

A QUALITY MATRIX FOR CEFR USE: Examples of promising practices

1 OVERVIEW

Project leader(s) contact: Fergus O'Dwyer

Country: Japan

Institution (not ongoing): Osaka University

Type of context: Classroom level

Educational sector: Tertiary

Main focus of your project: Teaching Practices; Learning/Self-Assessment; Portfolio Use

SUMMARY

Name: Classroom learning cycles with can-do descriptors

Abstract:

Implementation of task-based language learning and teaching (TBLT), classroom implementation of the CEFR, cyclical learning, and assessment fulfilling roles, such as informing the next learning stage, can be combined in a connected pedagogy. Classroom assessment can perform roles such as a decision-making tool, a participatory pedagogical process, and informing the next learning task. Scaled descriptors from the CEFR are used to create clear and concrete descriptors for assessment, which is at the centre of the learning cycle.

Stage: Planning; Implementation; Evaluation

Theme: Teaching; Assessment

CEFR aspects used: Descriptors; self-assessment, strategies/learning to learn, assessment with defined criteria

Main features of this example:

- CEFR descriptors linked to specific tasks
- CEFR-informed classroom assessment
- Self-assessment and learner training

Quality principles particularly demonstrated: Relevance, Validity, Transparency, Coherence, Inclusiveness, Sustainability



2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background: This practice involved a group of twenty language learners who took a presentation skill-based class at Osaka University, with levels ranging from B1 to B2.

Steps/stages: Language instruction can consist of a five stage cycle: Learning Stage Outline; Self-assessment; Goal-setting; Learning Stage; and Reflection (O'Dwyer 2010). The following graphics details the cycle:

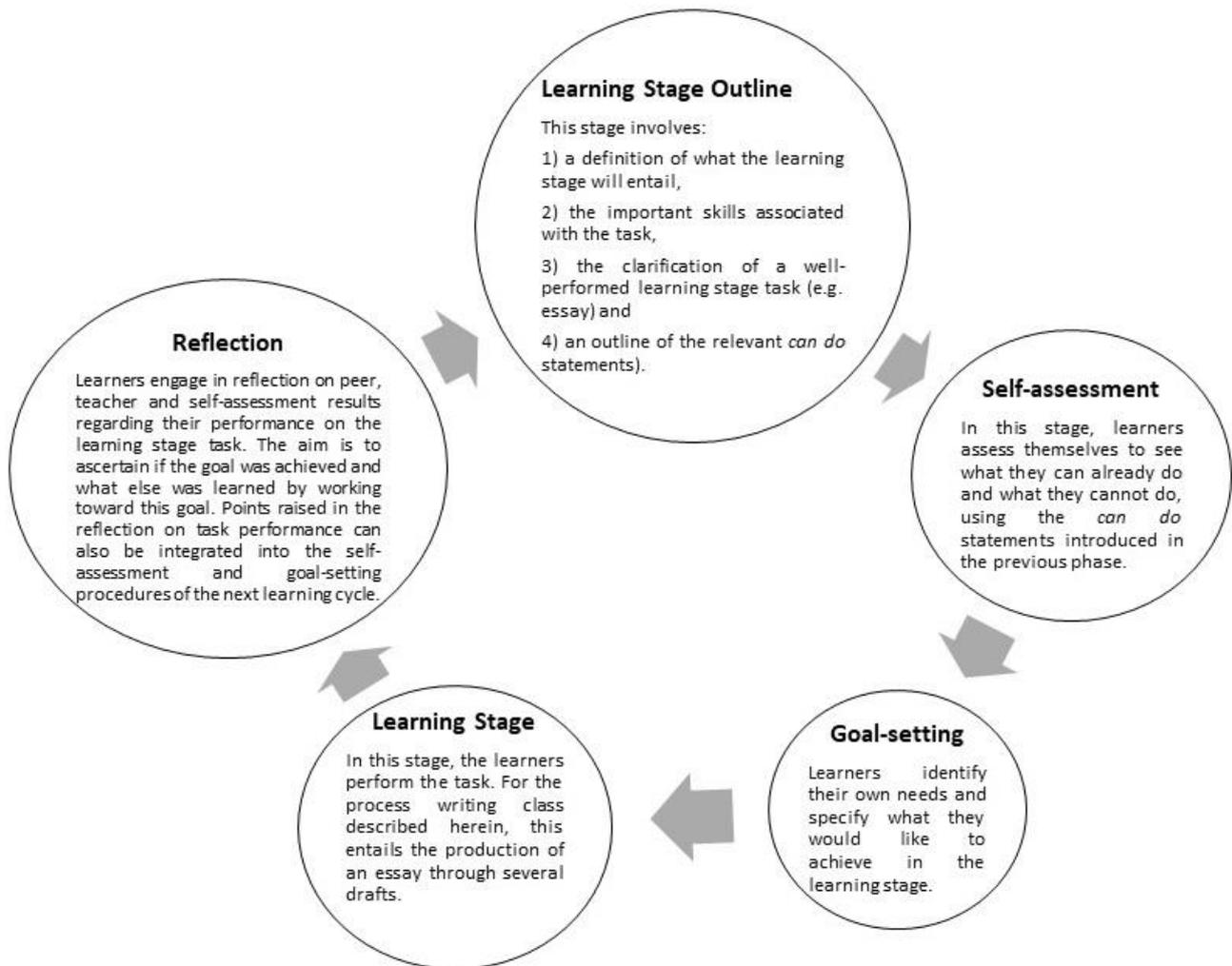


Figure 1 Learning Cycle

In the case of this learning cycle, classroom assessment is designed to facilitate learners in reflecting on previous learning and in effectively looking forward (self-assessing etc.) to future learning. The example learning tasks include both spoken production and an interactive activity. The CEFR descriptors for spoken production and spoken interaction, which were consulted to create the *can-do* checklist for the unit, are given below.

Table 1. CEFR descriptors for spoken production (CEFR: 60)

ADDRESSING AUDIENCES	
B2	Can give a clear, systematically developed presentation, with highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
B1	Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision. Can take follow up questions, but may have to ask for repetition if the speech was rapid.

Table 2. CEFR descriptors for spoken interaction (CEFR: 77)

INFORMAL DISCUSSION (WITH FRIENDS)	
B1	Can give or seek personal views and opinions in discussing topics of interest Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely

Based on these CEFR descriptors, *can do* statements that correspond to each task were created:

	Task	Assessment
Task 1	Discuss and create new product ideas (one idea per group member).	I can agree and disagree politely, exchange personal opinions, negotiate and present about decisions and ideas.
Task 2	Debate the pros and cons of various product ideas from other groups, agree on the best product, give a poster presentation explaining decision.	I can give an effective poster presentation on opinions, decisions and ideas, providing relevant information and clear explanations.
Task 3	Conduct Market Research on one of the best products, present findings.	I can give a short presentation in a clear and precise manner, highlighting significant points and providing relevant supporting detail.
Task 4	Create an infomercial of one of the best products.	I can prepare and present an infomercial, using stress and intonation to convey meaning, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.

Figure 2. Tasks and corresponding Can-do statements

The Task 1 descriptor was created with reference to the following B1 Spoken interaction descriptors (CEFR: 77):

(Step 1) CEFR B1 Spoken interaction descriptors:

Can give or seek personal views and opinions in discussing topics of interest.

Can express belief, opinion, agreement and disagreement politely.

The above descriptors were combined, and the following Task 1 descriptor was created:

(Step 2) *I can agree and disagree politely, exchange personal opinions, negotiate and present about decisions and ideas.* Descriptors for the presentation task were created on the basis of the B1 and B2 descriptors of Spoken production (Addressing audiences) descriptors (*ibid*, p.60). The presentation descriptors for Task 2 and Task 3 are based on the following B1 level descriptors:

(Step 3) CEFR B1 Spoken production descriptors:

Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision.

The Task 2 descriptor specified the type of presentation and what the presentation is about, as well as what the presentation should contain. The modified descriptor is given below:

(Step 4) *I can give an effective poster presentation on opinions, decisions and ideas, providing relevant information and clear explanations (Task 2).*

For the Task 3 descriptor, the instructor specified the manner of the presentation. This fluency requirement slightly elevated the performance goal.

(Step 5) *I can give a short presentation in a clear and precise manner, highlighting significant points and providing relevant supporting detail (Task 3).*

The final task descriptor (Task 4) is based on the following B2 level descriptor (Ibid. 60):

(Step 6) CEFR B2 Spoken production descriptor:

Can give a clear, systematically developed presentation, with highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.

The modifications specify the task and added the manner of the presentation as follows:

(Step 7) *I can prepare and present an infomercial, using stress and intonation to convey meaning, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion (Task 4).*

Assessment rubrics directly link to the task descriptors, see example below:

1 The <u>poster</u> was informative and visually impressive	1 2 3 4 5
2 The <u>presentation style</u> was effective	1 2 3 4 5
3 The presenters provided <u>relevant information</u>	1 2 3 4 5
4 The <u>explanations</u> were clear and easy to understand	1 2 3 4 5
<i>The presenters can give an effective poster presentation on opinions, decisions and ideas, providing relevant information and clear explanations *(reasonably well) **(well) *(very well)</i>	
	Total: /20
Comments and advice:	
What was done well:	
What can be improved:	

Figure 3. Poster Presentation Assessment Rubric for Task 2

It is possible to involve learners in the assessment criteria and quality required. This can be done by the learner groups brainstorming answers to the following questions:

“What is a good (informative and visually impressive) poster?”

“What is an effective presentation style?”

“In a poster presentation, how can we provide relevant information?”

“In a poster presentation, how can we provide clear and easy to understand explanations?”

The result of this process is a brainstorming from each learner group for each question, which is provided to the teacher. The teacher then compiles selected answers from the brainstorming and inserts them into an extended rubric.

This extended rubric (see Figure 4) is then presented to learner groups at the beginning of the next class, so that they can refer to answers that might further help their understanding of effective task performance.

The final assessment rubric is supplemented with contributions from the learner groups, so this learner involvement is an example of assessment as a participatory pedagogical process.

1 The <u>poster</u> was informative and visually impressive [Attractive, colourful, clear, and easy to see/understand; makes an impact; has essential information but not too much information]	1 2 3 4 5
2 The presentation style was effective [Loud and slow speech; clear, simple English; used pauses and repetition; used gestures and eye contact effectively; emphasized the important points; there was good combination between presenters]	1 2 3 4 5
3 The presenters provided relevant information [The presenters knew the products well; they gave examples concerning the main points of the poster; they made sure audience understood; the presentation was logical; the presentation made the products appear attractive]	1 2 3 4 5
4 The explanations were clear and easy to understand [The presenters used simple but relevant words; the presentation supplemented the poster with detailed information; the information was summarised well; important words or phrases were emphasized; body language was used well]	1 2 3 4 5
The presenters can give an effective poster presentation on opinions, decisions and ideas, providing relevant information and clear explanations	
*(reasonably well) **(well) *(very well)	Total: /20
Comments and advice: What was done well:	
What can be improved:	

Figure 4. Extended Poster Presentation Assessment Rubric for Task 2

After reflecting on their performance, using the rubric, learners can extend on this reflection on the poster presentation using the following questions:

- “In a presentation, what is easy?”
- “What is interesting?”
- “What can I/we do well?”
- “What is challenging?”
- “What can I/we improve?”
- “How?”

These final two questions can then form goals for the next learning task, the market research presentation (task 3). In this way, assessment informs the next learning stage or task, and is forward-looking, supporting future student learning.

Publications that have been used or produced related to this example:

This text is based on:

O’Dwyer, Fergus, Imig Alexander & Nagai, Noriko (2014) Connectedness through a strong form of TBLT, classroom implementation of the CEFR, cyclical learning, and learning-oriented assessment. *Language Learning in Higher Education*, 3(2), 231- 53. DOI: [10.1515/cercles-2013-0012](https://doi.org/10.1515/cercles-2013-0012)

O’Dwyer, Fergus & Runnels, Judith (2015) Bringing learner self-regulation practices forward. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 5(4), 404-422. https://sisaljournal.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/odwyer_runnels.pdf

3 ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNT:

- Task and course design should facilitate learner progress to connected but more complex competencies. As the *can do* statement of each task illustrates, the performances of a series of tasks are incrementally developed and are gradually more demanding. By relating competencies to learning goals created around the *can do* statements of the CEFR, as above, it is possible to provide realistic and scaled efficacy. By pitching the goals of the final task (Task 4) above the current level of the learners, we are giving the learners a taste of tasks and goals they should aim for in future learning.
- Assessment should inform the next learning stage or task, and be forward-looking, supporting future student learning. Post-task assessment and reflection should lead to goals for the next learning task. Self-assessment and reflection can enable the learner see how quickly they are progressing toward quantifiable and realistic language-learning goals. If the learning tasks are connected, and if learners are given a chance to improve upon related skills in remaining tasks, an assessment culture is created in the classroom. Feedback loops, with reflection leading to the creation of goals for the next learning stage, can create motivation, particularly by facilitating self-efficacy. One part of this process can be scaling which *can do* statements are used for goal-setting for each stage, as in the examples above, which corresponds to the presentation tasks of the course.
- Involve learners in the assessment: The process in the final part of above is helpful as it gets learners to think about how to perform the task well (by engaging with criteria and quality). Some may prefer listing the assessment criteria in Figure 4 without numbers to use as assessment: assessment can focus purely on providing feedback and constructive criticism, rather than assigning a score.
- Integrate such practices with the ELP, for example the "My next language learning target" page of the *CercleS ELP* (European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education 2002).