The CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR/CV) and its Implementation

*Teacher Education: Implications and Opportunities*

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Plan of the presentation

- The CEFR and its innovation potential in language education
- From the CEFR to the CEFR/CV: completing, refining, facilitating
- The action-oriented approach: roles of teachers and students
- Teacher education: a loop towards a strategic/reflective way
- Conclusions: implications and opportunities
The CEFR and its innovation potential in language education

• From the CEFR to the CEFR/CV: completing, refining, facilitating
• The action-oriented approach: roles of teachers and students
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The CEFR: a 20-year old milestone

**Achieved:**
- Provided Common Reference Points, infused transparency
  - CEFR levels,
  - Descriptive scheme
  - Illustrative descriptors

**Ongoing:**
- Has stimulated reflection on complexity of language education
- Is fostering pedagogical innovation
Innovative Aspects of the CEFR

- Levels and descriptor scales > curriculum alignment
- From four skills to four modes of communication: reception, production, interaction, mediation (not developed in the CEFR 2001)
- Learner as social agent and co-construction of meaning through interaction and mediation
- Plurilingual and pluricultural competences
- Action-oriented approach (tasks)
Innovative Aspects of the CEFR

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• Plurilingual and pluricultural competences

• Action-oriented approach (tasks)
A coherent curriculum

• **Planning:**
  • “Sign-posting” with Can Dos

• **Teaching:**
  • Action-oriented approach: language as activity

• **Assessment:**
  • Tasks: descriptors as objectives and assessment criteria
Descriptors for Assessment

Distinguishing between:

Descriptors of **communicative activities** (the WHAT):
CEFR Chapter 4 scales

Descriptors of **aspects of proficiency** related to particular competences (the HOW Quality of language):
CEFR Chapter 5 scales
Descriptors for Assessment

Distinguishing between:

Descriptors of *communicative activities* (the WHAT):
CEFR Chapter 4 scales

**INFORMAL DISCUSSION  B1**

Can generally follow the main points in an informal discussion with friends provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect.

Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely.
### Descriptors for Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociolinguistic/Pragmatic</strong></td>
<td>Can perform and respond to a wide range of language functions, using their most common exponents in a neutral register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Range</strong></td>
<td>Has a sufficient language to express him/herself with some circumlocutions on most topics pertinent to his everyday life such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fluency</strong></td>
<td>Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linguistic Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used &quot;routines&quot; and patterns associated with more predictable situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptors of **aspects of proficiency** related to particular competences (**the HOW** Quality of language):

CEFR Chapter 5 scales
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• Plurilingual and pluricultural competences

• Action-oriented approach (tasks)
Overall Language Proficiency

General Competences
- Savoir
- Savoir-faire
- Savoir-être
- Savoir apprendre

Communicative language competences
- Linguistic
- Sociolinguistic
- Pragmatic

Communicative language activities
- Reception
- Production
- Interaction
- Mediation

Communication strategies
- Reception
- Production
- Interaction
- Mediation

CEFR Descriptive scheme
Innovative Aspects of the CEFR

• Levels and descriptor scales > curriculum alignment
• From four skills to **four modes** of communication: *reception, production, interaction, mediation* (not developed in the CEFR 2001)
• Learner as **social agent** and co-construction of meaning through *interaction* and *mediation*
• Plurilingual and pluricultural competences
• Action-oriented approach (tasks)
Learners are social agents who:

• (co)-construct meaning
• in real-life tasks
• by engaging in **communicative activities**
• drawing on **competences**
• and employing **communication strategies**

In turn, by accomplishing tasks, they develop:

- **general competences** (incl. intercultural)
- **communicative language competences**:
  - Pragmatic
  - Linguistic
  - Socio-linguistic

Chapitre 4

Learners needs: a shift from teaching the ‘language’ to teaching what learners want/need to do in the language

Chapitre 5
Innovative Aspects of the CEFR

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• Plurilingual and pluricultural competences
• Action-oriented approach (tasks)
Pioneering the idea of linguistic and cultural diversity as a resource, valuing uneven dynamic profiles

An uneven plurilingual competence

A changing competence

A differentiated competence allowing code switching

A partial competence

Non-compartmentalized competences

Abandoning ‘perfect bilingualism’
Innovative Aspects of the CEFR

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The AoA holistically integrates in tasks and scenarios:

• real-world variables (domains, contexts, tasks, communicative activities and texts)
• ‘can do’ descriptors (as objectives);
• language quality criteria (for assessment);
• aspects of competence, from strategic et pragmatic to linguistic (as competence objectives).

Scenarios and tasks flesh out and translate into practice the Action-oriented Approach
One scenario: *Nuit Blanche Intercultural Celebration Mashup*

The municipal government is looking to sponsor a major art installation for Toronto’s upcoming *Nuit Blanche*, a free, 12-hour, city-wide art exhibit featuring hundreds of artists from around the world.

With the intent of inspiring understanding between cultural and linguistic communities, the city is asking for proposals for an interactive art installation that combines a celebration from one of the local cultures with elements from a similar or different celebration from one or two other cultures.

*Your group has decided to submit a proposal for an interactive art installation. You will work on researching celebrations in various languages/cultures, design an event which meets the submission guidelines, write a proposal, and receive feedback from other artists in the class.*
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• Conclusions : implications and opportunities
Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR, 2001):
• learning
• teaching
• assessment

• CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR/CV, 2017):
• Key aspects of the CEFR for teaching & learning
• Updated and new illustrative descriptor scales
• User-friendly and accessible presentation of scales (old+new), concepts and rationales

Eventually supports and facilitates teachers and teacher educators’ work
Overall Language Proficiency

- General Competences
  - Savoir
  - Savoir-faire
  - Savoir-être
  - Savoir apprendre

- Communicative language competences
  - Linguistic

- Communicative language activities
  - Reception
  - Production
  - Interaction
  - Mediation

- Communication strategies
  - Reception
  - Production
  - Interaction
  - Mediation
Mediating communication
Mediating concepts
Mediating a text
Mediation strategies
Learners as social agents engaged in mediation

In real-life situations, learners/users draw on all possible resources/tools available to make sense of oral or written texts both in a language and through languages, in order to understand concepts and messages.

- But they aren’t alone...
- learners/users constantly engage in a double perspective: individual and social

Mediating concepts and texts

Mediating communication
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Action-oriented teaching and learning

- Real-life tasks
- Transparency of objectives/assessment
- Strategic/autonomous decision-making
The action-oriented approach: a proficiency perspective guided by ‘Can do’ descriptors

The CEFR’s action-oriented approach represents a shift away from syllabuses based on a linear progression through language structures, or a predetermined set of notions and functions, towards syllabuses based on needs analysis, oriented towards real-life tasks and constructed around purposefully selected notions and functions. (CEFR/CV, 2017: 26)
• The task is a **unifying tool** making it possible to structure learning around actions that are **vivid**, **defined**, and **concrete**.

• The approach has moved away from an accumulation of knowledge and know-how and toward **a logic of strategic activation** of resources in order to **achieve an objective**

• organizing the course around tasks also makes it possible to **link teaching and assessment right away**
The action-oriented approach: iterative, strategic process of planning/doing/reflecting/acting + sharing

- communities of practice
- CEFR/CV + resources

- students involved in the process
- students make choices
- students act/teachers observe, reflect and plan further

- teachers as strategists
- descriptor(s)
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Educating to the action-oriented approach: iterative, strategic process of planning/doing/reflecting/acting + sharing

- experts of CEFR/CV
- CEFR/CV + resources
- iterative process
- with CEFR/CV
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Conclusions: implications and opportunities
The CEFR/CV

- makes the CEFR principles and concepts more accessible
- provides guidance through rationales
- highlights and expands aspects of the CEFR relating to:
  - complexity theory
  - the socio-cultural approach
  - the ecological approach
  - the intercultural/plurilingual dimension
- supports further innovation (plurilingualism and mediation + strategies)
- fosters social justice (transparency, quality education)
Comments from the piloting

“The students were made more aware of how language can be used to collaborate, take turns, build a conversation, and work towards a goal. ... The descriptors helped to draw attention to the end results and the objectives that speakers were trying to achieve”

“We saw how the participants moved from needing to clarify and confirm mutual understanding to interacting more effortlessly by building upon each other’s ideas”

“It greatly stimulates to focus practically on the applied aspects of pluricultural and plurilingual university education ... reveals great methodological gaps in our understanding of what pluricultural and plurilingual education through co-learnt languages is, ... what urgent experimental practical researches we should do to improve modern language teaching and learning and university education on the whole.”