Language Educational Policy and Language Learning Quality Management: The *Common European Framework of Reference*

Olaf Bärenfänger
University of Leipzig

Erwin Tschirner
University of Leipzig

Abstract: The major goal of the Council of Europe to promote and facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues has led to the development of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR). Among other things, the CEFR is intended to help language professionals reflect on their current practice and situate and coordinate their efforts. The last two objectives are similar to quality management goals. The aim of this article is to present a standard model of quality management, and show how the CEFR may be used to introduce quality management goals in foreign language learning settings to improve the quality of foreign language teaching and learning and to document its results.

Key words: Common European Framework of Reference, *language learning and teaching, language policy, quality management, standards*

Language: Relevant to all languages

Introduction

Language policy is often described as a long-term sustained and conscious effort to alter a language or change a language's functions in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems (Weinstein, as cited in Beer & Jacob, 1985). Language education policy also is seen as a means of solving communication problems, across borders and internationally. A seemingly perennial example of how political institutions aim to control languages in the United States is the debate about bilingual education (cf. Crawford, 2007). A prominent example of successful language (education) policy from Europe is the development of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*

Olaf Bärenfänger (PhD, University of Bielefeld) is Assistant Professor of German as a Foreign Language at the University of Leipzig in Leipzig, Germany.

Erwin Tschirner (PhD, University of California, Berkeley) is Professor of German as a Foreign Language at the University of Leipzig in Leipzig, Germany.

(CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001; cf. Baker, 2002; Little, 2003; Morrow, 2004). This particular language policy initiative is a reflection of the political and social realities of a multilingual and multicultural Europe that aims to form a single European education, employment, and residential space for its citizens (Fulcher, 2004; Hudson, 2005; Schmenk, 2004). The CEFR has changed how foreign languages are taught, learned, and evaluated in Europe in a substantial way and is considered to be "one of the most important documents in the fields of language learning and teaching in Europe" (Schmenk, 2004, p. 9).

There are 35 official and 185 recorded languages within the Council of Europe's 43 member states (Daoust, 1997). In the 1980s, the Council of Europe recognized that it was not only linguistic diversity that prevented interaction and mobility, but also the fact that because of differing educational traditions and different ways of teaching and assessing foreign language competences, it was very difficult to know how well someone could use a foreign language simply by looking at his or her language certificates (Trim, 2001).

While the Council of Europe's language policy highlights the importance of communicating across cultures, it also champions plurilingualism and the preservation of linguistic diversity (Hudson, 2005; Little, 2003; Morrow, 2004). This is evident in the first and second of three basic principles set down by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which state:

• that the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding [and]
• that it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues

in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination. (Council of Europe, 1982, p. 1)

Preserving this linguistic and cultural diversity while promoting communication, interaction, and mobility within a growing European Union and across all of Europe led to the development of the CEFR. The goals of the CEFR (cf. Heyworth, 2004) are to:

• promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries;
• provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications;
• assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts. (Council of Europe, 2001)[1]

The last statement adds an important third goal to the twin goals of enabling communication and mobility and of providing a common yardstick for language programs and certifications, namely, reflection on and improvement of current practice (Little, 2003; Morrow, 2004). It is precisely this goal of helping practitioners reflect that this article addresses. This issue is similar to quality management, and indeed may be used to develop a language learning quality management system. Moreover, reflecting on teaching and learning has become a genuine language policy facet of the CEFR.

When there is a common yardstick, when (national) standards are being developed (e.g., Lafayette, 1996), when the quality of learning outcomes becomes an objective to be measured and controlled, outcome-based assessment–the assessment of teachers, learners, and institutions based on the results a particular program is able to deliver according to predefined criteria–becomes a distinct possibility (Schalock, 2001).

Certainly, a number of language professionals may be skeptical about outcome-based assessment, at times for good rea-

sons. Some programs are designed to produce a particular set of results without taking into account what may be important for individual learners (teaching to the test). At times it is unclear exactly who is responsible for reaching or not reaching the desired results; at other times achieving the desired outcome simply is beyond the control of the person responsible for a particular program.

There are also a number of advantages of outcome-based assessment. Focusing on the outcome of a program emphasizes the effects a program has on the life of a particular learner or a particular social group; creates transparency and raises the accountability of the people responsible for the success of the program; encourages the responsible use of resources; and helps teachers, learners, institutions, and politicians make informed decisions. In short, outcome-based assessment (including assessment based on the CEFR) may contribute to the optimization of educational processes while serving all stakeholders.

While the CEFR was developed to serve the language policy goals of Europe, it may be applied profitably to language learning contexts outside of Europe as well. Van Houten (2005) describes pilot programs using the CEFR in Canada, Japan, and South America. In the United States, there is increasing interest in the CEFR, too, as can be gleaned from sessions at major U.S. foreign language conferences such as the 2006 annual meeting of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (NECTFL) ("Adapting the Common European Framework of Reference to the Americans") and the 2007 annual conference of ACTFL ("Bridging U.S. and European Assessment Principles"). The Educational Testing Service has recognized the role the CEFR plays from a test methodological point of view and has completed a study comparing the Test of English as a Foreign Language with the CEFR (Tannenbaum & Wylie, 2005). Cummins (2007) has used the CEFR as the

basis of Linguafolio, a learner portfolio, for U.S. audiences.

One reason for the worldwide attention the CEFR has received may be the fact that it offers a more comprehensive and detailed system of level descriptions than most other systems. Another reason may be that the CEFR was developed on the basis of research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), foreign language education, and test research. The effort invested in the empirical validation of the CEFR is commonly acknowledged, even though there may remain questions as to its comprehensiveness (Hudson, 2005). From a language education policy point of view, the CEFR has been praised for its potential to facilitate a convergence of differing systems worldwide (Mocket, Byrnes, & Slater 2006). Van Houton (2005) believes that the CEFR may also be used in the United States to "facilitate mobility among levels and institutions, as well as among nations" (p. 15). As the remainder of this article intends to show, the CEFR offers a variety of innovative solutions for language education policy questions, in both European and non-European contexts.

The next section presents a standard model of quality management. Then, those parts of the CEFR that focus on issues of quality and raising quality standards will be discussed in detail. The last section addresses how the CEFR may be used to develop quality guidelines, plan quality-driven learning processes and outcomes, and guide the quality management process.

Quality Management

Quality management is an approach that was developed in the 1940s and 1950s, mainly in the United States and Japan, to eliminate errors and defects in production processes in industrial contexts (Heyworth, 2002). It does so by carefully analyzing the function of individual elements, paying attention to good design, and giving responsibility for quality to the workers involved in the production process.

The question, of course, is if techniques from the work and organization sciences can be applied to foreign language teaching (Brown & Heyworth, 1999; von der Handt, 2003). One reason to think they cannot is that specialists in foreign language education are undecided about how to define quality in foreign language education because the object of quality management in our field–foreign language competence–is an extremely complex "product." Indeed, the genuinely interactive character of foreign language instruction may require the application of standards that are quite different from those applied to industrial processes or services (Brown & Heyworth, 1999; von der Handt, 2003). Yet another reason the techniques may not transfer is that the customer orientation of the industrial model creates problems because the supplier of the service–the school or the teacher–obviously is not the only person responsible for the product–good learning (Brown & Heyworth, 1999; von der Handt, 2003). In addition, the foreign language learner as the "client" is not really able to choose between different products, as these are, more often than not, prescribed (for example, by curricula). And finally, the industrial model may be only partially transferable to the process of learning a foreign language because the long-term successes of learning processes cannot easily be measured.

On the other hand, quality management has been shown to improve the quality of processes and services in educational institutions (Heyworth, 2002). Furthermore, it seems reasonable to assume that the precise description of learning requirements, teaching methods, and evaluation criteria resulting from a quality management approach may optimize learning processes considerably.

Quality management is best known by its national and international acronyms–European EN or the international industry standard ISO (International Organization for Standardization, 2003). The CEFR largely follows an objective similar to the concept of quality management as it is defined in the currently valid standard ISO 9000: 2000. This standard describes quality management as a set of coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to quality (International Organization for Standardization, 2003; for a general introduction to quality management, cf. Hoyle, 2001). More precisely, quality management strives to ensure that work processes take place in a specific manner determined by the requirements put forth by the organization itself. In this way, trust is developed between the organization's management and its clients regarding the quality of a product. Products may be industrial products in the classic sense, such as cars, textiles, or toys, as well as services like medical treatment or language courses. The five major quality management instruments–quality planning, quality control, quality assessment, quality assurance, and quality improvement–are described below.

Quality planning, according to the ISO 9000: 2000 standards, is the part of quality management that focuses on setting quality objectives and specifying operational processes and their related resources to fulfil the goals of the quality management process (International Organization for Standardization, 2003). While quality policy, one element of quality planning, defines the organization's "quality philosophy" abstractly, its other elements concentrate on identifying concrete quality objectives, concrete product requirements, and concrete work processes. Thus, quality planning is concerned with planning a product with respect to the procedures and activities to be carried out during the implementation of the quality management system. This last point may seem redundant, but in reality, quality often is jeopardized when tasks and competences are not clearly determined. Therefore, documentation of responsibilities plays a key role in the development and assurance of quality. A further quality planning subtheme is the creation of a quality management plan that

contains information about the different activities to be implemented to develop and improve quality and their relationship to one another.

The second instrument focusing on fulfilling quality requirements is quality control (International Organization for Standardization, 2003). Quality control compares intermediate or final results to the quality goals established during quality planning so that counter measures may be implemented in the event of discrepancies. It includes all the execution procedures and actions undertaken to fulfil the demands for quality products or services tailored to suit the end users' needs. Its goal is to achieve an appropriate and satisfactory quality economically and reliably.

To be reliable, quality control needs to be informed by quality assessment, which is the third instrument of quality management. Quality assessment is based on a system of actions to guarantee that the quality control will be efficient. It includes the assessment of products and production processes, and is used to determine if the quality system functions within certain boundaries of tolerance determined by the end user's requirements.

Quality assurance, the fourth instrument, is considered to be the part of quality management that generates trust regarding the success of the relevant quality requirements set out for the product. It refers to the documentation and disclosure of all measures that develop and assure quality.

The final element of quality management is quality improvement. It consists of measures undertaken to increase the efficiency of actions and procedures with the purpose of achieving additional benefits for the organization and its users.

The question for language teachers, materials developers, curriculum planners, evaluators, and others is how to implement the basic elements of quality management in language teaching and learning processes. The following section addresses how the CEFR may be used to provide these elements with respect to foreign language education.

Quality-Relevant Aspects of the CEFR

For most people, the CEFR's most well-known and appreciated aspect may be the description of foreign language competences and their categorization into six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2, with A1 referring to the lowest level and C2 to the highest level (Little, 2003; Morrow, 2004; North, 2004; Schmenk, 2004). In addition to a general foreign language competence (the global scale) (Heyworth, 2004), a great number of partial competences (the subscales) also are described (Morrow, 2004).

The global description of level B2–the upper-intermediate level–for example, is as follows:

> Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. (Council of Europe, 2001)[2]

In addition to the global competence scale, the CEFR includes 54 scales that address partial competences for the following areas: communicative activities, interactive activities, productive activities, communicative strategies, working with text, and communicative language competence. All of these categories are divided again into subcategories; for example, the category written interaction is divided into the subcategories overall written interaction; correspondence; and notes, messages, and forms. An example of a descriptor from the subscale correspondence at the B2 level is the following: "Can write letters conveying degrees of emotion and highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences and commenting on the cor-

respondent's news and views" (Council of Europe, 2001).[3]

Both the global as well as the analytical descriptors of foreign language competence in the CEFR may play a central role within a quality management system because they may be used to serve as criteria for the description of foreign language competence. This connection between the CEFR and the quality of teaching and learning processes already has been considered in the literature on the CEFR (e.g., Brown & Heyworth, 1999; Heyworth, 2002).

The CEFR competence descriptors allow for the formulation of quality requirements for the product of foreign language competence. This is a form of quality planning, whereas the competence descriptors themselves may be considered criteria for quality control. Of course, quality requirements are not limited to the criteria of the CEFR, e.g. the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines–Speaking (1999) may be used in the same way. With respect to quality management as a whole, however, the use of the competence descriptors is somewhat limited because they describe only the product of teaching and learning and not its processes.

There is, however, a feature of the CEFR that may help in the formulation of criteria for teaching and learning processes– the question boxes. These are invitations to reflect on a broad range of activities related to the teaching, learning, and assessment of foreign languages. Framework users are invited to "consider and where appropriate state" (Council of Europe, 2001)[4] how they would answer each set of questions. The following excerpt shows that these aspects of the CEFR are not simply ornamental, but of central importance for the quality development and assurance of teaching and learning processes. This question box refers to the situational context of the target language use:

> Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state: in which kinds of communicative interaction the learner will need/

be equipped/be required to engage; which roles the learner will need/ be equipped/be required to play in the interaction. (Council of Europe, 2001)[5]

This question box tries to engage a user-group–language teachers, materials developers, curriculum planners, evaluators, and others–to reflect on the situations and kinds of interactions learners will have to be able to deal with in the target language. The question also implies that consideration needs to be given to the skills a learner already has acquired so that it can be determined which skills need to be developed next. The goal is to formulate concrete requirements, such as evaluation criteria that may be communicated to the learner.

At a more abstract level, it is evident that the goal of these question boxes is to elicit differentiated statements about particular facets of the product termed foreign language competence. The question boxes go beyond the competence descriptors as descriptions of the product because they systematically look at issues related to learning processes, as well as teaching and learning methods. Moreover, the question boxes emphasize the process dimension, which is of primary interest to quality management.

The question boxes are scattered throughout the entire CEFR and therefore may be more difficult to locate than the competence descriptors. Because of their importance for the conception of a quality management system for language courses, language learning programs, and the creation of materials for self-directed learning, the following section provides an overview of these question boxes. Due to space limitations, only a few select areas will be discussed; complete lists are provided in Appendix B.

Quality Management on the Basis of the CEFR

Quality Planning: Quality Policies and Quality Objectives

Quality policies and objectives are only marginally referred to in the CEFR. In Chapter 3–the chapter that focuses on the common reference levels–there are two question boxes that may be interpreted as focusing on quality policies. These question boxes ask the reader why and to what end he or she intends to use the CEFR. Determining purposes and objectives is a central element of defining quality policies. Proclamations relating to the quality policies of an organization often are included in mission statements (e.g., Association of Language Testers in Europe, 2007).

The first of these two question boxes refers to the various ways of using the competence descriptors that make up the heart of the CEFR. The box invites users to reflect on their interest in the levels (Council of Europe, 2001), specifically, if their interest is constructor-oriented, i.e., focused on learning objectives, syllabus content, and teacher guidelines; if their interest is assessor-oriented, i.e., focused on increasing the consistency of assessment; or if their interest is user-oriented, i.e., focused on reporting results to employers, parents, and learners.

The second question box refers to the relationship between the levels described by the CEFR and previously established grading systems. Here, users of the CEFR are invited to determine whether they are primarily interested in establishing a set of profiling levels to record progress in proficiency; identifying transparent criteria for grades; or establishing through a common framework coherent relationships between educational sectors, proficiency levels, and assessment types (Council of Europe, 2001). For example, if the goal of a foreign language department is to develop a curriculum, syllabus, and teaching materials to help learners reach particular preestablished educational standards, then that department's interest is primarily constructor-ori-

ented. The department will ask what exactly it is that learners need to be able to know or do, and will develop teaching and learning goals and objectives according to these preestablished standards. Its work will be guided by knowledge of teaching methods and learning processes, as well as knowledge of curriculum or syllabus design.

However, if the goal of that same department is to determine its students' foreign language competences as reliably and objectively as possible, then its interest is primarily assessor-oriented. The department will ask not only what learners need to be able to know or do, but also how well they need to know or do these things. It will strive to develop tests on the basis of a theoretical construct or model of second language proficiency; specify test goals and target groups; try to standardize testing and rating procedures as much as possible; formulate criteria for the selection of test authors and raters; and try to calibrate the test on the basis of a test already shown to be a reliable and valid measure of the competences or proficiency in question.

Even though test authors' primary interests may vary considerably with respect to what they expect the test to accomplish, there always will be an interest in improving quality, whether it is the quality of the teaching and learning process or the quality of the assessment. Obviously, quality management systems will differ depending on the type of interest and thus, the specific quality objectives. Therefore, the questions contained in the question boxes clearly are important to consider given the value of users determining why they want to use the CEFR.

Quality Planning: Products

The central tasks in quality planning are crafting a detailed description of the product and identifying those product requirements that determine its quality. These tasks are dealt with at great length in chapters 4 and 5 of the CEFR. Chapter 4 is primarily concerned with the product of foreign language competence and how it may be conceptual-

TABLE 1

CEFR Descriptors Serving as Quality Goals in a Beginner Course

Competence Area	CEFR Descriptor
General linguistic range	Has a very basic range of simple expressions about personal details and needs of a concrete type
Overall listening comprehension	Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses to assimilate meaning
Listening to announcements and instructions	Can understand instructions addressed carefully and slowly and follow short, simple directions
Overall reading comprehension	Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words, and basic phrases and rereading as required
Reading correspondence	Can understand short, simple messages on postcards
Reading for orientation	Can recognize familiar names, words, and very basic phrases on simple notices in the most common everyday situations.
Reading for information and argument	Can get an idea of the content of simpler informational material and short simple descriptions, especially if there is visual support
Reading instructions	Can follow short, simple written directions (e.g., to go from X to Y)
Vocabulary range	Has a basic vocabulary repertoire of isolated words and phrases related to particular concrete situations
Grammatical accuracy	Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a learnt repertoire

Note: From *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Adapted with permission.

ized with respect to the context of language use, the themes of communication, communicative tasks and purposes, communicative language activities and strategies, communicative language processes, and the kinds of texts and media that occur in the language use situation. Chapter 5 discusses learners' general competences and skills, as well as their specific communicative language competences and skills.

These two chapters contain a seemingly endless number of competence scales. They describe communicative activities, communication strategies, working with

text, and communicative language competence. These competence descriptors may serve as relatively general product requirements in the sense of learning goals, i.e., foreign language competence requirements for learners. (See Appendix A for a list of scales found in the CEFR.)

As an example, Table 1 presents competence descriptors describing competences in the receptive skills at level A1, which may be used as quality goals to plan a course for beginners or construct a language test to verify whether or not these goals have been reached.

If the competence descriptors are intended to form the basis of a language course, then they need to be operationalized during the syllabus design stage (cf. Byram, 2000; Harmer, 2001; Nunan, 1988). To this end, specific learning objectives are derived from general learning goals. The goal that reads "able to understand simple announcements" may be translated into the objectives "able to understand announcements in trains," "able to understand announcements in language courses," and "able to understand instructions for technical appliances." Then teaching methods, instructional materials, and tasks to reach these objectives may be selected. However, if the competence descriptors are intended to form the basis of a language test, then test items need to be written. For example, if the test is to determine if learners are able to understand simple postcards, a postcard may be presented to them with comprehension questions.

As useful as competence scales are, when it comes to determining quality requirements, they inevitably fall short with respect to the conditions and prerequisites for foreign language acquisition. This is what the question boxes intend to accomplish. They are therefore complementary to the competence scales. The following example illustrates how question boxes relate to the conditions of learning:

> Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:
> * the situations which the learner will need/be equipped/be required to handle;
> * the locations, institutions/organizations, persons, objects, events and actions with which the learner will be concerned. (Council of Europe, 2001)[6]

Together with a situations matrix in the CEFR (see Table 2), the question box allows for the systematic planning of situations that should be part of a curriculum designed for a particular target group.

On the basis of this matrix of language use situations, language and content learning goals may be identified at the micro level. For example, if a student is to demonstrate that he or she is able to effectively take part in a debate, he or she must be able to define a problem, react to the contributions of others, explain the difference between his or her position and the positions of others, support his or her position with examples, summarize, argue convincingly, and so forth. To do all this, the student needs a large academic vocabulary, linguistic routines with which to structure texts and establish cohesion between textual elements, appropriate sociolinguistic registers, and so forth.

The remaining question boxes in Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the physical and mental contexts of language use; communication themes; communicative tasks, purposes, activities, and strategies; texts and media; general competences of learners; and their communicative language competence (see Appendix B for a detailed list of these question boxes).

Quality Planning: Processes

Regarding the process dimension of learning and teaching foreign languages, the CEFR does not provide scaled descriptors, but it does contain a number of question boxes (in chapters 6, 7, and 8) that address the issue.

Chapter 6 is concerned with how learners develop the ability to carry out tasks, activities, and processes; how teachers may facilitate these processes; and which curricular measures are best suited to develop these abilities. For example, if one believes that interaction and the negotiation of meaning are key to successful foreign language learning (Foster, 1998; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994), then the entire curriculum needs to be designed to provide a significant number of interaction opportunities.

Chapter 7 discusses in detail the role of communicative tasks for acquiring foreign language competence. The decidedly functional bent of the CEFR has been responsible for the greatly increased use of communicative tasks in language courses, teaching materials, and tests. Some European countries have only recently started to adopt

TABLE 2

Situations Matrix

Domain	Locations	Institutions	People	Objects	Events	Operations	Texts
Personal	Home: house, rooms, garden –own –of family –of friends –of strangers Own space in hostel, hotel The country-side, seaside	The family Social networks	(Grand) Parents, offspring, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws, spouses, intimates, friends, acquaintances	Furnishing and furniture Clothing Household equipment Toys, tools, personal hygiene Art objects, books Wild/domestic animals, pets Trees, plants, lawn, ponds Household goods Handbags Leisure/ sports equipment	Family occasions Encounters Incidents, accidents Natural phenomena Parties, visits Walking, cycling, motoring Holidays, excursions Sports events	Living routines: Dressing, undressing, cooking, eating, washing, do-it-yourself activities, gardening Reading, radio and TV Entertaining Hobbies Games and sports	Teletext Guarantees Recipes Instructional material Novels, magazines Newspapers Junk mail Brochures Personal letters Broadcast and recorded spoken texts
Public	Public spaces: Street, square, park Public transport Shops, (super) markets Hospitals, surgeries, clinics Sports stadiums, field, halls Theatre, cinema, entertainment Restaurant, pub, hotel Places of worship	Public authorities Political bodies The law Public health Services clubs Societies Political parties Denominations	Members of the public Officials Shop personnel Police, army, security Drivers, conductors Passengers Players, fans, spectators Actors, audiences Waiters, barpersons Receptionists Priests, congregation	Money, purse, wallet Forms Goods Weapons Rucksacks Cases, grips Balls Programs Meals, drinks, snacks Passports, licences	Incidents Accidents, illnesses Public meetings Lawsuits, court trials Rag days, fines, arrests Matches, contests Performances Weddings, funerals	Buying and obtaining public services Using medical devices Journeys by road/ship/air Public entertainment and leisure activities Religious services	Public announcements and notices Labels and packaging Leaflets, graffiti Tickets, timetables Notices, regulations Programs Contracts Menus Sacred texts, sermons, hymns

more communicative approaches in their foreign language curricula. The emphasis on function and communication in foreign language teaching throughout Europe may be one of the most important contributions the CEFR has made in the European context.

Chapter 8 considers issues of curriculum design to support plurilingualism. As can be seen in Table 3, the question boxes

of these chapters deal with foreign language acquisition theories, methodological issues, communicative tasks, and linguistic diversity or plurilingualism.

One of the most valuable contributions the CEFR has made may be the fact that it encourages its users to think systematically about exactly how learners may be expected to acquire the for-

TABLE 2 *continued*

Domain	Locations	Institutions	People	Objects	Events	Operations	Texts
Occupa-tional	Offices Factories Workshops Ports, rail-ways Farms Airports Stores, shops Service industries Hotels Civil service	Firms Multi-national corporations Nationalized industries Trade unions	Employers/-ees Managers Colleagues Subordinates Workmates Clients Customers Reception-ists, secretaries Cleaners	Business machinery Industrial machinery Industrial and craft tools	Meetings Interviews Receptions Conferences Trade fairs Consulta-tions Seasonal sales Industrial accidents Industrial disputes	Business administra-tion Industrial management Production operations Office proce-dures Trucking Sales opera-tions Selling, mar-keting Computer operation Office main-tenance	Business letter Report mem-orandum Life and safety notices Instructional manuals Regulations Advertising material Labeling and packaging Job descrip-tion Sign posting Visiting cards
Educational	Schools: hall, classrooms, playground Sports fields, corridors Colleges Universities Lecture the-atres Seminar rooms Student Union Halls of resi-dence Laboratories Canteen	School College University Learned societies Professional institutions Adult educa-tion bodies	Class teachers Teaching staff Caretakers Assistant staff Parents Classmates Professors, lecturers (Fellow) students Library and laboratory staff Refectory staff, clean-ers Porters, secretaries	Writing material School uniforms Games equipment and clothing Food Audiovisual equipment Blackboard and chalk Computers Briefcases and school bags	Return to school/entry Breaking up Visits and exchanges Parents' days, evenings Sports days, matches Disciplinary problems	Assembly Lessons Games Playtime Clubs and societies Lectures, essay writing Laboratory work Library work Seminars and tutorials Homework Debates and discussions	Authentic texts (as above) Textbooks, readers Reference books Blackboard text OP text Computer screen text Videotext Exercise materials Journal articles Abstracts Dictionaries

eign language for functional purposes. This process-oriented point of view establishes congruence between means and goals, i.e., students' activities in class are related to what they are expected to be able to do. It also establishes transparency because tests are designed to verify that functional goals have been reached and functional activities are used in class to reach these functional goals. In addition, because this relationship is reflected in current thinking about SLA, the gap between research and practice is starting to close.

TABLE 3

Question Boxes in Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of the *Common European Framework of Reference* Regarding the Acquisition of Foreign Language Competence

Aspects of Learning and Teaching Foreign Languages	Partial Aspects	Page No.
Foreign Language Acquisition Theories	Language learning and language acquisition	139
	Opportunities for language acquisition	139
	Assumptions concerning language learning	140
Methodological Issues	General methodological approaches	143
	Roles of teachers and learners in the organization, direction, implementation, and assessment of language learning processes	145
	Use of instructional media	145
	Types of written and spoken texts and their role in language learning and teaching frameworks	147
	Place of activities, tasks, and strategies in the learning/teaching program	147
	Methods to develop general competences (e.g., knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge)	149
	Steps to promote learner independence	149
	Goals and methods of vocabulary acquisition	150, 151
	Goals and methods of grammar acquisition	152, 153
	Goals and methods of pronunciation and orthography acquisition	154
	Developing pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence	154
	Errors and mistakes	156
Tasks	Real life and pedagogic tasks	167
	Criteria for selecting tasks	
	Meaning orientation vs. form orientation	
	Tasks and learner strategies	
	Adapting tasks to learner needs	
	Evaluating task completion	
Linguistic Diversification	Previous experience with linguistic and cultural plurality	176
	Existing plurilingual and pluricultural competences	
	Concurrent experience with linguistic and cultural plurality	
	Types of plurilingual and pluricultural objectives	
	Establishing effective relationships between different components of plurilingual and pluricultural competences	
	Types of partial competences and their uses	
	Options and forms of differentiation for the development of a diversified competence	
	Forms of learning organization	
	Evaluating partial and diversified plurilingual and pluricultural competences	

Quality Control and Quality Assessment

The task of quality control is to compare the final or intermediate results to the quality objectives established in quality planning and to deal with discrepancies. For this, the CEFR also offers a basis, in two ways:

1. The scales describing foreign language competence in chapters 4 and 5 may be turned into criteria to assess whether a learner actually has achieved these competences. Indeed, these competence descriptors are highly relevant for the design of tests and other language assessments (Alderson et al., 2006; Council of Europe, 2003; Fulcher, 2004; Hudson, 2005; Huhta & Figueras, 2004; North, 2004). There is virtually no high-stakes test in Europe today that does not refer to the CEFR; consider, for example, the International English Language Testing Systems, Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera [Certificates of Spanish as a Foreign Language], or the Test de Conaissance du Français [Test of Language Competence in French] (cf. Cummins, 2007, for a recent list of tests using the CEFR).

2. Complementing the competence descriptors, chapter 9 of the CEFR focuses on assessment. It contains two question boxes that invite users to reflect on types of assessment, assessment procedures, and using the CEFR to guide assessment procedures and report results.

To establish a functional quality control system or, for that matter, a foreign language curriculum, it is crucial to select tests and assessment methods that are well suited to the individual learning situation. It is necessary to consider, for example, whether learning outcomes are to be assessed continually (formative evaluation) or if progress should be measured at the end of a learning program (summative evaluation); whether the goal is to assess the achievement of certain learning objectives (achievement tests) or a general foreign language profi-ciency; whether the results of a test are to be interpreted in reference to a reference group (norm-oriented evaluation) or to objective criteria (criteria-oriented evaluation); whether it is linguistic knowledge that will be tested (competence test) or the ability to use this knowledge (performance test); whether competences are assessed holistically or analytically; whether the evaluation is done by an evaluator (teacher assessment) or by the learner him- or herself (self-assessment). Table 4 shows the contents of two question boxes focusing on general issues of evaluation and types of assessments, as well as on the economy and feasibility of particular assessment systems. The competence descriptors of the CEFR and the question boxes together provide ample opportunity to develop criteria for quality control.

Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement

The CEFR contains no clear guidelines for quality assurance and quality improvement. However, the CEFR as a whole may be interpreted as a call for the systematic documentation of all measures initiated by it, that is, systematic documentation that may lead to a general increase in trust in the quality of the product of foreign language competence. The prerequisites of quality assurance are fulfilled when there is a document that states which learning objectives are to be achieved during a learning program, which methods will be used, and what is expected of the learners.

Similarly, the aspect of quality improvement, that is, the optimization of learning and teaching processes, is not specifically addressed. However, because the CEFR asks the user to explain his or her teaching assumptions and methods and to reflect on the characteristics of learning situations as well as the characteristics of learners, the initial steps for quality improvement have been taken. When methods and assumptions are made transparent, they may be monitored more systematically and, if

TABLE 4

Question Boxes in Chapter 9 of the *Common European Framework of Reference* Regarding the Assessment of Foreign Language Competence

Aspects of Assessment and Evaluation	Partial Aspects	Page No.
Types of Assessment	Suitability of assessments for learner needs	192
	Suitability for different pedagogical cultures	
	Usefulness of assessment for washback purposes	
	Achievement vs. proficiency testing	
	Criterion-referencing vs. norm-referencing	
	Training of teachers in techniques and interpretation	
	Integrated approach in relation to standards and definitions	
	Learner self-assessment	
	Relevance of the CEFR scales and further developments	
Feasibility of Assessment Systems	Theoretical categories vs. operational approaches	196
	Adaptability of CEFR to local requirements	

needed, may be improved, enhancing the quality of the product.

Quality Management With the Framework: Opportunities and Limitations

This article started by introducing a classic concept for quality management and went on to illustrate how the CEFR may be used as a point of departure for a quality management system. It can be claimed that the CEFR offers a comprehensive and systematic overview of exactly what foreign language learners need to learn and how they need to learn it. This means that the CEFR may be used to construct a quality management system for individual purposes. The document's tables and question boxes may be used as checklists for quality planning and quality control in foreign language teaching and learning.

Transferring techniques such as quality management from the work and organization sciences to the field of foreign language learning certainly requires some

getting used to. However, some aspects of quality management already have been implemented in the United States under the name Understanding by Design (Brown 2004; McTighe & Wiggins, 1999; Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006; Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). There are obvious parallels between both approaches: The goal of both is to control, ideally to optimize, learning processes; both use national or international standards to determine objectives; both require a precise definition of objectives; and both seek to measure change explicitly. While quality management may be the more general approach, involve a larger number of actors and institutions, and allow certification according to international standards, the relationship between it and Understanding by Design certainly should receive greater scrutiny to benefit both approaches.

One of the problems of the CEFR may be that it is not very user-friendly (Komorowska, 2004). It contains lists, lists, and lists—and then more lists. However, if one has a particular goal, the richness and

comprehensiveness of the CEFR become apparent through a careful reading of the document, perhaps combined with a check-list approach to its insights. Then it may be used for a variety of goals, including, for example, as a basis for quality planning and quality control. Some claim that the CEFR focuses too much on the product dimension of foreign language acquisition, but it contains many references to language acquisition and language learning processes.

The goals of the Council of Europe–to promote and facilitate communication and interaction among speakers of different mother tongues in order to promote mobility, mutual understanding, and cooperation; overcome prejudice and discrimination; and provide a sound basis, a common yardstick, for the mutual recognition of language qualifications–appear to have been achieved in principle through the development of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. The third goal of the CEFR–to help learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies, and educational administrators reflect on their current practice and to situate and coordinate their efforts–has been achieved as well, at least partially. For example, the document has been used as a basis to develop widely used instruments such as the European Language Portfolio (Schärer, 2006), which is intended to help learners document their language learning efforts and reflect on their learning.

The CEFR has had an enormous impact on foreign language curricula, teaching, and assessment materials throughout Europe. Reflecting on current practice and coordinating efforts are two important features of a quality management system. Because of its plurilingual and multicultural approach, in addition to creating better conditions for the study of foreign languages in Europe, the CEFR is ideally suited to initiate a worldwide discussion about quality management in foreign language teaching and learning. If it succeeds in initiating such a discussion, the CEFR indeed will prove to be–not only for Europe–a language educational policy document of lasting value.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. From Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (pp. 5—6), by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Reprinted with permission. (Page numbers here and in subsequent references to the Council of Europe refer to the electronic version of the CEFR.)
2. From Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (p. 24), by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Reprinted with permission.
3. From Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (p. 83), by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Reprinted with permission.
4. From Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (p. 43), by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Reprinted with permission.
5. From Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (p. 84), by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Reprinted with permission.

6. From *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (p. 46), by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Reprinted with permission.

References

ACTFL proficiency guidelines–Speaking. (1999). Yonkers, NY: American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages.

Alderson, J., Figueras, N., Kuijper, H., Nold, G., Takala, S., & Tardieu C. (2006). Analysing tests of reading and listening in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference: The experience of the Dutch CEFR project. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 3*(1), 3–30.

Association of Language Testers in Europe. (2007). About ALTE. Retrieved September 2, 2007, from ALTE Web site at http://www.alte.org/about_alte/index.php

Baker, C. (2002). Council of Europe: Common European framework of reference. Learning, teaching, assessment. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 6*(3), 467–470.

Beer, W., & Jacob, J. (1985). *Language policy and national unity*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allenheld.

Brown, J. L. (2004). *Making the most of understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Brown, P., & Heyworth, F. (1999). *Guide de l'utilisateur pour l'assurance qualité et la maîtrise de la qualité*. [User's guide for quality assurance and quality management]. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Byram, M. (Ed.) (2000). *Routledge encyclopedia of language teaching and learning*. London: Routledge.

Council of Europe. (1982). *Recommendation no. R(82) 18 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning modern languages*. Strasbourg, France: Author.

Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved September 2, 2007, from http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/Common_Framework_of_Reference/1cadre.asp#TopOfPage

Council of Europe. (2003). *Relating language examinations to the common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEF). Preliminary pilot version of a proposed manual*. DGIV/EDU/LANG (2003), 5. Strasbourg, France: Author.

Crawford, J. (2007). *The decline of bilingual education: How to reverse a troubling trend?* Retrieved September 2, 2007, from http://users.rcn.com/crawj/langpol/Crawford_Decline_of_BE.pdf

Cummins, P. W. (2007). LinguaFolio: American model for the European language portfolio. *Modern Language Journal, 91*(1), 117–121.

Daoust, D. (1997). Language planning and language reform. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *The handbook of sociolinguistics* (pp. 436–454). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Foster, P. (1998). A classroom perspective on the negotiation of meaning. *Applied Linguistics, 19*(1), 1–23.

Fulcher, G. (2004). Deluded by artifices? The common European framework and harmonization. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 1*(4), 253–266.

Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited.

Heyworth, F. (2002). Chapter 7–Quality assurance and quality control in language learning and teaching. In S. Bailly, S. Devitt, M.-J. Gremmo, F. Heyworth, A. Hopkins, B. Jones, M. Makosch, P. Riley, G. Stoks, & J. Trim (Eds.), *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment. A guide for users*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Heyworth, F. (2004). Why the CEF is important. In K. Morrow (Ed.), *Insights from the common European framework* (pp. 12–21). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hoyle, D. (2001). *ISO 9000 quality systems handbook*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Hudson, T. (2005). Trends in assessment scales and criterion-referenced language assessment. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 25*, 205–227.

Huhta, A., & Figueras, N. (2004). Using the CEF to promote language learning through diagnostic testing. In K. Morrow (Ed.), *Insights from the common European framework* (pp. 65–76). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

International Organization for Standardization. (2003). *ISO Standards Compendium ISO 9000–Quality management*. Geneva: Author.

Komorowska, H. (2004). The CEF in pre- and in-service teacher education. In K. Morrow (Ed.), *Insights from the common European framework* (pp. 55–64). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Lafayette, R. (1996). *National standards, a catalyst for reform. ACTFL Foreign Language Education Series*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook.

Little, D. (2003). The common European framework: Principles, challenges, issues. *Neusprachliche Mitteilungen aus Wissenschaft und Praxis* [Neophilologic Bulletin for Research and Teaching], 56(3), 130–140.

Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (1999). *The understanding by design handbook*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mocket, A., Byrnes, H., & Slater, R. (2006, November). *The power of language: U.S. language policy five years after 9/11*. Plenary session panel at ACTFL 2006, Nashville, TN. Retrieved September 2, 2007, from ACTFL Web site: http://www3.georgetown.edu/departments/german/faculty/byrnesh/Byrnes. ACTFL.11-06.pdf

Morrow, K. (2004). Background of the CEF. In K. Morrow (Ed.), *Insights from the common European framework* (pp. 3–11). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

North, B. (2004). Relating assessments, examinations, and courses to the CEF. In K. Morrow (Ed.), *Insights from the common European framework* (pp. 77–90). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Nunan, D. (1988). *Syllabus design*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Pica, T. (1994). Research on negotiation: What does it reveal about second language learning conditions, processes, and outcomes? *Language Learning, 44*, 493–527.

Schalock, R. L. (2001). *Outcome-based evaluation, 2nd ed*. New York and London: Kluwer Academic.

Schärer, R. (2006). *European language portfolio: Interim report 2005*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.

Schmenk, B. (2004). Drama in the margins? The common European framework of reference and its implications for drama pedagogy in the foreign language classroom. *German as a Foreign Language, 1*, 6–23.

Tannenbaum, R. J., & Wylie, E. C. (2005). *Mapping English language proficiency test scores onto the common European framework*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Tomlinson, C. A., & McTighe, J. (2006). *Integrated differentiated instruction and understanding by design: Connecting content and kids*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Trim, J. (2001, September). *The work of the Council of Europe in the field of modern languages 1997–2001*. Paper presented at a meeting to mark the European Day of Languages at the European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz, Austria.

Van Houten, J. B. (2005). *Achieving articulation through assessment*. Retrieved September 2, 2007, from http://www.nflrc.iastate.edu/nva/worddocuments/assessment_2005/pdf/nsap_achieveing_articulation.pdf

von der Handt, G. (2003). Qualitätssicherung und –entwicklung [Quality assurance and quality development]. In K.-R. Bausch, H. Christ, & J.-J. Krumm (Eds.), *Handbuch Fremdsprachenunterricht, 4. Auflage* [Foreign language instruction, 4th ed.] (pp. 390–394). Tübingen, Germany/Basel, Switzerland: Francke.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

APPENDIX A

Illustrative Scales in Chapters 4 and 5 of the Common European Framework of Reference*

1. Communicative Activities

			Page No.
Reception	Spoken	Overall listening comprehension	71
		Understanding interaction between native speakers	72
		Listening as a member of a live audience	72
		Listening to announcements and instructions	73
		Listening to radio and audio recordings	73
	Audio/Visual	Watching TV and film	77
	Written	Overall reading comprehension	74
		Reading correspondence	75
		Reading for orientation	75
		Reading for information and argument	76
		Reading instructions	76
Interaction	Spoken	Overall spoken interaction	79
		Understanding a native speaker interlocutor	75
		Conversation	80
		Informal discussion	81
		Formal discussion (meetings)	82
		Goal-oriented cooperation	83
		Obtaining goods and services	83
		Information exchange	84
		Interviewing and being interviewed	85
	Written	Overall written interaction	86
		Correspondence	86
		Notes, messages, and forms	87
Production	Spoken	Overall spoken production	64
		Sustained monologue: describing experience	64
		Sustained monologue: putting a case (e.g., debate)	65
		Public announcements	65
		Addressing audiences	66
	Written	Overall written production	67
		Creative writing	67
		Writing reports and essays	68

2. Communication Strategies

		Page No.
Reception	Identifying cues and inferring	78
Interaction	Taking the floor (turn-taking)	88
	Cooperating	89
	Asking for clarification	89
Production	Planning	70
	Compensating	70
	Monitoring and repair	70

3. Working With Text

		Page No.
Text	Taking notes (in lectures, seminars, etc.)	98
	Text processing	98

4. Communicative Language Competence

		Page No.
Linguistics	General range	110
	Vocabulary range	112
	Grammatical accuracy	113
	Vocabulary control	114
	Phonological control	117
	Orthographic control	118
Sociolinguistic	Sociolinguistic	121
Pragmatics	Flexibility	124
	Taking the floor (turn-taking)–repeated	124
	Thematic development	125
	Coherence	125
	Propositional precision	129
	Spoken fluency	129

* Note: From *Common European Framework of Reference for Languges: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*, by the Council of Europe, 2001, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univeristy Press. Copyright 2001 by the Council of Europe. Adapted with permission. (Page numbers have been added.)

APPENDIX B

List of Question Boxes in Chapters 4 and 5 of the Common European Framework of Reference *Regarding the Communicative Competence of Foreign Language Learners**

Aspects of Foreign Language Competence	Partial Aspects	Page No.
Contexts of Language Use	Domains (e.g., personal, public, occupational, educational)	46
	Concrete situations regarding locations, times, institutions, and organizations, involved persons, objects, events, operations, texts	46
	Parameters like handwriting, ambient noise, number of interlocutors, pressure	50
Mental Contexts	Ability to perceive characteristics of the communication situation	51
	Drives, motivations, interests	
	Ability to reflect on one's own experiences	
	Mental characteristics of language use	
	The ability to adapt the mental context of someone involved in communication	
Communication Themes	Themes and subthemes	53
	Concepts and terms referring to themes and subthemes (e.g., locations, institutions/organizations, persons, objects, events, actions)	
Communicative Tasks, Purposes, Activities, and Strategies	Description of communicative tasks generally in the private, public, and educational domains as well as methods for the enquiry into requirements of the learner	54
	Types of tasks in the educational domain as a participant in goal-oriented interactions, projects, role-plays, simulations, etc., or as a teacher	55
	Types of imaginative and artistic uses of language	56
	Productive spoken activities	61
	Productive written activities	63
	Types of aural input and processing methods	68
	Types of visual reception and processing methods (reading goals, reading styles)	71
	Types of communicative interaction and the roles of learners	84
	Mediating activities and strategies	88
	Nonverbal communication	89
	Paralinguistic behavior	90
	Paratextual features	90
	Skills required for the management of communication tasks	93

	Using reference materials	93
Texts and Media	Type of media and type of processing mode (receptive, productive, interactive, in mediation)	95
	Type of media and text-type (receptive, productive, interactive, in mediation)	96
	Assumptions regarding the psycholinguistic processes of different media	97
	Consideration of texts presented to learners	
	Creation of appropriate texts through learners	
General Competences of Learners	Knowledge of the world	102
	Sociocultural knowledge, intercultural awareness	104
	Practical skills and know-how	104
	Cultural mediation roles of the learner, cultural sensitivity	105
	Personality features of the learners	106
	Language and communication awareness, general phonetic awareness and skills	107
	Study skills, heuristic skills, learner autonomy	108
Communicative Language Competence	Lexical competence	112
	Grammatical competence	114
	Morphology	115
	Semantic competence	116
	Phonological competence (skill, sounds, prosody, fluency)	117
	Orthographic, orthoepic competence	118
	Spectrum of greetings, address forms, expletives	122
	Conventions of politeness, impoliteness	
	Sayings, clichés, folk proverbs	
	Register	
	Social varieties	
	Discourse characteristics	130
	Macro and micro functions of language	
	Interaction schemata	