



Report on the colloquium

Aligning language education with the CEFR

Hosted by CRELLA, University of Bedfordshire

29 September 2023

Compiled by

David Little

Executive summary

The colloquium was conceived as a staging post between the 2020 CEFR conference “Towards a Roadmap for Future Research and Development” and a two-day international conference to be hosted in October 2024 by Blanquerna-Universitat Ramon LLull, Barcelona.

The colloquium attracted 43 in-person and 259 online registrations. Attendance in person was 41 and online approximately 180.

The programme was divided into six sessions as follows:

1. *Welcome and opening words*

Neus Figueras, convenor of the Alignment Handbook Steering Group

Sarah Breslin, Executive Director of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz and Head of Language Policy at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg

2. *Introduction – the Comprehensive Learning System*

Barry O’Sullivan, British Council

3. *From handbook to hands-on: CEFR curriculum alignment in Ireland and Türkiye*

Thom Kiddle, Norwich Institute for Language Education

Discussant

Barry O’Sullivan

4. *Aligning course books with the CEFR: Does what it says on the cover?*

Glyn Jones, freelance consultant

Discussant

Lynda Taylor, UKALTA

5. *Aligning assessment with the CEFR*

Revision and CEFR linking of the National English Adaptive Test in Uruguay

Chihiro Inoue, CRELLA, University of Bedfordshire

CEFR for classroom assessment in tertiary education

Anna Soltyska, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Discussant

Nick Saville, ALTE

6. *Panel discussion*

David Little (rapporteur)

Members of the Alignment Handbook Steering Group: Neus Figueras, Barry O’Sullivan, Lynda Taylor, Nick Saville

1. Welcome and opening words

Neus Figueras, convenor of the Alignment Handbook Steering Group

On behalf of the Alignment Handbook Steering Group, Neus Figueras welcomed in-person and online participants, noting that altogether there had been more than 250 registrations from around the world. The colloquium was a follow-up to the February 2020 conference hosted by the British Council, “The CEFR: Towards a Road Map for Future Research and Development”, which had yielded two outcomes: the book *Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference and its Companion Volume* (edited by David Little and Neus Figueras, Multilingual Matters, 2022) and the handbook *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR* (published online by EALTA, UKALTA, the British Council and ALTE, 2022). The purpose of the colloquium was to explore developments since 2020 and consider some of the challenges that must be met when aligning language education with the CEFR; it was conceived as part of the preparation for a two-day European conference planned for the autumn of 2024. Neus Figueras thanked the speakers for agreeing to contribute to the colloquium; EALTA, UKALTA, the British Council and ALTE for their financial support; and Tony Green and his colleagues at CRELLA for agreeing to host the colloquium.

Sarah Breslin, Executive Director of the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz and Head of Language Policy at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (by video)

Sarah Breslin began her pre-recorded message by expressing her regret that she was unable to attend the colloquium. She had also missed the 2020 CEFR conference “Towards a Road Map for Future Research and Development”, though she had learnt a great deal from the resulting publication, *Reflecting on the CEFR and its Companion Volume*. She noted that the second outcome of the 2020 conference, the handbook *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR*, is being used in the ECML’s RELANG Training and Consultancy, which relates language curricula, tests and exams to the CEFR and its Companion Volume. RELANG is now in its tenth year, and examples of its impact are available on the [ECML’s website](#). The new ECML programme “Languages at the Heart of Democracy” (2024–2027) may include further projects that make use of the handbook.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1, on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture, was approved by the Council of Europe’s highest decision-making body, the Committee of Ministers, in February 2022. Comprehensive and visionary, the Recommendation reaffirms the Council of Europe’s commitment to quality language education, and the work reported on in this colloquium is making an important contribution to its implementation.

Sarah Breslin concluded by thanking the contributors to the colloquium for their commitment and dedication, not only to the overarching vision of quality language education as promoted by the Council of Europe but also to the sheer hard work required to find appropriate ways of realizing the vision in practice. This is a matter of developing contextualized responses to different learner needs in specific learning environments, promoting and facilitating the use of the CEFR and its Companion Volume, and feeding into the virtuous cycle of research informing practice and practice informing research. It is very encouraging to know that EALTA, the British Council, UKALTA and ALTE are committed to cross-institutional cooperation in developing and implementing the Alignment Handbook: together we are much stronger.

2. Introduction

The Comprehensive Learning System

Barry O’Sullivan, British Council

Figure 1 presents the Comprehensive Learning System (CLS), in which curriculum, delivery and assessment are fully aligned with one another. The circle at the centre of the triangle represents the standards that bind the system together. When defining standards we take account of the full complexity of the context of use that the CLS aims to serve, drawing on the CEFR as a key reference document but recognizing that differences in context give rise to differences in standards. At the centre of the context of use is the individual learner and test-taker, and in designing our CLS we seek to operationalize the principles captured in the acronym JEDI: justice, equality, diversity and inclusion. The CLS should deal justly with every individual who enters it; everyone should be treated equally; the system should take account of all kinds of diversity; and it should be capable of including everyone. These are fundamental concerns in the work we are talking about today. The Handbook explains how we make a link between our standards and whatever we are doing. Its fairly traditional structure derives from the practice of aligning language tests with the CEFR, which comprises five steps: familiarization, specification, standardization, standard-setting and validation. The first three steps are likely to be the same whatever component of the CLS we are concerned with, but standardization and validation are likely to vary across curriculum, delivery and assessment.

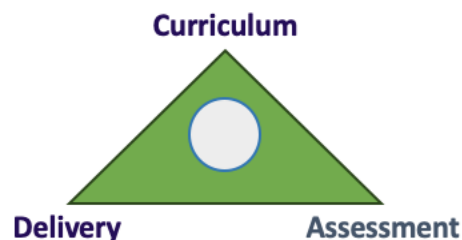


Figure 1 The Comprehensive Learning System

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3. Curriculum

From handbook to hands-on: CEFR curriculum alignment in Ireland and Türkiye

Thom Kiddle, Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE)

The CEFR and curriculum

NILE is concerned with teacher training and mentoring in a Comprehensive Learning System that seeks to achieve interconnection between curriculum and syllabus design, materials design and development, and assessment design and delivery (Figure 2). In doing so, it recognizes that each teacher has her own version of the curriculum and each learner responds to the teacher in his or her own way. Alignment with the CEFR is seen as a journey that starts from where teachers are, not from where we want them to be.

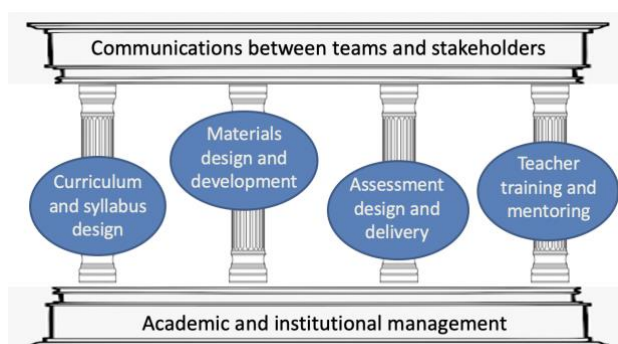


Figure 2 Teacher training and mentoring in a Comprehensive Learning System

The CEFR in a historical context

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949. In the 1970s it led the way in promoting the idea of notional-functional syllabuses, developing *The Threshold Level* and laying the foundations of communicative language teaching. Its goals were to preserve and encourage citizens to value Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity and to facilitate international communication and exchange. In 1991 it decided to develop the CEFR to provide a basis for mutual recognition of qualifications and to facilitate discussion of learning objectives and achievement standards. Ten years later, in 2001, the CEFR was published in English and French. This was followed in 2009 by the Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR. The first draft of the CEFR Companion Volume was published in 2018 and a revised version in 2020. Two years later *Aligning Language Education with the CEFR: A Handbook* was published.

The CEFR – key concepts for alignment: foundations

The CEFR (2001) summarizes its description of proficiency in terms of language use as follows:

Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under various **constraints** to engage in **language activities** involving **language processes** to produce and/or receive **texts** in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those **strategies** which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences. (CEFR 2001, Section 2.1; CEFR CV 2020, p. 32)

Unless all participants buy into this model, it's difficult to embark on an alignment journey.

The key concepts on which alignment draws fall into three categories:

1. Structure: communicative language competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic); communicative language activities (reception, production, interaction, mediation); and communicative language strategies (receptive, productive, interactive, mediational) (CEFR CV, p. 32; from Piccardo et al. 2011).
2. The CEFR proficiency levels, avoiding the misconception that the levels are a series of same-size stepping stones.
3. The modes of communication brought together in the CEFR CV's self-assessment grid (Alignment Handbook, p. 24): oral comprehension, reading comprehension, oral production, written production, oral interaction, written and online interaction, mediating a text, mediating concepts, mediating communication.

Context is king

Alignment project 1: Ireland

This project involved private language schools and English language departments in higher education; the participants were school owners, directors of studies and academic managers. Part of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's support for the introduction of the new International Education Mark, the training comprised four one-day face-to-face briefing meetings with online Q&A follow-up. Participants came to the training with a wide range of familiarity with the CEFR, from basic to advanced. The key need was to achieve CEFR alignment in order

to meet inspection requirements, and a key concern was to decide how much is enough in terms of alignment with the CEFR. The external stakeholders were the Department of Education, the private language sector, and the universities.

A key aim of the training was to move away from treating the textbook as the curriculum. Delivery recognized the importance of peer-to-peer sharing and collaborative tasks in establishing a shared language and shared reference points in talking about alignment, levels and scales – the importance, in other words, of engaging in the professional discourse of an alignment community. Cognitive engagement with the CEFR levels, scales and descriptors ran the risk of overload, so it was necessary to break things up and fill in gaps in the system. It was also necessary to decide which approach to adopt, “top-down or bottom-up” (Alignment Handbook, p. 29), “a priori” or “retrofit” (Boyd 2022), recognizing that both approaches are equally possible and “respectable”. Examples from other contexts played an essential role.

The alignment process was documented using a project diary, recording decisions and rationales and tracking versions. The NILE CEFR Filtering Tool and other resources were used in addition to the Alignment Handbook and CEFR CV – different reference points help participants to navigate the alignment journey.

Alignment project 2: Türkiye

The Turkish project focused on state secondary schools nationwide and prepared master trainers for a cascade-model training that would prepare teachers for future CEFR alignment projects. The training comprised a ten-day course in which master trainers developed materials and plans for use in seven-day and five-day cascade trainings. A key need was to develop understanding of the CEFR and its place in the language syllabus and the classroom – participants’ prior familiarity with the CEFR was more varied than anticipated. A key concern was to find ways of convincing teachers that the CEFR is relevant to their situation when there are no new textbooks. The external stakeholders in the project were the Ministry of Education, the cascade-training participants, and teachers.

The project stressed the importance of familiarization activities (chapter 2 of the Alignment Handbook) and guided examples of the journey from scales to descriptors to the intended learning outcomes of the syllabus to classroom activity to assessed learning outcomes. Participants were engaged in multiple concept-checking activities throughout (cf. the forms in the Alignment Handbook): self-assessment is not sufficient in a cascade model. The training included “critical incident” simulations to help participants deal with resistance. The Cambridge Profile resources were used to explore the role of grammar and vocabulary in the structural syllabus paradigm. There was great interest in mediation and integrated skills, which were unexplored concepts for Turkish teachers. In response to the need for a supported, structured and simplified training package for the cascade model, NILE produced an “easified” and abridged Alignment Handbook.

Heading in the right direction?

Of course, however successful we are in bringing participants on a collaborative alignment journey, someone will always point out that there’s another bridge (Figure 3).

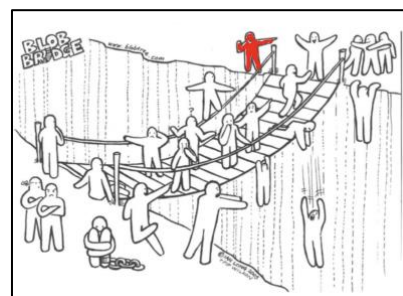


Figure 3 Someone will always point to another bridge

References

- Boyd, E. (2002). Commonality versus localization in curricula. In D. Little & N. Figueras (eds), *Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume*, pp. 159–170. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Piccardo E. et al. (2011), [*Pathways through assessing, learning and teaching in the CEFR*](#). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Discussant – Barry O’Sullivan

It is essential that we help language education professionals to understand the complexity of the CEFR, and to that end we need to build a communication model that starts with familiarization and emphasizes the co-construction that comes from working together. But the whole purpose of what we’re doing is to reach the validation stage, and marketing can easily undermine validation. We must not lose sight of these questions: What is validation? Who is it for? What are we trying to convince people of? What is enough? The Alignment Handbook was developed primarily from the perspective of assessment; Thom Kiddle’s presentation has confirmed that we need more on curriculum.

General discussion

In response to a question from the floor, Thom Kiddle said that it’s important that the trainer doesn’t simply provide the answers. The role of “critical incidents” is to prompt participants to find their own answers. Given the complexity of any educational context, there will always be multiple reasons for rejecting the CEFR; hence the importance of delivering training that emphasizes communication, collaboration and co-construction.

An in-person participant pointed out that governments decide to adopt the CEFR, and teachers respond to this as an imposition, another hurdle they must clear. In response Thom Kiddle said that was what made the project in Türkiye interesting: there was no external driving force, whether curriculum, revised materials or whatever. But still we have to find a way of winning hearts and minds. Barry O’Sullivan said that governments who decide to adopt the CEFR tend not to take account of the communication needed, as implied by the socio-cognitive model. If people are excluded from the argument, they will always feel themselves to be outsiders.

In response to an online participant’s suggestion that teachers want tried and tested, ready-made resources, Thom Kiddle said that this is by no means true of all teachers; in its effort to standardize, one language school in Ireland had gone so far as to specify learning outcomes for every lesson.

As regards languages other than English, Thom Kiddle said he has worked with modern languages departments in the University of the West Indies. Nick Saville recalled that English Profile is a CEFR Reference Level Description project; RLDs have also been developed for other languages, but they take different forms in response to different contexts. Neus Figueras pointed out that the Dialang project developed vocabulary and grammar scales for different European languages.

An online participant pointed out that the CEFR’s communicative approach can be controversial in systems where curricula and textbooks focus on grammar and vocabulary. Thom Kiddle responded that there is no single approach to communicative language teaching.

4. Course books

Does what it says on the cover?

Glyn Jones, freelance consultant

The title of this presentation derives from an advertising slogan for paint: “Does what it says on the tin”. The inclusion of a CEFR level designation such as “A2” on the cover of a language textbook constitutes an implicit claim of alignment to the CEFR. But how should we interpret such a claim? And how can we tell if it has been met? What sort of evidence should we adduce?

Open Mind Elementary (Figure 4) claims that it is A2. But does this refer to

- entry level: “This book is for learners who have reached CEFR level A2. It is designed to take them to a higher level (within the A2 level or beyond)”?
- exit level: “On completion of this course, successful learners will have reached CEFR level A2 (from some lower level)”?
- content specification: “The learning objectives and tasks in this book match the CEFR descriptors at A2 level”?

What it is to be “at” A2 is in any case a complex question since it may entail a “minimalist”, an “average” or a “mastery” claim.

According to the teachers’ book that accompanies *Open Mind Elementary*, “Students completing *Open Mind Pre-intermediate* should reach the level of ability described by the A2 performance descriptors” (p. xv). One way of aligning a textbook to the CEFR is to match its learning objectives to CEFR descriptors. This entails

- identifying learning objectives, unit by unit;
- comparing tasks with learning objectives;
- establishing whether each task matches one or more CEFR descriptors (at any level);
- counting the matches, grouped by level (aggregate of different mappings);
- repeating this process for grammar and vocabulary (using English Profile and Core Inventory);
- plotting a level profile;
- checking against one’s holistic impression;
- determining the entry and exit level.

These procedures were applied to coursebooks in the *Open Mind* series. The contents pages identify the learning objectives for each unit. Table 1 shows the objectives for reading and listening in the first three units together with matching CEFR descriptors. Note that for reading in units 1 and 3 it proved impossible to find any match in the CEFR.

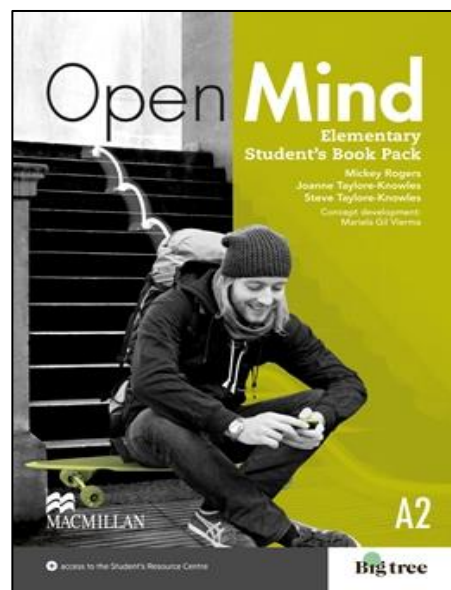


Figure 4 *Open Mind Elementary*

Table 1 Sample learning objectives from *Open Mind Elementary* and matching CEFR descriptors

Unit	READING		LISTENING	
1	RECOGNIZING COGNATES: an online survey		Listening to a voicemail message <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding times and dates • understanding personal information 	17.A2 [-1.69]
2	Reading a celebrity biography <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding personal information 	19.A1	LISTENING FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION: an informal conversation	02.A1
3	RECOGNIZING COGNATES: a magazine article		Listening to a radio show FUNCTION: talking about people's likes and dislikes	26.12.1 <i>Can say what s/he likes and dislikes</i>

The celebrity biography in unit 2 reads as follows:

"Javier Bardem is an actor from Spain. He comes from an acting family. Some of his relatives are actors. His mother (Pilar Bardem) is an actor, and his uncle (Juan Antonio Bardem) was a film director. His brother Carlos and his sister Monica are both actors.

"Javier is famous in both the Spanish-speaking world and the English-speaking world. He has many awards, including an Oscar® and a Golden Globe® award for his role in *No Country for Old Men*."

This corresponds to the descriptor for OVERALL READING COMPREHENSION at A1:

Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.

On the other hand, unit 3 contains the task "listening to a radio show", which corresponds to the descriptor for LISTENING TO AUDIO MEDIA AND RECORDINGS at A2:

Can understand and extract the essential information from short recorded passages dealing with predictable everyday matters that are delivered slowly and clearly.

And the task "talking about people's likes and dislikes" corresponds to CONVERSATION at A2.1: *Can say what he/she likes and dislikes*. So already there is a mixture of A1 and A2 descriptors.

Since the CEFR does not contain detailed specifications of grammar, the explicitly taught grammar learning objectives can be linked to the CEFR at one remove by matching them with items in the British Council–EQUALS *Core Inventory for General English*, and targeted vocabulary can be submitted to the *English Vocabulary Profile* utility.

Figure 5 shows a quantitative analysis of correspondences between learning objectives and CEFR descriptors.

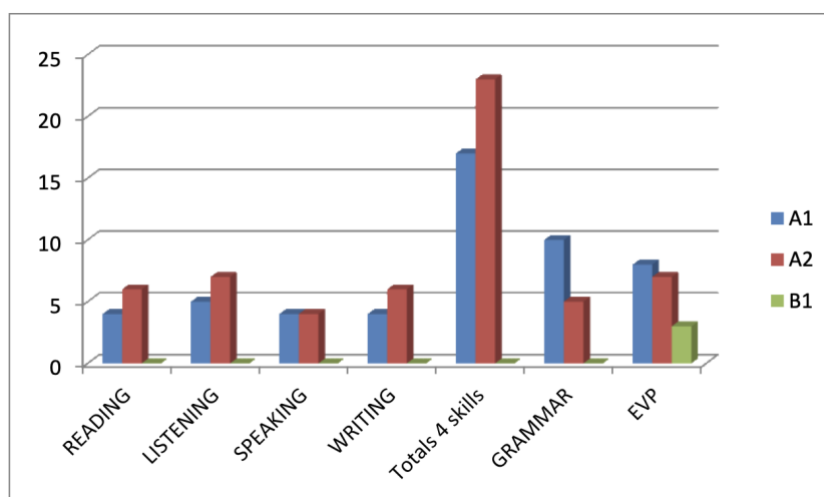


Figure 5 Quantitative analysis of correspondences between learning objectives and CEFR descriptors

Quantitative is compared with qualitative analysis, which is arrived at by identifying, skill by skill, typical features of tasks and checking them against CEFR descriptors, especially in the GLOBAL SCALE and the holistic descriptions of levels found in section 3.6 “Content coherence in Common Reference Levels” (CEFR pp. 33 ff., CV pp. 173 ff.) – see Figure 6.

Viewed more holistically, the aspects of the material which bring it closer to A2 are:

- **Engagement with connected (albeit simple) text**, where in A1 the emphasis is on discrete utterances and information points. This is found in the work on “sequencing and connecting ideas” in writing (Units 10 and 12) and the related activity “Tell a story” (Unit 11), which also features in Speaking (Unit 10). In Listening, the tasks mostly require comprehension of discrete information points, but the delivery, although slow and clear, is generally continuous, without the frequent pauses which A1 listeners require (according to the descriptor for Overall listening comprehension, CEFR p. 66). In Reading, the texts towards the end of the book (such as the blog entry in Unit 12) approach the level described in the descriptor for Overall listening comprehension at B1 :” Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension”(CEFR p. 69)
- An emphasis, in the receptive skills, on **understanding the main idea** (e.g. in reading, Units 5 and 7) **as opposed to isolated facts.**
- In speaking, a level of conversation that goes **beyond the exchange of basic information** that characterises A1 performance to include **exchange of opinions** (Unit 3) and talking about habits and routines (Unit 4) and plans (Unit 12).

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Figure 6 Qualitative analysis of matches between learning objectives in *Open Mind Elementary* and CEFR descriptors

In carrying out this exercise for other coursebooks, Glyn Jones has adopted the practice of mapping using the techniques shown in Tables 2 and 3. In one instance (see Table 3) he produced adapted (“I can”) descriptors at the publisher’s request.

Table 2 Example of mapping

CEFR scale	Descriptor	CEFR level	Page	Activity/exercise
Overall listening comprehension	<i>Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent.</i>	B1	39	6 Listening a–c
Overall reading comprehension	<i>Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low-frequency idioms.</i>	B2	38	5 Reading a–c
Reading for information and argument	<i>Can understand short texts on subjects that are familiar or of current interest, in which people give their points of view (e.g. critical contributions to an online discussion forum or readers’ letters to the editor).</i>	B1+	36	2 Grammar b, c
Informal discussion (with friends)	<i>Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely.</i>	B1	37 39	4 Speaking 7 Speaking a–b

Table 3 Example of mapping with adapted (“I can”) descriptors

COURSE INFORMATION				CEFR INFORMATION		
Unit	Section	Page	Can-do statement	Level	Scale	Applicable descriptors
1	Listening	10	<i>I can recognise the purpose and general idea of everyday social encounters if these are spoken slowly and clearly.</i>	A1	Spoken reception: Overall listening comprehension	<i>Can recognise concrete information (e.g. places and times) on familiar topics encountered in everyday life, provided it is delivered in slow and clear speech.</i>
1	Speaking	20	<i>I can ask questions to find out basic personal information when I’m getting to know someone.</i>	A1	Spoken interaction: Information exchange	<i>Can ask and answer questions about themselves and other people, where they live, people they know, things they have.</i>
1				A1	Spoken interaction: Interviewing and being interviewed	<i>Can reply in an interview to simple direct questions spoken very slowly and clearly in direct non-idiomatic speech about personal details</i>
2	Listening	28	<i>I can understand details of speakers’ personal information if they speak slowly and clearly.</i>	A1	Spoken reception: Understanding conversation between other speakers	<i>Can understand some words and expressions when people are talking about themselves, family, school, hobbies or surroundings, provided they are talking slowly and clearly.</i>

The exercise of linking materials to the CEFR raises the following issues:

- How is progression dealt with in a given learning resource?
- If you have descriptors that indicate a higher or lower level than the one indicated for the resource, that doesn't necessarily matter, given that the relationship of descriptors to levels is probabilistic, not absolute; whereas if you insist on using only descriptors related to your stated level, this deprives your material of richness.
- Alignment with the CEFR is possible and appropriate only if learning outcomes are defined in action-oriented terms.
- Secondary resources like Reference Level Descriptions can be useful, but Glyn Jones's preference is always to give priority to CEFR descriptors.
- It is important to triangulate quantitative and qualitative analyses.
- It is useful to distinguish between "scaffolding" and "realistic" tasks. CEFR descriptors are not applicable to scaffolding tasks; the latter are preparatory to realistic tasks, which *may* be captured by descriptors.
- The adequacy of CEFR descriptors is highly variable. For example, the scale for OVERALL READING COMPREHENSION contains the phrases "lengthy, complex texts" at C1 and "straightforward factual texts" at B1, but no reference to text properties at the intervening level, B2.

A different approach was adopted by Tsagari (2010) in a project to align a series of course-books published for the Greek school system. She used a two-phase process of social moderation. The first phase, "pre-use evaluation", involved a panel of teachers who analysed the coursebooks using checklists based on the CEFR and the so-called Dutch Grid (Alderson et al. 2006, Tardieu et al. 2010). In the second phase, "post-use evaluation", 147 in-service teachers completed an online survey.

The process of aligning materials with the CEFR corresponds to the Alignment Handbook as follows:

- Identifying main learning objectives = generic specification
- Mapping individual tasks = specific specification
- Level profile = graphic profiling of alignment (form 3.3)
- Tsagari's "Pre-use evaluation" \cong standard setting in that it uses social moderation
- "Post-use evaluation" = validation in the sense that it attempt to establish whether the materials really do what it says on the cover.

References

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Discussant – Lynda Taylor

Lynda Taylor began her response to Glyn Jones's presentation by recalling that in the early 1990s she wrote a course book that was linked to a new exam, Cambridge Advanced English. Support resources were scarce. She could refer to *The Threshold Level* and *Waystage*, but there was no CEFR. We have come a long way since then. With EDIA (equity, diversity, inclusion and access), or JEDI, in mind, there is an inevitable tension between our desire to meet the needs of the individual learner and the fact that the CLS must cater for large populations.

Lynda Taylor deconstructed the acronym EDIA, borrowing its four letters to highlight four particular aspects that she believes we shall need to pay greater attention to in the future when seeking to align teaching and learning materials to the CEFR.

She used the letter *E* to stand for *Evidence* – in other words the requirement to provide appropriate and transparent evidence in support of any claims we wish to make about textbook or materials alignment as part of any validation process. This may involve the presentation of quantitative evidence but is also likely to involve some process of qualitative judgment.

D stands for *Description*. This focuses on the processes we adopt to describe the skills or ability construct we're interested in for teaching and learning. Adequate description is likely to involve triangulating to multiple sources, not just the CEFR scales but Reference Level Descriptions and additional resources such as language inventory and profile projects. Moving forward, we may need to enlarge our construct to embrace, for example, multimodal communication. Do we need to get away from the traditional (and simplistic) four skills approach? IT opens things up in many different ways. Our description must be characterized by *diversity*, matching the diversity of any group of learners at whom a coursebook is aimed. Every learner experiences the teacher, the curriculum and materials in an individual way, so attention to diversity and different ways of describing is essential.

Lynda Taylor used the letter *I* to stand for the *Issues* that will need to be faced in undertaking this process of description: e.g. the issue of the flexibility needed when matching learning objectives to descriptors; the challenge of identifying a threshold of sufficiency (how much is enough?); the distinction between realistic and scaffolding tasks, and the overarching question: How far is alignment possible, appropriate and necessary? What we should aim for is not systematicity but a level of coherence that can embrace messiness.

Finally, Lynda Taylor suggested that *A* might be used to stand for *Approach*. Inclusiveness is a key characteristic of the approach Glyn Jones has adopted. There are different ways of approaching the alignment process, for example, standard and localized, which are likely to be strongly shaped by context. We are confronted by great cultural differences and contrasts, so localization becomes increasingly important. As the Handbook evolves, it will need to confront and respond to these issues.

In conclusion Lynda Taylor highlighted three essential Cs that echo Sarah Breslin's opening comments and seem to thread their way through the colloquium: *Communication*, *Context* and *Culture*.

From the online chat

Charalambos Kollias: “According to Charles Alderson, ‘To adequately align a test to the CEFR, first design it with the CEFR in mind’. The same holds true for aligning materials. Why not take a standard setting approach to validating the CEFR alignment claims made for coursebooks? I would like to review and/or conduct the internal validity analysis – Rasch all the way!”

5. Assessment

Revision and CEFR linking of the National English Adaptive Test in Uruguay

Chihiro Inoue (presenter) and Fumiyo Nakatsuhara, CRELLA, University of Bedfordshire; Alina Alvarez, Cecilia Marconi and Gabriela Kaplan, Centro Ceibal

Ceibal en Inglés is a blended English language programme that is taken by more than 80,000 Spanish-speaking children in Uruguay. Part of Ceibal’s programme of technology-supported educational innovation, it was designed to address a shortage of English language teachers. The four-phase project undertaken by CRELLA with the Centro Ceibal revised the National English Adaptive Test (NEAT) and in doing so brought about a rapprochement of English language teaching and testing in schools in Uruguay.

The NEAT is used to track learners’ progress and to inform programmes designed to enhance teaching and learning – the aim is that learners should achieve A2 by the end of Year 6 (primary schools) and B1 by the end of Year 9 (secondary and vocational schools). The adaptive test has three components: grammar and vocabulary, reading, and listening. There is also a test of speaking, but it was developed outside the adaptive framework (see Khabbazzbashi et al. 2022).

The NEAT is taken by 70,000 students annually. They range in age from 9 to 15 years and are learning English at primary, secondary and vocational schools. The test provides evidence of learners’ ability to communicate in English at a basic level in personal and educational domains. Published annually, test results are used to establish the proficiency levels of students in different EFL programmes. They inform policy makers and support the development of a national curriculum framework for English; they also inform students of their level but do not affect their grade or placement; and they demonstrate alignment with an international framework, the CEFR.

The NEAT began as a paper-based test of vocabulary, grammar and reading in 2013 and became computer-adaptive in 2014; listening was added in 2015. In 2017, the first phase of the project involving CRELLA and Centro Ceibal undertook the validation of the vocabulary, grammar and reading components. Test specifications and sample items were reviewed, followed by item analysis (IRT and distractor analysis) and a review of score and level reporting. This phase concluded by recognizing a need to improve the quality of items and develop a more solid rationale for deciding CEFR levels.

The second phase of the project (2018–2019) revised test specifications and item writing guidelines (IWGs) with a view to bringing test content closer to the national curriculum and the CEFR. The revision of the IWGs made use of *English Vocabulary Profile* and *English Grammar Profile*.¹ Syllabuses, textbooks, teaching materials and plans were collected from different programmes, and vocabulary and grammar lists were collated and grouped with CEFR levels. In item design, efforts were made to ensure a match between the requirements of test items and CEFR descriptors, e.g., *Can understand short, simple messages sent via social media or email (e.g. proposing what to do, when and where to meet)* (A1, READING CORRESPONDENCE). This process also involved localization in deciding what situations learners in Uruguay are familiar with and what a “simple message” looks like. The definition of pre-A1 provided by the *CEFR Companion Volume* (2018 version) was very useful because it is important in EFL environments.

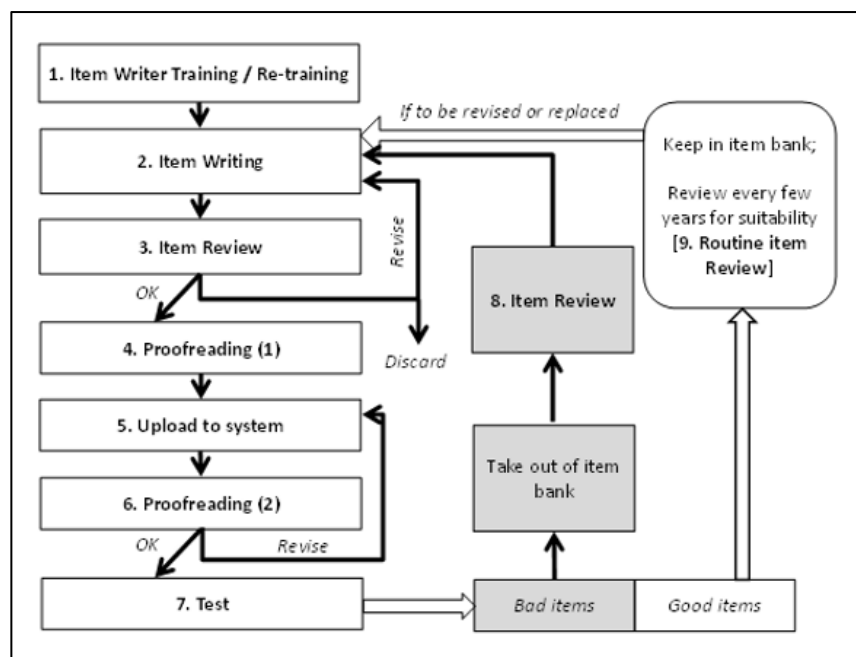


Figure 7 Item production and review cycle

In the third phase of the project (2020–2022), more items were written for all three components of the adaptive test; item statistics from the pilot were used to link the test to the CEFR; and the IWGs and items were modified based on the main test. Without a robust item production and review cycle (Figure 7), much of the effort invested in the project would be wasted, so a team of experts from Centro Ceibal and ANEP (the ministry of education) has been formed to pave the way and oversee the establishment of this cycle. At the same time, a rigorous programme of item writer training has been carried out.

The fourth phase of the project (2023) has focused on linking the components of the adaptive test to the CEFR. A three-day workshop for 13 panellists has taken place in Montevideo. Apart from one language testing expert from CRELLA, the panellists represented important stakeholder organisations involved in English language education in Uruguay. Specifically, six of the

¹ Respectively <https://www.englishprofile.org/wordlists> and <https://www.englishprofile.org/english-grammar-profile>

panellists came from ANEP and play various roles in teaching and exam coordination; two panellists were Ceibal staff closely involved in item writing; and four were independent consultants with expertise and experience in the public, private and university sectors. The Alignment Handbook identifies five steps in the alignment process: familiarization → specification → standardization → standard setting (bookmarking) → validation. The workshop focused in particular on specification and standard setting. For specification the forms in the 2009 Manual for Linking Examinations to the CEFR were used and the alignment claim was based on test content. For standard setting, booklets were prepared with items arranged in order of increasing difficulty, “bookmarks” were placed at transition points, and outlier items were discussed with a view to improving them.

In conclusion, the revision of NEAT has led to more solid test specifications and IWGs, stronger links between the national curriculum (with different programmes) and the CEFR, and a robust item production and review cycle. Linking the test to the CEFR has led to an enhanced understanding of NEAT and its test content among the panellists, generating professional development and communication opportunities; greater collegiality among different stakeholder organizations; and a shared determination to ensure positive washback on teaching, teacher training and materials design.

Reference

Khabbazbashi, N., Nakatsuhara, F., Inoue, C., Green, T. & Kaplan, G. (2022). The design and validation of an online speaking test for young learners in Uruguay: challenges and innovations. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 4(1), 141–168. <https://doi.org/10.46451/ijts.2022.01.10>

CEFR for classroom assessment in tertiary education

Anna Soltyska, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The Language Centre at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (Germany) provides courses in English for General and Specific Academic Purposes. The development and implementation of assessment frameworks for the courses is guided by the CEFR level descriptors, subject content recommendations issued by the relevant faculty, and the principles of task-based teaching and learning. The course Essential English for Students of Management and Economics (B1/B2–B2) is used to illustrate the approach.

The course is elective and credit-bearing (5 credit points) and is taken by MA and BA students with a variety of L1s. Students are divided into parallel groups that are taught by several instructors. Course delivery follows a blended-learning format.

The external context of use is the educational domain, and CEFR level descriptors are used to specify course and assessment content as follows:

- **Production (spoken):** SUSTAINED MONOLOGUE; ADDRESSING AUDIENCES
- **Production (written):** CREATIVE WRITING (descriptions); REPORTS AND ESSAYS
- **Interaction:** CONVERSATION, formal and informal DISCUSSION, GOAL-ORIENTED CO-OPERATION
- **Reception (spoken):** UNDERSTANDING CONVERSATION BETWEEN NATIVE SPEAKERS; LISTENING AS A MEMBER OF LIVE AUDIENCE; listening to radio and audio recordings
- **Reception (written):** READING FOR ORIENTATION; READING FOR INFORMATION AND ARGUMENT
- **Working with text:** NOTE-TAKING (LECTURES, SEMINARS ETC.)

- **Vocabulary range:** Has a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to his/her field and most general topics. Can vary formulations to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution.
- **Grammatical accuracy:** Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding

Descriptors for MEDIATING A TEXT are also used:

- RELAYING SPECIFIC INFORMATION – in speech and in writing
- EXPLAINING DATA (e.g. in graphs, diagrams, charts, etc.) – in speech and in writing
- PROCESSING TEXT – in speech and in writing
- TRANSLATING A WRITTEN TEXT – in speech and in writing
- NOTE-TAKING (LECTURES, SEMINARS, MEETINGS, ETC.)

Subject-specific content comprises the following topics: development of the world economies; supply and demand; money; governments and markets; crisis economics; hiring and firing; economics and the environment.

As part of their workload, students taking the course are required to produce ten course assignments that involve various skills. They also take two mid-term exams, one in speaking (describe a diagram) and one in mediation (listening into writing), and two end-of-term exams, one in speaking (oral presentation) and one in mediation (reading/listening into writing). The three sample assessment tasks that follow are shown exactly as they were presented to the students via Learning Management System Moodle. Boldface was used to draw attention to key aspects of each task, which students are encouraged to use as a self-assessment checklist before submitting each task for grading. These highlighted aspects of the task are typically used to create a task-specific assessment grid. The verbs underlined in red refer to particular sub-tasks (German *Handlungen*) derived from CEFR level descriptors, which make up components of a response to a particular task.

Sample assessment task 1: Speaking (describe a diagram)

Choose a **product** or **service** whose **demand and/or supply** has been affected by the **current situation** (post-COVID-19 implications, war in Ukraine and its consequences, inflation crisis, etc.). The effect can be positive or negative. Find or draw a **Marshallian cross** diagram that shows **the shift of demand (and supply)** for this product/service **before and after** the crisis.

Prepare a **short presentation (2–3 mins)** describing the diagram and explaining the shift. In your presentation, **include the following**:

- introduce the visual and explain what it shows in general
- explain how the supply of and demand for the chosen product/service have changed based on the visual
- speculate about some possible reasons and consequences of the change.

Remember to **structure your presentation** and to use **signal words** and **expressions** to guide the listener. Make sure to pronounce key terms correctly and to speak clearly.

Record your presentation and **upload** below.

Sample assessment task 2: Mediation (reading and listening into writing)

In your economics course, you were asked to prepare a summary about the **current economic crisis** based on the **two sources** below: the DW video *A new kind of global recession* and the OECD editorial *Confronting the crisis*.

Watch the video and read the article. In each source, identify the **features** and **consequences** of the crisis as well as possible **remedies**. Look for common themes in **both** sources.

In your summary, highlight **four** different **features of the crisis** with the accompanying **consequences and remedies**. Summarize these aspects in your text in a clearly structured way. Include a very brief explanation of the reasons for the crisis into your introduction. Write a summary of about **450–500 words**.

Remember: Your task is to make the content of the sources accessible to the other students on the course. Adapt the language of the sources to make it more neutral and easier to understand. Also, make sure to explain difficult/technical/specialist terms to help your fellow students understand. Be careful not to plagiarize – paraphrase the language of the sources before using it in your writing.

Sample assessment task 3: Mediation (reading and listening into speaking)

You are going to explain the concept of “Hartz IV” to an international student of economics at your department who **does not speak much German and is not familiar with the German reality**.

Step 1: Use the resources above to get the ideas for your explanation.

Step 2: Use the vocabulary from the unit to prepare your explanation in English

Step 3: Record and **upload your explanation** in the submission area below. Your recording should be between 2 and 3 minutes long and saved as mp3, mp4 or wmv file.

Follow up:
Listen to the recordings of the two other students allocated to you by the teacher. Prepare to give them your feedback on their performance. Make sure to include comments on the specific aspects of their performance and some ideas for improvement.

Sample assessment task 3 is one of ten course assignments which students have to submit as a part of the course workload.

Presenter (name):	Product/Service:	
Criterion	Points	Examples
... has appropriately used subject-specific terms related to supply and demand	1 2 3 4	
... has correct pronounced key items	1 2 3	
... has used appropriate vocabulary for referring to the visual and comparing	1 2 3 4	
... has used appropriate signals to guide the listener	1 2	
... has structured her/his description in a meaningful/helpful way	1 2 3	
... has used the language with sufficient accuracy	1 2 3 4	
Total	__/20	

Figure 8 Assessment criteria for rating the speaking task “Describe a diagram”

Figure 8 shows the criteria and scoring scheme used to rate students' performance of the speaking task "Describe a diagram". The criteria are shaped by the interaction of CEFR level descriptors (cf. pronunciation, structuring the response and signalling language, grammatical and lexical accuracy), subject-specific content (subject-specific terms relevant to the task, vocabulary for describing a visual, pronunciation of key terms) and the task-based approach to teaching and learning (referring to a visual and comparing).

The criteria and scoring schemes for the course are designed collaboratively by all instructors involved in teaching in a given term. To this end, sample target outcomes ("model texts") are produced and analyzed for each exam task. Furthermore, to achieve the greatest possible degree of standardization within and across student cohorts, each time an anchor text is selected and graded by all teachers to serve as a benchmark for further ratings. Whenever possible, oral presentations are marked independently by two examiners. After each iteration of the course, overall assessment results are evaluated and tasks or criteria revised, if necessary.

Of the five steps identified in the Alignment Handbook, the approach to course design, delivery and assessment described in this presentation has engaged fully with familiarization and specification. Standardization, standard setting and validation are work in progress.

Discussant – Nick Saville

The two presentations in this part of the colloquium have focused on the alignment of assessment with the CEFR, something that has been going on for some twenty years and is much more firmly established and widespread than the alignment of curricula and materials. The two projects presented predate the publication of the CEFR CV and the Alignment Handbook and are thus examples of retrofitting; at the same time, they offer new opportunities to share experience, taking account of the CEFR CV and the comprehensive guidance now provided by the Alignment Handbook.

Both projects emphasize the importance of context, communication and culture. In both contexts alignment to CEFR was important for policy; the Alignment Handbook emphasizes the importance of communication with stakeholders; and it makes clear (section 6.2) that materials devised for one context cannot be expected to automatically work in a different system. Alignment claims are thus valid only when they are used for a particular purpose in a particular context – normally the purpose and context for which the resource in question was developed.

In the Uruguayan case, the alignment study is only one part of a long-term Reform Programme that dates back more than 15 years and involves all cycles of the K12 school system. The so-called *Plan Ceibal* was created in 2007 and operates at a macro-systemic level, involving infrastructure and digital technology, to deliver on both educational and societal goals. It is an ambitious plan that aims to use technology to help Uruguayan education policies to be more inclusive and to provide equal opportunities. Of particular relevance to us is the alignment of the NEAT tests, broken down into the four explicit phases that Chihiro Inoue described.

The purpose of the NEAT tests is to monitor and evaluate learning outcomes at systemic level rather than to assess the learners themselves, so the tests do not lead to certification or qualification. They are designed to deliver an approach to language assessment that explicitly

seeks to bridge the gap between teaching and testing. Importantly, they are adaptive, and from a technical point of view, the use of adaptive testing raises specific challenges for alignment and benchmarking the test scores to the CEFR levels.

Policy makers in Uruguay are clearly interested in using the tests to set and improve proficiency standards and to address areas of weakness in the system. Their understanding of the CEFR, and the related alignment claims, is thus very important. Moreover, the reliability of the assessments themselves and the dependability of the alignment to CEFR levels are crucial factors if the system is to serve the purposes they attend.

The NEAT programme is not only multilevel but multilingual, which is significant, given that the emphasis is so often on English alone. It would be interesting to know how other languages are being monitored and how the outcomes compare. It is worth noting that there is a brief section in the Alignment Handbook (p. 61) about standard setting across languages.

We heard that NEAT does not currently test the productive skills, although this is a key element of the curriculum and an educational priority. In this respect, it has similarities to other benchmarking approaches – like SurveyLang, which did not evaluate speaking ability for practical reasons. This could be considered *systemic non-alignment* – with potential for negative impact on learning and teaching. It is, however, a positive development that NEAT now includes a speaking test, which is not adaptive. It is an online browser-based test designed for younger learners (for an account of its development, see Khabbazzbashi et al. 2022 – for full reference, see p. 16 above).

In conclusion, the importance of the specification phase of the linking exercise should be highlighted. As Chihiro Inoue pointed out, vertical alignment is often the main focus in alignment studies, but we should not forget construct and content alignment, which are equally important.

The Bochum project offers an interesting combination of subject content and language proficiency, and the presentation was a good example of how to talk about constructive alignment in relation to ecosystems. The impact of the CEFR CV is especially noticeable in the project's use of mediation tasks, and standardization in a classroom context is of particular interest. The project used the Alignment Handbook only by implication. It is worth noting that the RUB language centre designs all courses and assessments using the CEFR as the main point of reference. As part of the UNiCert network the RUB is regularly audited for the alignment of its programmes with CEFR.

Of particular relevance in Anna Soltyska's presentation was the need to embed the assessments into the classroom environment, and to support teacher decision-making in carrying out the assessment procedures. The rigour of standardization and standard setting in the classroom context was especially interesting in this case study: it has often been assumed that this kind of approach is beyond the capabilities of teachers. Specifically, we heard about the standardization procedures used to ensure consistency in assessing parallel groups and in maintaining consistency over time.

What impacted the project design most, however, was the general principle of constructive alignment and a high level of interdependence between goals, instructional methods and assessment tasks and modes. Constructive alignment is another approach to developing ecosystems of learning – in this respect it is similar to the Comprehensive Learning System

referenced in the Alignment Handbook and described by Barry O’Sullivan at the beginning of the colloquium.

Anna Soltyska believes that the Alignment Handbook “gives a name and the right structure” to numerous alignment activities that have gradually been introduced and implemented over many years in her institution. In cases like this, the Handbook doesn't revolutionize assessment practices; rather, it serves to endorse what is already being done very effectively. It can also support communication with stakeholders in a given context – language centres, schools, teachers, etc. – helping them to better understand how their individual efforts form part of a larger endeavour of quality assurance.

General discussion

In reply to a question about training item writers, Nick Saville suggested that item writing is as much a craft as knowledge, a skill that can only be developed through practice. Anna Soltyska observed that although the university context requires high quality assessment, what can be done depends on available resources. Lynda Taylor drew attention to the importance of examples in item writing: don't throw away discarded items, but retain them and explain why they failed to make the cut.

From the online chat

Charalambos Kollias: “This colloquium reminds me of the [EALTA 2008 colloquium in Athens](#) where we presented our alignment projects using the 2003 version of the Council of Europe’s manual for relating exams to the CEFR. But we are now in a stronger position. I am looking forward to the next version of the Handbook!”

6. Panel discussion

The Alignment Handbook Steering Group

Neus Figueras (EALTA, convenor), David Little (rapporteur), Barry O’Sullivan (British Council), Nick Saville (ALTE), Lynda Taylor (UKALTA)

Introduction – David Little

In the opening session Barry O’Sullivan reminded us that a Comprehensive Learning System insists on the interdependence of curriculum, delivery and assessment. The successful development and implementation of a CLS require critical engagement with the context of use, at the centre of which is the individual learner/test-taker, and effective communication with all stakeholders. Hence the need to operationalize the principles captured in the acronym JEDI: justice, equality, diversity and inclusion. To begin with, alignment with the CEFR was a matter for test developers. The concepts of constructive alignment and the CLS, however, necessarily extend alignment to the other dimensions of language education.

Today’s presentations described a varied and informative range of alignment activities, focusing in turn on curriculum, materials, and assessment in two very different contexts. Each presentation has confirmed what Barry O’Sullivan said at the beginning of the day and Thom Kiddle repeated in his presentation: context is king.

To date, alignment with the CEFR has focused mainly on the proficiency levels, scales and descriptors. But today's concern with the individual learner/test-taker – sometimes explicit, always implied – challenges us to align language education also with the CEFR's view of the learner as a "social agent" (CEFR, p. 9). This view derives ultimately from the European Convention on Human Rights, as does the Council of Europe's concept of plurilingual and intercultural education, elaborated in Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 of the Committee of Ministers and referred to by Sarah Breslin in her recorded message. Early in his presentation Thom Kiddle cited the textbox at the beginning of chapter 2 of the CEFR, which defines language learning as language use: "Language use, embracing language learning ..." (see p. 5 above). He argued that if those engaged in aligning language education with the CEFR don't accept this definition, there's no point in going any further.

The implications of this argument are profound. The first of the three sentences in the textbox refers to the competences on which we draw when we use language, while the second is concerned with the performance of language activities in specific contexts. The third sentence reads as follows: "The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences." If the first two sentences present a model of language use, of which language learning is an instance, this third sentence should perhaps be read in two ways. When a language is being acquired "naturalistically", monitoring is often something that happens below the threshold of conscious awareness; when a language is being taught and learned in a formal educational context, on the other hand, conscious monitoring supports the activation of those unconscious processes. This is something that a revised version of the Handbook should surely engage with and attempt to unpick.

The decision to align one or another dimension of language education with the CEFR rests on the assumption that the CEFR itself is trustworthy, but this shouldn't be taken to imply that the CEFR and the CEFR CV are beyond criticism. At the 2020 conference, for example, Constant Leung raised serious conceptual questions about the CEFR CV's treatment of mediation and plurilingualism, asking to what extent it reflects "the dynamic and fluid nature of language use in real-life language practices"; and Elif Kantarcioğlu argued that the complexity of mediation skills challenges traditional assessment and standard-setting practices in terms of construct definition (see the contributions of Leung and Kantarcioğlu to *Reflecting on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and its Companion Volume*). Critical reflection on the CEFR and the CEFR CV has been largely absent from today's deliberations. It is nevertheless an important part of critical engagement with both documents. That is why the call for contributions to next year's Barcelona conference will focus on three topics: alignment case studies, either completed or in progress; reactions to and reflections on the Handbook; and issues of theory and practice arising from the use of the CEFR and its CV.

Discussion

Lynda Taylor wondered whether David Little's remarks on the CEFR's view of the learner as a social agent point to the next part of the roadmap.

Barry O'Sullivan argued that no significant progress has been made in any dimension of language education for 30 years. Nick Saville agreed that we haven't succeeded in delivering on the original promise of the CEFR, and Neus Figueras wondered whether we are on the right track as regards training.

Barry O’Sullivan suggested that there is also a problem at the level of policy: when education is essentially about gatekeeping, language learning leads to nothing.

Nick Saville pointed out that nothing much seems to have happened regarding plurilingualism; the idea of developing an integrated communicative repertoire has been given only limited attention. Neus Figueras argued that we are nevertheless better than we were, though not as good as we could be.

David Little suggested that it is important to distinguish between systems of education and institutions: the former have been slow to understand the implications of the CEFR and act on them, whereas many individual institutions have taken the CEFR on board and benefited as a result. He recalled that the European Language Portfolio, devised as the CEFR’s companion piece, was an instrument of constructive alignment that failed to take root in Europe’s education systems.

Nick Saville emphasized the importance of the CEFR as a way of making progression in learning visible.

Referring to Barry O’Sullivan’s comment, Thom Kiddle argued that 30 years isn’t long in educational reform, but he agreed with Neus Figueras that we shan’t see significant change until the CEFR is more effectively embedded in teacher education.

Acknowledging the importance of communication, Lynda Taylor said that we nevertheless have to find the right discourse. Barry O’Sullivan agreed: we fail when we simply tell people what to do. He said that we must have alignment, though what we align with is another matter.

Nick Saville wondered whether technology will break the barrier; in any case, we need to embed more technology into our practice because that is the nature of the current reality. Barry O’Sullivan pointed out that technology is leading to more flipped classrooms; also, that the importance of context is a reason for localizing the CEFR and its use. Nick Saville noted that the CEFR is a good starting point for a conversation with people who come from somewhere else. Thom Kiddle observed that the textbox at the beginning of Chapter 2 of the CEFR seems to reflect how AI systems are developed.

A member of the online audience missed any criticism of the CEFR in the day’s programme. Nick Saville pointed out that the CEFR has attracted two kinds of critic: those who feel that it’s hegemonistic and those who have criticisms of aspects of its descriptive scheme. Barry O’Sullivan suggested that the next version of the Alignment Handbook may choose to raise critical issues in the CEFR and propose solutions. Lynda Taylor said that it is important that others interested in CEFR alignment speak up and join the editorial team.

From the online chat

Alex: “Nick raised the issue of how culture and communication are incorporated into assessment. I’m curious as to how both (in the form of intercultural communication) may be incorporated into those two assessment structures with reference to the CEFR – particularly in the Uruguayan context.”

Kevin Haines: “It’s so interesting how the CEFR has become an ‘institution’ in language teaching and learning (in the nicest sense of the word) without becoming institutionalized. It is progressing in a democratic way without allowing itself to be undermined by rigid owner-

ship. These tools you are developing allow for contextualization of language learning, and that means language can be learned purposefully and not prescriptively in my opinion.”

Cristina Corcoll: “I am a lecturer in Blanquerna, the institution that will host the October 2024 conference, and I share Neus’s optimism. I can share that the way we work with our pre-service English teachers does focus on communication and on the understanding of language learners as language users. It is true, however, that not all our university students have learnt English this way, so they need to rethink how we learn and teach languages before they can actually feel ready to follow this approach in their own classrooms.”

Sahbi Hidri: “I personally was hoping to hear some critical perspectives on the CFFR: a) the overemphasis on ‘communicative competence’ at the expense of cultural competence, b) the endpoint of the descriptors is most often misleading to decide on the future of a test-taker, c) I see the Canadian Language Benchmarks descriptors as more accurate and precise, d) anything on the cultural bias that the CEFR is causing (think outside Europe, please), e) aligning materials to the CEFR in areas where people sit for the IELTS, but no ELT textbooks, f) what about the diagnostic and developmental assessment benchmarks of special needs learners?, g) how can you apply the CEFR in multilingual contexts, where more than language is used in the classroom? Hope you will consider these issues for non-European countries.”

Closing words

Neus Figueras again thanked the presenters for their contributions, members of the in-person and online audiences for their participation, and the staff of CRELLA for all their support. She also repeated that a two-day European conference hosted by Blanquerna-Universitat Ramon LLull will take place in Barcelona on 18–19 October under the title “Responding to the CEFR Alignment Handbook: Sharing experience of alignment activities and reflecting on lessons learned”. The conference will share good practice in aligning language education (curricula, materials, assessment) to the CEFR, showcase uses of the Handbook in different contexts, with different languages and for different purposes, and gather learning points to inform the revision of the Handbook. A call for papers will be launched in January 2024 inviting interested colleagues to submit proposals on the following topics:

- Alignment case studies, either completed or in progress
- Reactions to and reflections on the Handbook
- Issues of theory and practice arising from the use of the CEFR and its CV

Appendix

Programme of the colloquium

Time	Speaker(s)	Presentation
10:00–10:45	Neus Figueras and Barry O’Sullivan	Welcome and introduction Including a short address from Sarah Breslin, Executive Director of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) and Head of Language Policy, Council of Europe
10:45–11:45	Thom Kiddle Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE) <i>Discussant:</i> Barry O’Sullivan	From handbook to hands-on: CEFR curriculum alignment in Ireland and Turkiye In this session we will present and discuss the ways that training was delivered to two distinct groups of education professionals in Ireland and Turkiye, focusing on planning and developing alignment principles and practices for their contexts.
11:45–12:00	REFRESHMENT BREAK (coffee and tea provided)	
12:00– 13:00	Glyn Jones Freelance <i>Discussant:</i> Lynda Taylor	Does what it says on the cover? This session describes the process of aligning learning materials with the CEFR, including some of the issues considered and challenges encountered.
13:00–14:30	LUNCH BREAK (own arrangements)	
14:30–15:30	Chihiro Inoue CRELLA, University of Bedfordshire Anna Soltyska Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany <i>Discussant:</i> Nick Saville	Revision and CEFR-linking of the National English Adaptive Test in Uruguay This presentation reports on a 4-phase test revision project that has brought English teaching and testing closer in schools in Uruguay. CEFR for classroom assessment in tertiary education This presentation gives insight into using CEFR to guide teachers’ decisions when developing assessment tasks and criteria for classroom use within LAP (language for academic purposes) and LSP (language for specific purposes) courses at a German university.
15:30–16:30	The Handbook Steering group <i>Chair:</i> Neus Figueras	Panel discussion
16:30–17:00	David Little and Neus Figueras	Summary round-up of the day and closing words