

4 Planning and teaching with the CEFR

Section 1: Essentials

4.1.1 The CEFR approach

The CEFR aims to be neutral as regards methodologies; it is intended to be ‘comprehensive’ in that it should be possible to situate any style of teaching within the conceptual framework provided. CEFR Section 6.4 briefly discusses teaching/learning approaches and options, but is non-prescriptive. The CEFR does not suggest a harmonisation of objectives; it provides a mechanism to assist a systematic approach to the selection and communication of them.

However, no system of description can be fully neutral. The approach taken, explained in CEFR Chapter 2, is an *action-oriented approach*. This propagates language learning for a social purpose, not as an intellectual pursuit. Language is seen as communication, as collaboration. This view suggests that language and skills should be taught because they are relevant to the needs of the learners. We don’t learn ‘a language’, we learn the language and skills necessary for what we need or want to *do* in the language. Essentially the CEFR proposes an application to the so-called ‘general’ language learner of the approach long associated with Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP). The fundamental issue, as discussed in Section 2.1.3, is *needs analysis*. What do the learners most need to be able to do? How long have they got for this process? What should therefore be focused on? Clearly the answers for a B2 English curriculum for (a) Maths teachers, (b) lower secondary school pupils, (c) future undergraduates at an English-speaking university or (d) young professionals will be substantially different. The design of a test appropriate to each of the four groups would be different as well.

The CEFR proposes that the learner, their needs and experiences, their interests and ambitions, should be put at the centre of the planning process. This is not at all incompatible with the approach proposed in the ‘Teaching unplugged’ movement, which suggests abandoning course books and seeing what the learners actually want and need to do (Meddings and Thornbury 2009). However, in most educational situations, many teachers may not have the competences and experience necessary for the virtuoso improvisation implied by such an approach – or the freedom and confidence to try it.

Therefore needs analysis is likely to continue to occur at two levels: at the level of the institution with the analysis of the main needs profiles as discussed in Section 2.1.3, with provision of appropriate curricula and resources, and at the level of the class with diagnosis of the particular needs of the learners concerned. The key to a CEFR-based approach in practice is that the needs analysis operating at a class level is based upon what learners need to *do in the language* – rather than just on what we view as their linguistic ‘gaps’. Unfortunately this seldom happens: learning tends to be seen in linguistic terms. Very many people operate a deficit model of needs analysis based only on learners’ grammatical knowledge. Mistakes get noticed and inform the future teaching programme. This is well and good. However, needs analysis should also determine the type of activity that occurs in the classroom. Some of that at least should reflect relevant real world activity for the group concerned. What sort of tasks will these students need to perform with the language after the course and therefore what kinds of tasks should we be using in the classroom?

But the fact that the CEFR promotes needs analysis in terms of *tasks* and provides ‘Can Do’ descriptors to assist in that process does not mean that the CEFR promotes a functional approach or a task-based approach. After all, fully a third of the illustrative scales concern aspects of learner competences. There are six descriptor scales just on aspects of linguistic competence. The key to effective CEFR-based planning and teaching is the combination of top-down and bottom-up thinking. Good planning starts top-down from target real world tasks and the communicative language activities (cf. CEFR Chapter 4) that they imply, and analyses the competences needed – linguistic, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, intercultural (see CEFR Chapter 5). Once the competences have been identified, these may be linked by bottom-up thinking to suitable pedagogic activities to practise them. Some of these pedagogic activities will link up to the real world tasks, simulating them; others will not. This approach can be helpful in relating learning objectives to real world needs in a framework for action-oriented learning. At the top of the process are so-called general objectives: global curriculum aims for the level concerned, summarising what the learners will be able to do. These are elaborated into specific objectives for each level, which can be used to orient the process of teaching and learning, as described in the rest of this section.

4.1.2 Transparency and coherence

‘Can Do’ descriptors (CEFR Chapter 4) can be exploited for ‘signposting’ in curriculum aims, syllabuses, cross-referenced resources lists, weekly/monthly plans, classroom displays, lesson aims, evaluation checklists, report cards, personal profiles, certificates etc. Within a class, such signposting helps to set priorities, explain syllabus choice and lesson relevance, select appropriate

communicative tasks and assess progress. In a school, descriptors facilitate discussion between teachers, organisation of materials, articulation of programmes, communication with other departments or institutions, and reporting results to parents and other stakeholders. In practical terms, checklists of ‘Can Do’ descriptors for a level are very useful for the following purposes:

- as source material in the design of a syllabus
- to analyse the needs of a group or person and set priorities
- to list objectives, explain priorities and invite discussion
- to source materials
- to set priorities for linguistic content
- to help learners to understand why they are learning certain things
- to select appropriate communicative tasks
- to recommend specific self-study activities
- to discuss progress with individual learners
- to refocus learners’ attention and motivation halfway through a course
- to report ongoing progress to parents
- to decide if the class as a whole or a single individual has achieved the level concerned
- to document achievement at the end of a course.

‘Can Do’ descriptors are thus primarily a communication tool that allows learners to be treated as partners in the learning and teaching process. In a Greek secondary school that is an EAQUALS member (Doukas School, Athens), learners and teachers independently prioritise the list of ‘Can Do’ descriptors for the level at the very start of the course. The teacher uses this activity to explain to the learners the rationale behind his/her planning and to fine tune the course (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services 2008: 25). A ‘Can Do’ approach, well signposted to learners, can also help them to realise that language learning is a process of accumulating practical communicative competences, not just ticking off items of grammar. As Anthony Krupa, the author of one of the EAQUALS case studies on the implementation of a CEFR curriculum at the British Institute of Seville, puts it:

Over the years an attempt was made to expand the syllabus checklist to include information on functions, lexical areas and themes, and a list of reading, writing and listening skills and formats to be dealt with. However, the essential problem with this approach to syllabus design is that it reinforces the tendency of teachers, students (and their parents) to see language learning as an essentially linear process consisting of ‘doing’ large language items, such as ‘the present perfect’, ‘conditional sentences’, etc., which can then be ‘ticked off’. There is little encouragement to make genuine communication the focus of teaching and learning, and a strong emphasis on getting students through exams based on the

typical ‘controlled practice’ type of grammatical exercise. It was to begin to educate these three groups of people away from this way of looking at language learning that we decided to adopt a ‘Can Do’ approach (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services 2008:26).

As will be discussed in Chapter 5, descriptors can also be useful to determine what tasks could be used for performance assessments (spoken, written, integrated skills) and of course to formulate the assessment criteria used for grading performance in such assessments. In addition, communicating the assessment criteria for different aspects of quality (CEFR Chapter 5) can help learners to know what to focus on and facilitates tutorials, peer assessment and self-assessment. Self-directed learning (= US self-regulated learning) can only be effective if you know roughly where you are – from reasonably accurate self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses. This self-assessment will be more accurate if learners are trained to reflect on their progress with the help of descriptors.

However, there is a reason why *transparency* is linked to *coherence*. Descriptors need to be fully integrated into the system, as experience with the ELP shows. The rather heavy format of the official Portfolios has hindered their widespread adoption, but the fundamental reason why Portfolios (and hence descriptors) tend not to play the central role that they might in orientating learning is that they tend to get regarded as an unwelcome add-on. People tend not to take too kindly to ‘meta-activities’ that take time away from core teaching. In a study for the Council of Europe, Michael Fleming and David Little documented the resulting fact that although well over 100 versions of the Portfolio have been developed, implementation is often problematic especially when it must be accommodated alongside a text book.

The same EAQUALS school, the British Institute of Seville, documents this very experience:

Early attempts to introduce the European Language Passport and Portfolio wholesale without first introducing and working with the ‘Can Do’ concept were not a success as it was clear that both students and teachers needed to see a clear link between the Passport and Portfolio’s contents and what they were doing in class on a weekly basis. Hence, in order to get the first of the three groups (the teachers) on board, we decided to describe the contents of the course (i.e. essentially, of the course book) in terms of ‘Can Dos’ written by us but based on the style and format of the “official” Portfolio ‘Can Dos’ (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services 2008:26).

In other words the school developed ‘micro Can Dos’ for the course book activities that linked them to the more holistic ‘official’ ‘Can Dos’ used to

report progress. The point is returned to in more detail later. First, however, we must turn to the issue of aligning a curriculum to the CEFR.

4.1.3 Aligning a curriculum to the CEFR

The main disadvantage of pre-CEFR curricula is that, in the words of some of those EAQUALS schools who have written up case studies on their implementation of a CEFR curriculum, they do not give teachers or learners a clear idea of practical course aims, or a way of monitoring the achievement of them. In addition, assessment was a very time-consuming process for teachers that tended to overvalue a mark in a final test over more holistic forms of evaluation. The main methodological implications of the CEFR all concern curriculum planning:

- conducting a global needs analysis for the learner population concerned in order to select objectives (communicative and linguistic) related to real world tasks the learners are going to have to perform in the language
- presenting global communicative objectives in a curriculum statement in terms of what learners will be able to do in the language
- specifying these communicative and linguistic objectives in syllabuses for different levels, with reference to materials available
- sequencing these objectives into schemes of work for covering short, specific periods of time
- analysing the specific needs and interests of a particular group of learners in determining the final programme with them
- communicating lesson, module and level objectives to learners
- involving learners in the monitoring of their achievement.

However, in relating a curriculum to the CEFR, the most important point is not to throw away what already exists. What exists may have been well developed to suit the needs of learners in the context. The Council of Europe's curriculum development guide (Beacco et al 2010) advises against a sharp break with the existing curriculum, suggesting a little-by-little approach rather than an all-or-nothing bang. A wide 'innovation gap' induces failure in very many cases. The place to start a CEFR curriculum reform is not the CEFR itself but the educational philosophy and pedagogic culture of the institution. This is why the CEFR encourages reflection about that philosophy, and the way that it is implemented in practice, through 'reflection boxes' at the end of each section. These are always formulated as 'Users may wish to consider' followed by bullet points.

4.1.3.1 Curriculum statement

EAQUALS advice is to first produce a curriculum statement on the basis of brainstorming of key words and concepts that the staffroom associates with the school and aspects that differentiate it from other schools. This statement can then be refined in discussion in order to ensure that it provides a description of the learning environment offered. Observation of classes can be helpful in addition to such discussion in order to capture the spirit of the institution in practice.

4.1.3.2 Communicative aims

The second section of a curriculum document should be a global summary of communicative aims for each CEFR level, separate from any more detailed instruments that are discussed below. These curriculum aims should be a summary of the result of a needs analysis. As mentioned in Section 4.1.1, needs analysis should be undertaken at the level of the institution as well as at the level of the class with the diagnosis of the particular needs of the individual learners. The aim of the needs analysis at an institutional level is to establish whether learners share the same needs profile (see Figure 2.1 in Section 2.1.3) and/or identify main types of learners, in order to be able to ensure the provision of appropriate curricula and resources. A checklist of descriptors is the simplest and most effective form of such a needs analysis. A large-scale survey of this type was undertaken in Eurocentres prior to the development of the Eurocentres Scale of Language Proficiency. Nowadays with SurveyMonkey this is simple to organise and analyse. A section asking for demographic information at the beginning can later be exploited to distinguish between different groups. Even simpler, the same survey can be duplicated, with different groups being given different links. Then the data for different groups is separate and can be easily contrasted. If it is necessary to conduct a more sophisticated analysis for corporate clients and establish both the current level and the target level in different areas in what is called a ‘language audit’, then the following procedure could be used. In the survey, present two identical subscales for each area (showing just a relevant range of levels) and ask the respondent to mark the level they need to be on the first subscale, and the level they think they are currently on the second. In SurveyMonkey this can easily be set up as two successive multiple-choice questions, with the descriptors for the different levels in that area being the ‘options’ and the stem being a header question like (for the first of the pair): ‘Formal Meetings: Please select the required level of competence from the options below.’

EAQUALS experience suggests that descriptors are best sourced from both the CEFR summary scales (CEFR Tables 1, 2 and 3) and the illustrative descriptor scales in CEFR Chapters 4 and 5, validated portfolios and other sources referenced to in Section 3.1.3. In this process we should feel

free to reorganise the CEFR scale categories; they are intended to be colated as appropriate. We should also feel free to adapt the CEFR illustrative descriptors to the particular context considered. Advice on the latter is given in Section 4.2.3. The outcome of the needs analysis process should include a global summary of curriculum aims for each level for each type of course, in addition to the more detailed documents used for planning that are discussed in the next section. An example for a B2 global summary produced by Frank Heyworth, which stays very close to the CEFR categories and illustrative descriptors, is given in the EAQUALS CEFR Curriculum Guide (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services 2007):

B2

Global scale: Can understand the main ideas of a 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 possibly 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.

Salient characteristics: At this level effective argument is possible, and speakers can account for and sustain opinions in discussion, explain viewpoints, advantages and disadvantages. Users can hold their own in social discourse, with a degree of fluency enough for regular interaction with native speakers, and can adjust to changes of direction, style and emphasis.

General linguistic range: Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints and develop arguments without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.

B2+ Can express him/herself clearly and without much sign of having to restrict what he/she wants to say.

Grammatical accuracy: Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding.

B2+ Good grammatical control; occasional 'slips' or nonsystematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect.

Vocabulary range: Has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to his/her field and most general topics. Can vary formulation to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution.

Is able to:

Understand most of what is said, even in a noisy environment; lectures in own field, radio and TV documentaries, live interviews, talk shows, plays, most films, the main ideas even of complex presentations.

Read news articles and reports, detailed text in own field, specialised articles with the help of a dictionary, letters on professional or academic topics, technical manuals, reviews and criticisms of films or plays.

Express detailed factual information, degrees of emotion, opinions, defending points of view in discussions and reacting to others; give detailed descriptions on a wide range of topics; sustain a reasoned argument; express a viewpoint, talk about consequences, advantages and disadvantages.

Write clear and detailed texts, summaries of articles, expository essays, short book or film reviews, personal letters explaining complex ideas and feelings.

Use strategies to correct slips and errors, to gain time with standard phrases (“That’s a difficult question to answer”), to be aware of typical mistakes and avoid them.

The third section of a curriculum statement might involve a detailed definition of the methodological approach and the rationale behind it. CEFR Chapter 6 (*Language learning and teaching*), CEFR Chapter 7 (*Tasks and their role in language teaching*) and CEFR Chapter 8 (*Linguistic diversification and the curriculum*) may be useful at this point, as may the Council of Europe’s newer guide for intercultural and plurilingual education (Beacco et al 2010). Since the options opened up by the CEFR are vast, and because curriculum reform is almost always carried out under time pressure, the Council of Europe’s CEFR Guide for Users suggests strict prioritisation and limited aims:

Users of the Framework might begin by reconsidering the categories in which their present document is written. In addition they may wish to consider a limited number of questions rather than asking them all. To begin with, the following selection of questions is suggested:

- Does it make sense to include the context of language use in the curriculum?
 - Is it appropriate to make the finer distinctions made in the Framework and distinguish for instance between oral interaction and oral production or to include mediation?
 - Are the themes as mentioned in documents such as *Threshold Level* relevant for the curriculum to be drafted?
 - Should text-types be mentioned?
 - Should tasks be specified?
 - What is the role of strategies and should they be specified?
- (Council of Europe 2002:156)

4.1.3.3 Planning documents

Once the curriculum is complete, the next step is the development of planning documents for implementing it. EAQUALS distinguishes three levels:

- *The syllabus*: a means of specifying appropriate course content, aims and learning outcomes for teachers and students, statements of content to be covered in a certain period of time, and specification of what language knowledge and skills will be covered at what level.
- *Schemes of work*: a means of describing in more detail the learning–teaching content within the overall syllabus for a specific period of time, e.g. a week or month.
- *Lesson plans*: the content and activities of a single lesson.

In most contexts the syllabus is closely related to the course book. Course books are useful because they are a good way of operationalising an approach, saving preparation time and providing reference material for learners. If course books are used, one important function of the syllabus in practice is to free the experienced teacher from the requirement of having to follow the book precisely. As they acquire confidence, teachers can be encouraged to move away from the course book when appropriate, whilst still keeping in mind the main objectives. In all contexts the main function of the syllabus is to ensure that other aspects are covered (e.g. strategy training, self-assessment, intercultural competence) if the institution considers them important and they are not covered by the course book.

In the process of curriculum reform, the value of the CEFR and its ‘Can Do’ descriptors is (a) to give rigour and a real world orientation to the elaboration of communicative objectives, and (b) to require a justification for the teaching of specific grammatical content beyond the mere fact that it had traditionally been taught at the level concerned. Although all course books and syllabuses claim to be communicative, most give the impression that the approach followed is still the 1980s approach of supplementary strands (skills, functions) snaking around a formal core of grammar. In this approach grammar is garlanded with functions that nowadays might be relabelled as ‘Can Do’ descriptors.

However, in order to guide syllabus development the CEFR/Portfolio descriptors need to be adapted to the context concerned. This usually means simplification and possibly tweaking in a specific direction (for example for lower secondary school, for preuniversity contexts) or it may mean interpreting and unpacking a more global CEFR descriptor in order to list the tasks implied by it. Table 4.1 shows examples of both forms of elaboration, taken from the bank of CEFR/Portfolio descriptors on the Council of Europe’s website.

In the first example, for A1, the editing is purely simplification and stays very close to the original. In the second, the CEFR descriptor is interpolated into tasks that are implied, but not stated. Both processes are typical of the translation of CEFR descriptors into syllabus aims. In this process, the

Table 4.1 Elaboration and simplification of CEFR descriptors in Portfolios

CEFR	Portfolios
A1	<p data-bbox="204 270 487 392">Can write numbers and dates, own name, nationality, address, age, date of birth or arrival in the country, etc. such as on a hotel registration form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can understand a questionnaire (entry permit form, hotel registration form) well enough to give the most important information about myself (name, surname, date of birth, nationality). [1.2000CH] ● I can fill in a questionnaire with my personal details (job, age, address, hobbies). [1.2000CH] ● I can fill in a form that concerns me, for example at hotel reception. [5.2000FR] ● I can fill in a simple form or questionnaire with my personal details (e.g., date of birth, address, nationality). [10.2001IE/Auth] ● I can fill in a form (my name, address, age). [7.2001CZ/1115] ● In simple situations and circumstances that are familiar to me I can fill out a form with my name, date of birth, nationality etc. [20.2001POR] ● I can fill in a form with my name, my nationality, my age and my address. [44.2003FR/Coll.] ● I can fill in basic personal details in forms. [ECML/BERGEN]
A2+	<p data-bbox="204 829 487 899">Can deal with common aspects of everyday living such as travel, lodgings, eating and shopping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can get simple practical information (e.g., asking for directions, booking accommodation, going to the doctor). [10.2001IE/Auth]. ● I can handle most typical tourist situations, e.g. buying, eating out and checking travel times. [ECML/BERGEN]

CEFR/Portfolio descriptors can be broken down into constituent elements, as shown in Table 4.2.

This is translated from a CEFR guideline produced by Ángeles Ortega for the Spanish national language schools for adults, Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas (EOI). The left-hand column shows the global, generic CEFR descriptor and in the right-hand column this is elaborated into a long – but still open-ended – list of tasks implied by it. These more specific, atomistic descriptors could be used for demonstrating progress to learners. The process of ‘unzipping’ CEFR/Portfolio descriptors into ‘micro-descriptors’ in this way can also be very useful in developing variants of CEFR descriptors, particularly for young learners. As several writers have pointed out, it is not just at the lower levels that this process of ‘unzipping’ is to be recommended. Whereas many of the CEFR/Portfolio descriptors at lower levels are already relatively micro, describing one concrete task or function, from B1 they start to become more holistic with more focus on qualitative aspects. Many people prefer to unpack the more holistic, summary descriptors at the B and C levels into a

Table 4.2 Unzipping CEFR/Portfolio descriptors into micro-descriptors (Ortega 2009:98; translated by the author)

CEFR/Portfolio	Micro-descriptors
A1 Can interact in a simple way, asking and answering simple questions, initiating and responding to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can say his or her name ● Can spell his or her name ● Can ask somebody their name ● Can say where he or she lives ● Can ask somebody where they live ● Can say how he or she feels ● Can ask somebody how they feel ● Can introduce himself or herself ● Can introduce someone to others ● Can introduce someone to others and say what relationship he or she has with them (e.g. “This is my brother Juan”; “Juan, my brother”) ● Can greet somebody he or she knows ● Can greet someone he or she does not know ● Can answer the telephone ● Can take leave, saying goodbye ● Can say how old he or she is ● Can ask how old somebody is ● Can say what he or she does / what his or her profession is ● Can ask others what they do / what their profession is ● Can say thank you ● Can say sorry ● ...

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series of micro-descriptors. David Little reports that this has been done for Portfolios produced in Ireland. Indeed, many schools do not make a distinction between descriptors and functions: the descriptors or micro-descriptors are supplemented by other functions in a list that is then entitled ‘communicative objectives’. At this point it would be useful to consult the reference works for language content at different levels that were discussed in Section 3.2.4. Here Green’s cumulative overview of functional progression across the levels (Green 2012:Appendix B) can be particularly useful, as can the graphic overview in the Core Inventory (North et al 2010:38) that takes a more selective approach, showing only those functions more salient at each level.

All the EAQUALS schools that have reported curriculum case studies have arrived at a similar format for the syllabus objectives for each level. Rather than just being a Portfolio-style list of ‘Can Dos’, these tend to have two sections: (a) communicative objectives (= ‘Can Do’ descriptors, often supplemented by functional content from older syllabuses) and (b) the language resources necessary to complete those real world tasks successfully

(= grammar, vocabulary). Ela Jarosz describes how Bell Krakow came to this decision:

Bell Krakow teachers understood the need for creating a uniform system of assessment and certification in Europe. They also appreciated the focus on practical abilities emphasised by 'Can Do' statements. They did not understand, however, why the system of syllabi with concrete linguistic objectives, the system that worked well, should be substituted by the system of 'Can Do' descriptors which seemed to be very general and elusive, especially in the context of the existing requirements set by the Polish Ministry of Education.

The teachers were greatly relieved to see that the intention of Bell Krakow was not to get rid of the 'old' syllabi system and replace it with CEFR levels and descriptors but to supplement and support the existing syllabi and assessment procedures with the new approach which facilitated the learning process (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services 2008:43).

Whilst the approaches to defining the objectives appear similar, institutions differ in the extent to which they prescribe detail. Some, like Eurocentres, use checklists of objectives to give a global framework, not necessarily cross-referenced to any particular sequencing or to specific resources. Others, like the British School of Seville, have sequenced objectives that are closely cross-referenced to the course book concerned.

Within EAQUALS, there is a tendency for schools like the British Institute of Seville that work with the same group of learners for a few hours a week over an extended period (extensive 'foreign language' environment) to have more strictly sequenced, detailed approaches with prescribed materials and progress tests. By contrast, schools working with a changing full-time clientele (intensive 'immersion' environment), like Eurocentres, tend to have a more global, holistic approach. This difference is not immediately apparent from looking at the summaries of objectives. In the intensive context, these summaries may themselves constitute 'the syllabus', with schemes of work allocated an advisory rather than prescriptive function, whereas in the extensive context the level summaries are often accompanied by *very* detailed schemes of work for a sequence of specific lessons that are followed far more closely and cross-referenced to prescribed materials.

Cross-referencing is the key issue: should materials be cross-referenced only to the more global CEFR/Portfolio descriptors in order to orientate the selection of tasks and monitor coverage and progress? Or are more 'micro' descriptors as shown in Table 4.2 cross-referenced to materials so that we can refer to 'Can Do' descriptors at a lesson level? Opinions differ. The British Institute of Seville states:

Other institutions seem to have shied away from this approach of describing everything that is included in the course in terms of a 'Can

Do', but we believe it does have certain advantages despite the amount of work involved. The main advantage is the direct link, easily seen by both teachers and students, between the work covered and the relevant 'Can Do'. Work on language (structures and lexis) is thus seen as developing the tools with which to achieve certain 'Can Dos' rather than as an end in itself, and teachers and students' mindsets begin to change. It is this direct link that justifies the time spent on the project (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services 2008:27).

Thus in the British Institute of Seville, every activity in every lesson, including linguistic exercises, has a very specific, locally developed micro 'Can Do' descriptor, which can be related to one or more of the more global CEFR 'Can Do' descriptors. Eurocentres, on the other hand, adopts a more holistic approach. The French Eurocentres uses a common classification system to cross-reference everything to the objectives (communicative and linguistic). The Eurocentres English schools use course books plus supplementary materials. Resource finders help teachers locate materials for different skills by cross-referencing materials to both communicative objectives, drawn from 'Can Do' descriptors and linguistic objectives derived from them. The significant point is that here, as with the British Institute of Seville approach, an activity will very often relate to several 'Can Do' descriptors. Teachers do not teach 'Can Dos' one after another in linear fashion.

To summarise, the key stages of the curriculum design process discussed above can be summarised in Figure 4.1. The EAQUALS Guide suggests concluding the first edition of a curriculum reform by reviewing the curriculum statement, the description of methods and the syllabus contents again. The aim of the review is to double-check that the documents apply an

Figure 4.1 Key stages of the curriculum design process

A. The school's educational philosophy: What does this school believe about learning a language?



B. Objectives: What should students be able to do, according to the results of our needs analysis (CEFR 'Can Do' statements)? What do they need to know at any given level in order to do it? How does this relate to exams used in the school?



C. Methods, techniques: How is this learning to be achieved? What methods and techniques should teachers use in their classrooms?



D. Syllabus; schemes of work; progress: What language and micro-skills will be learned? How long is a level likely to take? How are specific periods of teaching (week, month, term) planned? How are lessons planned? How are learners informed about planning?



E. Assessment: pre/during/post: How are learners placed in classes? How and at what intervals is progress assessed? How is assessment used to guide ongoing teaching/learning processes? What assessment is there at the end of the course? What form of certification is given?

action-oriented approach which is compatible with the stated general principles of learning, teaching and assessment.