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CEF Illustrative Performance Samples:

For Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEF)

English

(Swiss Adult Learners)

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Acknowledgements

This set of performance samples has been prepared for the Council of Europe's Languages Policy Division by Eurocentres (Foundation for European Language and Educational Centres) and the Coordination Office of the Migros Club Schools.

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation with 45 member states. Part of the work of the Languages Policy Division concerns the promotion of transparency and coherence in language education through the CEF and the Portfolio.

Eurocentres, a Swiss not-for-profit foundation, teaches English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Japanese in some 18 schools in countries where these languages are spoken. Eurocentres has been a consultant to the Council of Europe since 1968 and played a major role in the development of the CEF and of the Portfolio.

The Migros Club Schools are Switzerland's largest provider of adult education with approximately 50 centres throughout the country. About half of the Club School participants follow language courses. Over 30 languages are on offer nationally. The Club Schools are a not-for-profit institution, subsidised by the Migros Federation of Cooperatives.

The producers would like to thank all those who have made it possible to publish these samples, and in particular the contributions by:

- The Club School learners of English depicted, who freely gave their permission for these recordings to be used for training purposes;

- The 100 Swiss teachers of English who took part in the 1994 Swiss research project, whose judgements are the basis of calibrations of the majority of the samples

- Susan Gilbert, Georgia Staub and Karyl Müller-Pringle (Team leaders for the training of examiners in Switzerland for the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate) for assisting Dr North and Mr Hughes in helping to confirm the ratings of the B2 samples, and UCLES for arranging for them to do so.

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3rd November 2003

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Section 1

Introduction

This set of video recordings for English is made available to accompany the pilot version of a Manual (Council of Europe 2003) for relating certificates and diplomas to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (Council of Europe 2001). The Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg is publishing this initial set of calibrated samples in order to assist member states, national and international providers of examinations in applying the Standardisation Procedures outlined in Chapter 5 of the Manual.

The immediate context for the publication is the piloting of the Manual in a series of Case Studies for different languages in 2004-2005. The function of this current set of recordings is to act as a catalyst in this first stage of using the Manual in order to provide:

- concrete samples for standardisation training for English (Manual: Chapter 5);

- operationalisation of a neutral, standardised performance task that is simple to set up and that should be adopted in the Case Studies in order to assist comparison between different systems;

- points of reference to which samples for other languages can be benchmarked during the Case Studies involving other languages;

- a core set of samples that can be augmented/replaced by further samples for learners of English from other educational sectors and language regions that arise from the Case Studies for English.

The recordings are intended to be used in standardisation training in connection with Section 5.5 of the Manual (pages 71-76). Users are advised to refer to that section for detailed instructions and suggestions about how to carry out such standardisation training. Workshop participants will greatly benefit by deepening their familiarisation with the CEF through undertaking some of the activities with descriptors described in Chapter 3 of the Manual prior to working with the video. The idea is then that these recordings, and the CEF assessment instruments provided with them, should be used to arrive at a common understanding of the CEF levels. That common understanding can then be applied to the benchmarking of local recordings to the levels. The local samples, showing learners in the context concerned, can then be used in conjunction with the centrally provided calibrated samples in further dissemination training.

The majority of the recordings on the cassette were made during the research project that produced the CEF Levels (A1-C2) and the "Can Do" descriptors in the CEF and Swiss European Language Portfolio (North 2000; North and Schneider 1998; Schneider and North 2000). These particular recordings have been chosen because:

- they give performances clearly situated at CEF levels
- all the speakers shown on these recordings gave their written consent to the use of these recordings for research and training purposes
- the technical quality, whilst not perfect, is sufficient for dissemination. Unfortunately this was not the case with the recordings made for other educational sectors in the original project.

Copies of the video are available from:

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In addition to the notes on the performances and details about the tasks filmed, this document also provides relevant CEF rating instruments from the Manual. It should be emphasised that, useful as these tools are, they were originally prepared for a specific rating conference at the end of the Swiss research project (Schneider and North 2000). Users may wish in addition to consult original CEF scales such as the following:

CEF SCALES FOR ASPECTS OF COMPETENCE			
	Spoken Interaction	Spoken Production	CEF (English)
Linguistic Competence			
General Linguistic Range	✓	✓	Page 110
Vocabulary Range	✓	✓	Page 112
Vocabulary Control	✓	✓	Page 112
Grammatical Accuracy	✓	✓	Page 114
Phonological Control	✓	✓	Page 117
Sociolinguistic Competence			
Sociolinguistic Appropriateness	✓	✓	Page 122
Pragmatic Competence			
Flexibility	✓		Page 124
Turntaking	✓		Page 124
Thematic Development		✓	Page 125
Cohesion and Coherence		✓	Page 125
Spoken Fluency	✓	✓	Page 129
Propositional Precision		✓	Page 129
Strategic Competence			
Turntaking (repeated)	✓		Page 86
Cooperating	✓		Page 86
Asking for clarification	✓		Page 87
Planning		✓	Page 64
Compensating	✓	✓	Page 64
Monitoring and Repair	✓	✓	Page 65

- Pronunciation was omitted from the Oral Assessment Criteria Grid not because pronunciation is felt to be unimportant, but because in the project that produced the original scale of descriptors in relation just to English (North 2000), descriptors for pronunciation were problematic. There were a number of reasons for this:

- It is very difficult to distinguish in words between levels of pronunciation ability in the same way that one can do this with fluency, for example.

- Pronunciation tends to be perceived as a negative phenomenon, interference from mother tongue, rather than as a positive competence. This makes it difficult to scale mathematically with positive concepts.

- Teachers and examiners who are unfamiliar with typical target-language performance from speakers of an L1 from outside their experience tend to be harsher in their

judgement than teachers and examiners who are familiar with such an accent. Thus German-speaking Swiss teachers of English reacted more negatively to the pronunciation of French-speaking learners, and French-speaking teachers of English reacted more negatively to the pronunciation of German-speaking learners.

- Once the French and German languages were the objects of study in addition to English in the Swiss project, descriptors of pronunciation, alone of all the categories of description investigated, failed to be interpreted in a manner consistent across languages.

- Finally, learners with the same background and the same general language level can vary wildly in their pronunciation.

For the CEF publication, the results achieved for English were used as the basis for developing the scale for "Phonological Control" (English page 117). However, the fact of the matter is that one cannot have the same confidence in this scale as in the scales for other aspects of spoken language.

Any queries about the tasks, rating instruments or judgements regarding the performances themselves can be addressed to:

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Section 2

The Performances

The first point that needs to be made about these recordings is that they were originally intended for research not for publication. The sound quality is adequate for the purpose at hand, but the filming was done in normal classrooms without any rearrangement of furniture or attention to background.

This informal assessment reflects the philosophy of the Council of Europe modern languages network expressed in the Portfolio project. It can be summarised by the Canadian language tester Merrill Swain's slogan "Bias for Best:" give learners a secure, comfortable platform to show what they can do. Bachman and Palmer (1996) provide a model of a test taker's performance that considers the affective factors that can influence performance positively or negatively. Gipps (1994) points out that a learner's competence has a "fuzzy" outline. Given a supportive environment (= "scaffolding"), a learner a learner can produce a better performance, and the experience of that good performance can have a positive educational effect (= "educational assessment").

All the performances follow a broadly similar format. The two, or sometimes three, learners are on camera without a native speaker interlocutor or teacher. The learners have been briefed – but not told in which order to speak. Topics are selected by the learners from suggestions given. The performance typically follows in three phases. The rationale for this organisation, together with the materials used to elicit the performances, is given in Section 3.

1. **Production Phase by Speaker A:** a sustained, coherent monologue that is semi-prepared. It shows what the learner in question can do given an opportunity to reflect on what they want to say. Speaker A is speaking primarily to Speaker B, who generally engages in some back-channelling, and may interrupt with comments or questions.

2. **Production Phase by Speaker B:** the same in reverse

3. **Interaction Phase:** a spontaneous discussion prompted by discussion cards selected by the speakers.

The three phases are separated by a brief fade out for ease of use – even though the performances are continuous. In addition, one of two performances are interrupted by a cut. In one or two cases this was to eliminate external noise. On other occasions a description or discussion has been cut short. In one case the two monologues are not followed by an interaction phase. This was because the learners felt that they had done enough, and because a lot of interaction had already occurred in the production phases.

There are seven extracts. Names appear in brackets if it is recommended that the person concerned is best not rated. The level of the performances does NOT appear on the video screen. The extracts are identified by the names of the speakers.

A1	(Arlette) and Micheline
A2	(Gertrude) and Marcel
A2	Heidi and Johanna
B1	Renate and Rosemary

B2	Michaela and Doris
B2	Rainer, Marco and Andreas
C1	Eva, (Doris) and Anne-Marie

A1 **(Arlette) and Micheline**	Micheline and Arlette have had about 60-70 hours of English lessons. The recording is one of the original 1994 Swiss recordings. In that project the predominantly secondary school teachers at the rating conference were very hard on both speakers, whom they penalised for their lack of fluency and accuracy in their attempts at real communication. 14 year-old school children performing a far narrower version of the task in which they asked and answered a list of learnt questions were rated at A1 – considerably above Micheline and Arlette. Nevertheless Micheline is a good example of an A1 level adult learner struggling to use her limited resources to generate real communication. Arlette does not really produce enough language to say with confidence that she has achieved Level A1. **Production Task:** "Last weekend." **Interaction Task**: "What makes an ideal home?"	
Timings	Production: - Micheline: - Arlette Interaction:	01 23 (1 min 20 secs) 03 00 (1 min 10 secs) 04 23 (2 mins 50 secs)
Micheline (right)	A1 is considered to be the lowest level of generative language use – as opposed to phrase book repetition. Appropriately, the lowest descriptor for spoken interaction of production to be calibrated at A1 (just above the cut-off) says: *Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition at a slower rate of speech, rephrasing and repair*. The does describe Micheline's performance – and the experience with the "good-looking young man" she describes. Below this level people are said to be able to *make simple purchases where pointing and gesture can support the verbal reference*, *ask and tell the time*, and *use some basic greetings*. Micheline's performance also appears to match the A1 criteria for Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction and Coherence.	

A2 **(Gertrud) and Marcel**	Marcel gives a typical A2 performance. Gertrude was very uneasy, and did not give a sufficiently developed performance to provide an adequate sample. Therefore her Production Task has been omitted and she should not be assessed. She might be A1, she might be A2. The recording is one of the original 1994 Swiss recordings. In that project Marcel was rated as quite a strong A2 (but not A2+). **Production Task: Marcel**: "My home." **Interaction Task**: "An ideal holiday."

Timings	Production: Marcel: Interaction:	07 25 (1 min 30 secs) 09 07 (2 mins 30 secs)

Marcel (right)	Marcel's performance clearly fulfils the A2 criteria for Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction and Coherence. He can clearly *make himself understood in very short utterances* and he certainly *uses some simple sentence structures correctly*, e.g. "What sort of food do you like?" He can *link groups of words with simple connectors like "and," "but" and "because"* and his behaviour matches some descriptors calibrated at A2+, for example: *ask and answer questions about habits and routines, about pastimes and past activities* (CEF Information Exchange: page 81). In terms of Interaction, he can also *use simple techniques to start, maintain or end a conversation* (CEF Turntaking: page 124).

A2 **Heidi and Johanna**	Both learners give a strong A2 performance. The recording was made in 1994 but was not used in the CEF research project. There is no Interaction task, but the learners interact quite a lot during the Productions Tasks. **Production Task: Heidi**: "My life (family and interests)." **Production Task: Johanna:** "My holiday."

Timings	Production - Heidi: - Johanna:	 11 47 (3 mins 20 secs) 15 19 (2 mins 40 secs)

Heidi (left)	Heidi gives a particularly fluent and confident performance which matches many descriptors calibrated at A2+. She seems to *have a sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine everyday transactions involving familiar situations and topics* and indeed *a repertoire of basic language which enables her to deal with everyday situations with predictable content, though she will generally have to compromise the message and search for words*. (CEF pages 110; 112). In addition one could imagine her *socialising simply but effectively using the simplest common expressions and following basic routines* (CEF: Socio-linguistic: page 122).

Johanna (right)	Johanna is a little less fluent, but has taken a more demanding topic. Again she shows some A2+ qualities, for example it is clear she *can use the most frequently occurring connectors to in simple sentences in order to tell a story or describe something as a simple list of points* (CEF Coherence & Cohesion: page 125). Like Heidi she seems capable of *using simple techniques to start, maintain or end a conversation* (CEF Turntaking: page 124).

B1 **Renate and Rosemarie**	Both learners give strong performances for this level. The recording is one of the original 1994 Swiss recordings. Both were rated B1 on a checklist of 50 descriptors, adjusted for severity/lenience and in a rating conference involving 100 teachers. These are good, straightforward performances very suitable for use as a first extract to give workshop participants a point of reference. **Production Tasks**: "My flat." **Interaction Task**: "Which pets are better, cats or dogs?"
Timings	Production - Rosemary: 18 04 (1 min 50 secs) - Renate : 20 02 (1 min 10 secs) Interaction : 21 25 (2 mins 20 secs)
Renate (left)	Renate is a classic example of a speaker meeting the B1 criteria with a clear, natural way of speaking. She *can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation* and can certainly *keep going comprehensibly* –but with *pausing, especially in longer stretches*. Indeed she could be said to *express herself with relative ease. Despite some problems with formulation resulting in pauses and "cul-de-sacs", she is able to keep going effectively without help*. (B1+). She uses her *repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns reasonably accurately* (B1) and she certainly appears to *have enough language to get by*, as defined, and can *link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected. Linear sequence of points*.
Rosemarie (right)	Rosemary is a less natural speaker but she shows extremely good control, forward planning and linguistic coherence for this level – even in spontaneous interaction. The descriptor for B1+ for Grammatical Accuracy (CEF English page 114) is not at all exaggerated: *Communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; generally good control though with noticeable mother tongue influence. Errors occur, but it is clear what she is trying to express.* One suspects that her linguistic range could be B1+ (CEF page 110), but we do not really see it with this task: *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 films.*

B2 **Michaela and Doris**	Both learners are level B2, Doris (right) giving a strong performance for this level. The recording is not one of the original 1994 Swiss recordings. **Production Tasks**: "My flat" (a new flat in Doris's case). **Interaction Task**: "TV is a social disaster."

Timings	Production	
	- Doris:	23 53 (1 min 20 secs)
	- Michaela:	25 19 (2 mins 20 secs)
	Interaction:	27 48 (3 mins 50 secs)

Michaela (left)	The description lacks flair in that she adopts a rigid, repetitive format to describe her flat. However she can *produce stretches of language at a fairly even tempo*, which with the clarity of her description, her interaction skills, good use of linking expressions and her ability to sometimes self-correct when she confuses tenses all indicates a solid B2 performance.
Doris (right)	A lively and very coherent speaker for this level with a good speech flow, Doris uses some nice, natural expressions like "it's quite bright with big windows," and "[TV] takes away your creativity". She *can give clear descriptions, express viewpoints without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so*, and meets all the other B2 criteria.

B2 **Rainer, Marco and Andreas**	All three learners are level B2, with different profiles. The recording was made just after a holiday break. It is not one of the original 1994 Swiss recordings. **Production Tasks**: "What I did in the holiday break." **Interaction Task 1**: Foreign languages in Primary School. Note: The recording missed the start of the Rainer's first sentence. What he says is "We start with French in the 5th class." **Interaction Task 2**: "Sport is bad for relationships." The two on the outside (Rainer and Andreas) are primary school teachers. In the first of two interaction tasks they discuss foreign language learning in primary school, whilst Marco (not a teacher) looks on before adding his own views on the special situation in German-speaking Switzerland. Only the latter part of this discussion is recorded. The group then choose to discuss sport and relationships.
Timings	Production - Rainer: 31 48 (1 min) - Marco: 32 58 (1 min 40 secs) - Andreas: 34 50 (3 mins 10 secs) Interaction 1: 37 11 (2 mins 40 secs) Interaction 2: 40 03 (5 mins 20 secs)
Rainer (left)	A relaxed communicator with a good flow of language who can *initiate discourse and take his turn when appropriate* and *link his utterances into a coherent contribution*. He has a *sufficient range of language to express viewpoints without much conspicuous searching for words*, even though many of his utterances have a strong influence from German in both formulation and pronunciation. He cannot be said to *show a relatively high degree of grammatical* or lexical *control*. Here he is better described by the B1+ descriptor for Grammatical Accuracy (CEF English page 114): *Communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; generally good control though with noticeable mother tongue influence. Errors occur, but it is clear what he is trying to express.* Nevertheless overall Rainer represents an example of a B2 level "communicator" (as opposed to "error-avoider"); "data gatherer" (as opposed to "rule learner"); "street learner" (as opposed to "school learner"). He is typical of many German-speaking adult learners at this level in Switzerland.
Marco (middle)	Good interaction skills, and able to *produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo – although can be hesitant*. Generally coherent speaker with some impressive turns of phrase for the narrowness of his linguistic base. Weak on accuracy with many past tense and word order mistakes, tends not to elaborate his contribution. A speaker whose performance appeared to improve in the course of the activity.
Andreas (right)	Clearly meets all the B2 criteria on Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Interaction and Coherence. A very controlled, conscious performance showing considerable language awareness for this level. He always gets his point across effectively, though the performance is very self-conscious and a little laboured at times. Though strong for B2, he does not meet the level of accuracy described for B2+ *consistently maintain a high degree of accuracy*, and the hesitancy he showed launching himself into both description and discussion shows he does not meet C1 level and *express himself spontaneously and almost effortlessly*.

C1 **Eva, (Doris) and Anne-Marie**	Eva and Anne-Marie are both C1, and Anne-Marie meets some of the C2 criteria. Doris is slightly weaker and should not be rated. Her production phase has been omitted. The recording was made during the Swiss research project, in which Eva was rated at C1, Anne-Marie at C2 and Doris at B2+. The recording was made in 1994 and there is a reference in the interaction phase to the future (what will happen after 2000!). **Production Tasks**: "A powerful experience" **Interaction Task 1**: "A touring holiday wears you out rather than providing welcome rest" **Interaction Task 2**: "Women should not retire until they are 64." Anne-Marie describes meeting a GI on his way to Vietnam and Eva relates her encounter with a Holocaust survivor who was on Schindler's list. The listeners ask questions, and there is a fair amount of interaction and discussion arising from the production tasks. The actual interaction task, by contrast, does not generate particularly advanced language. Note: The beginning of the sentence for the first interaction task is lost. On the recording one sees and hears Eva read out: "….. *rather than produce welcome rest.*"
Timings	Production <table><tr><td>- Anne-Marie:</td><td>45 35 (3 mins)</td></tr><tr><td>- Eva:</td><td>48 48 (1 min 30 secs)</td></tr><tr><td>Interaction:</td><td>50 32 (4 mins.40 secs)</td></tr></table>
Eva (left)	With good pronunciation and fluency Eva can *produce clear, smoothly-flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.* She can also interact as stated in the C1 descriptor and she does *maintain a high degree of grammatical accuracy*. Her weakness in at least this performance is that although she can respond very naturally to others, she does not herself expand her answers. Thus she appears to be a weaker C1 speaker. In the research project she was twice independently rated as a borderline C1, just marginally above the cut-off point on the mathematical scale.
Anne-Marie (right)	Anne-Marie fulfils the C1 criterion *has a good command of a broad range of language*, though one is not entirely sure that she *doesn't have to restrict what she wants to say*. She certainly doesn't meet the C2 criterion for Range and *convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate,* etc. The kernel of the story she relates is the young American's apprehension, but this is described awkwardly as his being "scaring of being killed". The others have to ask follow up questions to get details, and she still doesn't really elaborate. It is also difficult to say that *errors are rare and difficult to spot,* (C1) let alone corrected. Indeed the B2+ descriptor for Grammatical Accuracy seems more appropriate: *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.* On the other hand she can express *herself at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor in hardly aware of it* (C2) and she *can interact with ease and skill, interweaving her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turn taking* (C2). On coherence she certainly meets the criteria for C1. Thus her profile appears to be as follows: Range: C1; Accuracy: B2+; Fluency: C2; Interaction: C2; Coherence: C1.

	The explanation for this uneven profile may lie in the fact that she is one of the strongest members of an adult conversation group. The class are not following a structured course to develop their linguistic competence, and she is not challenged by the level of the group.
	Her C2 score in the 1994 research project was reached only on the basis of her teacher's judgement of her ability on a checklist of 50 descriptors, adjusted for severity/lenience. Her teacher may have been a little over-influenced by her communicative strength in the group.

Section 3

The tasks

The tasks shown and rating instruments provided are a further development of the Eurocentres approach to oral assessment in small groups in the classroom called RADIO after the criteria used (North 1991; 1992), itself influenced by the format of the CCSE (Certificates in the Communicative Speaking of English) developed by Keith Morrow and Robin Davis. The tasks were developed by North (1996/2000) for the Swiss CEF research project.

Rationale

The rationale behind the task encompasses five points:

1. Eliciting different types of discourse.

Tarone (1983) and Ellis (1985/87) have posited a range of interlanguage styles spanning careful to vernacular and prepared to unprepared; Skehan (1987) proposed that such styles should be taken into account in oral assessment. Here, the Production Task is a more carefully delivered semi-prepared monologue. The coherence lies in the logical construction and internal cohesion of the text. The Interaction Task is a more casual, spontaneous conversation. The coherence lies in the turn-taking and cooperation strategies used to weave the separate contributions into one text.

Shohamy, Reeves and Bejerano (1986) argued that oral assessment should span different task types in order to ensure that different types of discourse are generated. The discussion cards in the task are based on their idea.

It is important that a speaking test has tasks or phases of tasks that generate different types of discourse, for example: long internally coherent turns and short interactive turns; monologues and dialogues; descriptions and opinions; partially prepared speech and fully spontaneous speech.

2. Learner Autonomy

The tasks are designed to give a platform for learners to show what they can do. They nominate topics; they decide how long to talk about what; they are in control. This is not always the case in the philosophy of an examination, as the word suggests.

Many writers have pointed out that the speech samples generated by oral proficiency interviews are questionable because:

- Reactive linguistic behaviour is unnatural outside situations with a clear power imbalance (doctor-patient; officer-soldier etc (Lazarton 1992)
- Interviews can be conversations but are usually just question and answers sessions and sometimes "outlandish contortions" (Van Lier 1989; Berwick and Ross 1993).
- Turn distribution and topic shift do not simulate normal linguistic behaviour (He and Young 1998); two thirds of the topics talked about are nominated by the examiner (Young and Milanovic 1992).
- Different individuals and in particular different cultures have quite different concepts of whether or not one should elaborate a long "display answer" to the question (Lazarton 1996; Young and Hallek 1998;

These tasks are closer to the kind of conversation one might have with these learners if one met them in real life. The speakers are not dominated by a native-speaker or teacher. They are in control of what they say; there is very little interference.

3. Comparability

Feedback from the examiner affects the amount of information given by learners and the way they give it; in other words the performance of the learner is a construct of the examiner, therefore no two interviews are comparable unless examiners are trained to behave in the same way.

Since a range of educational sectors and pedagogic cultures will be engaged in piloting the Manual, a standard format that eliminates native speaker/teacher interlocutor effects can be expected to be more effective in standardisation training. A standard format will also make it easier directly to compare the samples case studies from different countries and educational sectors.

These tasks eliminate the complication of the effects of different kinds of examiners by effectively eliminating the examiner.

4. Simplicity

The procedure is easy to explain to teachers and candidates and simple to easy to set up, Thus it can be used in a wide range of contexts with differing levels of expertise in oral assessment.

The samples are thus just as relevant to teachers (e.g. in the Portfolio network) as to testers.

5. Neutrality

The format is not used in any existing test.

The rest of this section provides guidelines for teachers or project co-ordinators wishing collect samples to document case studies and provide locally relevant exemplars for standardisation training.

Lower Secondary School / A1-B1

PRODUCTION PHASE: **Possible Topics for Description:**

People: A favourite person: - appearance
                                        - where do they come from?
                                        - what do they do?
                                        - why do you like them?
                                        - how did you meet them?/find out about them?

Places: Your home: - how big is it?
                                        - how old is it?
                                        - where is it?
                                        - what do you like about it?
                                        - what do you do not like about it

          Pets: Your pet: - what's he/she called?
                                        - what is he/she?
                                        - where and when did you get him/her?
                                        - what kinds of things does he/she eat?
                                        - what do you like about him/her?
                                        - tell a story about something he/she did!

INTERACTION PHASE :   Spontaneous, unprepared discussion

Make a card for each of the three topics.
Tell the speakers there are three topics they can talk about.
Give them the card on the same theme as the Phase 1 description
Tell them they can move onto the other topics if they want to - and put the cards face down beside them.

Homes: What makes an ideal home?
                     What is important?
                     where is it? (town/country, buses & trains, shops)
                     how big is it - the whole place, the rooms?
                     old/modern?
                     garden?
                     modern bathroom?

Holidays: What kind of holidays are best?
                     holidays on the beach
                     adventure holidays, trekking etc.
                     walking in the mountains
                     Why?

Pets: What kinds of pets are best?
                     cats?
                     dogs?
                     Why?

Upper Secondary School / B1-C2

PRODUCTION PHASE: **Possible Topics for Description:**

- Summarise a film, a book or a documentary etc. Relate the story and give your opinion of it.

OR

- Decribe a more complex issue you are interested in. Give your opinion about it, and provide reasons and arguments to support your point of view..

OR

- Relate in detail a personal experience your have had, explaining your feelings and reactions

INTERACTION PHASE :   **Spontaneous, unprepared discussion**

Use the Discussion Topics. These can be cut up and put on cards which are presented as a pack in the middle of the table.

Instructions for speakers:

The idea to discuss together one or more subjects.
- Each person takes four or five cards;
- Choose one or two that you would like to talk about. If you don't like any of them, take another 5.
- Decide which of you starts;
- Speaker A reads or shows the card to Speaker B, and starts the discussion by giving his/her opinion. Speaker B should feel free to interrupt as they wish.
- When the discussion comes to a natural end, Speaker B reads or shows his/her card – and starts the discussion.
- When the discussion comes to a natural end, Speaker A takes another card, and starts again with the new subject.
- etc.

Discussion Topics (B1-C2)

- One long holiday is better than two short ones.

- The railways should be privatised to make them more efficient.

- Zoos should be abolished; liking animals is no reason for putting them in cages.

- By the year 2,100 everyone will be vegetarian.

- People say the (French/Spanish/English) are not interested in learning languages.

- Nobody wants telephones with video pictures.

- Television is a social disaster.

- Every man should be able to cook.

- Europe should have a common defence policy.

- What you see in America now is where we will be in about 10 to 20 years time.

- People's clothes tell you who they are.

- Governments have a responsibility to maximise employment.

- Children nowadays grow up faster than we did.

- The manipulation of plant or animal genes is no problem if controlled correctly.

- Children should start learning their first foreign language in primary school.

- Sport is bad for relationships and marriages!

- A culture is defined by its cuisine.

- Israel will never have peace with the Palestinians.

- The West should not do business with tyrannical regimes - like China.

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Appendices

- The Common Reference Levels: Manual Table 2.1
- Global Oral Assessment Scale: Manual Table 5.4
- Oral Assessment Criteria Grid: CEF Table 3; Manual Table 5.5
- Supplementary Criteria Grid: "Plus Levels"

THE COMMON REFERENCE LEVELS: Manual Table 2.1

Level		Global Descriptor (Table 1)	Salient Characteristics (CEF Section 3.5, simplified)
Proficient User			It cannot be overemphasized that Level C2 is not intended to imply native-speaker competence or even near native-speaker competence. Both the original research and a project using CEF descriptors to rate mother-tongue as well as foreign language competence (North 2002: CEF Case Studies volume) showed the existence of ambilingual speakers well above the highest defined level (C2). Wilkins had identified a seventh level of "Ambilingual Proficiency" in his 1978 proposal for a European scale for unit-credit schemes.
	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.	**Level C2**, labelled **'Mastery',** is intended to characterise the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language which typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners. Descriptors calibrated here include: _convey finer shades of meaning precisely_ by using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of modification devices; has a good _command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms_ with awareness of _connotative level of meaning_; backtrack and restructure around a difficulty so smoothly the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.	**Level C1** was labelled **Effective Operational Proficiency**. What seems to characterise this level is good access to a broad range of language, which allows fluent, spontaneous communication, as illustrated by the following examples: _Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions. There is little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies; only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language._ The discourse skills characterising the previous band continue to be evident at Level C1, with an emphasis on more fluency, for example: _select a suitable phrase from a fluent repertoire of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get the floor, or to gain time and keep it whilst thinking; produce clear, smoothly-flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices_
Independent User	**B2 +**		This band (B2+) represents a **strong Vantage** performance. The focus on argument, effective social discourse and on language awareness which appears at B2 continues. However, the focus on argument and social discourse can also be interpreted as a new focus on discourse skills. This new degree of discourse competence shows itself in conversational management (co-operating strategies): _give feedback on and follow up statements and inferences by other speakers and so help the development of the discussion; relate own contribution skilfully to those of other speakers_. It is also apparent in relation to coherence/cohesion: _use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas; develop an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail_. Finally, it is at this band that there is a concentration of items on negotiating.
	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	Descriptors calibrated at **Level B2** represent quite a break with the content so far. For example at the lower end of the band there is a focus on effective argument: _account for and sustain his opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments; explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options; develop an argument giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view; take an active part in informal discussion in familiar contexts, commenting, putting point of view clearly, evaluating alternative proposals and making and responding to hypotheses._ Secondly, running right through the level there are two new focuses. The first is being able to more than hold your own in social discourse: e.g. _understand in detail what is said to him/her in the standard spoken language even in a noisy environment; initiate discourse, take his turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly; interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party._ The second new focus is a new degree of language awareness: _correct mistakes if they have led to misunderstandings; make a note of "favourite mistakes" and consciously monitor speech for it/them; generally correct slips and errors if he becomes conscious of them._

THE COMMON REFERENCE LEVELS: TABLE 2.1 (continued)

Level		Global Descriptor (Table 1)	Salient Characteristics (CEF Section 3.5, simplified)
	B1+		This band (B2+) seems to be a **strong Threshold** performance. The same two main features at B1 continue to be present, with the addition of a number of descriptors which focus on the exchange of <u>quantities</u> of information, for example: *provide concrete information required in an interview/consultation (e.g. describe symptoms to a doctor) but does so with limited precision; explain why something is a problem; summarise and give his or her opinion about a short story, article, talk, discussion interview, or documentary and answer further questions of detail; carry out a prepared interview, checking and confirming information, though he/she may occasionally has to ask for repetition if the other person's response is rapid or extended; describe how to do something, giving detailed instructions; exchange accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within his field with some confidence.*
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.	**Level B1** reflects the **Threshold Level** specification and is perhaps most categorised by two features. The first feature is the ability to maintain interaction and get across what you want to, in a range of contexts, for example: *generally follow the main points of extended discussion around him/her, provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect; express the main point he/she wants to make comprehensibly; keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.* The second feature is the ability to cope flexibly with problems in everyday life, for example *cope with less routine situations on public transport; deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements through an agent or when actually travelling; enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics.*
Basic User	A2+		This band (A2+) represents a **strong Waystage** (A2+) performance. What is noticeable here is more active participation in conversation given some assistance and certain limitations, for example: *understand enough to manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort; make him/herself understood and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations, provided the other person helps if necessary; deal with everyday situations with predictable content, though he/she will generally have to compromise the message and search for words;* plus significantly more ability to sustain monologues, for example: *express how he feels in simple terms; give an extended description of everyday aspects of his environment e.g. people, places, a job or study experience; describe past activities and personal experiences; describe habits and routines; describe plans and arrangements; explain what he/she likes or dislikes about something.*
	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.	**Level A2** appears to reflect the level referred to by the **Waystage** specification. It is at this level that the majority of descriptors stating social functions are to be found, like *use simple everyday polite forms of greeting and address; greet people, ask how they are and react to news; handle very short social exchanges; ask and answer questions about what they do at work and in free time; make and respond to invitations; discuss what to do, where to go and make arrangements to meet; make and accept offers.* Here too are to be found descriptors on getting out and about: the simplified cut-down version of the full set of transactional specifications in "The Threshold Level" for adults living abroad, like: *make simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks; get simple information about travel; use public transport: buses, trains, and taxis, ask for basic information, ask and give directions, and buy tickets; ask for and provide everyday goods and services.*
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	**Level A1** is the lowest level of generative language use - the point at which the learner can *interact in a simple way, ask and answer simple questions about themselves, where they live, people they know, and things they have, initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics,* rather than relying purely on a very finite rehearsed, lexically organised repertoire of situation-specific phrases.

GLOBAL ORAL ASSESSMENT SCALE: Manual Table 5.4

C2	***Conveys finer shades of meaning precisely and naturally.*** Can express him/herself spontaneously and very fluently, interacting with ease and skill, and differentiating finer shades of meaning precisely. Can produce clear, smoothly-flowing, well-structured descriptions.
C1	***Shows fluent, spontaneous expression in clear, well-structured speech.*** Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly, with a smooth flow of language. Can give clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects. High degree of accuracy; errors are rare.
B2+	
B2	***Expresses points of view without noticeable strain.*** Can interact on a wide range of topics and produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo. Can give clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding.
B1 +	
B1	***Relates comprehensibly the main points he/she wants to make.*** Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair may be very evident. Can link discrete, simple elements into a connected, sequence to give straightforward descriptions on a variety of familiar subjects within his/her field of interest. Reasonably accurate use of main repertoire associated with more predictable situations.
A2+	
A2	***Relates basic information on, e.g. work, family, free time etc.*** Can communicate in a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar matters. Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident. Can describe in simple terms family, living conditions, educational background, present or most recent job. Uses some simple structures correctly, but may systematically make basic mistakes.
A1	***Makes simple statements on personal details and very familiar topics.*** Can make him/herself understood in a simple way, asking and answering questions about personal details, provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help. Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances. Much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words.
Below A1	Does not reach the standard for A1

- ***Use this scale in the first 2-3 minutes of a speaking sample to decide approximately what level you think the speaker is.***
- ***Then change to Table 5.5 (CEF Table 3) and assess the performance in more detail in relation to the descriptors for that level.***

ORAL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA GRID: CEF Table 3; Manual Table 5.5

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turntaking, referencing, allusion making etc.	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
C1	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.	Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2+					
B2	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he or she searches for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.	Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some "jumpiness" in a long contribution.
B1+					
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
A2+					
A2	Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.	Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.	Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.	Can ask and answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.	Can link groups of words with simple connectors like "and, "but" and "because".
A1	Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.	Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.	Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.	Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like "and" or "then".

SUPPLEMENTARY CRITERIA GRID: "Plus Levels"

	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE
C2					
C1					
B2+	Can express him/herself clearly and without much sign of having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Shows 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.	Can communicate spontaneously, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression in even longer complex stretches of speech. Can use circumlocution and paraphrase to cover gaps in vocabulary and structure.	165-166- 94/261 Can intervene appropriately in discussion, exploiting a variety of suitable language to do so, and relating his/her own contribution to those of other speakers.	162 Can use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas.
B2					
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 films.	Communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; generally good control though with noticeable mother tongue influences.	Can express him/herself with relative ease. Despite some problems with formulation resulting in pauses and "cul-de-sacs", he/she is able to keep going effectively without help.	94/111 & 130 Can exploit a basic repertoire of strategies to keep a conversation or discussion going. Can give brief comments on others views during discussion. Can intervene to check and confirm detailed information.	*No descriptor available*
B1					
A2+	Has sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine, everyday transactions involving familiar situations and topics, though he/she will generally have to compromise the message and search for words.	*No descriptor available*	Can adapt rehearsed memorised simple phrases to particular situations with sufficient ease to handle short routine exchanges without undue effort, despite very noticeable hesitation and false starts.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple, restricted face-to-face conversation, asking and answering questions on topics of interest, pastimes and past activities. Can interact with reasonable ease in structured situations, given some help, but participation in open discussion is fairly restricted.	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.
A2					
A1					