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DEVELOPING AN ACTION-ORIENTED PATHWAY IN THE CLASSROOM

Danielle Hunter
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Whitby, Ontario, Canada

Web Workshop Format



My Context:



- Newcastle, Ontario, Canada
- Durham District School Board
 - Elementary (5 to 13 years old)
 - Secondary (14 to 18 years old)
 - 20 years as a teacher
 - French as a Second Language
- French Immersion student

“AoA-inspired practices are influenced by context-related factors.”
(Piccardo & North, 2019: 6)

**PRESENTATION
OUTLINE**

**Key Concepts of the CEFR
Planning an Action-oriented
Pathway**

- Activity A – Exploring tasks
- Activity B – Creating scenarios

Sample AoA Projects

Conclusions

Questions

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2001



2020



Companion volume



Teaching

CEFR

Learning

Assessment

A transparent,
coherent
framework

“The approach adopted here, generally speaking, is an **action-oriented** one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘**social agents**,’ i.e. members of society who have **tasks** (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action.” (Council of Europe, 2001: 9)

User/Learner as a Social Agent

“To be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one’s own actions”
(Bandura, 2001:2)

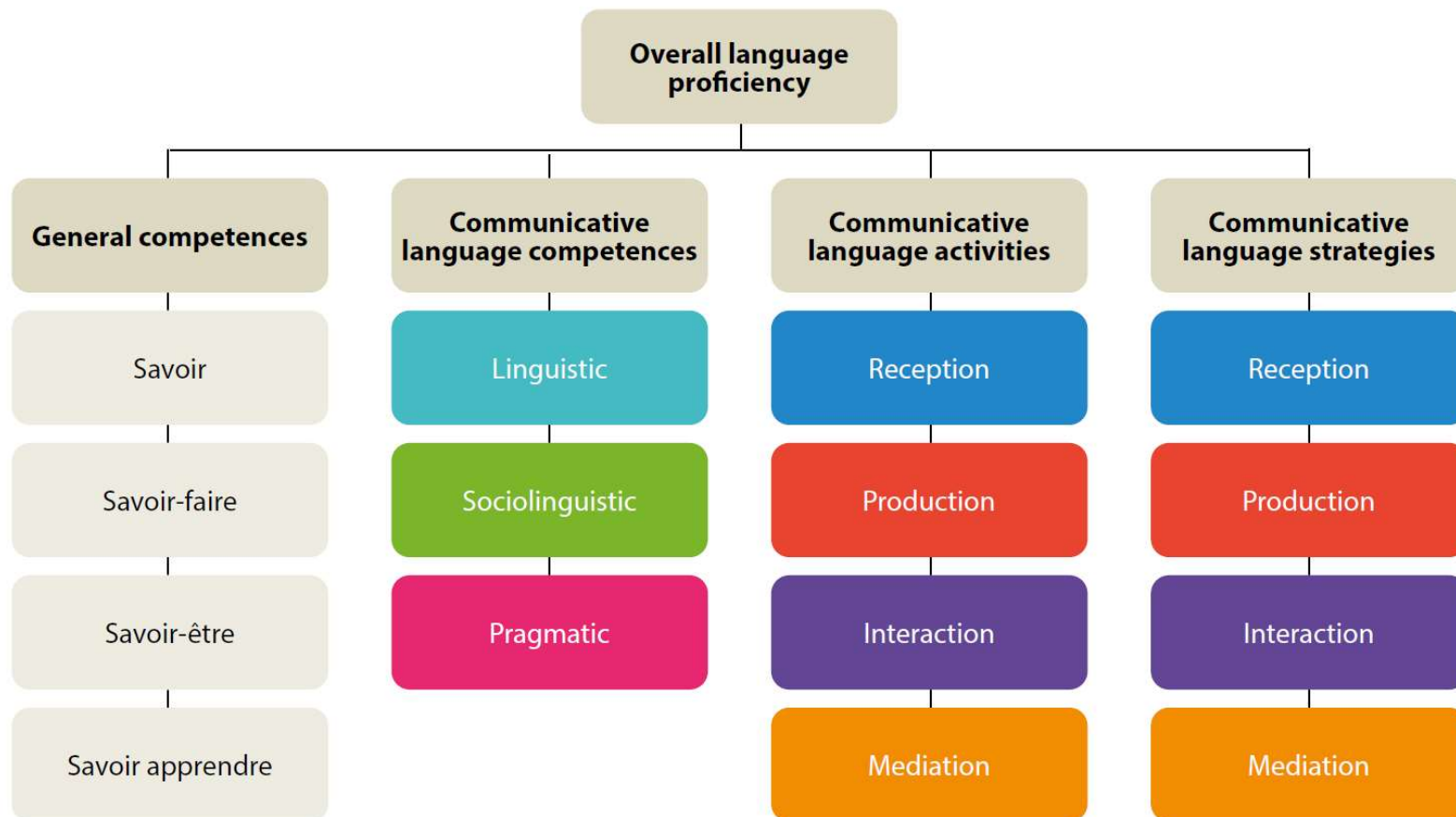
Seeing users/learners as **social agents** implies:

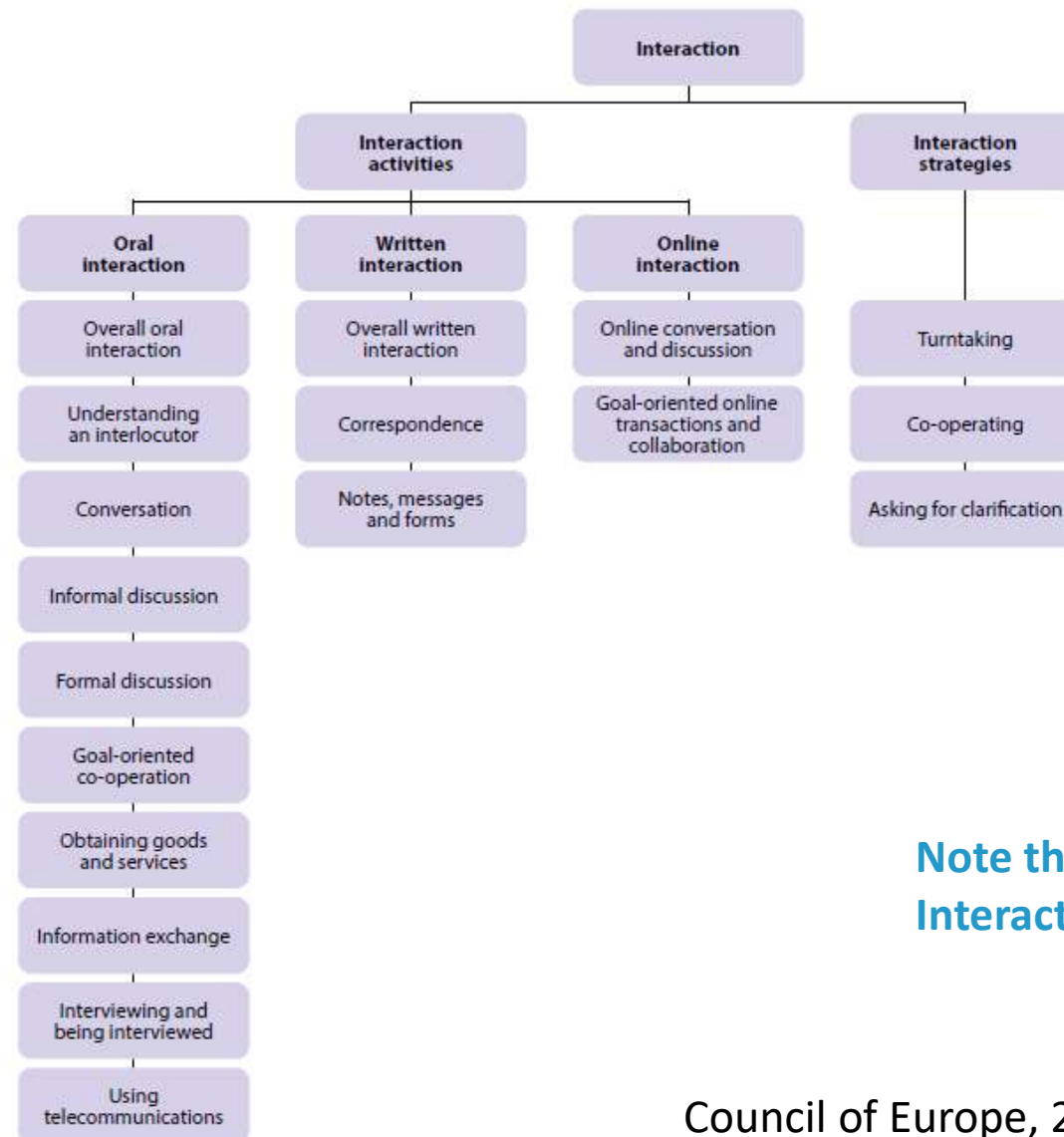
- Exercising **agency** within a specific social context, which imposes conditions and constraints
- Involving them in the learning process
- Recognising the social nature of language learning and language use
- Extensive use of the target language in class
- Recognising the interaction between the social and the individual in the learning process
- Allowing learners to use **all of their resources (cognitive, emotional, linguistic and cultural)**
- Encouraging them to see similarities and regularities as well as differences between languages and cultures
- Developing strategies in iterative cycles in order to **plan, produce** results, and **monitor** their action

Above all:

- Using **purposeful, collaborative tasks**, whose primary focus is not language

CEFR Descriptive Scheme





Note the colour coding
 Interaction = purple

Illustrative Descriptors

Main function: To help align curriculum, teaching, and assessment

- Describe what people **can do** in the real-world (action-oriented)
- Help inform planning (e.g., needs assessment, backwards design)
 - *What is it that you want learners to do in the language?*
- Are illustrative - open-ended, incomplete
- Inspire teachers to create tasks (combining descriptors) and design criteria
- Serve as a reference tool
- Bring transparent “sign-posting”
- Inform assessment (not primary use)

Can understand enough to read short, simple stories and comic strips involving familiar, concrete situations described in high frequency everyday language.

(Reading as a leisure activity, A2)

Can use simple techniques to start, maintain or close a short conversation.

(Turntaking, A2)

Website: CEFR Descriptors (Searchable)

Home Introduction Purposes Levels The CEFR descriptors Learning, Teaching, Assessment

You are here: Democracy > Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR descriptors

The CEFR Common Reference levels are fully defined in a structured set of illustrative 'can-do' descriptors for many different categories.

The original descriptors for both the CEFR and European Language Portfolio were based on those developed in a Swiss National Research Project while also drawing on earlier Council of Europe's "threshold levels" specifications. The descriptors have been updated and extended in a large-scale international project resulting in the publication of the: *CEFR Companion volume* in 2020.

▶ [CEFR Descriptors \(Searchable\)](#)

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/the-cefr-descriptors>

CEFR Descriptor Scheme (updated)	Mode of communication	Activity, strategy or competence	Scale	Level	Descriptor
Communicative language activities	Reception	Oral comprehension	Overall oral comprehension	A1	Can follow language which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for them to assimilate meaning.
Communicative language activities	Reception	Oral comprehension	Overall oral comprehension	A1	Can recognise concrete information (e.g. places and times) on familiar topics encountered in everyday life, provided it is delivered slowly and clearly.
Communicative language activities	Reception	Oral comprehension	Understanding conversation between other people	A1	Can understand some expressions when people are discussing them, family, school, hobbies or surroundings, provided the delivery is slow and clear.

Website: Bank of Supplementary Descriptors

Collated representative samples of descriptors of language competences developed for young learners (aged 7-10 and 11-15 years)

by Tim Goodier and Tunde Szabo, Eurocentres Foundation.

The objective of this document is to provide an overview of how existing descriptors of language competence for young learners relate in content and focus to the calibrated CEFR illustrative descriptors, as a first step towards the possible future development and/or calibration of young learner illustrative descriptors:

Updated versions (2018):

 *Collated Representative Samples of Descriptors of Language Competences Developed for Young Learners – Volume 1: Ages 7-10*

 *Collated Representative Samples of Descriptors of Language Competences Developed for Young Learners – Volume 2: Ages 11-15*

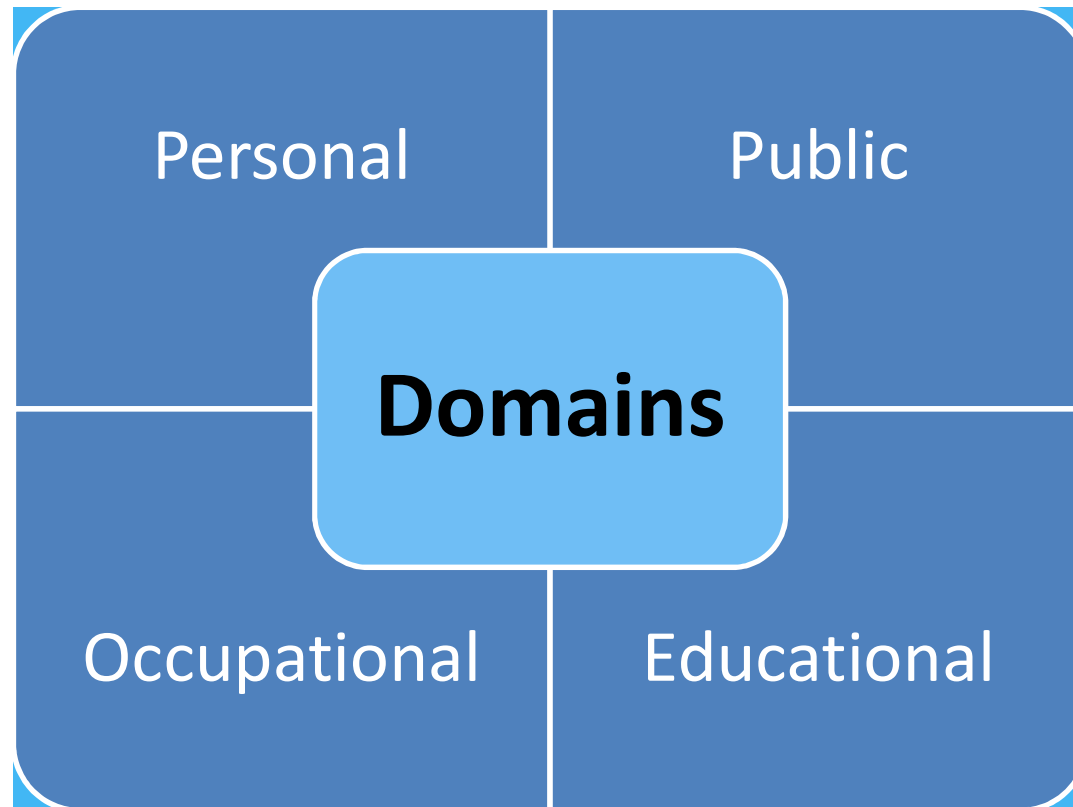
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/bank-of-supplementary-descriptors>

Tasks

“[...] ‘social agents,’ i.e. members of society who have tasks (not exclusively language-related) to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action.” (Council of Europe, 2001: 9)

- Learning is directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life, authentic situations
- Learning occurs in context, with the purpose of developing and activating strategies and competences needed to complete the task
- The ‘classroom’ becomes the gateway to functioning effectively in the outside world in the target language
- Tasks provide direction to teaching, learning and assessment
- **IMPORTANT: The primary focus of the task is not language**

Domains



NOTE: CEFR Companion Volume, Appendix 5: Examples of Use in Different Domains for Descriptors of Online Interaction and Mediation Activities

Plurilingualism and Pluriculturalism

Plurilingualism: The dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner (CEFR, 2020: 30)

- Plurilinguals have a **single, interrelated repertoire** that they combine with their general competences and various strategies in order to accomplish tasks (CEFR, 2001: Section 6.1.3.2)
- It is about valuing all the developing language resources that the user/learner brings
- Educators need to think of their 'language policy'

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Action-oriented Task

Checklist

Key Elements:

- ✓ Learners are 'social agents' in an authentic social context
- ✓ Action is purposeful with real-life application
- ✓ There is a clearly communicated goal to be accomplished that results in a product or outcome
- ✓ Learners process authentic, real-life texts and experiences
- ✓ There are conditions and constraints (e.g., that promote critical and creative thinking)
- ✓ Learners work collaboratively, helping the progress of others
- ✓ Learners draw upon their existing and newly developed competences
- ✓ Learners make choices and think and act strategically

Modified from: Hunter, D., Cousineau, D., Collins, G. and Hook, G. (2019). *Action-oriented Approach Handbook*. Ottawa: Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.

Activity A – Please see handouts (emailed)

ACTIVITY A – EXPLORING EXAMPLES OF ACTION-ORIENTED TASKS (GROUP WORK)

Instructions:

- Please share your name and your geographic location with your group.
- Together, choose one of the example tasks below to explore.
- Select a person from the group who will record the group's ideas on Padlet.
- With your group, discuss the following questions:
 - Which of the elements from the "Guidelines for Creating an Action-oriented Task" (found in the blue box below) can you identify in the example?
 - What do you like about the example?
 - What modifications would you make to the example?
- Post your group's answers on the Padlet.
- If there is time remaining, repeat the instructions above using a different task.

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING AN ACTION-ORIENTED TASK

- Learners are 'social agents' in an authentic social context
- Action is purposeful with real-life application
- There is a clearly communicated goal to be accomplished that results in a product or outcome
- Learners process authentic, real-life texts and experiences
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Piccardo, E., and Hunter, D. (2021, March 9). *Bringing the new CEFR Companion Volume to Life in the Classroom* [Google Slides]. CASLT.

- Task 1 - French studies information night
- Task 2 - Proposing a name change for a school
- Task 3 - Creating a community cookbook
- Task 4 - Let's go to the movies
- Task 5 - Eating out in Durham
- Task 6 - Getting health care in Durham
- Task 7 - Opening a bank account
- Task 8 - Changing the school start time

Activity A – Padlet

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AoA CEFR Web Workshop -Task 1 - French studies community information night (B1)

Elements of an action-oriented task

+

What we like about this task

+

What modifications we would make to this task

+

Other thoughts

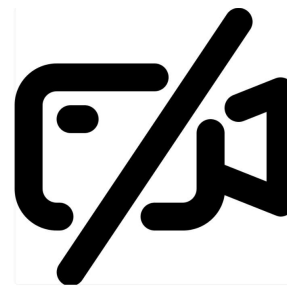
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Our ideas

♥ 0

Add comment

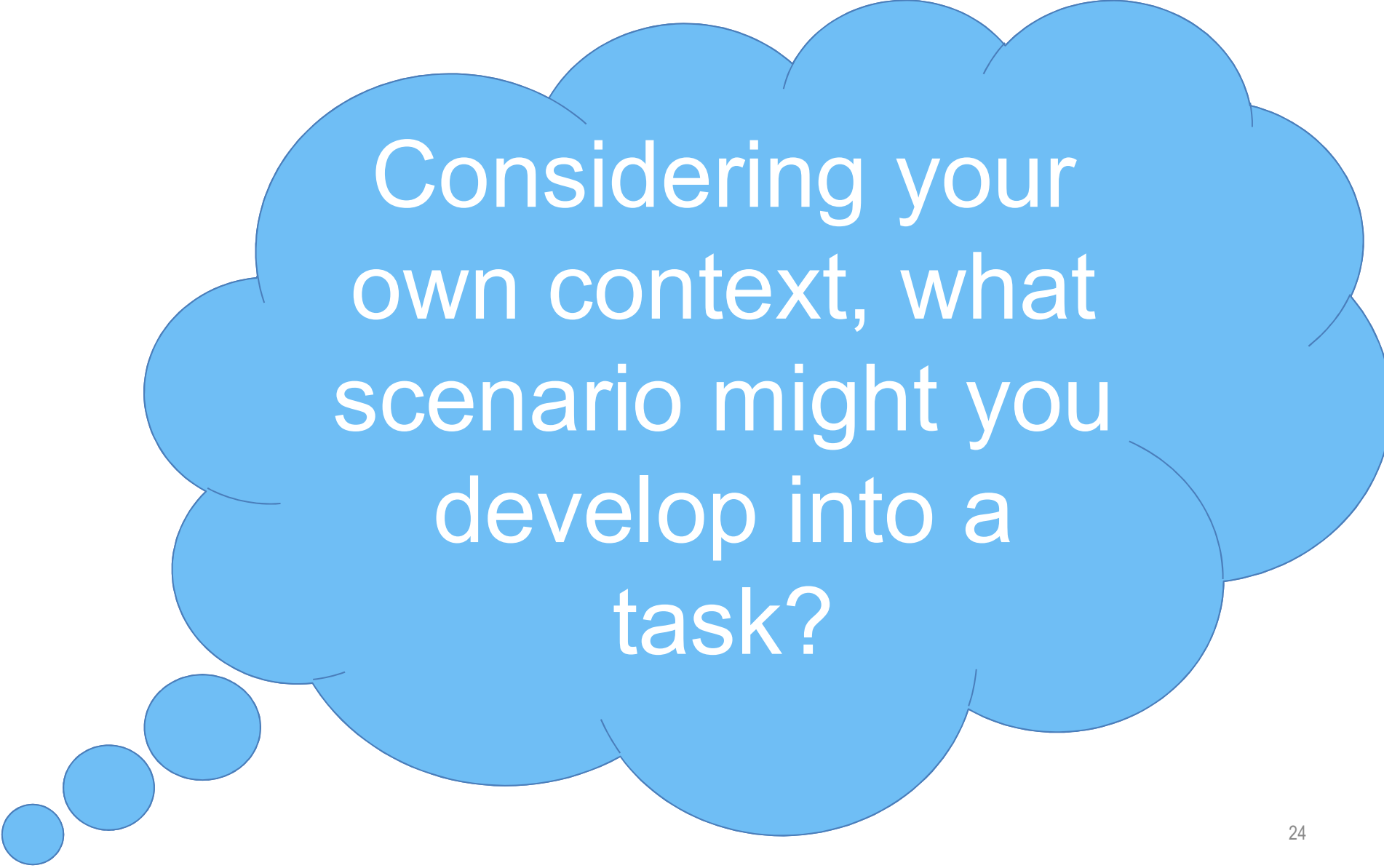
Activity A - Discussion



Choosing a Scenario for a Task

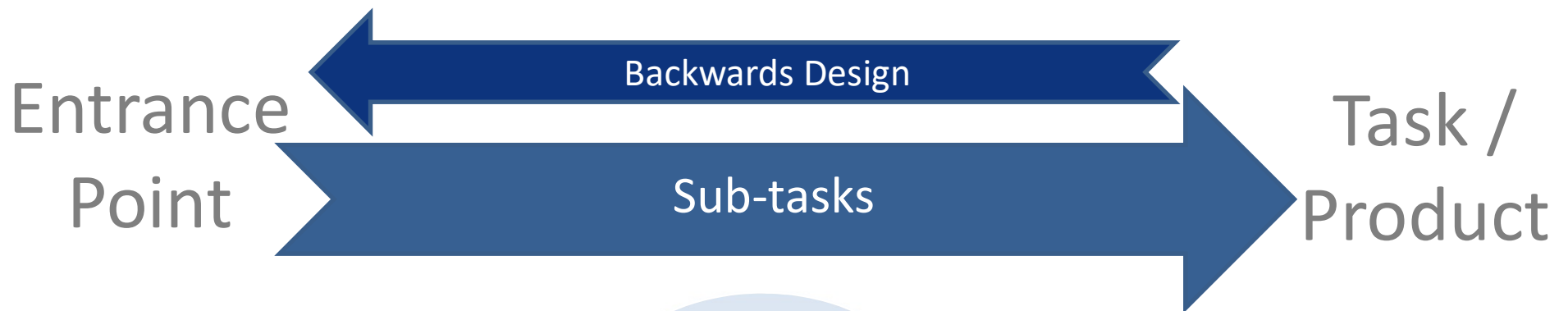
Theme	Scenario
Integrated Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing a local historical site on a travel website
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing a fundraising campaign to support a local charity
Environmental Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing a composting program
Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning a musical recital at a nursing home
Healthy Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosting a social event over lunch
Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing a personalized workout plan Planning a trip to the local farmer's market
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning a wellness expo Speaking to your doctor about mental health supports in the community
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inviting a knowledge keeper from a First Nations community to speak Ensuring community compliance with accessibility laws
Safe Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting emergency assistance after an accident Proposing speed bumps to slow down traffic in front of a local daycare
Financial Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a monthly budget on a fixed income
Mathematical Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ordering flooring and wallpaper for a room to be redecorated
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convincing a family member to purchase the latest smartphone
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critiquing a film online
Social Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing an evening out for friends visiting from out of town
Education and Career Life Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing your education plan with a counsellor Attending a job interview
Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a workplace health and safety display board and training

Hunter, D., Cousineau, D., Collins, G. and Hook, G. (2019). *Action-oriented Approach Handbook*. Ottawa: Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.

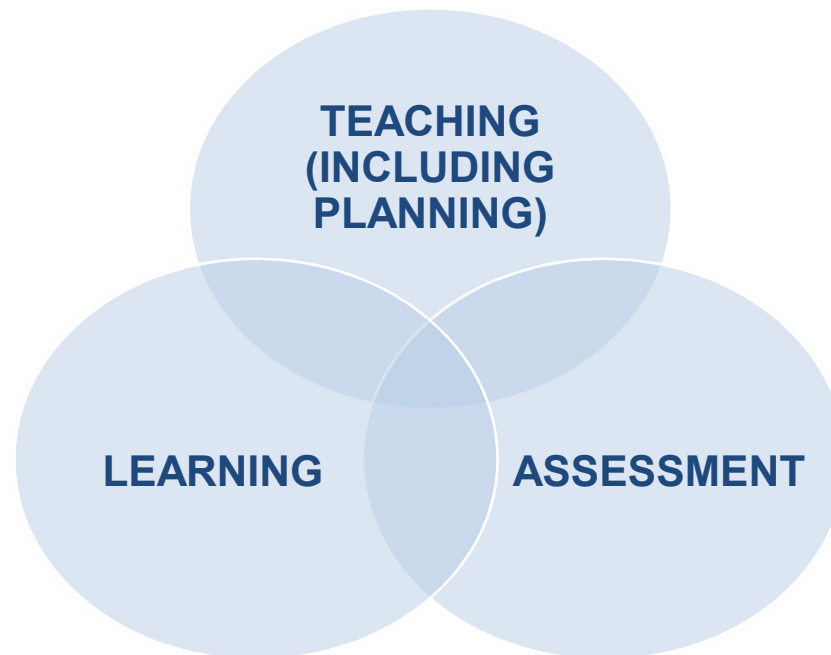


Considering your
own context, what
scenario might you
develop into a
task?

Planning an Action-oriented Pathway



Feedback
Feedforward
(Piccardo &
North, 2019)



Transparency
Metacognition
Scaffolding
Gradual release of
responsibility
Autonomy

Blank Scenario Planning Chart

Scenario:		
Domain:		Level:
Authentic Resources Used:	Expected Learning Outcomes (e.g., Overall Expectations):	Assessment Opportunities:
		For Learning: As Learning: Of Learning:
Action-Oriented Task		
Description:	Checklist:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Learners are "social agents" in an authentic social context <input type="checkbox"/> Action is purposeful with real-world applications <input type="checkbox"/> There is a clearly communicated goal to be accomplished that results in a product or outcome <input type="checkbox"/> Learning is supported by authentic, real-life texts and experiences <input type="checkbox"/> There are conditions and constraints that promote critical and creative thinking <input type="checkbox"/> Learners draw upon their existing and newly developed competences <input type="checkbox"/> Learners make choices and think and act strategically	
Descriptors:		
<i>Expressed through can-do statements</i>		
Language Activities and Strategies Needed to Complete the Task:		
Language Competences Needed to Complete the Task:		

Note: General Competences (i.e., declarative knowledge, skills and know-how, existential competence, and ability to learn) are always combined with language competences (i.e., linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic) to complete a task. Although there are not descriptor scales for general competences, they are an important component of language proficiency.

Sub-Tasks		
Description of Sub-Tasks to Build Identified Competences:	Language Activities Used:	Competences Stressed:

Hunter, D., Cousineau, D., Collins, G. and Hook, G. (2019). *Action-oriented Approach Handbook*. Ottawa: Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers.

Sub-Tasks

Description of Sub-Tasks to Build Identified Competences:

Sir John A. Macdonald: Class Discussion

After watching the video clip "[Should schools bearing Sir John A. Macdonald's name be changed?](#)"¹⁰⁹ the class discusses the controversy taking place across the country around schools bearing his name.

Language Activities Used:

Reception
Interaction

Competences Stressed:

Linguistic
Pragmatic

Talk of the Town: Inside/Outside Circle (annex 11)

Learners interact with others, discussing the school name, in a social setting.

Interaction
Mediation

Sociolinguistic
Linguistic

School Board Policy and Procedures (annex 5)

Learners review the renaming policy and procedures for the school board to better understand the process and to inform their arguments.

Reception

Pragmatic

Points of View: Café Conversations (annex 6)

Learners interact with others to hear the points of view of various stakeholders regarding the school name.

Interaction

Pragmatic

Planning My Arguments

Learners gather information and build their arguments for the final task performance.

Reception
Production

Linguistic
Pragmatic

How to Apply to Speak at a Board Meeting

Learners review the procedures for speaking at a board meeting and submit a written request.

Reception
Production

Linguistic
Sociolinguistic

A Board Meeting In Action

Learners attend or watch a video clip of a board meeting in action.

Reception

Pragmatic
Sociolinguistic

Creating a Slideshow Presentation

Learners gather skills to build an effective slideshow presentation.

Reception
Production

Pragmatic

Building My Presentation

Learners build their presentation for the final task.

Production

Linguistic
Sociolinguistic
Pragmatic

Gathering Support from the School Council

Learners deliver their presentation at the school council to gather local support.

Production
Mediation
Interaction

Linguistic
Sociolinguistic
Pragmatic

Activity B

ACTIVITY B – SKETCHING AN ACTION-ORIENTED TASK (GROUP WORK)

Instructions:

- Please share your name and your geographic location with your group.
- Select a person from the group who will record the group's work on Padlet.
- With your group, sketch out an action-oriented task for the B1 level.
- Begin by selecting the domain: personal, public, occupational, education.
- Consult the following documents to help with the assignment:
 - Guidelines for Creating an Action-oriented Task (found in the blue box below)
 - CEFR Companion Volume, Self-Assessment Grid, B1 (sent via email as a separate attachment)
- Post the sketch of your action-oriented task on Padlet

GUIDELINES FOR CREATING AN ACTION-ORIENTED TASK

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Piccardo, E., and Hunter, D. (2021, March 9). *Bringing the new CEFR Companion Volume to Life in the Classroom* [Google Slides]. CASLT.

Activity B – Padlet

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AoA CEFR Web Workshop - Activity B - Sketching an Action-oriented Task

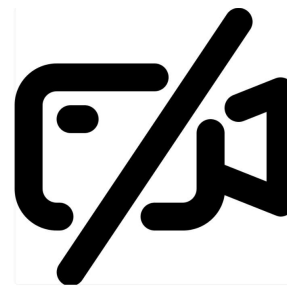
Scenario: Enter title here

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 Add comment

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Activity B - Discussion



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Synergies: Settlement, Integration and Language Learning (EN, FR)



Translate

Feedback

What are you lookin... 🔍

I'd Like To... ▾

Moving to Durham
Region

Living
Here

Work and
Study

Business in
Durham

Who We
Are



DURHAM
Immigration Portal

Exploring the Region of Durham
Through Task-based Learning

Living in English, **Discovering Durham**

- Module One – Living in Durham: Welcome to Durham
- Module Two – Working in Durham: Getting a Job in Durham
- Module Three – Learning in Durham: Going to School in Durham
- Module Four – Living in Durham: Getting Health Care in Durham
- Module Five – Settling in Durham: Eating Out in Durham
- Module Six – Settling in Durham: Emergency 911 in Durham

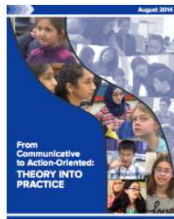
<https://www.durhamimmigration.ca/en/index.aspx>

<https://www.dce.ca/en/student-services/community-resources.aspx#Synergies-Settlement-Integration-and-Language-Learning>

From Communicative to Action-Oriented: Illuminating the Approches (EN, FR)

THEORY

PRACTICE



September 2014

**From Communicative to
Action-Oriented: Theory
into Practice**

DOWNLOAD



September 2014

**Editable Lesson
Planning Template**

DOWNLOAD



September 2014

**Interactive Lesson Plan:
Grade 3 French
Immersion**

VIEW



<https://transformingfsl.ca/en/resources/from-communicative-to-action-oriented-illuminating-the-approches/>

LINCDIRE



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Summary: The Action-oriented approach

- Backwards design of modules → **can-do aims/outcomes**
- **Acceptance of complexity**, with scaffolding as necessary
- Authenticity/credibility of a scenario for a **task/project**; **autonomy** to research different source materials
- A **unifying task** – several phases → **(co-)production** of an artefact → a reflection phase
- A **pluri-/ intercultural** focus ; integration of **languages**
- **Agency** to make decisions; **co-construction of meaning** through mediation of concepts and/or communication
- Feedforward & feedback → **self-efficacy** → **awareness**
- **(Self-)assessment** of the outcomes

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Thank you!
Merci !