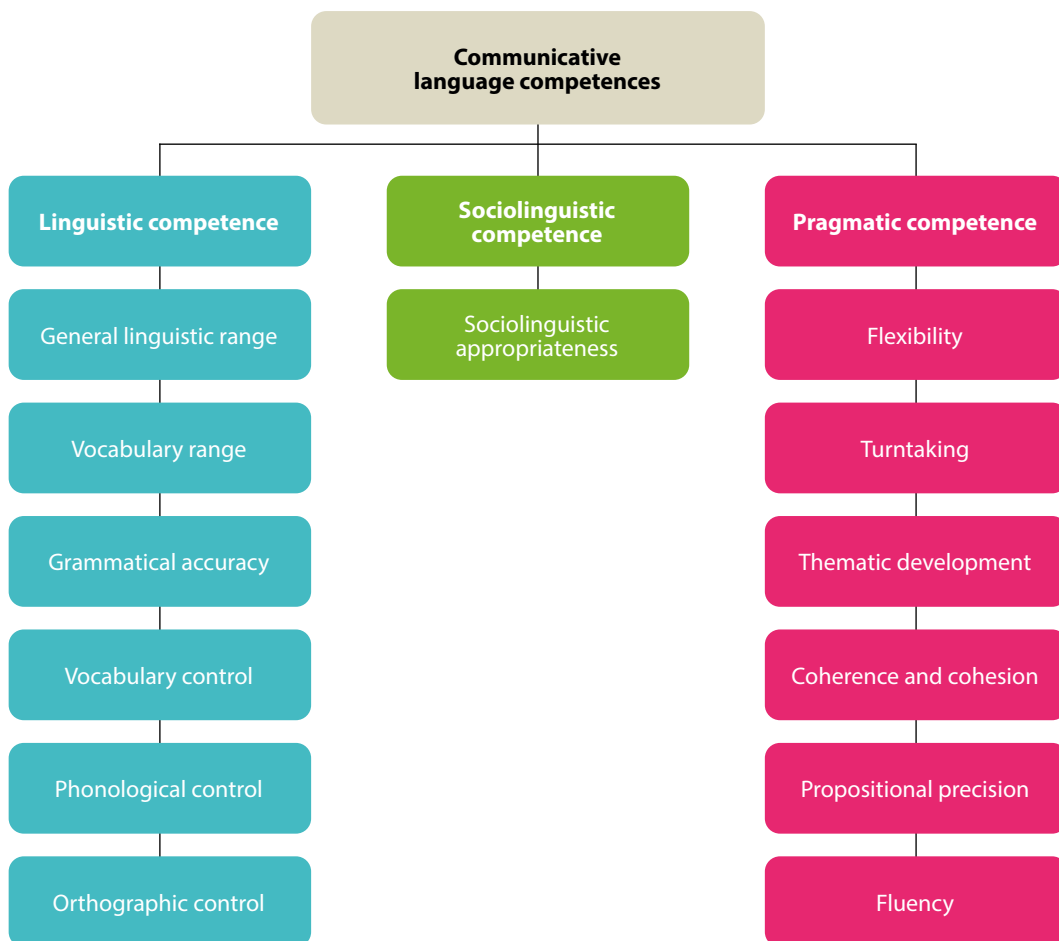


Chapter 5

THE CEFR ILLUSTRATIVE DESCRIPTOR SCALES: COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE COMPETENCES

As stated in the first chapter when discussing the CEFR descriptive scheme, the view of competence in the CEFR does not come solely from applied linguistics but also from applied psychology and sociopolitical approaches. However, the different competence models developed in applied linguistics from the early 1980s on did influence the CEFR. Although they organised them in different ways, in general these models shared four main aspects: strategic competence; linguistic competence; pragmatic competence (comprising both discourse and functional/actional competence) and sociocultural competence (including sociolinguistic competence). Since strategic competence is dealt with in relation to activities, the CEFR presents descriptor scales for aspects of communicative language competence in CEFR 2001 Section 5.2 under three headings: “Linguistic competence”, “Pragmatic competence” and “Sociolinguistic competence”. These aspects, or parameters of description, are always intertwined in any language use; they are not separate “components” and cannot be isolated from each other.

Figure 16 – Communicative language competences



5.1. LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Descriptors are available for different aspects of linguistic competence: “Range” (subdivided: “Morpho-syntactic range”, later renamed “General linguistic range”, and “Vocabulary range”); “Control” (subdivided: “Grammatical accuracy” and “Vocabulary control”), “Phonological control” and “Orthographic control”. The range/control distinction is a common one that reflects the need to take account of the complexity of the language used rather than just registering mistakes. “Phonological control” is presented as a grid with the categories “Overall phonological control”, “Sound articulation” and “Prosodic features” (stress and intonation).

The features of language used successfully at different levels are sometimes called “criterial features” but these are particular to different languages. Research in corpus linguistics is beginning to shed light on the nature of these features, and learners’ accuracy in using them, but results cannot easily be generalised across languages or across the linguistic backgrounds of the learners concerned.

General linguistic range

Since the primary evidence for second language acquisition (that is, progress) is the emergence of new forms and not their mastery, the “range” of language at the user/learner’s disposal is a primary concern. Secondly, attempting to use more complex language, taking risks and moving beyond one’s comfort zone are essential parts of the learning process. When learners are tackling more complex tasks, their control of their language naturally suffers, and this is a healthy process. Learners will tend to have less control over more difficult, more recently learnt morphology and syntax than when they stay within their linguistic comfort zone, and this needs to be taken into consideration when viewing (lack of) accuracy.

Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ range of settings – from A1 to B2, then unrestricted;
- ▶ type of language: from memorised phrases to a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity;
- ▶ limitations: from frequent breakdown/misunderstanding in non-routine situations to no signs of having to restrict what they want to say.

	General linguistic range
C2	Can exploit a comprehensive and reliable mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity. No signs of having to restrict what they want to say.
C1	Can use a broad range of complex grammatical structures appropriately and with considerable flexibility. Can select an appropriate formulation from a broad range of language to express themselves clearly, without having to restrict what they want to say.
B2	Can express themselves clearly without much sign of having to restrict what they want to say. Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints and develop arguments without much conspicuous searching for words/signs, using some complex sentence forms to do so.
B1	Has a sufficient range of language to describe unpredictable situations, explain the main points in an idea or problem with reasonable precision and express thoughts on abstract or cultural topics such as music and film. Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express themselves with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel and current events, but lexical limitations cause repetition and even difficulty with formulation at times.
A2	Has a repertoire of basic language which enables them to deal with everyday situations with predictable content, though they will generally have to compromise the message and search for words/signs. Can produce brief, everyday expressions in order to satisfy simple needs of a concrete type (e.g. personal details, daily routines, wants and needs, requests for information). Can use basic sentence patterns and communicate with memorised phrases, groups of a few words/signs and formulae about themselves and other people, what they do, places, possessions, etc. Has a limited repertoire of short, memorised phrases covering predictable survival situations; frequent breakdowns and misunderstandings occur in non-routine situations.

	General linguistic range
A1	Has a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type. Can use some basic structures in one-clause sentences with some omission or reduction of elements.
Pre-A1	Can use isolated words/signs and basic expressions in order to give simple information about themselves.

Vocabulary range

This scale concerns the breadth and variety of expressions used. It is generally acquired through reading widely. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ range of settings – from A1 to B2, then unrestricted;
- ▶ type of language: from a basic repertoire of words/signs and phrases to a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.

Note: Vocabulary range is taken to apply to both reception and production. For sign languages, established and productive vocabulary is implied from A2+ to C2, with established vocabulary at A1 and A2.

	Vocabulary range
C2	Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.
C1	Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions; little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies. Can select from several vocabulary options in almost all situations by exploiting synonyms of even words/signs less commonly encountered. Has a good command of common idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; can play with words/signs fairly well. Can understand and use appropriately the range of technical vocabulary and idiomatic expressions common to their area of specialisation.
B2	Can understand and use the main technical terminology of their field, when discussing their area of specialisation with other specialists. Has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to their field and most general topics. Can vary formulation to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution. Can produce appropriate collocations of many words/signs in most contexts fairly systematically. Can understand and use much of the specialist vocabulary of their field but has problems with specialist terminology outside it.
B1	Has a good range of vocabulary related to familiar topics and everyday situations. Has sufficient vocabulary to express themselves with some circumlocutions on most topics pertinent to their everyday life such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel and current events.
A2	Has sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine everyday transactions involving familiar situations and topics. Has sufficient vocabulary for the expression of basic communicative needs. Has sufficient vocabulary for coping with simple survival needs.
A1	Has a basic vocabulary repertoire of words/signs and phrases related to particular concrete situations.
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

Grammatical accuracy

This scale concerns both the user/learner's ability to recall "prefabricated" expressions correctly and the capacity to focus on grammatical forms while articulating thought. This is difficult because, when formulating thoughts or performing more demanding tasks, the user/learner has to devote the majority of their mental processing capacity to fulfilling the task. This is why accuracy tends to drop during complex tasks. In addition, research in English, French and German suggests that inaccuracy increases at around B1 as the learner is beginning to use language more independently and creatively. The fact that accuracy does not increase in a linear manner is reflected in the descriptors. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ control of a specific repertoire (A1 to B1);
- ▶ prominence of mistakes (B1 to B2);
- ▶ degree of control (B2 to C2).

	Grammatical accuracy
C2	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).
C1	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare and difficult to spot.
B2	Good grammatical control; occasional "slips" or non-systematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect.
	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding. Has a good command of simple language structures and some complex grammatical forms, although they tend to use complex structures rigidly with some inaccuracy.
B1	Communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; generally good control, though with noticeable mother-tongue influence. Errors occur, but it is clear what they are trying to express.
	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.
A2	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes; nevertheless, it is usually clear what they are trying to say.
A1	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a learnt repertoire.
Pre-A1	Can employ very simple principles of word/sign order in short statements.

Vocabulary control

This scale concerns the user/learner's ability to choose an appropriate expression from their repertoire. As competence increases, such ability is driven increasingly by association in the form of collocations and lexical chunks, with one expression triggering another. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ familiarity of topics (A1 to B1);
- ▶ degree of control (B2 to C2).

	Vocabulary control
C2	Consistently correct and appropriate use of vocabulary.
C1	Uses less common vocabulary idiomatically and appropriately. Occasional minor slips, but no significant vocabulary errors.
B2	Lexical accuracy is generally high, though some confusion and incorrect word/sign choice does occur without hindering communication.

	Vocabulary control
B1	Shows good control of elementary vocabulary but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts or handling unfamiliar topics and situations. Uses a wide range of simple vocabulary appropriately when discussing familiar topics.
A2	Can control a narrow repertoire dealing with concrete, everyday needs.
A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

Phonological control

The 2001 scale has been replaced in this publication. The description of phonology in CEFR 2001 Section 5.2.1.4 is clear, thorough and sufficiently broad to encompass more recent reflections on aspects of phonology in second/foreign language education. However, the 2001 scale did not capture this conceptual apparatus and the progression appeared unrealistic, particularly in moving from B1 (“Pronunciation is clearly intelligible even if a foreign accent is sometimes evident and occasional mispronunciations occur”) to B2 (“Has a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation”). In fact, the phonology scale was the least successful of those calibrated in the original research behind the descriptors published in 2001.

In language teaching, the phonological control of an idealised native speaker has traditionally been seen as the target, with accent being seen as a marker of poor phonological control. The focus on accent and on accuracy instead of on intelligibility has been detrimental to the development of the teaching of pronunciation. Idealised models that ignore the retention of accent lack consideration for context, sociolinguistic aspects and learners’ needs. The 2001 scale seemed to reinforce such views and for this reason, the scale was redeveloped from scratch. A [process report](#)⁴⁵ on the sub-project is available on the CEFR website. From an extensive review of the literature and consultation with experts, the following core areas were identified to inform work on descriptor production:

- ▶ articulation, including pronunciation of sounds/phonemes;
- ▶ prosody, including intonation, rhythm and stress – both word stress and sentence stress – and speech rate/chunking;
- ▶ accentedness, accent and deviation from a “norm”;
- ▶ intelligibility, accessibility of meaning for interlocutors, covering also the interlocutors’ perceived difficulty in understanding (normally referred to as “comprehensibility”).

However, because of a certain overlapping between sub-categories the scale operationalises the above-mentioned concepts into three categories:

- ▶ overall phonological control (replacing the existing scale);
- ▶ sound articulation;
- ▶ prosodic features (intonation, stress and rhythm).

Intelligibility has been a key factor in discriminating between levels. The focus is on how much effort is required from the interlocutor to decode the speaker’s message. Descriptors from the two more detailed scales are summarised in more global statements, and explicit mention of accent has been used at all levels. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ intelligibility: how much effort is required from the interlocutor to decode the speaker’s message;
- ▶ the extent of influence from other languages spoken;
- ▶ control of sounds;
- ▶ control of prosodic features.

The focus is on familiarity and confidence with the target language sounds (the range of sounds a speaker can articulate and with what degree of precision). The key concept operationalised in the scale is the degree of clarity and precision in the articulation of sounds.

The focus is on the ability to effectively use prosodic features to convey meaning in an increasingly precise manner. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ control of stress, intonation and/or rhythm;
- ▶ ability to exploit and/or vary stress and intonation to highlight their particular message.

45. Piccardo E. (2016), “Phonological Scale Revision Process Report”, Education Policy Division, Council of Europe, available at <https://rm.coe.int/168073fff9>.

Phonological control			
	Overall phonological control	Sound articulation	Prosodic features
C2	Can employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with a high level of control – including prosodic features such as word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation – so that the finer points of their message are clear and precise. Intelligibility and effective conveyance and enhancement of meaning are not affected in any way by features of accent that may be retained from other language(s).	Can articulate virtually all the sounds of the target language with clarity and precision.	Can exploit prosodic features (e.g. stress, rhythm and intonation) appropriately and effectively in order to convey finer shades of meaning (e.g. to differentiate and emphasise).
C1	Can employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with sufficient control to ensure intelligibility throughout. Can articulate virtually all the sounds of the target language; some features of accent(s) retained from other language(s) may be noticeable, but they do not affect intelligibility.	Can articulate virtually all the sounds of the target language with a high degree of control. They can usually self-correct if they noticeably mispronounce a sound.	Can produce smooth, intelligible spoken discourse with only occasional lapses in control of stress, rhythm and/or intonation, which do not affect intelligibility or effectiveness. Can vary intonation and place stress correctly in order to express precisely what they mean to say.
B2	Can generally use appropriate intonation, place stress correctly and articulate individual sounds clearly; accent tends to be influenced by the other language(s) they speak, but has little or no effect on intelligibility.	Can articulate a high proportion of the sounds in the target language clearly in extended stretches of production; is intelligible throughout, despite a few systematic mispronunciations. Can generalise from their repertoire to predict the phonological features of most unfamiliar words (e.g. word stress) with reasonable accuracy (e.g. while reading).	Can employ prosodic features (e.g. stress, intonation, rhythm) to support the message they intend to convey, though with some influence from the other languages they speak.
B1	Pronunciation is generally intelligible; intonation and stress at both utterance and word levels do not prevent understanding of the message. Accent is usually influenced by the other language(s) they speak.	Is generally intelligible throughout, despite regular mispronunciation of individual sounds and words they are less familiar with.	Can convey their message in an intelligible way in spite of a strong influence on stress, intonation and/or rhythm from the other language(s) they speak.

Phonological control			
	Overall phonological control	Sound articulation	Prosodic features
A2	<p>Pronunciation is generally clear enough to be understood, but conversational partners will need to ask for repetition from time to time. A strong influence from the other language(s) they speak on stress, rhythm and intonation may affect intelligibility, requiring collaboration from interlocutors. Nevertheless, pronunciation of familiar words is clear.</p>	<p>Pronunciation is generally intelligible when communicating in simple everyday situations, provided the interlocutor makes an effort to understand specific sounds.</p> <p>Systematic mispronunciation of phonemes does not hinder intelligibility, provided the interlocutor makes an effort to recognise and adjust to the influence of the speaker's language background on pronunciation.</p>	<p>Can use the prosodic features of everyday words and phrases intelligibly, in spite of a strong influence on stress, intonation and/or rhythm from the other language(s) they speak.</p> <p>Prosodic features (e.g. word stress) are adequate for familiar everyday words and simple utterances.</p>
A1	<p>Pronunciation of a very limited repertoire of learnt words and phrases can be understood with some effort by interlocutors used to dealing with speakers of the language group. Can reproduce correctly a limited range of sounds as well as stress for simple, familiar words and phrases.</p>	<p>Can reproduce sounds in the target language if carefully guided.</p> <p>Can articulate a limited number of sounds, so that speech is only intelligible if the interlocutor provides support (e.g. by repeating correctly and by eliciting repetition of new sounds).</p>	<p>Can use the prosodic features of a limited repertoire of simple words and phrases intelligibly, in spite of a very strong influence on stress, rhythm and/or intonation from the other language(s) they speak; their interlocutor needs to be collaborative.</p>

Orthographic control

This scale concerns the ability to copy, spell and use layout and punctuation. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ copying words and sentences (at lower levels);
- ▶ spelling;
- ▶ intelligibility through a blend of spelling, punctuation and layout.

	Orthographic control
C2	Writing is orthographically free of error.
C1	Layout, paragraphing and punctuation are consistent and helpful. Spelling is accurate, apart from occasional slips of the pen.
B2	Can produce clearly intelligible, continuous writing which follows standard layout and paragraphing conventions. Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother-tongue influence.
B1	Can produce continuous writing which is generally intelligible throughout. Spelling, punctuation and layout are accurate enough to be followed most of the time.
A2	Can copy short sentences on everyday subjects, e.g. directions on how to get somewhere. Can write with reasonable phonetic accuracy (but not necessarily fully standard spelling) short words that are in their oral vocabulary.
A1	Can copy familiar words and short phrases, e.g. simple signs or instructions, names of everyday objects, names of shops, and set phrases used regularly. Can spell their address, nationality and other personal details. Can use basic punctuation (e.g. full stops, question marks).
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

5.2. SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

Sociolinguistic competence is concerned with the knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use. Since language is a sociocultural phenomenon, much of what is contained in the CEFR, particularly in respect of the sociocultural, is also of relevance to sociolinguistic competence. The matters treated here are those specifically relating to language use that are not dealt with elsewhere: linguistic markers of social relations; politeness conventions; register differences; and dialect and accent.

Sociolinguistic appropriateness

One scale is offered for “Sociolinguistic appropriateness”. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ using polite forms and showing awareness of politeness conventions;
- ▶ performing language functions in an appropriate way (at lower levels in a neutral register);
- ▶ socialising, following basic routines at lower levels, without requiring the interlocutor(s) to behave differently (from B2 up) and employing idiomatic expressions, allusive usage and humour (at C levels);
- ▶ recognising sociocultural cues, especially those pointing to differences, and acting accordingly;
- ▶ adopting an appropriate register (from B2 up).

	Sociolinguistic appropriateness
C2	<p>Can mediate effectively and naturally between users of the target language and members of their own community, taking account of sociocultural and sociolinguistic differences.</p> <p>Has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning.</p> <p>Appreciates virtually all the sociolinguistic and sociocultural implications of language used by proficient users of the target language and can react accordingly.</p> <p>Can effectively employ, both orally and in writing, a wide variety of sophisticated language to command, argue, persuade, dissuade, negotiate and counsel.</p>
C1	<p>Can recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts; may, however, need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar.</p> <p>Can understand humour, irony and implicit cultural references and pick up nuances of meaning.</p> <p>Can follow films employing a considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage.</p> <p>Can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage.</p> <p>Can adjust their level of formality (register and style) to suit the social context: formal, informal or colloquial as appropriate, and maintain a consistent register.</p> <p>Can frame critical remarks or express strong disagreement diplomatically.</p>
B2	<p>Can with some effort keep up with and contribute to group discussions even when talk is fast and colloquial.</p> <p>Can recognise and interpret sociocultural/sociolinguistic cues and consciously modify their linguistic forms of expression in order to express themselves appropriately in the situation.</p> <p>Can express themselves confidently, clearly and politely in a formal or informal register, appropriate to the situation and person(s) concerned.</p> <p>Can adjust their expression to make some distinction between formal and informal registers but may not always do so appropriately.</p> <p>Can sustain relationships with users of the target language without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with another proficient user.</p> <p>Can express themselves appropriately in situations and avoid crass errors of formulation.</p>
B1	<p>Can perform and respond to a wide range of language functions, using their most common exponents in a neutral register.</p> <p>Is aware of the salient politeness conventions and acts appropriately.</p> <p>Is aware of, and looks out for signs of, the most significant differences between the customs, usages, attitudes, values and beliefs prevalent in the community concerned and those of their own community.</p>
A2	<p>Can perform and respond to basic language functions, e.g. information exchange and requests, and express opinions and attitudes in a simple way.</p> <p>Can socialise simply but effectively using the simplest common expressions and following basic routines.</p> <p>Can handle very short social exchanges, using everyday polite forms of greeting and address.</p> <p>Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, apologies, etc.</p>
A1	<p>Can establish basic social contact by using the simplest everyday polite forms of: greetings and farewells; introductions; saying please, thank you, sorry, etc.</p>
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

5.3. PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

A simple way of understanding the linguistic/pragmatic distinction is to say that linguistic competence is concerned with language usage (as in “correct usage”) and hence with language resources and knowledge of the language as a system, whereas pragmatic competence is concerned with actual language use in the (co-) construction of text. Pragmatic competence is thus primarily concerned with the user/learner’s knowledge of the principles of language use according to which messages are:

- ▶ organised, structured and arranged (“discourse competence”);
- ▶ used to perform communicative functions (“functional competence”);
- ▶ sequenced according to interactional and transactional schemata (“design competence”).

Discourse competence concerns the ability to design texts, including generic aspects like “Thematic development”, “Coherence and cohesion” as well as, in an interaction, co-operative principles and “Turntaking”. Functional competence includes “Flexibility” in the use of one’s repertoire and the selection of appropriate sociolinguistic choices. All the scales for communicative language activities describe different types of functional language use. Knowledge of interactional and transactional schemata relates also to sociocultural competence and is to some extent treated under “Sociolinguistic appropriateness” on the one hand and “General linguistic range” and “Vocabulary range” on the other, in terms of range of settings and, at lower levels, repertoires for them. In addition, pragmatic competence involves “speaker meaning” in context as opposed to the “sentence/dictionary meaning” of words and expressions. Thus, articulating exactly what you want to say requires another aspect of pragmatic competence: “Propositional precision”.

Finally, saying anything requires “Fluency”. Fluency is generally understood in two complementary ways: firstly in a holistic way, representing the speaker/signer’s ability to articulate a (possibly complex) message. This more holistic usage is reflected in statements like “she’s an articulate speaker” or “his Russian is very fluent” and implies an ability to talk/sign at length, with appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts. In a narrower, more technical interpretation, talking/signing at length implies a lack of distraction through breaks and long pauses in the flow. Putting “Fluency” under pragmatic competence cuts across the traditional competence/performance dichotomy used by linguists since Chomsky. As was mentioned in discussing the CEFR model, the CEFR does not continue that tradition. The view taken is that, in an action-oriented approach, competence exists only in action.

Flexibility

Flexibility is concerned with the ability to adapt language learnt to new situations and to formulate thoughts in different ways. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ recombining learnt elements creatively (especially lower levels);
- ▶ adapting language to the situation and to changes of direction in conversation and discussion;
- ▶ reformulating points in different ways to emphasise points, express degrees of commitment and confidence, and avoid ambiguity.

	Flexibility
C2	Shows great flexibility in reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to give emphasis, differentiate according to the situation, interlocutor, etc. and to eliminate ambiguity.
C1	Can make a positive impact on an intended audience by effectively varying style of expression and sentence length, use of advanced vocabulary and word order. Can modify their expression to express degrees of commitment or hesitation, confidence or uncertainty.
B2	Can adjust what they say and the means of expressing it to the situation and the recipient and adopt a level of formality appropriate to the circumstances. Can adjust to the changes of direction, style and emphasis normally found in conversation. Can vary formulation of what they want to say. Can reformulate an idea to emphasise or explain a point.
B1	Can adapt their expression to deal with less routine, even difficult, situations. Can exploit a wide range of simple language flexibly to express much of what they want.
A2	Can adapt well-rehearsed, memorised, simple phrases to particular circumstances through limited lexical substitution. Can expand learnt phrases through simple recombinations of their elements.
A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

Turntaking

Turntaking is concerned with the ability to take the discourse initiative. This ability can be viewed both as an interaction strategy (to take the floor) or as an integral aspect of discourse competence. For this reason this scale also appears in the section “Interaction strategies”. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ initiating, maintaining and ending conversation;
- ▶ intervening in an existing conversation or discussion, often using a prefabricated expression to do so, or to gain time to think.

Note: This scale is repeated under “Interaction strategies”.

	Turntaking
C2	<i>No descriptors available; see C1</i>
C1	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface their remarks appropriately in order to get the floor, or to gain time and keep the floor while thinking.
B2	<p>Can intervene appropriately in discussion, exploiting appropriate language to do so.</p> <p>Can initiate, maintain and end discourse appropriately with effective turntaking.</p> <p>Can initiate discourse, take their turn when appropriate and end conversation when they need to, though they may not always do this elegantly.</p> <p>Can use stock phrases (e.g. “That’s a difficult question to answer”) to gain time and keep the turn while formulating what they want to express.</p>
B1	<p>Can intervene in a discussion on a familiar topic, using a suitable phrase to get the floor.</p> <p>Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest.</p>
A2	<p>Can use simple techniques to start, maintain or close a short conversation.</p> <p>Can initiate, maintain and close simple, face-to-face conversation.</p> <p>Can ask for attention.</p>
A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

Thematic development

This scale is concerned with the way in which ideas are logically presented in a text and related to each other in a clear rhetorical structure. It also involves following relevant discourse conventions. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ telling a story/relating a narrative (lower levels);
- ▶ developing a text, expanding and supporting points appropriately, for instance with examples;
- ▶ developing an argument (especially B2 to C1).

	Thematic development
C2	Can use the conventions of the type of text concerned with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease and fulfilling all communicative purposes.
C1	<p>Can use the conventions of the type of text concerned to hold the target reader's attention and communicate complex ideas.</p> <p>Can give elaborate descriptions and narratives, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.</p> <p>Can write a suitable introduction and conclusion to a long, complex text.</p> <p>Can expand and support the main points at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.</p>
B2	<p>Can develop an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.</p> <p>Can present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly.</p>
	<p>Can follow the conventional structure of the communicative task concerned when communicating their ideas.</p> <p>Can develop a clear description or narrative, expanding and supporting their main points with relevant supporting detail and examples.</p> <p>Can develop a clear argument, expanding and supporting their points of view at some length with subsidiary points and relevant examples.</p> <p>Can evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</p> <p>Can clearly signal the difference between fact and opinion.</p>
B1	<p>Can clearly signal chronological sequence in narrative text.</p> <p>Can develop an argument well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time.</p>
	<p>Shows awareness of the conventional structure of the text type concerned when communicating their ideas.</p> <p>Can reasonably fluently relate a straightforward narrative or description as a sequence of points.</p>
A2	<p>Can tell a story or describe something in a simple list of points.</p> <p>Can give an example of something in a very simple text using "like" or "for example".</p>
	<i>No descriptors available</i>
A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>
Pre-A1	<i>No descriptors available</i>

Coherence and cohesion

Coherence and cohesion refer to the way in which the separate elements of a text are interwoven into a coherent whole by exploiting linguistic devices such as referencing, substitution, ellipsis and other forms of textual cohesion, plus logical and temporal connectors and other forms of discourse markers. Both cohesion and coherence operate at the level of the sentence/utterance and at the level of the complete text. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ linking elements, mainly with logical and temporal connectors;
- ▶ using paragraphs to emphasise text structure;
- ▶ varying the types of cohesive devices used, with fewer "clunky" connectors (C levels).

	Coherence and cohesion
C2	Can create coherent and cohesive text making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of cohesive devices.
C1	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured language, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices. Can produce well-organised, coherent text, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns.
B2	Can use a variety of linking expressions efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas. Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link their utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some “jumpiness” in a long contribution. Can produce text that is generally well-organised and coherent, using a range of linking expressions and cohesive devices. Can structure longer texts in clear, logical paragraphs.
B1	Can introduce a counter-argument in a simple discursive text (e.g. with “however”). Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points. Can form longer sentences and link them together using a limited number of cohesive devices, e.g. in a story. Can make simple, logical paragraph breaks in a longer text.
A2	Can use the most frequently occurring connectors to link simple sentences in order to tell a story or describe something as a simple list of points. Can link groups of words/signs with simple connectors (e.g. “and”, “but” and “because”).
A1	Can link words/signs or groups of words/signs with very basic linear connectors (e.g. “and” or “then”).
Pre-A1	No descriptors available

Propositional precision

This scale concerns the ability to pinpoint how to formulate what one wishes to express. It concerns the extent to which the user/learner can communicate detail and shades of meaning, and can avoid compromising their ideally intended message. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ type of setting and information concerned (A1 to B1), with no restriction from B2, when the user/learner can communicate detail reliably, even in more demanding situations;
- ▶ degree of detail and precision in information given;
- ▶ ability to qualify, emphasise and disambiguate likelihood, commitment, belief, etc.

	Propositional precision
C2	Can convey finer shades of meaning precisely by using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of qualifying devices (e.g. adverbs expressing degree, clauses expressing limitations). Can give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity.
C1	Can qualify opinions and statements precisely in relation to degrees of, for example, certainty/uncertainty, belief/doubt, likelihood, etc. Can make effective use of linguistic modality to signal the strength of a claim, an argument or a position.
B2	Can pass on detailed information reliably. Can communicate the essential points even in more demanding situations, though their language lacks expressive power and idiomaticity.

	Propositional precision
B1	Can explain the main points in an idea or problem with reasonable precision.
	Can convey simple, straightforward information of immediate relevance, getting across the point they feel is most important.
	Can express the main point they want to make comprehensibly.
A2	Can communicate what they want to say in a simple and direct exchange of limited information on familiar and routine matters, but in other situations they generally have to compromise the message.
A1	Can communicate basic information about personal details and needs of a concrete type in a simple way.
Pre-A1	Can communicate very basic information about personal details in a simple way.

Fluency

Fluency, as discussed above, has a broader, holistic meaning (= articulate speaker/signer) and a narrower, technical and more psycholinguistic meaning (= accessing one's repertoire). The broader interpretation would include "Propositional precision", "Flexibility", and at least to some extent "Thematic development" and "Coherence/cohesion". For this reason, the scale below focuses more on the narrower, more traditional view of fluency. Key concepts operationalised in the scale include the following:

- ▶ ability to construct utterances, despite hesitations and pauses (lower levels);
- ▶ ability to maintain a lengthy production or conversation;
- ▶ ease and spontaneity of expression.

	Fluency
C2	Can express themselves at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow. Pauses only to reflect on precisely the right means to express their thoughts or to find an appropriate example or explanation.
C1	Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.
B2	Can communicate spontaneously, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression in even longer complex stretches of language.
	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although they can be hesitant as they search for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with users of the target language quite possible without imposing strain on either party.
B1	Can express themselves with relative ease. Despite some problems with formulation resulting in pauses and "cul-de-sacs", they are able to keep going effectively without help.
	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.
A2	Can make themselves understood in short contributions, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.
	Can construct phrases on familiar topics with sufficient ease to handle short exchanges, despite very noticeable hesitation and false starts.
A1	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words/signs, and to repair communication.
Pre-A1	Can manage very short, isolated, rehearsed utterances using gesture and signalled requests for help when necessary.