Transversal Competences in Teaching Interpreting</i>	12
<b>Cristiana TEODORESCU &amp; Mihaela COLHON, University of Craiova:</b> <i>Creation of Electronic Linguistic Resources. The Acquisition of Transversal Skills by MA Students in Letters</i>	12
<b>Mihaela POPESCU, University of Craiova:</b> <i>Strategies for the Development of Multilingual Competence through the Intercomprehension Method</i>	13
<b>Melitta SZATHMARY, University of Craiova:</b> <i>The Development of Transversal Skills in Romanian Linguistics Classes</i>	13
<b>Anca Gabriela MIC, University of Craiova:</b> <i>Why Transversal Skills? Views and Opinions of a PhD Student</i>	14

# ABSTRACTS

This presentation will include a brief description of the *TRANSMOD* project, of its history, its goals and the results that have been obtained so far, and will end with a mission statement for this seminar: to obtain the final structure of the Good Practice Guide on transversal skills.

*TRANSMOD* was proposed by the University of Craiova (Romania) in cooperation with Bifröst University (Iceland) and Nesna University College (Norway) with a three-fold purpose: clarifying the status of transversal skills in the three partner institutions, exchanging good practices in the field and creating a valuable instrument that may help teachers effectively integrate such skills in their classes. The project has adopted a gradual approach and has undergone three major phases of research: documentation and mobilities; questionnaire-based research; and elaboration of good practice guidelines.

After having dealt with multiple challenges, the researchers have been able to crystallize their views on transversal skills and on how they are actually implemented in our universities, and have channeled them towards the elaboration of proposals for an increased integration. Their presentations span a wide range of academic topics, but they all converge towards the same ultimate goal: providing useful ideas, models and tools for the development of transversal skills in our students. With the opportunity of this seminar, these contributions will be discussed and the final structure of a joint publication, a Good Practice Guide on transversal skills, will be determined.

A detailed questionnaire was proposed to around 200 academics, in order to gain an accurate insight on how transversal skills are actually viewed and implemented in the three higher education institutions involved in the *TRANSMOD* project (the University of Craiova, Nesna University College and Bifröst University).

This questionnaire included 32 questions, dealing with aspects such as the respondent's academic background, the respondent's background on transversal skills, the general and specific development of transversal skills and the assessment of such skills. The answers highlighted both convergences between the Romanian university and the Nordic universities – for instance, the development of critical and creative thinking is prioritized in all institutions; most teachers in all HEIs award a degree of autonomy of 31-60% to their students; the use of genuine examples in teaching is preferred in the three HEIs – as well as significant differences in teaching paradigms – a higher importance awarded to the development of academic content in Craiova; compulsory titles and bibliographies for projects, compulsory methods of analysis in Craiova, while such aspects are left at the students' choice in Bifröst and Nesna, etc. All in all, the findings of the questionnaire helped to focus the project members' efforts towards the proposal of new tools for developing transversal skills in modern teaching practice.

Bifröst University is known for its emphasis on combining theory and practice, through case studies, group work and applying theory to real-life situations.

The school's original (1918) mission was the training of leaders, using Ruskin College at Oxford as a model mainly for leaders for Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies. This training required emphasis on developing transversal skills. Later when upgrading the school's status as a university the focus of course shifted towards more academic theory.

As most students at Bifröst University are enrolled in distance learning programs, innovation is needed to meet the emphasis on group work and how to combine theory and practice. In applying theory to practical situations all students must acquire relevant transversal skills. The paper focuses on three sides of the concept of Transversal Skills, with the main focus on the last one listed:

1. What can be deduced from Bifröst University's Mission statements on the concept of Transversal Skills.
2. What can be deduced from Bifröst University's course descriptions on the concept of Transversal Skills.
3. Examples and best practices of developing Transversal skills based on interviews with several of Bifröst University's teachers and what importance they place on transversal skills.

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**Patrick MURPHY,**  
Nesna University College

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***Problem based learning and transversal skills:  
Decoding an authentic text through visualization***

Pragmatic and practically oriented at heart, the author of this article claims the communication process of a text may be summed up as follows: If you can draw or construct the contents of a text, you understand the text.

Traditional classroom learning has seen learner input and output as consigned not only within the four walls of the classroom, but also compartmentalized according to subject. This article uses a practical example of how one may combine an authentic text, problem based learning, and focus on encoding and decoding a text for communicative competence. The learners are faced with the challenge of visualizing and graphically reproducing a police report of an automobile accident. Solving the challenge of decoding and graphically encoding, as well as the follow-up tasks, brings in elements of both logical/strategic nature, as well as developing the learner's creative side that goes beyond traditional compartmentalized subject learning. Schemata is challenged for both teacher and learner, as this article takes the learner from textbook and classroom to location based learning in the world beyond the classroom walls, where transversal skills come natural.

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**Anca BĂNDOI &  
Marian SIMINICĂ**  
University of Craiova

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***A Teaching Approach on the Need to Develop  
Transversal Skills in Finance Students***

Given the recent economic and financial crisis, but also the obvious need for reform in most educational systems across Europe, the identification of new tools meant to provide support in developing transversal skills for students currently enrolled in Business and/or Economics Bachelor degrees has become a very important issue. A certain set of skills is required to work with both private and public finance and transversal skills seem to gain a more and more important share as time passes. The professional level of employees becomes increasingly complex, as they are not only required to possess specific financial knowledge, but also IT skills, communication skills, foreign language mastery, to name but a few. At a certain hierarchical level, such skills make the difference between good employees and great employees. This study has been triggered by such practical needs and aims at providing good practice proposals for the efficient development of transversal skills in finance students.



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**Anca TĂNASIE**  
**University of Craiova**

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***International Business: the Enhancement  
of Transversal Skills in International  
Contracting and Negotiation***

International business, contracting and especially trans-cultural business negotiation provide field professionals with a great variety of challenges, from communication to inter-cultural leadership. Such challenges require both scientific and professional skills, but also transversal ones. The present research focuses on the identification and enhancement of most efficient tools employed in the development of these transversal skills for International Business and Economics students as part of English-taught bachelor and master degrees. Such a research also involves an inter-cultural and international approach, since the analysis is based on the assessment of international students coming from different cultural environments, different countries and different educational systems.

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**Cătălin BARBU &  
Liviu CRĂCIUN**  
**University of Craiova**

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***The Development of Management and Marketing-  
Related Transversal Skills in Entrepreneurial  
Education in Romania***

Entrepreneurship has become a very challenging issue in Romania's actual economy and the training of students in this field requires the development of a wide range of skills. In the latest years, the development of transversal skills has been a real target at both a macro-level (the educational system) and a micro-level (teachers) in Romania, but a genuine focus on practical, effective tools has been missing. Our interests in the efficient creation, adjustment and implementation of such tools have resulted in the present study, which deals with the development of transversal skills in future entrepreneurs currently studying in the fields of management and marketing. The main starting point of our analysis is an assessment of the students' perceptions and needs in this respect, but also an adaptation of teaching means to the requirements of this specific area.

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**Anne-Lise WIE,**  
**Nesna University College**

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***Working with transversal skills with nature  
as the learning arena***

Frikultskolen (education based on nature and culture) in Mo i Rana has for more than twenty years been an alternative for pupils who of various reasons do not fit in with the regular school system. The pedagogy of Frikultskolen is founded on holistic human development. Nature is used as a learning arena, where learning may just as well take place in a mountain cabin, at a farm, or on board a boat; as well as in the traditional classroom. The contents of the training is taken from all the school subjects on offer.

Outdoor teaching is more than merely bringing the textbook outside, and do the same as one would do indoors. There is a need to develop teaching and learning methods that are suited to the target audience, the area, and the content. My thesis statement is “how to work with the transversal skills, with special focus on reading and writing, when training takes place outdoors”.

In order to learn more about Frikultskolen’s work, I have employed fieldwork methodology; spending time in the field, observing, and having conversations with teachers both in informal settings and in interview form.

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**Daniela DINCĂ**  
**University of Craiova**

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***Transversal Skills Developed through Project-  
Based Learning (PBL)***

Starting from the general topic of transversal skills training in Humanities students, the hereby paper aims at presenting project-based learning as an interactive teaching and learning method implying the selection, processing and synthesis of information, the asking of questions, interactions within the group, communication of results, correlation of outputs and creation of a final product. We shall aim both at an overview of the benefits of this method for the training of future teachers of foreign languages, as well as an illustration thereof with some examples of good practices in French Civilisation courses. Students may, thus, freely choose their itinerary to complete this action, and they will acquire a strategy of learning to learn and, particularly, to organize themselves in teams and make decisions.

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**Florentina ANGHEL**  
University of Craiova

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***Literature Classes – A Way to Prepare Students  
for Life by Developing Transversal Competences***

For several years now, there has been a decline in interest for literature, and literature classes implicitly, due to an unrealistic belief that literature, seen as fiction only, cannot teach students useful aspects of life. Besides the fact that such an opinion contradicts the essence of literature as art, meant to teach/instruct and delight according to Aristotle and Horace or seen as imitation of life, the complexity of the class activities is also neglected. Consequently, my presentation aims at showing that literature can be taught via class activities based on new tools for our academic environment, such as project-based learning and other collaborative tasks, which offer the students the opportunity to better understand the content while solving the tasks and develop transversal competences: communication in foreign languages, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression, interplay between students and society, development of critical and creative thinking, involvement of students in research, personal development of students, tolerance, environmental awareness, leadership skills, etc. The paper will provide examples of collaborative activities that can be used in literature classes.

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**Patrick MURPHY,**  
Nesna University College

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***Legitimizing the Subject English in a Location  
Based Context: Application of Cross-curricular  
and Transversal Skills***

This article is a response to the challenges for English as a foreign language with today's increasing focus on cross-curricular activities, transversal skills, and location based learning. This article shows how geocaching as an activity not thought out as a teaching and learning tool for the classroom, may be used as a tool giving a meaningful interaction between school subjects, location based teaching, and communicative competence with the outside world. The reader is introduced to geocaching as a potentially powerful learning tool. Though the vantage point and primary focus here is that of English as a foreign language, geocaching may be used as a focal point in all school subjects. The very nature of this flexibility and potential of a real world activity lends itself to cross-curricular activities. Working with school subjects through a real world activity shows how naturally transversal skills are indeed a part of a complete education.

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**Sorin CAZACU**  
**University of Craiova**

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***The Importance of Transversal Competences  
in Teaching Interpreting***

Today's students need to be equipped with new and updated skills than previous generations, which is why the transversal competences such as self-initiative, team work and technological literacy are instrumental to succeed in higher education and modern labour market. It has thus become a priority for an academic programme in Translation and Interpreting to help students acquire, besides key competences, specific skills and knowledge that will allow them to solve the types of problems that arise in their area of work.

This paper will enlarge upon some of the transversal skills more specifically fostered by interpreting courses, such as personal development skills (e.g. multi-tasking, critical thinking, self-confidence), analytical skills (e.g. understanding and analysing, perceiving structures, data mining), and communication skills (e.g. public speaking, short-term memory skills, note-taking techniques). A closer look will be taken into how these skills can be used in community interpreting as a relevant area in the context of growing political interest for social inclusion and fair access to public services, in the light of the current increase of economic migration in some European countries. Given the face-to-face setting in which the community interpreter performs, his/her role in the exchange has to be fully acknowledged and reassessed.

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**Cristiana TEODORESCU**  
**& Mihaela COLHON**  
**University of Craiova**

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***Creation of Electronic Linguistic Resources.  
The Acquisition of Transversal Skills  
by MA Students in Letters***

Transversal skills are key competences in teaching practice, since they are developed throughout the study of several disciplines, not only one. With a view to developing their transversal skills, as of the academic year 2014-2015, the 1<sup>st</sup> year students of the Master's Programme in Legal Translation and Terminology have received an assignment to work on a dictionary of legal terms which, so far, includes parallel terms in Romanian, French and English languages. The dictionary aims at completing the offer of specialised dictionaries and is dedicated to a wide range of target groups. The assignment does not involve only specific philological and terminological know-how, but also a significant IT-based component. The students mostly work with MS Acces and MS Excel, but also become acquainted with other dedicated software. The purpose is to enhance their IT skills (digital literacy), which is, in our opinion, one of the most relevant transversal competences one should possess in today's world.

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**Mihaela POPESCU**  
University of Craiova

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***Strategies for the Development of Multilingual  
Competence through the Intercomprehension  
Method***

One way of fostering the transversal skills of students in Humanities refers to the wide range of teaching strategies applying the method of “intercomprehension” between related languages (Romance languages in our case). The proposal of such an approach in (general or specialised) classes of Romance Linguistics represents a way of access to multilingualism, through an innovative method for foreign language teaching and learning, mainly based on the deployment of already existent linguistic skills (in one’s mother tongue and/or related foreign languages).

Therefore, “intercomprehension”, as defined in the policies of the European Union, illustrates the speakers’ competence to understand those who speak or write a language belonging to the same family as their own, in a given context. Our communication will first outline the general methodological and conceptual framework for the definition and operation of this method, and will then present some strategies for its application in teaching practice, supported by concrete examples.

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**Melitta SZATHMARY**  
University of Craiova

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***The Development of Transversal Skills  
in Romanian Linguistics Classes***

The status of transversal skills in the teaching process of Romanian universities is still not very well established, despite the recognition of this concept in both EU policies and national frameworks and methodologies. It is our view that teaching in Romanian universities should go beyond scientific knowledge transfer and should include, as a significant goal, the development of transversal skills in the student population. Thus, the students will be suitably prepared to face the requirements of the labour market, which are, of course, not limited to academic content. In the hereby paper we shall try to prove the usefulness of new teaching methods, such as project-based learning, in the development of interesting, challenging and inclusive classes of Romanian language. Activities related to project-based learning enhance transversal competences such as critical thinking, team spirit and creativity. Through such methods, the students will follow the academic syllabus, but they will also learn to “think out of the box” and to acquire a much needed shift of mindset.

Transversal skills represent a topic that may not be considered very relevant by students at first sight. When studying for a degree, most students are basically interested in getting good marks. However, when completing the Bachelor's level and beginning postgraduate studies or employment, students have to face reality: professional skills are not everything. PhD students, for instance, do not require only specific competences for the field they are preparing for; they also need to be able to do adequate research (find relevant sources, be able to extract and process ideas), to filter information through their own views (critical thinking), to come up with ideas and concepts of their own (creativity). This means that PhD students need to develop a set of skills that will allow them to go further with their knowledge and expertise in a specific field, and that will also prove to be useful while they are carrying out their own research activities. These skills are not necessarily developed within the precincts of an academic setting. Most transversal skills (e.g. computer literacy) are self-taught in an informal environment, in the students' spare time. This article focuses on identifying a set of basic transversal skills that a PhD student should possess.

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[www.eeagrants.org](http://www.eeagrants.org)

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