CEFR ONLINE WORKSHOP SERIES 2022 #6

Title

Using the CEFR Companion Volume to enhance teacher agency in school-based language curriculum making

Date & Time

Thursday, 8 September 2022, 16.00 CET

Presenter

Daniela Fasoglio

Handout

In this workshop there will be three activities in breakout rooms:

Activity I: ENGAGE with the key concepts of the CEFR Companion Volume

Reflecting on how such concepts as mediation and the action-oriented approach are related to your own language use and to the curriculum you work with.

Activity II: FOCUS on areas of concern in the language curriculum

Formulating your own curricular challenge and considering how to use the CEFR to answer it.

Activity III: DESIGN, DEVELOP AND EVALUATE

Discussing the examples of curricular challenges and the questions contained in this handout.

EXAMPLE 1

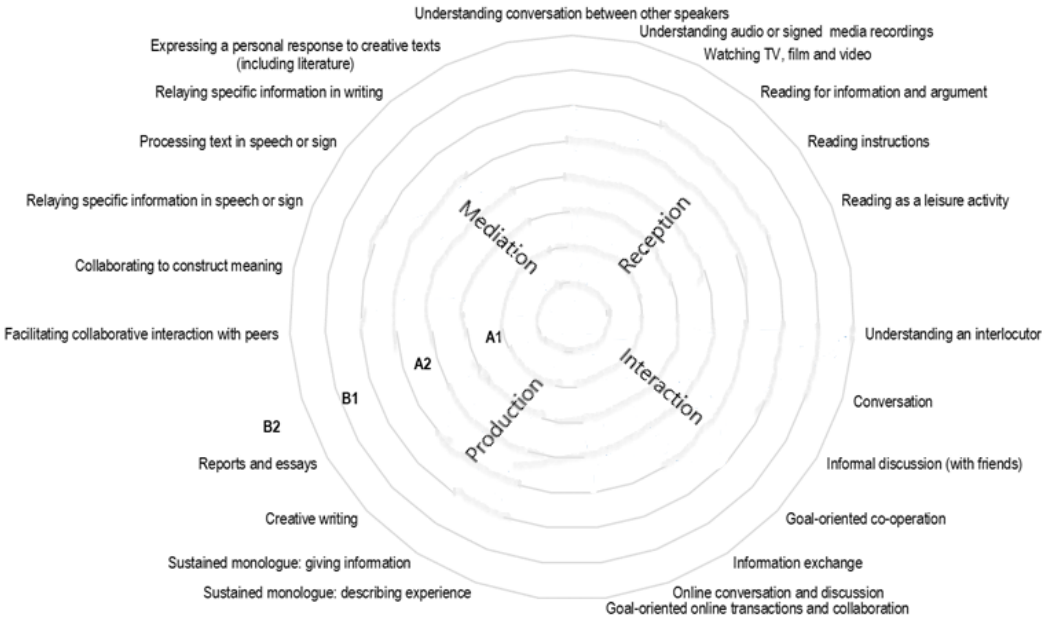
Curricular challenge:

The German department of a secondary school wants to develop a school curriculum that meets the needs of the pupils in the general upper secondary track. In the last few years a large percentage of the students of this track followed a study in international business.

Intervention:

With the help of the CEFR scales, the teachers make a learner profile that gives an overview of the attainment targets for German at the end of general upper secondary education (age: 17-18). They can then use the profile to design a learning path and select or develop their teaching materials.

Which scales are relevant for this profile? What proficiency level(s) should be attained?



EXAMPLE 2

Curricular challenge:
The English section wants to better integrate digital literacy into the curriculum in the first class of pre-vocational education (age: 12-13). They use the CEFR scale 'Online conversation and discussion' to design language tasks. Pupils' proficiency level of English for reading and writing has been averagely assessed at A2.
Intervention:
They choose the following two can do-descriptors:
A2+ Can make short, descriptive online postings about everyday matters, social activities and feelings, with simple key details..
A2+ Can comment on other people's online postings, provided they are written in simple language, reacting to embedded media by expressing feelings of surprise, interest and indifference in simple way.

What kind of cooperative language task can teachers develop for their classrooms?

Teachers discuss these can-do descriptors with the pupils together with the scales for linguistic competence for A2: vocabulary range, vocabulary control, and grammatical accuracy, so that pupils know what they success criteria are in carrying out the task.

How would you organize the discussion so that it is clear for the pupils what their success criteria are?

EXAMPLE 3

Curricular challenge:
The Spanish section have noticed that pupils experience the use of the Spanish language as a barrier. Teachers would like to introduce the use of creative texts in the curriculum in lower secondary classes, as they think that it will enhance pupils' language learning.
Intervention:
The Spanish teachers develop several language tasks in line with the scales 'Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literary)' and 'Creative writing'. In the language tasks, students have to understand short illustrated stories, describe themes and characters and express their opinions.

What kind of cooperative language task can teachers develop for their classrooms?

The teachers use the scales for vocabulary range, vocabulary control, grammatical accuracy, orthographic control and coherence/cohesion to describe success criteria. With the can-do statements for A1 and A2 they develop a *rubric* with which pupils can keep track of their progress after completing each language task.

Communicative goal		I am still working on this	I can do this	I am really good at this
I can describe themes and characters.	- I can tell in simple sentences or single words what the text is about, also with the help of the film, and make a short summary. - I can use standard phrases to describe one character. - I can describe an event (what happens to the main character) in single words. - I can connect sentences using the words "y", "pero" and/or "porque". - I can conjugate most of the verbs I use in the present tense. - I can spell the words I know reasonably correctly, and write the more difficult words phonetically.			

EXAMPLE 4

Curricular challenge:
The school wants to address a formative approach in the lessons as a focal point for the following years. The language sections discuss together how they can use the CEFR descriptors in order to actively involve pupils in their own language learning process.

Intervention 1:
Use the can-do descriptors to clarify goals and success criteria with the pupils.
For a French class in upper secondary school, the teacher has developed a few language tasks around the following language activities:
Creative writing
B2 - Can give a review of a film, book or play.
Expressing a personal response to creative texts, including literature
B1 - Can explain why certain parts or aspects of a work especially interested them.
B1 - Can explain in some detail which character they most identify with and why.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher discusses with the students what a good review looks like, using some (anonymous) examples from a previous school year and some examples from the internet. The teacher lets the students choose a few passages from the examples that they think are well done. The teacher discusses the passages chosen by the students with the class.
Together they make a list of the criteria a good review should meet:
How should the structure of a review be built? What should it contain?
Pupils also look at which language competences and strategies they need:

- What language is appropriate?
- What language structures do they need to have a good command of?
- What other success criteria are important?

The teacher leads the class discussion. The students also mention connecting words and spelling as important aspects to pay attention to. Through this activity the students get a concrete idea of what they have to be able to do to write a good review. They create a list of success criteria for the product of their language task. To formulate them, the teacher uses the B1 can-do descriptors of the following scales:

- propositional precision;
- coherence and cohesion;
- thematic development (distinguishing main from minor issues);
- orthographic control (spelling, punctuation, layout, paragraphing);
- vocabulary control;
- grammatical accuracy.

Teacher and students can then use the success criteria to evaluate the students' products.

Intervention 2
Use the can-do descriptors for language activities, language competences and language strategies to collect feedback on the work of the students, let them assess their own and each other's work, let them discuss their work, their goals and how they can improve their language.
The pupils of the German class work in groups to make a vlog in order to promote the study of German at school. The language task is based on the following can-do descriptor:
Sustained monologue: putting a case
A2+ I can explain what they like or dislike about something and why they prefer one thing to another, making simple, direct comparisons.
The teacher asks the students watch their own vlog in groups and discuss its quality. They do this with the help of a list of success criteria discussed beforehand: what does an effective plea look like? What communicative competences should pupils show in the vlogs?
The teachers asks the students to reflect on the quality of their language use by using the following scales of the CEFR:

- vocabulary range and control;
- grammatical accuracy;
- fluency;
- coherence;
- turntaking.

In a group discussion, the teacher also asks the students to reflect on the way they worked together while making the vlog by using the scales for strategies and mediation:

Planning
B1 - I can rehearse and try out new combinations and expressions and ask for feedback.
Note-taking
B1 - I can note down routine instructions in a meeting on a familiar subject provided these are formulated in simple language and I am given sufficient time to do so.
Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers
A2 - I can collaborate in simple practical tasks, asking what others think, making suggestions and understanding responses provided I can ask for repetition or rephrasing from time to time.
Encouraging conceptual talk
B1- I can ask why someone thinks something or how they think something would work.
A2 - I can ask what someone thinks of a certain idea.

How would such an approach work for you?

EXAMPLE 5

Curricular challenge:
The school has decided to implement the CEFR in their curricula. The language sections have to evaluate the teaching materials they currently use and find out if they are CEFR-proof.
Intervention:
The teachers select one communicative modus (reception, production, interaction, mediation) and read the scales that describe the language activities for that skill. They also discuss if some of these scales are particularly, or less relevant for their pupils. For example, they find 'Conversation' more important than 'Formal discussions'.

They analyse the teaching materials that are currently used:

a) Which scales are addressed in the teaching materials?
b) Which scales and can-do descriptors are less addressed, or not addressed at all?
c) What language tasks can be added in order to address them?

Which scales do you expect to be less or not addressed in the teaching materials used in your educational context? Why?