APPLYING THE CEFR TO YOUR CURRICULUM

Clare Harrison and Graham Seed
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Aims of the talk

What is the CEFR, and its recently launched Companion Volume?

How can the CEFR inform curriculum evaluation and development?
Progress
Clear plan
Check progress
Curriculum
What does curriculum mean?

Knowledge and skills
How do you plan a curriculum?

- Diagnose learners’ needs
- Define learning objectives
- Plan for assessment
- Select and organise activities and materials
Learners may not have a purpose for learning English

Teachers may not have control over the curriculum
POLL
What about you?

Do you have to follow a prescribed curriculum?

Do your learners have a clear goal for learning English?

Write your answers in the chatbox on the left of your screen.
Learners may not have a purpose for learning English

Teachers may not have control over the curriculum

Teachers may not have time to plan a curriculum
The CEFR to the rescue!

Fundamentally, the CEFR is a tool to assist the planning of curricula, courses and examinations by working backwards from what the users/learners need to be able to do with the language (Companion Volume, page 26)
Poll
How much do you think you know about the CEFR already?

1) Nothing or almost nothing
2) A little, but I wouldn’t be confident enough to tell someone else about the main points
3) Enough to be able to tell someone else about the main points
4) A lot
CEFR
Common European Framework of References for Languages

2001  2018
Underlines, expands and develops 2001 volume does not replace it!

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is an international **standard for describing language ability**. It describes language ability on a six-point scale, from A1 for beginners, up to C2 for those who have mastered a language. This makes it **easy** for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, **to see the level** of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily **compare** our qualifications to other exams in their country.
CEFR
Six levels – A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2
• Learner as a social agent

• An action-oriented approach
**CEFR – Sets of Can Do Descriptors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITTEN PRODUCTION</th>
<th>OVERALL WRITTEN PRODUCTION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>C2</strong></td>
<td>Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C1</strong></td>
<td>Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion. Can employ the structure and conventions of a variety of written genres, varying the tone, style and register according to addressee, text type and theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B2</strong></td>
<td>Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1</strong></td>
<td>Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A2</strong></td>
<td>Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like ‘and,’ ‘but’ and ‘because’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1</strong></td>
<td>Can give information in writing about matters of personal relevance (e.g. likes and dislikes, family, pets) using simple words and basic expressions. Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-A1</td>
<td>Can give basic personal information in writing (e.g. name, address, nationality), perhaps with the use of a dictionary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CEFR – Sets of Can Do Descriptors

Communicative Language Activities and Strategies

Communicative Language Competences

Linguistic Competences
(Vocab, grammar, phonology, etc.)

Sociolinguistic Competences

Pragmatic Competences
(Turn-taking, coherence, fluency, etc.)
CEFR – Sets of Can Do Descriptors

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Four Skills?
Four Modes of Communication

- Reception
- Production
- Interaction
- Mediation
Four Modes of Communication

MEDIATION

The user/learner acts as a social agent who creates bridges and helps to construct or convey meaning, sometimes within the same language, sometimes from one language to another.
Four Modes of Communication
MEDIATION

Mediation may be needed to help ...

• between languages (or varieties of language)
• between input and output
• to facilitate communication
New sets of descriptors for use of language online

Two new sets of descriptors:

Online conversation and discussion

Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration
Pre-A1 Level

Pre-A1 is approximately half-way towards A1

Learners rely on a limited number of words and formulaic expressions

This level provides:
• a starting point on the CEFR ‘learning ladder’
• a means of measuring progress, especially for young learners
C1 and C2 Levels

Not to imply native-speaker competence, but to describe the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease of language

Relevant for higher education and academic purposes
Where is the CEFR taking learning, teaching and assessment?

- **Focus on the structure of language – grammar, etc.**
- **Focus on communicative use of the language.**
- **CEFR mainly used only for assessment.**
- **CEFR used for learning, teaching and assessment.**

- **Language as a code.**
- **Language for action and collaboration.**
- **Language is a school subject.**
- **Language is to be learnt throughout life.**
Where is the CEFR taking learning, teaching and assessment?

- Language is either received or produced.
- Language is co-constructed through interaction.
- Native speaker.
- Proficient speaker.
- Four modes of communication: reception, production, interaction, mediation.
- Four skills of communication: reading, writing, listening, speaking.
How can the CEFR help?
Focus on language for communication

… language as a vehicle for **communication** rather than as a subject to study  (*Companion Volume*, page 27)
How can the CEFR help?
Making learning more communicative and authentic

**Speaking: Conversation A2**
Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions + apologies

**Mediation: Processing Text in Speech A2**
Can report the main points made in simple TV or radio news items, reporting events, sports, accidents etc. …
Online conversation and discussion

B1+ Can post online accounts of social events, experiences and activities …

B1 Can make personal online postings about experiences, feelings and events …

A2+ Can make short descriptive online postings about everyday matters, social activities and feelings …

A1 Can write very simple messages and personal online postings as a series of very short sentences about hobbies, likes/dislikes …
Wide range of coverage

4 modes

strategies

pragmatic

linguistic

plurilingual
CEFR descriptor research project

**Intuitive Phase:** Detailed analysis of existing descriptor scales and authoring of new descriptors

**Qualitative Phase:** 32 face-to-face workshops with groups of 4–12 teachers

(a) sorting descriptors into the categories they purported to describe
(b) evaluating the clarity, accuracy and relevance of the descriptors
(c) sorting descriptors into bands of proficiency.

**Quantitative Phase:** Rasch scaling analysis of the way 250 teachers interpreted the difficulty of the descriptors when each teacher assessed 10 learners … *(Companion Volume, page 40)*
Ready-made descriptors to use

Carefully worded
Fully validated
Ready to use!
A2 Can describe his/her family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job

A1 Can describe him/herself, what he/she does and where he/she lives

Pre-A1 Can describe him/herself (e.g. name, age, family), using simple words …
My name’s Kriszta. I’m 10 years old. I live in Budapest, in the centre of the city. I like football and dancing.

I’m Peter. I’m 10.

My name’s Erika and I’m 10 years old. I live with my family in a flat in the centre of Budapest. I have a brother and sister. My brother’s name is Gabor. He’s 11. My sister is Eva. She’s 12. I’m in the 6th grade at school. My favourite subject is maths and I love playing handball.
A2 Can describe his/her family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job  

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Questions and comments