Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment

A Guide for Users

Sophie BAILLY, Sean DEVITT, Marie-José GREMMO, Frank HEYWORTH, Andy HOPKINS, Barry JONES, Mike MAKOSCH, Philip RILEY, Gé STOKS and John TRIM (Ed.)

Language Policy Division
Strasbourg

CONTENT

SECTION I

FOR ALL USERS

Introduction

This guide is intended to help all members of the language teaching profession to make full use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEF). It supersedes the General User Guide (CC-LANG) and the series of ten specialised guides (CC-LANG (96) 9 –18). The first chapter is addressed to all users. Subsequent chapters are dedicated to the special concerns of particular types of users. Chapter 2 is addressed to those more directly concerned with the actual business of classroom language teaching: teachers, teacher trainers and perhaps the learners themselves. Chapter 3 is addressed to those who work at a greater remove from the classroom, but whose decisions powerfully affect what goes on there: educational authorities, administrators, organisers, and others concerned with curriculum development and quality control. Chapter 4 offers guidance to all those concerned with the development of language teaching textbooks and other materials of all kinds. Chapter 5 is addressed to adult learners, who may gain direct access to CEF. School learners are most likely to have their access mediated through teachers, and are treated in chapter 2.

Many users may fall into more than one category. School inspectors are certainly concerned with quality control. They may have other administrative functions, but are closely concerned with classroom methodology. Practising teachers are often called on to supplement textbooks with additional materials and may well undertake administrative duties involving curricular control and quality assurance. Chapters 2 – 5 have a dual function. The first is to suggest ways in which users may make use of CEF in their specialised professional work. The second is to supplement the existing framework in ways which are specifically relevant to the specialisation concerned.

CHAPTER 1 – GUIDANCE TO ALL USERS

By John Trim

We may now consider the CEF in more detail, taking the chapters in order, section by section. It should be noted that this chapter follows the order and numbering of CEF. Thus 6.1.3.4 identifies the 4th heading in the 3rd sub-section of the 1st section of chapter 6.

A Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment

Introduction

The introductory pages to CEF contain, first, its contents with page numbers for reference. A prefatory note acknowledges the contributions of individuals and institutions to the development of CEF over a ten-year period. Three pages of notes for the user follow, which should be read before the Framework itself (or this guide). Finally, a synopsis of the contents of the chapters and appendices gives an indication of where to find information of different kinds, which users may wish to consult whilst familiarising themselves with the layout of CEF.

Part 1: The CEF in its political and educational context

This first chapter is also introductory, giving users a clear idea of the overall character and intentions of CEF and its setting in the context of Council of Europe policy with regard to modern languages.

1.1 What is the CEF?

Users are invited to read this clear and concise summary of the content and the aims of the CEF.

The Council of Europe

Since users of CEF may not previously have had contact with the Council, they may find it useful to know something of its structure and functions.

Founded on 5 May 1949, by ten founder member states, the Council of Europe is the oldest European international political organisation.

Any European state can become a member of the Council of Europe provided it accepts the principle of the rule of law and guarantees everyone under its jurisdiction the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At present the Council has forty-three member states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation whose main aims are:

- to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law;
- to promote awareness of a European cultural identity and encourage its development;
- to develop common responses to problems facing European society (minorities, xenophobia, environmental protection, bioethics, Aids, drugs, etc.);
- to develop a political partnership with Europe's new democracies; and
- to assist central and eastern European countries with their political, legislative and constitutional reforms.

The Council of Europe covers all major issues facing European society with the exception of defence. Its work programme includes the following fields of activity: human rights, media, legal co-operation, social and economic questions, health, education, culture, heritage, sport, youth, local and regional government, and environment.

The Committee of Ministers is the decision-making body of the Council of Europe, composed of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the member states or their Permanent Representatives. The deliberative body is the Parliamentary Assembly whose members are appointed by national parliaments.

The Congress of Local and Regional authorities of Europe is a consultative body representing local and regional authorities. Governments, national parliaments and local and regional authorities are thus represented separately.

The Council of Europe's work leads to European conventions and agreements in the light of which the member states' legislation is subsequently harmonised and amended. Some conventions and agreements are also open for adoption by non-member states. The studies carried out and work done in the various fields of action are made available to the governments to help them work together to foster social progress in Europe.

The Council of Europe also adopts Partial Agreements, a form of "variable geometry" co-operation, which allows a number of member States, with the consent of others, to carry out a specific activity of common interest.

The European Convention on Cultural Co-operation establishes the framework for the Council of Europe's work in education, culture, heritage, sport and youth, managed by the Council for Cultural Co-operation. Its educational programme is supervised by the Committee on Education and includes the Modern Languages Projects serviced by the Modern Languages Division of Directorate General IV: Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Environment (DECS). In addition to the forty-three member states, the Convention has been adopted by four further states: Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Holy See and Monaco.

The main Council of Europe website is: http://www.coe.int
The Language Policy Division websites are: http://culture.coe.int/lang and http://culture.coe.int/portfolio
The ECML website is: http://culture.coe.int/ecml

1.2 The aims and objectives of Council of Europe language policy

The Council of Europe has energetically promoted the learning of modern languages ever since the establishment of the Council for Cultural Cooperation in the late 1950's. At that time modern languages were still in many countries studied in the shadow of the classical languages as part of the education of an intellectual, cultural or social elite. They were needed primarily in diplomacy and commerce. Otherwise, international communication was mostly mediated by professional translators and interpreters. By 1960, Europe had recovered from the Second World War and the internationalisation of European society was beginning to be felt, affecting all sections of the population of all classes and ages. Over the last forty years, the process has continued and accelerated, necessitating a profound reorientation and reorganisation of the social organisation of language learning, teaching and assessment, which is still far from complete.

1.2.1 The growing need for communication skills across language boundaries

Across the world, society is undergoing a profound transformation. At an increasing rate, scientific discoveries are giving us a deeper and more detailed understanding of the world in which we live, and the burgeoning research-based industries are ever more rapidly applying this knowledge to all aspects of our lives. In particular, the communications industries have developed beyond recognition in recent years. Not only have personal travel and transport of goods made international mobility an everyday matter, but also, thanks to electronics, the movement of information and ideas can be virtually instantaneous and knows no geographical limits. The transformation is far from complete. Indeed, we cannot yet tell what its final outcome may be. Meanwhile, individuals everywhere are called upon to adjust their ideas, skills and practices to a changed and changing environment, as are all institutions: social, economic, political, military, etc., which find their traditional structures and practices no longer appropriate or even viable as the transformation proceeds.

The world of education is by no means immune from these pressures. Indeed, since those charged with the education of young people are responsible for equipping them to meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities presented by life in the twenty-first century, it is precisely the members of the teaching profession at all levels who should be most concerned with trying to foresee what these challenges and opportunities may be. If present trends continue we may surely expect them to include:

1.2.1.1 Increased personal mobility

Within the world of work, an increasing proportion of employees may expect to work in multinational corporations and consortia, either by direct recruitment or as a result of mergers, take-overs or contractual obligations. They may then be called upon to use a multinational's operating language, or to spend some part of their career as a visitor to or temporary resident in another country. If unable to do so, they may become limited or even marginalised in their professional or vocational careers. Even if not required to travel, they may well find themselves required to deal professionally with the needs of foreign colleagues, or with foreign visitors in the context of the rapidly expanding leisure industries. Furthermore, international trade and finance involve the operation of international markets and movements of capital on a global scale transcending all national and linguistic boundaries and demanding instantaneous response via electronic media.

In the educational domain, increasing numbers of pupils will spend some part of their schooling in a foreign country as a consequence of their parents' professional or vocational mobility. In

addition, more and more students will find that their particular area of study is best pursued in a foreign university. In return, educational institutions at all levels will need to deal with a proportion of their intake coming from a variety of language backgrounds and will not be able to take mother-tongue competence for granted. In response, an increasing number of schools as well as colleges and universities may find themselves ever more multinational in character and multilingual in their operation.

In addition, the continuing expansion of leisure travel -- unlikely to be contained within the limits of packaged tours -- will take the form of independent travel involving give and take in interpersonal, face-to-face communication across language boundaries.

1.2.1.2 Access to information

Scientific and technological advances are producing an exponential growth in knowledge. In both fields and indeed in other specialisations, teams and individuals are working on the same problems in many different countries. Even where they are in competition with each other, co-operation to ensure a rapid flow of information regarding findings is essential. Much of the information is ephemeral, necessary at the time it is produced, but soon superseded by further advances. Speed is imperative. Consequently, relatively little of this information is formally translated. Specialists form intercommunicating networks across national and linguistic boundaries. Anyone unable to communicate with others in the network is soon marginalised and left behind. There is less and less scope for the lone worker. In all fields, international congresses, conferences, symposia, colloquies and seminars are of growing importance, with attendance ranging from a handful of participants to several thousand, in which case a substantial industry is developing to take charge of the organisation. Such conferences and congresses attract participants from many countries, only a small minority of whom can contribute using their mother tongue. Even at the undergraduate level, standard textbooks have a limited life. Increasingly, they must be read in the original rather than waiting for a translation to appear. Economic pressures on publishers and on the budgets of students and university departments oblige publishers to seek to lower unit costs by increasing print numbers. This produces a pressure to publish in a language which will ensure the widest international use.

However, the whole business of information flow is again in the course of rapid and fundamental change as a consequence of the electronic revolution and the computer age it is producing. The electronic database connected into the ubiquitous Internet is becoming the favoured form of storage for information of a kind which is ephemeral or which requires frequent updating. Anyone with access to a personal computer or a terminal can, without leaving home, search for relevant information in a particular field made available by specialists across the world and download whatever that person may need for reference in printed-out form. Bulky library holdings can be made available for occasional reference in the form of small disks (CD-ROM) with considerable savings of space and expense, often with provision for regular updating. The pace of change is such that one cannot foresee the ultimate outcome, but it is most likely that what seems highly advanced now will be regarded as primitive in a relatively short time. Once again, the scale of operation is global, with commercial viability dependent on very large scale operation, cutting across all received boundaries. The same applies to the sphere of entertainment, in which satellite television gives a viewer access to transmissions from many different countries.

1.2.1.3 Mutual understanding and tolerance

Effects of the changes outlined above reach into the everyday lives of countless people across the world. This is especially so perhaps in Europe, where they initially confront an intricate

patchwork of peoples, with their inherited cultures and languages. For many people the challenges and opportunities brought by an increasingly interactive European society offer exciting prospects. For others, however, they are seen more as a threat than a promise. Those in particular who do not understand the changes which are taking place and are ill-equipped to respond to them see their livelihoods endangered and their distinctive identity imperilled by the operation of extraneous forces they are powerless to control. They feel their living-space invaded by outsiders with alien customs and practices, and are aware of a crumbling away of the stable, balanced local community, which with varying degrees of idealisation they believe to have existed beforehand. Under these circumstances, those people with little knowledge or experience of the outside world can be brought to see outsiders, especially foreigners, as responsible for their difficulties. Negative stereotypes can be amplified by the unscrupulous and dangerous. Unpleasant forms of inter-community fears and hatreds can be built up into violent backlash against closer European and global co-operation. The best protection against all such forms of racism and xenophobia is provided by knowledge and direct experience of the foreign reality, and improved life and communication skills.

The need for mobility and access to information, taken together with the importance of mutual understanding and tolerance, establish effective communication skills across language boundaries as an indispensable part of the equipment of tomorrow's citizens facing the challenges and opportunities of a transformed European society.

1.2.2 What does the Council of Europe do for language learning?

The Council of Europe recognised the importance of the life-long provision for language learning for all at an early stage. In a series of projects over many years it has provided a forum for all those involved in policy making to come together with teachers, teacher trainers and support services to formulate policies and translate them into concrete objectives and practical ways of achieving them.

The Council helps member states to implement reforms and encourages innovation in language teaching and teacher training. In general, it facilitates the pooling of international experience and expertise, and promotes a coherent, learner-centred methodology which integrates aims, content, teaching, learning and assessment in a harmonious approach based on common principles.

The Council of Europe attaches considerable importance to promoting linguistic diversity in Europe and has assisted member states in producing planning instruments to promote the teaching of almost thirty national and regional languages. In addition, it has adopted the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in order to protect and promote these languages as a vital aspect of Europe’s rich linguistic and cultural heritage.

1.2.3 Resolutions of the Committee of Ministers

About once every ten years, the findings of the Council’s work lead to a composite Resolution of the Council of Ministers to the member states. They have no directive force, but strongly influence the development of national policies in the following years. For instance, Resolution (82) 18 was most valuable to the new member states in Central and Eastern Europe in reorienting national language teaching policies following the removal of Soviet hegemony. The most important general recommendations are reproduced under point 1.2. of the CEF.

1.2.4 The Common European Framework and language policy

As will be seen in 1.6, CEF is not itself a policy document. It does not set out to provide policy guidelines, but rather to encourage reflection and communication about all aspects of language learning, teaching and assessment. Reflection and communication about matters of policy at national - and indeed all levels from the classroom to the international community - is, of course, of great importance not only to authorities but also to all members of the teaching profession and to the general public. In a democratic society, an informed and enlightened public opinion is essential to the proper formation and execution of policy.

All CEF users are therefore invited to consider the following questions regarding national policy formation:

1. On what principles are the number and choice of languages in the curriculum made?
2. Is there a national language policy?
3. What are the reasons for the decision?
4. Do all children have the opportunity to become literate in their mother tongues (home language)? Are majority children enabled to learn minority languages?
5. Are modern languages

- Compulsory
- optional throughout education:
  - pre-school
  - primary
  - lower secondary and upper secondary
  - higher
  - further
  - adult

  What steps are taken to ensure coherence and continuity of development?

6. On what principles are decisions based concerning the curricular time available for language learning?
7. On what principles are policies based as to which decisions should be made at a) national, b) regional, c) local, or d) school level?
8. What steps are taken to achieve coherence among a) curricular objectives, b) teaching methods, c) textbooks and other teaching materials, and d) examinations and qualifications?
9. On what principles are national language provision based?
   a) economic need (for example, international trade, tourism)
   b) diplomatic relations
   c) parental pressures
   d) cultural values
   e) traditional practice
10. Are different ministries and ministerial departments responsible for different sectors of educational provision? If so, what steps are taken to ensure coherence among their policies?
11. What steps are taken to implement:
    a) the European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages
    b) the Council of Europe Framework Convention of National Minorities
    c) the Hague Recommendation Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities
    d) the (unofficial but UNESCO-sponsored) Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights?

12. Are minority languages used as the medium of instruction for mother-tongue speakers
    a) as a transitional measure
    b) in later stages of the educational process?
13. Is support given to the extra-curricular learning of minority languages?
14. What support is given to language learning in adult education?
15. Are there ministerial curricular guidelines concerning:
    a) the languages to be taught
    b) the objectives to be pursued
    c) the approach to be followed
    d) the methods to be used
    e) the materials to be used
    f) the qualification to be awarded
    g) the content and procedures in tests and examinations?

    Are guidelines mandatory or advisory?

    On what principles are guidelines based?
16. Is educational research in the language field ministerially promoted and funded? What steps are taken to bring the results of research to the attention of administrators and other professionals?
17. Are the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers on Modern Languages (69)2, (81)19, (97)6 accepted and taken into account in formulating national (or ministerial) policies? What steps are taken to bring the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to the attention of the language teaching profession?
18. Are the language learning objectives specified by the Council of Europe for twenty-three European languages (Waystage, Threshold, Vantage) used in textbook and course construction and in qualifying examinations?
19. Are nationally recognised language qualifications calibrated in terms of Common Reference Levels of the Council of Europe?

1.3 The need for plurilingualism

This section explains the concept of 'plurilingualism', developed further in Section 6.1.3 and in chapter 8. It also distinguishes the term 'plurilingual' from 'multilingual', which refers simply to the 'knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society', whether that society be local, national or international. Any European wishing to enlarge his language competence beyond the language of his home environment is confronted by a great diversity of languages – over fifty have recognised status as national or regional languages in the member states of the Council for Cultural Co-operation, leaving aside many more in the Russian Federation. A car driver may easily pass through five or six distinct language areas in the course of a single day's journey.

How are these barriers to communication to be overcome? Many wish to cut the Gordian knot by fixing upon one language as the universal medium of international communication. A small, but dedicated and vociferous minority wish it to be Esperanto, devised specifically for this purpose. Historical and economic forces have, however, gone far towards propelling English into such a position, particularly in relation to the communications industries themselves. This is not a particularly European, but rather a global phenomenon. In response, English has become the first foreign language in most educational systems, thus producing a self-reinforcing spiral. Already, many parents feel that a child who is not offered the opportunity at school to become fluent in English is being seriously disadvantaged. Some educational planners regard the teaching of English as a *lingua franca* as both necessary and sufficient. Their exclusion of other foreign languages from the school curriculum may be an effort to concentrate resources toward

maximum communicative effectiveness in the major language of international communication, or simply to keep the role of modern languages in the school curriculum to a minimum, leaving more space for mathematics, science, technology, the arts and mother-tongue development.

It is, of course, for competent authorities, taking account of informed public opinion and professional advice, to make language policy decisions according to their assessment of how best to meet societal and individual needs. However, the policies of the European institutions are firmly in favour of plurilingualism. This is not simply the result of resentment of the advantages enjoyed by the inhabitants of one member state as against others. After all, the increased use of English in recent years has not been matched by any noticeable increase in the relative wealth, power and influence of the United Kingdom in European affairs. Indeed, the exclusive reliance of some native English speakers on the use of their mother tongue in international contacts imposes limitations on communication which can have important negative political and economic effects. Rather, for a number of reasons, the multilingual nature of European society makes it necessary for Europeans to develop competencies in more than one non-native language. For one thing, the extent and level of competence in English in different countries should not be overestimated. Within the European Union, fewer than 50% of the population, even of younger people, claim a usable degree of competence in the language. In older age groups the percentage is much lower. The impression that English is everywhere spoken and understood arises only if contacts are limited to the travel industry, professional contacts and the better-educated.

Each country lives its life through its national, and in some cases regional, languages. Foreign visitors or residents who know nothing of that language will understand nothing of what they see and hear around them unless it is specifically aimed at them by those who have competence in a shared foreign language. They are likely to find themselves marginalised, even isolated. They will have access only to that information which is directed towards the outsider. Even where contact can be made through a shared foreign language, the quality of the communication depends on the competence of the interlocutors in that language, which of course lies outside the control of either party individually. If, particularly, the role of that language as a *lingua franca* has been interpreted to mean its use as a purely vehicular, culture-free communication code, it may well serve basic transactional requirements, but cripple the exchange of information and opinion on other than the most superficial aspects of personal life, social matters and questions of values and beliefs.

Clearly, people are best able to express matters of real concern to them when they use the full resources of their mother tongue. May there not sometimes be something to be said in favour of learning to read what they write, and listen with understanding to what they have to say, rather than put all resources into balanced skill development in one, or even two, international vehicular languages. Receptive skills, which require recognition of language and can exploit intelligent deduction may offer a more cost-effective return on learning effort than productive skills, which require both recall of the language to be used and the shaping of utterance to express the intended meaning in conformity with the grammatical and pragmatic conventions of the language.

In fact, confronted with the truly vast diversity of language and language use across Europe, no-one is in a position to do more than make limited inroads into the multilingual complexity of the continent. How to make the best use of the limited time and other resources available for language learning is a central issue for language planning. Successive Council of Europe projects have been based on the belief that it is of crucial importance to define carefully worthwhile, appropriate and feasible objectives which correspond to the communicative needs of individuals

in society. Since these needs reveal themselves only in the course of adult life, language learning must be organised in a flexible manner in a lifelong perspective.

Language learning at school should be seen not as a self-contained, product-oriented process, but as laying the foundation for future learning and use. As Porcher has shown (Porcher 1980), the nature of the school as an institution strongly constrains what can be done there at that phase of a person's life. Language learning in higher, further and adult education is not an optional extra, an embellishment or a hobby interest, but an essential social provision serving important national interests. It is noteworthy that at these levels demand is closely related to need and is much more diverse than at school level. It is not the case, for instance, that adults wish simply to improve their command of a language they already know reasonably well. More commonly, they prefer to widen their competence to further languages, with modest objectives on the productive side, but with a desire to understand fellow-Europeans expressing themselves in their most natural mode. As an example, BBC television series' based on this principle have attracted large rolling audiences that move from one introductory language course to another, whereas audiences for higher level courses in the same language have shown pyramidal tapering.

Of course, modern technology is able to provide high quality products at modest unit cost if a global audience can be reached with good organisation at the receiver's end (as instanced by the extraordinary global success of *Follow Me*). However, newer technologies allow for much greater differentiation of products and markets, and increasing power of choice and self-direction by the learner. It is now estimated (David Crystal, personal communication) that some 1000 languages are used and accessible on the Internet and that the use of English has declined to about 50%. We may confidently expect that as multi-media facilities are further developed, more universally accessible and better understood, language learning at all levels will become more diverse and decentralised. One consequence of this development will be that a much broader spectrum of providers, including, in many cases, learners themselves, will be called upon to make choices and decisions on the objectives and methods of language learning, teaching and assessment. Professional and educational mobility will present providers with the need to communicate their objectives and achievements to others so as to enable them to exercise informal choice as well as to raise the general level of work through the exchange of experience.

1.4 Why is CEF needed?

This section summarises the reasons why, in all the above respects, it will be of practical use for all those concerned with language learning and its outcomes to be able to set their efforts in a general European framework such as that provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CEF). It quotes the conclusions reached by the Intergovernmental Symposium held in Rüschlikon, Switzerland, which recommended the development of a common European framework of reference for language learning, teaching and assessment of all kinds and at all levels.

1.5 For what uses is CEF intended?

This section emphasises the use of CEF as a planning instrument and as such is self-explanatory. There are, of course, further uses. It is valuable as a means of raising awareness, particularly in higher education and in initial and in-service teacher education and training. Many institutions have welcomed CEF as a calibrating instrument for the equation of examinations and qualifications.

1.6 What criteria must CEF meet?

The Rüschlikon Symposium laid down criteria for CEF to meet. Participants agreed that CEF should be **descriptive**, not prescriptive. Practitioners should reflect upon their current practice, take decisions which they believe to be right in their circumstances and then share their decisions, objectives and methods with others. While the Committee of Ministers wants practitioners to find its policy recommendations convincing, and to follow them in their decision-making, it is not the function of CEF to tell them what to do. The Council of Europe's point of view, however well-founded, should not determine, or distort, the descriptive framework. This point, which is fundamental, has not always been understood.

CEF aims to be **comprehensive**, not selective. Many different kinds of learning and teaching exist. All should find a place and be able to describe their provision within the Framework. On the other hand, it cannot be exhaustive. It should, however, try to be **transparent** so that users – both those who describe their objectives and methods and those who receive the descriptions – should be able to see clearly what is on offer, avoiding vagueness and obscurity. It should be **coherent** – avoiding internal contradictions and equivocations, **multi-purpose** – capable of being used in different ways according to user needs, **open and dynamic** – capable of further development by its users as they discover the inevitable gaps and deficiencies. It must be **non-dogmatic**, welcoming all approaches and viewpoints, rather than insisting upon conformity to some current orthodoxy. It should be **user-friendly**, avoiding excessive complication and jargon, – though over-simplification is a complementary danger. Communication by means of language is a complex phenomenon, no part of which is irrelevant or a matter of course for all learners. The structure of linguistic interaction must be fully represented and some use of technical languages is unavoidable, though idiosyncratic terms should be explained.

Users may also find it helpful to consider how far the criteria apply to their own description of their aims, objectives and methods by reference to CEF. Is it, for instance, **comprehensive**? We do not mean that every user should try to include everything that is presented in CEF. The Framework attempts to be comprehensive in the sense that it must accommodate everything any of its users wish to specify. If CEF users find that there are things they wish to specify which have been overlooked, CEF fails the criterion of comprehensiveness. In that case, users should provide their own specification and let us know, so that CEF can be further developed. This is what is meant by saying that the Framework should be open and dynamic. On the other hand, particular users may well decide that much that is contained in CEF is inapplicable to them, perhaps because they feel that it is irrelevant to the needs of the learners they have in mind, or that it is inappropriate to those learners, or that it can be taken for granted, or is not of high enough priority where resources or time are limited. In relation to descriptions produced by users in terms of CEF, comprehensive has a different meaning. Has the user, before taking decisions, taken all options into consideration? Has everything been included that someone using the description would need to know, in an appropriate degree of detail?

As regards **transparency** and **coherence**, the criteria for CEF and for the description are the same: has the writer been sufficiently explicit for the user to have a clear picture of what is being presented, using language the user can understand (perhaps, if need be, with the aid of a standard dictionary), avoiding vagueness and ambiguity? Does the description hang together? Is it consistent, avoiding the contradiction in one place of what is said in another? Is it **flexible**, taking account of the different circumstances under which it may be used?

A final word, to avoid all misunderstanding: as a framework of **reference**, the aim is to be descriptive, not prescriptive. CEF exists not to promote, let alone impose, uniformity but to

improve communication whilst maintaining and encouraging diversity. The historical background gives a picture of the values, beliefs and attitudes which have informed the Council of Europe in its work in the modern languages field. Users are invited to reflect upon them and to bear them in mind as they use CEF, as indeed in all their work. However, it is for the users to decide whether to adopt them as their own. CEF is itself **non-dogmatic**, enabling all users to tell others of their decisions, rather than telling them what their decisions should be.

It must be recognised that the very act of developing a common framework is itself a political act. In the nineteenth century and later, many nation states set out to create or reinforce national unity in an authoritarian, sometimes oppressive, manner by imposing uniform national curricula, qualifications, textbooks, and classroom methods, while overriding the diverse provisions (if any) which marked the heterogeneous elements from which they were created. Today, there is greater respect for the identity of minorities and a more general recognition of the need to diversify educational provision. However, there is anxiety in some quarters that European unity will cause a loss of national identity. To promote continental unity whilst respecting and even increasing diversity, with democratic decision-making brought closer to the point of learning, by facilitating mutual information and promoting a common approach among the many professionals involved – that is an act of faith! In this spirit we invite the user to consider CEF further.

Part 2 – Approach adopted

This chapter is designed to prepare the reader to use the descriptive apparatus which follows in chapters 4 and 5. It presents the analysis of language use and the language user on which the more detailed taxonomy, or scheme of classification, used later, has been based. Accordingly, it is rather technical, but the important terms used are carefully explained. It is well worth taking time to 'read, mark and inwardly digest' this chapter before working through the detail of later chapters. This chapter is largely self-explanatory, but a few further words may help to avoid misunderstandings along the way.

2.1 An action-oriented approach

An action-orientation has marked the Council of Europe approach since the early 1970s, regarding language learning as preparation for the active use of the language for communication. However, this does not mean that we are only interested in overt activity. Of the people sitting opposite one in a train, the person immersed in a book is no less active than the pair next door engaged in animated conversation. Even the one gazing into space may be imagining what to expect in a crucial interview and planning not only self-preservation but also responses to the questions that may come.

Preparing people for active language use involves the full range of human capacities -the intellect, the emotions and the will as well as the exercise of practical skills. A complete view of language use and the language user must find a place for the whole person, but a whole person acting in a social context, as a 'social agent'. Of course, the use of this term does not mean reducing the full richness of the human personality to a dehumanised role-bearer, but rescues it from the complementary danger of individualistic, even solipsistic isolation.

The condensed statement of language use in the shaded box on p.9 and the definitions of the terms used which follow are basic to the understanding and use of CEF, as is the breakdown of these main categories, or parameters, into sub-categories. They provide the main structure for

chapter 4 and a number of the scales proposed in the appendix. They should be read with care and can be referred to if the meaning of the terms used in chapter 4 is not clear in that context. Inversely, the examples and the proposed scalings given in chapter 4 may help in understanding the dense and detailed text of chapter 2.

2.1.1 The general competences of an individual

This section introduces the categories developed in detail in section 5.1. Users should note the use of the term 'competence(s)' here and throughout CEF. It is used, not to indicate how efficiently the learner is able to use the language, but to refer to the knowledge, skills and attitudes which underlie the use of language at whatever level. Section 5.1 deals with competences which are not specifically concerned with language, but which are called upon for human activities of all kinds, including communication. Their development and organisation in the mind are also closely linked to the development and organisation of language.

2.1.2 Communicative language competence

This section deals with the categories developed in detail in section 5.2, i.e. those formally related to the structure (linguistic) and use (sociolinguistic and pragmatic) of language.

2.1.3 Language activities

This section, together with sections 2.1.4 and 2.1.5, deals with the categories developed in detail in chapter 4. The order in which they are discussed in these sections is somewhat different from the order of their presentation in chapter 4 itself, being influenced by the order in which they appear in the boxed paragraph at the beginning of chapter 2. In particular, strategies, discussed here together with tasks and texts, are treated in chapter 4 immediately following the activities with which they are associated. Users will also note that, in view of the importance attached to tasks in an action-oriented approach, chapter 7 is devoted to their role in language learning and teaching.

2.2 Common reference levels of language proficiency

This section gives the reasons why the scaling of language proficiency is given a prominent role in CEF and adds some words of caution. Language learning is a lengthy process and its calibration is important for many purposes, such as course planning and the award of qualifications. The establishment of common standards is a main justification for the introduction of CEF.

The principles of scaling are dealt with in considerable detail in chapter 3 and appendices A and B. Scales are provided throughout the work, holistically in chapter 3 and for specific activities, tasks and competences wherever appropriate and feasible in chapters 4 and 5 and in appendices C and D.

2.3 Language learning and teaching

This section briefly introduces the issues dealt with in detail in chapters 6, 7 and 8. It refers back again to chapter 1 and the relation between CEF as a descriptive instrument of reference and the policy statements of the Council of Europe.

2.4 Language assessment

This section completes the introductory account of the approach adopted by looking forward to the intentions and content of chapter 9. It also makes reference to the complementary development of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), which is also referred to briefly in section 8.4.2. ELP uses the levels and descriptors of CEF both for indicating the relative levels of qualifications achieved by holders, and for guiding their self-assessment. It may be of interest to CEF users to know a little more of the structure and functions of ELP.

European Language Portfolio

The Council of Europe has recently devised ELP, in which language learners of all ages and from all backgrounds throughout Europe can keep a record of their language skills and significant cultural experiences of all kinds in a recognised document.

The portfolio is a personal document, held and regularly updated by the learner, which contains three sections:

- *a passport section*, in which language qualifications and skills (formal and informal) can be recorded in an internationally recognisable manner;
- *a language and cultural biography section*, in which learners can describe their language knowledge and learning experiences in as wide a range of languages as possible;
- *a dossier* to contain examples of the learner's own work.

Aimed at motivating people to learn languages both in and out of formal education, the portfolio will also contribute to mobility in Europe as it provides a clear record of a person's language skills which could support their job applications, entry into educational establishments, etc.

Rules for the accreditation of ELP models have been agreed and a European Validation Committee has been set up under the authority of the Education Committee of the Council for Cultural Cooperation to take responsibility for accreditation. The portfolio will be launched during the European Year of Languages 2001. Further information on the portfolio will be available on its forthcoming website. In the meantime, if you require more information see the Language Policy Division website: http://culture.coe.int/portfolio.

Part 3 – Common reference levels

Following section 2.2., in which the reasons were given for making the proposal for a set of common reference levels of language proficiency a central focus of the Common European Framework. This chapter deals with the scales of language proficiency: the criteria they must satisfy, the number and definition of the levels proposed, the nature of the descriptors used to define the levels and the ways in which the levels may be used.

3.1 Criteria for descriptors for common reference levels

This section briefly considers basic issues dealt with at greater length in the appendices. It points out that scales must be at once relevant to learners, but not over-specific, if they are to be common to many different kinds of learner. The scales should be soundly based from a theoretical point of view, yet worded in a way that enables users to understand and apply them to

their own situation. A judicious combination of intuition and objective validation is needed to develop descriptors and ensure that they meet these criteria.

3.2 The common reference levels

This section briefly introduces the six levels to be used for most purposes throughout CEF, relating them to previous proposals by the Council of Europe. Some levels were produced in its early work on a possible unit-credit scheme to support and offer a structure for planning and recognising achievement in adult language learning across Europe. Arising from this project, *Threshold Level* was produced as an attempt to define in considerable detail the minimum level of language proficiency which would enable a language learner to act as an independent agent in transacting the business of everyday living as well as exchanging information and ideas with other people. This minimum turned out to be quite demanding and to require a substantial learning effort. *Threshold Level* was highly innovative. It initiated the functional-notional approach, setting out first what the learner had to do with the language and secondarily what language was necessary – in essence the action-oriented approach used in CEF. The Threshold level concept was first applied to English, but has since been applied to over twenty European languages, listed in the General Bibliography. The categories and exponents given in *Threshold Level* are drawn upon extensively in chapters 4 and 5. However, the Threshold level (and the Waystage and Vantage levels, which respectively precede and succeed Threshold) was not conceived as a comprehensive model. Rather, it was as a defined objective for a particular defined audience.

3.3 Presentation of common reference levels

This section presents the three summative, holistic scaling tables, which are already widely used to give a compact characterisation of the six levels on which the treatment of language proficiency in CEF is based.

Table 1 sets out in three or four sentences what language a learner at each level is able to understand and produce. Of course, so condensed a statement cannot be exhaustive. Interaction and mediation are not explicitly dealt with, nor are the conditions under which learners will be able to meet the criteria of performance specified. Nothing is said on how well learners can do what is specified. Much is left to be filled out and interpreted, partly by reference to other tables in CEF, partly by exercising common sense in the light of the user's experience. Nevertheless, a condensed statement of what a typical learner can do at each successive level is invaluable as a starting point, a foundation stone to build upon.

Table 2 expands Table 1, distinguishing the four skills and including spoken interaction. This is the table most commonly used, for instance as a basis for self-evaluation by holders of the ELP.

Table 3 characterises the six levels in terms of some classical criteria for evaluating language proficiency: range -- the lexical and grammatical resources the learner has available, accuracy -- the ability to deploy those resources consistently and without errors and mistakes, fluency -- the ability to deploy the resources in real time to produce connected discourse with normal rhythm and intonation, free from hesitations, false starts, etc., interaction -- the ability to maintain a conversation without creating problems in communication for the partner, and coherence -- the ability to deploy the resources at the learner's disposal to create integrated discourse.

3.4 Illustrative descriptors

This section gives the characteristics and origin of the descriptors used to define the various aspects of language proficiency specified in the tables.

3.5 Flexibility in a branching approach

This important section shows, with four examples, how the basic six-level scheme can be expanded (or perhaps reduced) to meet the needs of users concerned with a population of learners which needs to be more (or less) finely differentiated than the broad bands of the six-level system permit. For instance, in the relatively early stages of language learning, euphoria at finding oneself able to communicate at all is often succeeded by depression at having a mountain to climb and seeming to make little or no progress. Motivation may be easier to sustain by setting short term goals and recognising their attainment. These short-term goals may all lie within the same band in the six-level scheme. A particular teaching institution may well organise its provision in smaller steps. CEF itself does not attempt to define interlevels, which are in principle and in fact of indefinite number. It will be for the institution itself to do so, making use of the more extensive apparatus of description in chapters 4-7.

A complementary problem exists at the top end of the six-level system. Level C1 does not represent an ideal of unattainable perfection, but rather the highest level which it is practical to set as an objective for general language courses and public examinations. It may well be that some institutions concerned with language proficiency at the highest professional level will wish to set their criteria for qualification at a still higher level, or, more probably, to develop highly specialised modules rather than attempting to define objectives holistically. They may then perhaps specify Level C1 as an entry requirement and use the taxonomic apparatus of chapters 4-7 in defining the content of the modules.

In any case, the intention of this section is to show that the approach to the question: 'how many levels?' is left open. A six-level system appears to correspond to the general practice of the field in large-scale provision and is sufficiently differentiated to allow institutions to calibrate their systems by reference to it. It is not intended to constrain the freedom of institutions to organise provision in the best interests of their constituencies.

3.6 Content coherence in common reference levels

This section justifies and describes in greater detail the six levels and also three interlevels (A2+, B1+ and B2+) in the region covered by Waystage, Threshold and Vantage, where many (especially adult) learners are to be found.

3.7 How to read the scales of illustrative descriptors

This section deals particularly with two issues: a) descriptors at successive levels may not specify the same parameters of description, in which case, appropriate progress in how well a criterion at the lower level is satisfied may be inferred; b) many tables appear incomplete. No descriptor is offered at one or more levels. Reasons are given and ways of dealing with such cases are suggested.

3.8 How to use scales of descriptors of language proficiency

This section distinguishes different users and the purposes for which they may use the common reference levels.

3.9 Proficiency levels and achievement grades

This section discusses the relation between levels, which set objectives and criteria for their achievement in yes/no terms and grades, which classify learners according to their degree of success in meeting the criteria and achieving the objective.

Part 4 – Language use and the language user/learner

Following the first three introductory and explanatory chapters, chapter 4 now presents a fairly detailed scheme of categories for the description of language use and the language user. For quicker reference, users may find it convenient to consult the following table of the contents of this chapter.

4.6 Texts

4.6.1 media

4.6.2 genres and text-types

4.6.2.1 spoken texts

4.6.2.2 written texts

In accordance with the action-oriented approach taken, it is assumed that the language learner is in the process of becoming a language user, so that the same set of categories will apply to both. There is, however, an important modification which must be made. The learner of a second or foreign language and culture does not cease to be competent in his or her mother tongue and the associated culture. Nor is the new competence kept entirely separate from the old. The learner does not simply acquire two distinct, unrelated ways of acting and communicating. The language learner develops **interculturality and plurilingualism**. The linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how as well as an enriched, more complex personality. The learner experiences an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences, as well as an ability to mediate, through interpretation and translation, between speakers of the two languages concerned who cannot communicate directly. A place is, of course, given to these activities (4.4.4) and competences (5.1.1.3, 5.1.2.2 and 5.1.1.4), which differentiate the language learner from the monolingual native speaker.

Question boxes. You will see that from this point on, each section is followed by a box in which the CEF user is invited: to consider and where appropriate state the answers to one or more questions which follow. The alternatives in the phrase need/be, equipped/be, and required relate to learning, teaching and assessment respectively. The content of the box is phrased as an invitation rather than as an instruction in order to emphasise the non-directive character of CEF enterprise. If a user decides that a whole area is not of concern, there is no need to consider each section within that area in detail. In most cases, however, we expect that the CEF user will reflect on the question posed in each box and take a decision one way or another. If the decision is of significance, it can be formulated using the categories and examples supplied, supplemented as may be found necessary for the purpose in hand.

The analysis of language use and the language user contained in chapter 4 is fundamental to the use of CEF, since it offers a structure of parameters and categories which should enable all those involved in language learning, teaching and assessment to consider and state in concrete terms and in whatever degree of detail they wish, what they expect the learners towards whom they undertake responsibilities to be able to do with a language, and what they should know in order to be able to act. Its aim is to be comprehensive in its coverage, but not, of course, exhaustive. Course designers, textbook writers, teachers and examiners will have to make very detailed concrete decisions on the content of texts, exercises, activities, tests, etc. This process can never be reduced simply to choosing from a pre-determined menu. That level of decision must, and should, be in the hands of the practitioners concerned, calling on their judgement and creativity. They should, however, find represented here all the major aspects of language use and competence they need to take into consideration. The overall structure of chapter 4 is thus a kind of checklist and for this reason is presented at the beginning of the chapter. Users are recommended to familiarise themselves with this overall structure and to refer to it when asking themselves such questions as:

Can I predict the domains in which my learners will operate and the situations which they will have to deal with? If so, what roles will they have to play? What sort of people will they have to deal with? What will be their personal or professional relations in what institutional frameworks?

What objects will they need to refer to? What tasks will they have to accomplish? What themes will they need to handle? Will they have to speak, or simply listen and read with understanding? What sort of things will they be listening to or reading? Under what conditions will they have to act? What knowledge of the world or of another culture will they need to call on? What skills will they have to have developed? How can they still be themselves without being mis interpreted? For how much of this can I take responsibility? If I cannot predict the situations in which the learners will use the language, how can I best prepare them to use the language for communication without over-training them for situations that may never arise? What can I give them that will be of lasting value, in whatever different ways their careers may later diverge?

Clearly, CEF cannot give the answers to these questions. Indeed, it is precisely because the answers depend entirely upon a full appreciation of the learning/teaching situation and above all upon the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of the learners and other parties concerned that the diversification of provision is necessary. The role of chapter 4 is to articulate the problem in such a way that the issues can be considered and if need be debated in a transparent and rational way and the decisions communicated to all those affected in a clear and concrete manner.

4.1 The context of language use

It has long been recognised that language in use varies greatly according to the requirements of the context in which it is used. In this respect, language is not a neutral instrument of thought like, say, mathematics. The need and the desire to communicate arise in a particular situation and the form as well as the content of the communication is a response to that situation. The first section of chapter 4 is therefore devoted to different aspects of context.

4.1.1 Domains

The concept of domain is important in many respects. If it is known in which domain(s) the language learner will be using the language, it becomes possible to select themes, activities, tasks and texts on that basis, avoiding a good deal of what may prove to be irrelevant learning. On the other hand, circumstances change and no learning is more irrelevant than over-specialisation in a field which a learner then leaves behind. The domains proposed here are very broad.

4.1.2 Situations

The table illustrates by means of examples the different components of situations, and shows clearly to what extent our understanding of people, things and happenings depends on the situations and domains in which we encounter them. The examples are, of course, related to British culture. Many of the examples are appropriate to other European societies, but in all cases users should reflect and decide on the situations they wish to deal with and consequently the locations, institutions, etc. that figure in them. Users should note that this section is concerned with the context in which language is used. It should also be remembered that a situation is not static, but a dynamic concept shaped by the interaction of the participants.

4.1.3 Conditions and constraints

This section reminds the user that learner performance, like that of all other language users, is greatly affected by the conditions under which they have to operate. Examples are given of the more common factors concerned. The examples are by no means exhaustive and users are advised to reflect on the conditions and constraints that may affect a student's ability to learn, or to realise their full language proficiency in tests and examinations. The example of language

training for airline pilots is meant to alert users to the need to envisage the realities of the situations of communication when preparing learners to manage them effectively.

4.1.4 The user/learner's mental context

Context is not simply a matter of the external physical and social conditions under which acts of communication take place. It has been pointed out that no two members of an audience 'hear' the same lecture and that no two pupils experience the same class. We all respond to outside stimuli differently according to the way that they fit in with our experience and expectations. Such considerations, of which examples are given, have to be taken into account in course and lesson planning. Both teachers and examiners have to be sensitive to the fact, for instance, that discussions in the personal domain, dealing with family life, may distress a learner from a broken family or following a bereavement. Again, abrupt changes of theme may disorient a learner, who may then find it quite difficult to pick up the thread of a discourse, especially if he or she is not in a position to intervene and use compensatory strategies.

4.1.5 The mental context of the interlocutor(s)

We cannot consider merely the mental sets and activity of the user/learner. Classroom interaction between teachers and pupils and among pupils, as well as between oral examiner and candidate, or between candidates in group testing, necessarily involve the establishment and development of interpersonal relations. If that process goes badly, perhaps because of poor matching, learning may be inhibited and testing may produce misleading results. On the other hand, a compliant candidate with a command of a few techniques for signalling agreement may give a quite meretricious impression of understanding and fluency.

4.2 Communication themes

It is important to distinguish themes from tasks and purposes. For instance, employment and shopping may be learnt as social activities in the vocational and public domains respectively. The question then is: how do we prepare learners to use language effectively and appropriately in their jobs and while buying goods and services? However, employment and shopping may be the themes or topics of conversation in the personal domain, when people are exchanging information and opinions on what they do for a living or whether they enjoy or detest the Winter sales. Similarly, it is important to distinguish between the direct expression of emotional states and the way people talk about them. A person in a severe fit of depression may well talk in a very sad way about his or her happiness in former times. Of course, the distinction may appear academic. If a person says: “I feel very happy today”, he/she is probably both describing and expressing his/her emotional state. On the other hand, if the same person says, “I felt very happy yesterday”,, he or she is more likely to be expressing present unhappiness! Young people in their early teens, who are in general education and have not yet entered the world of work, may nevertheless be keenly interested in employment as a theme, discussing the pros and cons of different professions and vocations.

The classification of themes contained in chapter 7 of *Threshold Level 1990* has been highly influential and may be further consulted by the user. However, as CEF document states, the themes represented have been selected in the light of the expected needs and interests of the particular audience defined in chapter 2 of that work. In accordance with the somewhat different centres of interest of children in lower secondary education, Dr. van Ek proposed a modified scheme for the specific notions in his *Threshold Level for Schools*. In principle, each provider has to consider the needs, motivations and characteristics of the target audience and select themes and sub-themes accordingly. Some examples are given.

4.3 Communicative tasks and purposes

4.3.1 Users are recommended to read this section in conjunction with sections 7.1 – 7. 3, in which this topic is treated in greater depth and detail.

4.3.2 Users will find further examples of the specification of communicative tasks and purposes in chapter 7 of *Threshold Level 1990* and *Vantage Level*. These may be used as models for the concrete specification of what learners will need to be able to do as users in the domains represented there.

4.3.3 However, CEF also has to consider purposes other than those concerned with transacting the business of everyday living and with the exchange of information and opinion. Section 4.3.3 therefore deals with the role of tasks in the language teaching process itself and suggests headings under which they can be planned and reported.

4.3.4 Ludic uses of language

The playful use of language is often introduced into language teaching as light relief from more serious purposes. In fact, it plays a very important role in mother tongue development, concentrating attention on language as such. Language games are also a feature of adult leisure activities and figure largely in television entertainment. For an up-to-date discussion, see Cook, G. (2000) *Language play, language learning.* Oxford, OUP.

4.3.5 Aesthetic uses of language

Aesthetic activities range from simple rhymes and songs to the appreciation of high literary art. As the examples show, both find a place in education and in the outside lives of people at all stages of their existence. This section does not attempt to deal with the issues raised concerning the place of literary studies in education in relation to foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competences, but limits itself to identifying and exemplifying the kinds of activity involved. Those users for whom the issues are of close concern may well wish to develop section 4.3.5 further.

4.4 Communicative language activities and strategies

This section is one of the most substantial in chapter 4. Activities, as the term is used here, are to be distinguished from tasks and purposes. The term covers what are commonly termed the four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing, but viewed in a different perspective. Working in an action-oriented approach, we regard a skill as being the set of abilities necessary to the performance of a particular action, rather than the action itself. Skills are therefore treated in chapter 5, as an aspect of competence. Activities then, to refer to a class of actions. We distinguish here between receptive and productive activities as well as between those involving auditory and those involving visual stimuli. That gives the usual fourfold classification.

However, we also distinguish unidirectional activities, in which the user/learner is engaged only in producing or receiving a spoken or written text, from those in which the user/learner is called upon to act both as a producer and a receiver. We reserve the terms listening, reading, speaking and writing for unidirectional activities. With regard to the second category, we distinguish

between interactive activities, in which there is a verbal exchange with an interlocutor (for instance, in conversation), and mediating activities in which the user/learner acts simply as a channel of communication between other interactants (for instance, as an interpreter). We believe that it is useful to make these distinctions, because these kinds of activity are very different in character, as the examples show. They require different treatment in learning, teaching and assessment. They also involve different kinds of texts and their treatment in different ways. The issues raised are discussed further in section 4.6.4.

Sections 4.4.1- 4.4.4 deal successively with production, reception, interaction and mediation, sub-classified into those involving, respectively, speech and writing. In each case, the activity is first defined. Examples of the different kinds of activity in each category are then given, followed by the presentation of scales of proficiency in the activity concerned and an analysis of the strategies used by the language user in carrying out the activity.

It should be noted that strategy is used here to designate the mental operations of the language user in order to engage in the activity. It is not limited, as in some recent literature, to ways of overcoming obstacles to successful communication.

Section 4.4.5 is devoted to non-verbal communication. The action-oriented approach sees language as an aspect of a total communicative event, in which the participants exchange information and achieve mutual understanding by all means open to them. Since language is often not the only means of communication being used, account is taken in this section of practical actions which may accompany language and modify its use, as well as of paralinguistic behaviour, including body language and the use of speech sounds and voice qualities which stand outside the main language system and themselves signal meanings. Thus, in English, clicks do not form phonemes (regular phonetic constituents of words) but can be used to express mild disapproval. [Extra-linguistic speech sounds are difficult to represent in ordinary spelling. Users familiar with the International Phonetic Alphabet may note that in the examples given.

Many learners, especially those in the earlier stages of language learning with very limited linguistic resources, may rely on their use to communicate meaning. However, the meaning and use of the paralinguistic means of communication vary from one community to another in ways that do not necessarily coincide with linguistic boundaries and cannot be taken for granted.

No attempt has been made to deal with sign languages. The Council of Europe would be glad to hear from researchers and practitioners in that field as to the applicability of CEF to them.

Section 4.4.5.3 deals with what are, by analogy with paralinguistics, termed ‘paratextual’ features, devices used in hand-written or printed texts to emphasise words or signal the grouping and relative importance of phrases and sentences. Similarly, illustrations, charts, tables, etc. serve to express meaning and give information in a more economic or more striking way than discursive text.

4.5 Communicative language processes

A successful act of communication is a complex process, involving a chain of events. The production and reception of speech and writing require a sequence of highly skilled actions, mental and physical. In mature native speakers, the process works smoothly and, for the most part, unconsciously. Normally, only the higher cognitive planning and interpretative skills involve conscious choice and manipulation. The processes involved come to our attention mostly when young children are developing the necessary skills, or when – usually as a result of brain

damage – they break down in later life. In broad outline, the processes of communication and the sequences of skilled actions entailed are a human universal, the object of psycholinguistic study. Research into speaking is reported for example in Levelt, W.J.M., *Speaking: from intention to articulation*, a work of some 500 pages. A simpler outline is given by Denes, P. and Pinson, E. in *The Speech Chain*. When a non-native language is learnt subsequently, the processes have to be re-programmed and skills re-learned. This re-learning is partly facilitated, partly impeded by the pre-existent skills which have become routine and habitual in their operation. Actions and reactions are necessarily more conscious, slower, less reliable. There is an inevitable tension between increasing competences and increasing skill in the control of the processes of production and reception. At the extremes, some learners know a great deal of a language, but cannot put it into practice, whilst others can perform in a fluent and error-free way, but at the expense of having very little language to control. It is important for any language learning/teaching programme, and for any proficiency assessment, to find the proper balance between skills development and the enlargement of competences in the light of the needs and characteristics of the learners concerned.

Section 4.5 surveys the range of skills involved in the processes of planning, executing and monitoring language production, reception and interaction. It should be read in conjunction with the sections on strategies in section 4.4.

4.6 Texts

In an act of communication, the text is the linguistic artefact, external to the participants, which links them together. It is the output of the productive process and the input to the receptive process. In the case of an interactive process, the sequence of alternating contributions from the participants may be regarded as one text (for example, a dialogue).

Texts (spoken or written) are central to any act of communication, the only part of the chain of events that is normally observable. They are also central to language learning and teaching, since learners are essentially being equipped to produce and understand texts. They are certainly central to assessment, since much testing takes the form of presenting the testees with one text and requiring them to produce another in response (though in so-called single skill testing an attempt is made to test speaking, reading, listening and writing separately by reducing, often artificially, the role of those not being tested to a minimum by the use of mother tongue, non-verbal stimuli or responses, etc.).

Sections 4.6.1- 4.6.2 deal with the relation of a text to the medium which carries it, showing that this relation is not merely arbitrary. Section 4.3 enumerates and classifies, by no means exhaustively, the different kinds of text in everyday use. It also contains scales for note-taking in lectures and seminars and for processing text. No descriptors are given for note-taking, since participation in a seminar or listening to a university lecture presupposes language competences above this level. Section 4.6.4 discusses the relation between a text and the activity in which it is embedded. As has been indicated, this section should be read in conjunction with the relevant parts of section 4.4.

There is a close relation, both in educational contexts and in authentic use, between the purposes for which a text is produced, the media which carry the text, the form and content of the text and activities involved in its productive and receptive processing. The overall aim of section 4.6 is to explore -- and to some extent illustrate and codify -- that relation, so as to assist users of CEF in addressing the questions posed.

Part 5 – The user/learner's competences

This guide has dealt in some detail with what language users/learners are called upon to do as participants in acts of communication, as well as with the texts they produce or to which they respond. Now, consider what it is that enables human beings to engage in such acts of communication.

The term competences refers to the complex of different kinds of knowledge and skill people have to draw upon.[N.B. The term 'competence', plural 'competences', is used consistently throughout CEF. The term 'competencies' now frequently employed by applied linguists in the plural, but rarely in the singular, is avoided. The difference is stylistic. No difference of meaning is intended.]

It has seemed useful for practical purposes to classify competences according to the scheme presented below. It should, however, be emphasised that the scheme lays no claim to being philosophically or scientifically authoritative. In particular, it has seemed important to distinguish those competences directly concerned with language from those of a more general character, though the working of language itself depends on there being close correlations between them.

5.1 General competences

- 5.1.1 declarative knowledge (*savoir*)
  - 5.1.1.1 knowledge of the world
  - 5.1.1.2 sociocultural knowledge
  - 5.1.1.3 intercultural awareness
- 5.1.2 skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*)
  - 5.1.2.1 practical skills and know-how
  - 5.1.2.2 intercultural skills and know-how
- 5.1.3 existential competence (*savoir-être*)
- 5.1.4 ability to learn (*savoir-apprendre*)
  - 5.1.4.1 language and communication awareness
  - 5.1.4.2 general phonetic skills
  - 5.1.4.3 study skills
  - 5.1.4.3 heuristic skills

5.2 Communicative language competences

- 5.2.1 Linguistic competences
  - 5.2.1.1 lexical competence
  - 5.2.1.2 grammatical competence
  - 5.2.1.3 semantic competence
  - 5.2.1.4 phonological competence
  - 5.2.1.5 orthographic competence
  - 5.2.1.6 orthoepic competence
- 5.2.2 sociolinguistic competence
  - 5.2.2.1 markers of social relations
  - 5.2.2.2 politeness conventions
  - 5.2.2.3 expressions of folk-wisdom
  - 5.2.2.4 register differences
  - 5.2.2.5 dialect and accent

5.2.3 pragmatic competences
- 5.2.3.1 discourse competence
- 5.2.3.2 functional competence
- 5.2.3.3 schematic design competence

5.1.1.1 Knowledge of the world

The need to pay attention to the language learner's knowledge of the world is not always recognised. By the time even a young child comes to learn a new language in an educational context, he or she has already come to terms with the environment. Learning a new language does not mean starting afresh. Most of the knowledge of the world which is needed can be taken for granted. However, even for a mature adult, it is not simply a question of learning new words for old ideas. The way communities conceive the world in which they live and encode their collective experience in language varies significantly. It is, however, remarkable to what extent the framework of general and specific notions proposed in the Threshold Level have proved appropriate and adequate for more than twenty European languages, even from different language families. Judgement is needed in deciding such questions as: Does the language to be taught or tested involve a knowledge of the world which in fact is beyond the learners' state of maturation, or outside their adult experience? If so, it cannot be taken for granted.

The problem cannot always be avoided. In the case of the use of a non-native language as the medium of instruction in schools or universities (and indeed in mother-tongue education itself) both the subject content and the language used are new. In the past many language textbooks, such as the *Orbis pictus* of the celebrated seventeenth-century Czech educationist Comenius, have attempted to structure language learning in a way explicitly designed to give young people a structured world-view.

5.1.1.2 Sociocultural knowledge

The above remarks apply strongly in the sociocultural field. Better understanding of other peoples and sympathetic acceptance of cultural differences is an important policy aim of the Council of Europe as agreed by the First Summit meeting of Heads of State. Language learning has an important part to play in replacing stereotypes and hearsay by accurate knowledge. Language is a central aspect of the culture of its speakers. In addition, factual knowledge about the country where the language is spoken, and about the people who use it, is a natural centre of interest for language learners. Users should note that CEF distinguishes between sociocultural knowledge, treated in this section, and social skills, dealt with in section 5.1.2. Sociolinguistic competence, dealing with the more strictly linguistic aspects of sociocultural competence, is handled in section 5.2.2. All should be considered together. Indeed, since language is a sociocultural phenomenon, sociocultural concerns are not limited to the sections named as such, but are relevant throughout.

5.1.1.3 Intercultural awareness

For mutual understanding and tolerance it is valuable for a learner not simply to have knowledge and experience of another culture, but to use that experience and knowledge to raise awareness of the learner's own culture of origin. Those who know only the culture in which they live and have been brought up are likely to regard its way of doing things as natural and deviations from it as abnormal. Properly handled, confrontation with a culture which orders things differently can bring learners to relativise their own culture and to see it as having made particular choices from the range of possibilities open to human beings, none having exclusive validity. This is an important educational experience.

5.1.2 Skills and know-how

CEF is action-oriented. Knowledge is not seen as an end in itself but as the necessary basis for action. Skills and know-how are indispensable to bring knowledge into action. It is seen as an important aspect of language learning/teaching to enable learners to use language effectively in the active pursuit of skilled activities in which they have a keen interest. This principle is closely related to motivation and the avoidance of the 'intellectual fallacy'. Social skills are perhaps of particular significance in enabling learners to face the challenges of social intercourse with members of other communities without experiencing culture shock, which may reinforce rather than overcome prejudice.

5.1.2.2 Intercultural skills and know-how

Similar principles apply to interculturality, which is not simply a matter of knowing how the learner's culture of origin and the target culture relate to each other, but being able to act appropriately in relation to both cultures. In cross-cultural situations, such as school links, visits and exchanges, visitors are seen as representatives of their culture of origin. They are in a position to interpret that culture to their hosts, and by the way they behave, enhance international understanding and sympathetic acceptance (or, of course, the opposite!). They can avoid or overcome inter-ethnic misunderstandings much more easily than those who are monolingual and monocultural. This is the meaning of the slogan *Einsprachigkeit ist heilbar!* (monolingualism is curable!). On a practical level, a learner who has acquired intercultural skills can help those who lack them to deal with situations of cross-cultural contact.

5.1.3 Existential competence

It has long been a principle of the Council of Europe's approach to modern languages that learning objectives should be based on the communicative needs of learners and that both objectives and the methods used should be diversified to take account of the motivations and characteristics of learners. The way people communicate is not totally determined by external factors. Some people, even from a quite early age, are bold and enterprising, whilst others are cautious and reticent. Some are strong-willed, others more compliant, ready to see another point of view and to compromise rather than to press confidently ahead. Some are optimistic, others less so. Some act spontaneously, others only after reflection. Some are fully at home with abstract ideas, others more strongly attached to concrete reality. None of these and other polarities can be reduced to a right and a wrong alternative. Their existence makes for human variety and all have a contribution to make to a healthy pluralist democratic society. When learning another language, we should not expect, let alone force, learners to change their basic personalities but rather to help them to find ways of expressing them in a new language and a new cultural context. This should not be interpreted as a flaccid, permissive, relativism, in which anything goes. Personality development is itself an educational aim and the growth of self-awareness and self-confidence can be an objective of communicative language teaching.

5.1.4 Ability to learn

As was argued earlier, language learning during initial full-time education cannot guarantee to provide a learner with the whole of the communicative proficiency he or she will need in adult life. It is likely that communicative need will arise for a language not studied at school or university. Even in the case of a language which has been studied, the need may be for a variety or specialised area not covered at the time. If there is a protracted period in which the language is not used, language loss may occur so that the learner reverts to being a false beginner and considerable re-learning is necessary. In most cases, the learner is not in a position to take leave from work for a renewed spell of formal learning, but must learn on the job. For these reasons,

preparation for further independent learning, learning to learn, should form part of any course of learning. It should be recognised as a learning objective, and methods for developing language learning ability should be developed and applied (cf. *Threshold Level 1990*, chapter 13). Sections 5.1.4.1 –5.1.4.4 present four components of learning to learn which users should find self-explanatory.

5.2 Communicative language competences

Section 5.1 has dealt with the general competences which language users draw upon when participating in acts of communication. The preceding notes have largely been concerned to show how a consideration of these general competences is of importance to language learning, teaching and assessment. Attention is now focused on the competences directly concerned with language as a vehicle of communication.

5.2.1 Linguistic competences

No-one can use what they do not have. Every teacher or learner of a language knows this to be the heart of the matter. To build up linguistic resources, to know words and their meanings and be able to put them together into meaningful, correctly formed sentences, remains the central, inescapable requirement for successful communication. For some teachers, this is the whole of their responsibility to the learner, who is then left free to decide how to make use of it all. An action-oriented communicative approach sees the task differently. Language is for use, and knowledge of the forms of a language is not an end in itself. Nor is the ability to manipulate forms an end in itself. Linguistic competences have to be built up as part of the wider process of learning to communicate. A fully articulated awareness of the linguistic system of the language concerned is an essential basis for the proper planning of language courses and for the assessment of proficiency at successive levels. Some, though probably not all, types of learners may also be assisted in their progress by a conscious awareness of the language as an organised system.

How to present the parameters of language systems in a general framework is highly problematic. Languages vary greatly in their formal properties and there are differing opinions on the extent to which this variation is constrained by universal principles, ranging from total arbitrariness to close genetic determination. CEF authors do not claim to solve this issue, but confine themselves to a fairly traditional apparatus of classification.

This treatment is not intended to be normative. Users are invited to use the scheme presented as a basis for reflection, but are quite free to modify it or indeed to describe their objectives in terms of a different model which they consider more adequate or more appropriate. They are asked only to make their description explicit and transparent.

5.2.1.1 Lexical competence

Users will note that 'lexical' is used here not simply for single words, but rather for linguistic expressions which are stored and used as fixed, indivisible wholes. Lexical thus includes fixed phrases and idioms, but not all words, since complex and compound word forms are dealt with under morphology as part of grammatical competence. Grammatical elements occupy an intermediate position. They are simple word forms, but function only as elements of grammatical constructions. Often termed form words as opposed to content words, they are of high frequency and form closed sets. Together they make up a high proportion of running text, but contribute relatively little to its meaning. They are predictable from the context and are generally the words omitted from telegraphic texts, for example, (I shall) arrive (by the) last train (on) Friday. As

forms, they occur very early in a language course, but cannot then be taken to be known. For instance 'a' and 'the' will usually be found in lesson one, but their meaning is difficult, if not impossible to define and their use continues to present problems even to advanced learners. Many perform grammatical functions which in other languages are performed in other ways (for instance inflexional endings). Users may prefer to regard them as part of grammatical competence. The main thing is that all the facts should be dealt with at some point.

The part played by individual words in signalling grammatical relations varies greatly from one language to another. In languages like English, where they play a very important part, their classification is often problematic. The list given in section 5.2.1.1 gives classified examples, almost all of which are taken from English. The examples of particles are taken from German, where modal particles play an important role in the expression of speaker attitudes. Users will, of course, draw up such classified lists as they consider best suited to the language concerned.

5.2.1.2 Grammatical competence

For the reasons already given, the authors of CEF have not felt it to be within their competence to specify in advance for all future users the form which the specification of grammatical competence should take, in view of the different schools of thought and the diversity of languages in Europe. It is hoped that users of CEF will report their practice in a way that can serve as a basis for the intensive reconsideration of this section after trailing. This applies in particular to the remarks on syntax. As is stated there, 'the ability to organise sentences to convey meaning is a central aspect of communicative competence' and this section does little more than draw attention, with some exemplification, to 'some parameters and categories which have been widely used in grammatical description'. It may be the case that many of the categories listed here will not apply to a particular language and that others necessary for the description of that language are not represented here. Clearly, in such cases, while avoiding unnecessarily idiosyncratic terminology, colleagues will develop descriptive systems most appropriate to the language concerned. Others may well feel that a purely taxonomic approach, simply classifying forms, is inadequate. Again, CEF is not intended to discourage innovation, given that the resultant descriptions are useful and intelligible to users.

In particular, readers may be surprised not to find a discussion of transformational generative grammar, which has occupied a central position in theoretical linguistics for the greater part of the past half-century. There are two main reasons for this omission. The first is that from its beginnings this school has publicly distanced itself from language teaching (Chomsky 1966 in Allen and van Buren, chapter 7). This attitude contrasts strongly with the close involvement of the previous generation, strongly influenced by behaviourist psychology, discredited by Chomsky at the outset of his career (Chomsky 1959 Review of Skinner, B.F. 'Verbal behaviour' in *Language* 35, 26-58). The second reason is that the development of linguistic theory by this school has led it ever further from the realities of language in use, discarding along the way earlier models which appeared to have direct applications. Whereas the dramatic development of our understanding of the natural world in the natural sciences has been built up step by step, always subject to empirical validation and generally leading to, and learning from, practical applications, this does not seem to have been the case with linguistic research.

Users wishing to know more of the development of generative (or, more recently, universal) grammar, may consult, for the earlier, 'classical' model Chomsky, N., (1965) *Aspects of the theory of syntax.* Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, or Allen, J.P.B. and van Buren, P. (1971) *Chomsky: selected readings.* Oxford OUP. For more recent developments, Radford, A., Clahsen, H. and Spenser, A. (1999) *Linguistics: an introduction* provides an accessible account. Users should be aware that no single grammatical theory now commands general support.

5.2.1.3 Semantic competence

Semantics is often defined as the science of meaning. Since all aspects of human communicative behaviour are meaningful, in that they convey information of one sort or another to an observer properly equipped to identify and interpret them, almost everything contained in CEF may be considered as an aspect of a user/learner's semantic competence. In this section the treatment is narrower, being concerned only with the meanings of linguistic forms and the relations among them. Lexical semantics, dealing with the meanings of words (or, more strictly, lexical elements, cf. 4.7.2.1.1. (a)), is distinguished from grammatical semantics, dealing with the meanings attached to the organisation of words into sentences. The meaning of a sentence is embodied partly in the choice of lexical elements and partly by their organisation. Pragmatic semantics is then concerned with the formal meaning of relations among sentences, especially those of a logical character.

The paragraph at the end of section 5.2.1.3 points out a basic dilemma in descriptive linguistics, resulting from the double articulation of language. Both form and meaning are highly structured, but cut across each other in a largely arbitrary fashion. This is most obvious in the case of word forms. Words which are closely related in sound, for example, pit, pet and pat are unrelated in meaning. Words closely related in meaning, such as horse, mare, foal; bull, cow, and calf are unrelated in sound. Even where the relation seems close, as in that between verb forms and time relations, if one is systematically presented, the other shows anomalies and inconsistencies. This presents curriculum designers, course planners, textbook writers and others with the decision whether to make form or function the basis of organisation.

5.2.1.4 Phonological competence

This section deals with the organisation of language as sound. Phonetics, which deals with the chain of events from the actual bodily movements which produce speech sounds through acoustic properties of utterances to their perception as speech sounds, has been relatively stable for many years because the phenomena with which it deals are relatively easily accessible to direct observation and were the first aspects of language use to be closely investigated. The processes of sound production and reception are well-understood, and schemes for the classification of sounds on an articulatory (productive) or auditory (basis) are well-developed, with agreed international conventions for their representation (the International Phonetic Alphabet). The system can be mastered without undue effort through a programme of ear-training and articulatory training. Such a general phonetic training is an aspect of learning to learn, preparing learners to recognise and produce the distinctive sounds likely to be encountered in a new language, even in unfamiliar combinations (cf. section 5.1.4.2).

The phonology of a particular language deals with the role of sounds in signalling the words, phrases and sentences of a language. Only a limited number of sound distinctions are used for this purpose, produced by a number of distinctive articulatory gestures. These are termed the 'phonemes' of the language. Words are signalled by (normally) short sequences of such gestures, producing then a sequence of corresponding acoustic effects. Phonologically, phrases and sentences consist of sequences of such words forms, often modified according to their context and further characterised by distinctive prosodic features of pitch (intonation) and loudness (stress). Section 4.7.2.1.4 details the components of phonological competence. Of primary importance are:

1. knowledge of the phonemes of the language, the phonemic composition of words and the stress and intonation patterning of sentences in discourse.

2. skills in the production and perception of phonemes and prosodic features not only in isolation but also in combination within words and sentences. In mature speakers, phonological competence becomes a matter of unconscious habit. They become skilled at interpreting the speech of others, including dialect speakers, in terms of the phonology they have internalised. They may have great difficulty in producing sounds which do not figure as phonemes in their own speech. When confronted with a new language, they may have difficulty in perceiving and producing new phonemes or unfamiliar combinations of sounds and will translate what they hear in terms of their own phonology, producing a foreign accent. As a result, communication is made more difficult and misunderstandings result. On the other hand, the redundancy of language in context will usually make it possible for a proficient user of the language to reconstruct what is meant. The issues raised for language learning and teaching are presented in the form of options in section 6.4.7.9.

5.2.1.5 Orthographic competence

This section deals with the specific features of writing systems.

5.2.1.6 Orthoepic competence

This section deals with the principles governing the pronunciation of written forms.

5.2.2 Sociolinguistic competence

Sociolinguistic competence is concerned with the knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use. As was remarked with regard to sociocultural competence, language is a sociocultural phenomenon. Much of what is contained in many parts of CEF, particularly in respect of the sociocultural, is of relevance to sociolinguistic competence. The matters treated here are those specifically relating to language use and are not dealt with elsewhere.

5.2.2.1 Linguistic markers of social relations

Users will wish to consider ways in which social relationships between the learners and other users of the language determine language use. The examples from English are merely illustrative. In other languages, relations are marked in other ways, for example, *der/ihr* as against *Sie* in German, *tu* against *vous* in French, the use of the patronymic in Russian, etc.

5.2.2.2 Politeness conventions

An extended account of politeness conventions in Southern British society is given in chapter 11 of *Threshold Level 1990*. These conventions are mainly concerned with negative politeness, that is to say, avoiding giving offence. Politeness conventions are a frequent source of inter-ethnic misunderstanding. Hedges, such as the use of "I think", or of question tags, etc., employed by a speaker following English conventions may be interpreted in some other societies as uncertainty or lack of conviction. Inversely, their absence from the speech of those following more direct conventions may be interpreted by followers of the English conventions as a sign of arrogance or dogmatism. As exemplified in subsection 4, there are occasions when a deliberate departure from politeness conventions is called for. It may be important, however, for a learner not to depart from them unless confident of not being misinterpreted.

5.2.2.3 Expressions of folk-wisdom

Sententious phrases and sentences in common parlance are often exchanged among speakers to establish or reinforce social solidarity in matters of attitudes, values and beliefs. In English, the

cliché (proverb, etc.) itself is avoided in favour of an abbreviation or oblique reference, which may be opaque to a listener unfamiliar with the original, which is assumed to be common property. For instance, 'Ah, it's an ill wind', said with a rising intonation, indicates that there is a positive aspect to a bad situation, the words 'that blows no-one any good' being merely implied. At some point in the language learning process, the learning of a store of common proverbs, etc. may be a useful addition to a learner's receptive competence.

5.2.2.4 Register differences

The examples given here offer the different ways to suggest that some particular action should be started, dependent upon the situation and the relations among the participants. (As such, it is closely related to section 5.2.2.1.) The examples range from the use of fixed ritualistic formulae to laconic interchanges among intimates.

5.2.2.5 Dialect and accent

No European language communities are entirely homogenous. Different regions have their peculiarities in language and culture. These peculiarities are usually most marked in those regions where people live purely local lives, and therefore correlate with social class, occupation and educational level. Recognition of such dialectal features, therefore, gives significant clues as to the interlocutor's characteristics. Stereotyping plays a large role in this process. Learners will, in the course of time, also come into contact with speakers of various provenances. Before adopting dialect forms for themselves, learners should be aware of their social connotations and of the need for coherence and consistency.

5.2.3 Pragmatic competences

The term pragmatics may be used in linguistics to refer to the study of certain logical relations among sentences (cf. section 5.2.1.3). In this section the term is used more broadly; the narrower use is treated as an aspect of discourse competence.

5.2.3.1 Discourse competence

Discourse competence is the ability of a user/learner to construct sentences and arrange them in sequence so as to produce coherent stretches of language. A good deal of mother-tongue education is devoted to building a young person's discourse skills. In learning a foreign language, a learner is likely to start with short turns, usually of single sentence length. At higher levels of proficiency, the development of discourse competence, the components of which are indicated in this section, becomes of increasing importance. For a brief account of the factors involved in discourse competence, the user may wish to consult Crystal, D.: *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*, section 20.

5.2.3.2 Functional competence

Users are recommended to consult this section in conjunction with section 4.3. Macro functions here relates to the user/learner's ability to construct discourse as appropriate to different communicative purposes in the course of the performance of language tasks. The differences in function result in differences of language use. For example, in English, when describing an action, the present continuous is used. “I am picking up an egg and breaking it into a frying pan”. In demonstrating the action the simple present is employed, “I pick up an egg and break it into a frying pan”. Users are directed to *Threshold Level 1990* and *Vantage Level* for an extensive treatment of micro functions.

Conversational competence is not simply a matter of knowing which particular functions (micro functions) are expressed by which language forms. Participants are engaged in an interaction, in which each initiative leads to a response and moves the interaction further on, according to its purpose, through a succession of stages from opening exchanges to its final conclusion. Competent speakers have an understanding of the process and skills in operating it. A macro function is characterised by its interactional structure. More complex situations may well have an internal structure involving sequences of macro functions. The section gives examples from the simplest to the most complex. At one end are simple initiating/responding pairs such as question and answer. In *Un Niveau-Seuil*, the French version of the Threshold Level, the chapter *Actes de parole* arranges micro functions systematically as either (I) initiators or (II) responses. A simple interaction may consist of a brief sequence of such pairs, e.g. opening + transaction + closing, as:

Excuse me, Madam	- (I) seeking attention
Yes?	- (II) giving attention
Please could you tell me	
the way to the station?	- (I) request for information
First left and then straight on	- (II) giving information
Thank you, Madam	- (I) thanking
Not at all	- (II) accepting thanks.

Language courses often present language in the form of dialogues which exemplify interactional structures such as the above. However, the structure is less often made clear, so that learners do not know how to proceed unless an interaction takes the exact form of the dialogue, which is rarely the case. Learners may achieve much better user autonomy if they learn to control an interactional strategy, recognising the place of an interlocutor's turn in the interaction even if they fail to understand it, and using compensatory strategies (see *Threshold Level 1990*, chapter 12) to bring it back on course. As is pointed out, the fact that the participants have in their competence a model of the interaction (especially if it is routinised) does not mean that an actual conversation will contain all and only exponents of the micro- and macro functions as sequenced in the model. Some stages may be passed over in silence as being self-evident. The interaction may be 'humanised' by including exchanges on personal matters, for instance. However, the participants' knowledge of the underlying schema means that it can be called upon whenever communication is necessary. A good deal of work on interactional structures has been carried out by German sociolinguists interested in the theory of language as social action. Users wishing to explore the area more deeply might follow the work of, for example, Konrad Ehlich and Jochen Rehbein. However, relatively little has been done to develop schemata for the macro functions exemplified in 5.2.3.2 or for classes of transaction other than buying and selling. The Council of Europe will be glad to be informed by CEF users of their attempts to develop such schemata.

Part 6 – The processes of language learning and teaching

Chapter 4 sets out to define in some detail what a competent language user is required to do in order to take part in acts of communication. Chapter 5 then identifies the different kinds of knowledge and skill that enable a language user to act in that way. Chapter 6 now turns to questions of learning and teaching.

6.1 What is it that learners have to learn or acquire?

This section examines the question of learning objectives. Section 6.1.1 explains that, to a large extent, Tables 1-3 in chapter 3 – which give the criteria to be satisfied at each successive level of

language proficiency – can be taken as abbreviated statements of objectives, amplified and exemplified in chapters 4 and 5. Section 6.1.2 then discusses which parts of the learner's competence in a particular language need, in fact, to be taught explicitly and which may already be present or might be acquired in other ways.

However, a plurilingual competence is more than the simple sum of its single language components. Sections 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 explore in greater depth how a plurilingual competence differs from competence in a number of discrete languages and draws out the implications for language learning and for teaching objectives. The individual language components of plurilingual competence are uneven, differentiated according to the learner's experience and in an unstable relation as that experience changes. However, all are available for use and a user may switch languages when the situation changes (given that the interlocutor is also adequately plurilingual). The interaction of differentiated language components in the plurilingual user promotes the development of linguistic and cultural awareness, and makes a special contribution to a pan-European (indeed global) understanding and acceptance, as the parameters of diversity become better understood. The differentiated components are always partial. The less-developed language is not simply a deficient competence covering some part of that of a better-known one. Often the partial competences are complementary, as in cases of diglossia, where a particular language is used only in a particular social context (for example, the occupational or religious domain) but is more adequately developed for that purpose than another which in general is better known. Users are invited to examine the interrelation of their own language competences in a plurilingual perspective and to reflect on the extent to which they foster plurilingualism in others.

The plurilingual principle is then applied to the several components of communicative competence, showing how each may be more or less developed in partial competences, dependent upon the function of the knowledge of the particular languages concerned and their relative contribution to the learner's overall communicative competence. Emphasis is laid on their complementarity.

6.2 The processes of language learning

6.2.1 Acquisition or learning?

This section points out the need for users of CEF to be explicit in the way they use the terms acquisition and learning. Many writers confine the term learning to institutional learning, usually of a formal character; the terms learner and learning are used in a generic sense.

6.2.2 How do learners learn?

This section draws attention to the continuing wide divergence of opinion among theorists – and to some extent, practitioners – on the relative contribution to the development of language proficiency of acquisition resulting from exposure to language in use and learning resulting from formal instruction. Both extremes have their adherents, but most practice has elements of both, with some difference of emphasis. For strong advocacy of acquisition, see Kraschen (1982) and Kraschen & Terrel (1983).

6.3 What can each kind of framework user do to facilitate language learning?

This section considers the respective roles of each of the parties to the language learning process.

6.4 Some methodological options for modern language learning and teaching

This section now comes to questions of method in learning and teaching. As has been pointed out in chapter 1 and passim, CEF does not advocate any particular method, but invites users to reflect on the issues and on the options which are open to them.

In the field consultation between the first and second drafts of CEF, many colleagues expressed misgivings at this policy. They pointed out that the Council of Europe had long championed language learning and teaching for communication and that this had clear methodological implications. CEF should not leave its users with the impression that the Council was now retreating from that position and adopting a strictly neutral stance, possibly implying that its previous approach had been wrong. CEF should indicate preferred options or at least point out the probable negative consequences of taking up some others (such as adherence to grammar/translation methods or structural drilling).

As has already been explained in section 1.5 of this guide, the Council of Europe is not abandoning the approach for which it is wellknown, and is not methodologically neutral. Its principles were clearly enunciated in the celebrated Recommendation R(82)18 of the Committee of Ministers. The studies and workshop reports in its Project *Language learning for European citizenship* resulted in many methodological recommendations. These were consolidated in the conclusions and recommendations of the Final Report of the Project and endorsed by the Intergovernmental Conference *Language learning for a new Europe* held in Strasbourg in April, 1997 as the basis for a new Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers currently (January 1998) under consideration. However, CEF has a different function, namely to provide a basis for reflection and a tool for communication among practitioners, that is, those directly engaged in language teaching and assessment or in its administration and support services. The later chapters of this guide are directed to the special needs and interests of different categories of user; this chapter provides guidance likely to be of interest to all users.

Throughout this section and its sub-sections, an attempt is made to survey the range of options comprehensively and to invite framework users to reflect on these options and to situate themselves accordingly. It is of course possible that a user may feel that none of the options offered corresponds to his or her position. In that case, the user is invited to define that position as transparently as possible and feed the definition into the Council as a potential extension of CEF.

6.4.1 General approaches

This section takes up the range of methodological options implied by the discussion in 6.2. The options are arranged in order from simple exposure to language in use (option a) through self-instruction (option e) and traditional teacher-centred instruction (option f) to the most intensive interactive classroom methods (option i).

6.4.2 The relative roles of teachers, learner and media

Different views on the nature of learning have important implications for classroom organisation and practice, the ways in which teachers and learners are expected to behave and what part instructional media can be called upon to play. A classroom in which magisterial teaching methods are used is a very different place from one in which pupils are active agents and teachers play a supportive and facilitating role. In this section, users are invited to consider the options relating to the social character of classes and the implications of the choices made. The

attention of users is drawn to the Council of Europe publication *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom* by J. Sheils, in which these issues are thoroughly treated.

6.4.3 Texts

The options presented in this section deal with the role and nature of spoken and written texts used both receptively and productively for language learning and teaching. Before responding, users should again consult section 4.6.

6.4.4 Tasks and activities

When selecting from the options shown, users should consult chapter 7, where the issues concerned are discussed in considerable depth.

6.4.5 Communicative strategies

The strategies by which the learner's competences are brought into action when engaging in communicative activities are discussed in some detail in the various subsections of section 4.4 dealing with each of the 'activities' (production, reception, interaction, mediation) treated there. Concern with the development of these strategies is one of the hallmarks of a communicative approach to language learning and teaching, distinguishing it from earlier approaches concerned with knowledge of a language as an end in itself. In this section, options are presented. In considering them, users should reflect carefully on the issues raised in section 4.4.

6.4.6 General competences

Section 5.1 deals *in extenso* with the important role of the general competences of a language user in communication. By definition, however, they are not directly tied to language. This raises the question of what place, if any, they should have in a language course. In this section, many are offered. In considering them, users may wish to think about the consequences of selecting a particular option, with reference to chapter 4.

6.4.7 Linguistic competences

It need hardly be said that the development of linguistic competences is the necessary core of second or foreign language learning. Other components of communicative competence will, to some extent, already have been developed through general experience of life and in the development of mother tongue competence. It is a matter of judgement what place they should be given in second or foreign language teaching. However, the central fact is that ignorance of the languages concerned is the principal bar to communication. Effective teaching of the various components of linguistic knowledge and skill is at the heart of the teacher's responsibilities. All language systems are of necessity highly complex, further complicated by the fact that they have evolved by organic processes in social environments and are not logical constructs. As we have seen in chapter 4, the lexical and grammatical resources of any language are huge, requiring a correspondingly large amount of effort over a substantial period of time for their active mastery – in virtually all cases much more than is practically possible. How to make the best use of the time and of the human and material resources available is a question that confronts all the various partners for learning. Since the choices made by one party affect the work of all the others, some degree of co-ordination – certainly of mutual information – is necessary, compatibility rather than uniformity being the aim. In this section of CEF, as elsewhere, an effort has been made to present available options comprehensively. In case of gaps, users should supplement the options according to their own knowledge, experience and understanding, for the benefit of future users.

6.4.7.1 – 6.4.7.3 Vocabulary

The options listed here are not, of course, mutually exclusive. Users are invited to consider which methods to employ, and in what combinations, with what weighting.

6.4.7.4 – 6.4.7.8 Grammatical competences

The teaching of grammar is perhaps the most contentious area in language teaching and certainly one of the most important. Approaches vary from the most abstract formalism to the expectation that learners will pick it up as they go along, without any formal instruction, as young children are assumed to do when acquiring their first language. There is a long tradition of assessing progress in language learning by testing the learner's ability to perform grammatical exercises without error, a task made more difficult by the fact that natural languages do not form perfectly consistent systems (cf. section 6.5 of this guide below). Grammar acquires the reputation among school learners of a kind of intellectual obstacle course, concerned purely with formal accuracy and irrelevant to the expression of meaning.

On the contrary, the mastery of grammar raises human language above the memorisation of particular signs. The neglect of grammar in language teaching leads learners to disorientation and pidginisation as objectives, range, fluency and accuracy compete with each other. What is the proper balance to strike? What is the role of conscious awareness? What place, if any, is there for drilling? How far are learners able to induce grammatical rules from exposure to language in use? What is the effect of age, experience, education, intelligence, and learner type?

This section does not provide answers or even list in detail the full range of options. It draws particular attention to: a) factors affecting the ordering of aspects of grammar in courses, b) alternative and complementary methods of facilitating the development of grammatical competence, and c) a menu of exercise forms. The co-operation of users in the further development of this section is invited.

CEF makes no attempt to lay down general rules or procedures for the selection of grammatical course content, beyond some basic remarks on progression. Standard reference grammars are available for most languages and users are advised to draw upon them when deciding the grammatical content of courses, tests, etc. Users should identify the reference grammars consulted.

6.4.7.9 Pronunciation

This section provides a menu of methods, only some of which are combinable. In considering how to facilitate the learner's ability to recognise and produce spoken utterances, users should consult sections 5.1.4.2 and 5.2.1.4 and the notes on those sections in this guide.

6.4.7.10 Orthography

This section deals with the written form of the language. In mother tongue development, the child's control of the spoken language, including its phonology, is well-developed before he or she learns to read and write. Alphabetic writing systems are basically phonemic. Some, such as Finnish, are consistently so. In those cases, children require only to raise their awareness of the phonemic constitution of words and to associate a particular phoneme with a particular letter in order to be able to write any word or sentence. Conversely, they are able to pronounce any written word without special learning. In other systems, such as Chinese, which are logographic, words, not phonemes, are represented by signs. Children learn the sign for each word separately.

When they encounter a new word in speech, they do not know how to write it. Conversely, when they encounter a new word in its written form, they do not know how to pronounce it.

In many European languages (notoriously, English), a basically phoneme-based alphabetic writing system has become distorted by historical sound changes (for instance, the Great Vowel Shift in English) not reflected in the written form, partly by etymological factors (such as the desire to preserve the original written form of loan-words from the classical and other modern languages) and partly by a deliberate policy of ascribing distinct written forms to homophones (words identical in sound but different in meaning). As a result, such languages may leave foreign learners (and native children!) confused between the phonemic and logographic principles, especially where the names of letters are significantly different from their phonetic values. For many words, sound and spelling are interpredictable, but unreliably so. Foreign learners and teachers are faced with a complex of problems. Should learners, already literate in their mother tongue, repeat the original process of first acquiring the basic forms of the spoken language and then learning to write them (the 'phonetic' method), or start from the written form, more appropriate to texts and textbooks, and learn to pronounce it? Subsequently, are new words to be introduced first in spoken or in written form, or, as in daily life, whichever happens to come first? How are learners to learn to write forms encountered in, for instance, radio or television programmes, or in conversation with native speakers? How will they incorporate in conversation word forms they have met in the course of their own reading? The options listed in the section relate to different aspects of this problem cluster, covering also the orthoepic issues raised in section 5.2.1.6. The options form a menu and are combinable in different ways.

6.4.8 Sociolinguistic competence

6.4.9 Pragmatic competences

The options presented here relate closely to the corresponding sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3. In each case, one option is to assume that the competences and strategies concerned are simply transferred from mother tongue usage. This option does not mean to suggest that the competences be marginalised or dismissed. Other listed options should be given careful consideration in conjunction with the sections in chapter 4 and the notes on those sections contained in this guide.

6.5 Errors and mistakes

No treatment of the methodology of language learning, teaching and assessment could be complete without mention of errors and mistakes. Traditionally, the success or failure of learners has been assessed by setting them tasks and counting, perhaps weighting, the errors and mistakes made in carrying out the task. Tasks might be grammatical exercises, passages for translation in either direction between L1 and L2, multiple-choice comprehension exercises, or others in which there appears to be a straightforward right or wrong response. At a time when the need for international real-time communication was less urgent and the influence of the classical languages was still strong, language learning was justified educationally as providing a rigorous intellectual discipline, training young people to handle complex and only partially consistent systems with care and accuracy.

The advent of language teaching for communication called the values and aims of such traditional teaching into question. Were the types of task which lent themselves to error-counting preparing learners for communication, or too artificial to serve that purpose? Was the inculcation of a reflective concern for accuracy and fear of appearing stupid by committing errors the best

attitude with which to face the challenges of communication? Might learners be made too cautious, even timid, keeping to the known and safe, unwilling to take risks? If, however, both fluency and accuracy were the criteria for success, were they bought at the expense of undue restriction of range? Were learners being overtrained in the use of an impoverished language? Was the whole process demotivating for all but an intellectual elite, marginalising the broader mass of young people who would in future need to be prepared for international communication? On the other hand, communicative effectiveness as a criterion met resistance. The high redundancy of language meant that a pidginised language eked out by paralinguistic gestures might be effective in getting a communicative intention across to a sympathetic listener. Was that educationally acceptable? What would be its effect on the quality of international intercourse? Was this just another example of declining standards, the easy acceptance of low achievement in a spirit of 'anything goes'? There is also a technical argument in favour of error-based assessment. Error evaluation is well-understood and practicable. How else can relative proficiency be measured, progress monitored and problems identified?

At the present time attitudes, opinions and practices vary greatly. The options presented in this section are intended to assist users in reflecting upon and reporting their attitudes and practices in what is still a highly contentious area.

Part 7 – Tasks and their role in language teaching

This chapter develops in greater detail and depth issues of central importance to communicative language learning, teaching and assessment dealt with taxonomically in section 4.3. Users may also read this chapter in connection with the options presented in section 6.4.4 of this guide.

7.1 Task description

Task-based learning is, naturally, a strong and growing tendency within the communicative approach. This section discusses the characteristics of different task types in everyday language use and in the language-teaching classroom.

7.2 Task performance: competences, task conditions and constraints and strategies

7.3 Task difficulty

These sections, which are closely related, enter into the implications of a number of sections in chapter 4 for the performance of communicative tasks of varying degrees of difficulty, especially in an educational context. The issues raised are dealt with in a way that requires no further commentary. They will enable users of CEF to reflect upon and plan the use of task-oriented methods in language teaching and to report their answers to the questions reproduced above to other practitioners.

Part 8 – Linguistic diversification and the curriculum

European society is and will remain multilingual and multicultural. To move with increasing freedom and independence within it, individuals as social agents need to become increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural. Users should note that **multi-** is used here for the co-existence of a number of languages and cultures in a society, whereas **pluri-** is used for the knowledge of a

number of languages and cultures by an individual. An individual may be plurilingual in a monolingual society and conversely an individual may remain unilingual in a multilingual society. Furthermore, a plurilingual individual does not keep different languages in watertight compartments, but integrates them into an enriched communicative competence, as first explained in section1.3 of CEF. Our concern is with the plurilingual development of present and future citizens in our multilingual European society.

Parts 4 – 6 are mainly concerned with what is required of a user to communicate through one language with other users of that language, and with how that ability can be developed and facilitated. Section 6.1.3 deals with the development of individual plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. Chapter 8 now turns to the implications for educational policy. The argument is clearly and cogently presented, so that little detailed commentary is required.

8.1 Definition and initial approach

The first paragraph of this section leads on from the discussion in section 6.1.3 of this guide. It says, plurilingual competence is "not seen as the superposition or juxtaposition of distinct competences, but rather as the existence of a complex or even composite competence on which the user may draw". Implications for educational approaches and objectives are then drawn.

8.2 Options for curricular design

Attention now passes to the implications of plurilingualism for educational planning. The development of a young person's overall communicative competence should be planned as a coherent process and not as a mere juxtaposition of separated, unrelated curricular subjects. According to CEF, one implication is that co-operation among colleagues in a whole-school policy context is necessary in order "to adopt a transparent and coherent approach when identifying options and making decisions".

8.3 Towards curriculum scenarios

This section discusses the principles in accordance with which integrated curricula can be devised, covering a number of languages in a plurilingual perspective. Examples are given on the basis of the involvement of three foreign languages. The curricula cover primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and therefore require co-ordinated planning at a higher level than the individual school since not only does each stage of schooling have its own remit, with importance attaching to the interfaces between successive places, but also, in view of the fact that one secondary school may service a constituency containing a number of primary schools and *vice versa*. Curriculum planning will then have to be on a local or regional basis, but in a way that leaves room for diversification closer to the point of learning.

8.4 Assessment and school, out-of-school and post-school learning

This section discusses further the educational implications of a plurilingual perspective, such as: the need to recognise the validity of differentiated profiles at the end of school studies; the need for school as an institution to define its role in a context of lifelong education; the advantages of a portfolio covering partial competences as a means of reporting plurilingual competence; and the value of a modular basis for certification. The chapter concludes: "the way forward is clearly to implement projects and experimental work in the school environment and in a variety of contexts". CEF users are cordially invited to undertake such experimental work and to report their findings to the Council of Europe.

Part 9 – Assessment

CEF is a common European framework for language learning, teaching and assessment. Up to this point, the focus has been upon the nature of language use and the language user and the implications for learning and teaching. In this final chapter, attention is concentrated on the functions of CEF in relation to the assessment of language proficiency.

9.1 Introduction

This short section defines the scope of the chapter.

9.2 A resource for the development and/or description of assessment tools

This section outlines three main ways in which CEF can be used:

1. for the specification of the content of tests and examinations.
2. for stating the criteria for the attainment of a learning objective.
3. for describing the levels of proficiency in existing tests and examinations thus enabling comparisons to be made across different systems of qualifications.

9.3 Types of assessment

This section lays out in some detail the choices that have to be made by those conducting assessment procedures. The choices are presented in the form of contrasting pairs. In each case the terms used are clearly defined and the relative advantages and disadvantages are discussed in relation to the purpose of the assessment in its educational context. The implications of exercising one or another of the alternative options are also stated. The presentation is clear and does not require a detailed commentary.

9.4 Feasible assessment and a metasystem

This section is based on the observation that a practical scheme of assessment cannot be over elaborate. Judgement must be used as to the amount of detail to be included, for instance, in a published examination syllabus, in relation to the very detailed decisions that have to be made in setting an actual examination paper or establishing a test bank. Assessors, particularly of oral performance, have to work under considerable time pressure and can only handle a strictly limited number of criteria.

Learners who wish to assess their own proficiency, say as a guide to what they should tackle next, have more time, but will need to be selective concerning the components of overall communicative competence relevant to them. This illustrates the more general principle that CEF must be comprehensive, but all its users must be selective. Selectivity may well involve the use of a simpler classificatory scheme which, as we have seen in relation to communicative activities may well collapse categories separated in the general scheme. On the other hand, the user's purposes may well mean expanding some categories and their exponents in areas of special reference. The section discusses the issues raised and illustrates the discussion by presenting the scheme adopted by a number of examining bodies for proficiency assessment criteria. These include the Swiss National Research Council's Project for the Assessment of Video Performances, on which much of chapters 8 and 9 and the appendix are based. Table 13 then

presents a proposal for the criterion descriptors to be used in assessing overall proficiency at the six levels already suggested as the basis for the vertical dimension of the reference framework.

Chapter 9 will enable many users to approach public examination syllabuses in a more insightful and critical manner, raising their expectations of what information examining bodies should provide concerning the objectives, content, criteria and procedures for qualifying examinations at national and international level (for instance, ALTE, ICC). Teacher trainers will find it useful for raising awareness of assessment issues among teachers in initial and in-service training. However, teachers are becoming increasingly responsible for the assessment of their pupils and students at all levels, both formative and summative (cf. 9.3.5). Learners, too, are increasingly called upon to carry out self-assessment, whether to chart and plan their learning or to report their ability to communicate in languages which they have not been formally taught, but which contribute to their plurilingual development (cf. chapter 7).

The *European Language Portfolio* makes it possible for learners to document their progress towards plurilingual competence by recording learning experiences of all kinds over a wide range of languages, much of which would be unattested and unrecognised. The Portfolio encourages learners to include a regularly updated statement of their self-assessed proficiency in each language. It is of great importance for the credibility of the document for entries to be made responsibly and transparently. Here, the reference to CEF is particularly valuable.

The Council of Europe will be glad of information from all those involved in assessment at any level concerning their experience in applying CEF and particularly chapter 9 and the appendix in their work. Taken together with chapter 3, as well as the scales and can-do statements contained in chapters 4 and 5 and appendices A – D, the explicitness of chapter 9 in relation to CEF makes a separate chapter on assessment in this guide unnecessary. Those professionally involved in test development and in the administration and conduct of public examinations will wish to consult chapter 9 in conjunction with the more specialised document: *Language Examining and Test Development*, prepared under the direction of M. Milanovic (ALTE). This publication of the Council of Europe, which deals in detail with test development and evaluation, and is complementary to chapter 9, also contains suggestions for further reading, an appendix on item analysis and a glossary of terms. This guide is separately available from the Council of Europe under the title “Language examining and Test Development” and it has not therefore appeared necessary to include a chapter on assessment in this guide.

General bibliography

The bibliography contains:

1. Works consulted in the preparation of CEF
2. Works users may find useful for further consultation

The general bibliography is divided into sections. The first contains general works of reference, which users may wish to consult on a wide range of topics. Works particularly relevant to each CEF chapter are then listed in alphabetic order chapter by chapter.

Further specialised references are to be found in appendices A and C.

No bibliography can be complete. Other compilers would have drawn up a different list. Moreover, valuable contributions to the knowledge and understanding of the many issues treated in CEF are appearing year on year. One or two have been referred to above. To keep abreast of developments, users are encouraged to watch for the appearance of new works as announced in publishers' and booksellers' catalogues, to browse in bookshops and at exhibitions held in connection with the meetings of teachers' associations, to read reviews in journals.

Appendix A: Developing proficiency descriptors

This appendix gives advice and guidelines for users wishing to develop proficiency scales for their own purposes, perhaps because of a need to subdivide their constituency more finely than into the 6 levels on which the general purpose system is based, as indicated in section 3.5. The appendix should be read in conjunction with chapters 3 and 9, as well as with the scales contained in chapters 4 and 5 and in the following appendices. An annotated bibliography is given for further consultation.

Appendix B: The illustrative scales of descriptors

The scales contained in CEF have for the most part been produced in connection with a Project of the Swiss National Science Research Council. This appendix contains an account of the methodology of the Project and the way that the set of scales and the descriptors used were collected, tested and selected. A short bibliography is given, followed by an overview of the scales to be found in chapters 4 and 5. Finally, the many existing scales of language proficiency used as source material for the Swiss project are listed.

Appendix C: The DIALANG scales

This appendix gives a brief account, with references, of the DIALANG project, which has developed self-assessment scales for fourteen languages closely related to CEF scales.

Appendix D: The ALTE 'Can-do' statements

ALTE is The Association of Language Testers in Europe. It brings together one or more organisations in a large range of European countries responsible for the public examination of proficiency in the language of the country concerned. It contributes to the development of common standards in language teaching across Europe by aligning the examinations offered by its members within a common framework of key levels of language performance. These levels are defined in terms of can-do statements and correlate well with the descriptors in CEF. The statements are differentiated as 1) social and tourist; 2) work; and 3) study, and will be of particular interest to users concerned with these fields.

Index
An index of key concepts and terms is provided to facilitate reference.

SECTION II

FOR THOSE DIRECTLY ENGAGED IN THE LEARNING/TEACHING PROCESS

CHAPTER 2 – GUIDE FOR ADULT LEARNERS

prepared by Ph. Riley, S. Bailly and M.-J. Gremmo
Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en langues (CRAPEL), Université de Nancy 2

Content:

Introduction

This chapter is directly aimed at adult learners of foreign languages. Its purpose is to improve their learning ability (CEF 5.1.4 / 6.3.5), as well as help them to learn foreign languages. It is based on the contents of *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of reference* and those of the various publications of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project. It includes some "theoretical" parts in the form of general learning advice or maxims to be borne in mind; but technical terms are avoided as far as possible, and practical examples relating to users' own experience as learners are given in all cases.

Part 1 – Needs Analysis (see CEF 4 / 6.1.1)

When you set out on a programme of language study of some kind (whether by enrolling for a course or through private study, for example), it is worth asking yourself why you want to master that language or, rather, what do you want to do with it? In other words, in what kinds of situations are you going to communicate with it?

Clearly, what people need to be able to say or understand depends on the situations they take part in as speakers or hearers. In any given communicative situation, they play a particular social role and have to do a number of things with the language: there are things to say and things to understand which are not necessarily the same.

For example, if you want to learn English for tourism, you have to remember that a tourist does not need to learn the same things as someone working in the tourism business (a waiter, guide, chambermaid, travel agent, etc). You do not need to say the same things as they do: for example, as a tourist in a foreign country it is unlikely that you will need to know how to describe an ancient monument in historical detail in front of a group, in a foreign language. But if you were the guide that would certainly be one of the things you would need to be able to do. Similarly, a tourist and a tourist guide do not need to understand the same things: the tourist has to understand the guide when he or she is outlining the day's programme or explaining the significance of a site. Moreover, if the guide is not a native speaker of English, the tourist will

have to understand English spoken with a foreign accent. As for the guide, he or she will have to be able to understand the tourists' questions (so as to be able to answer them) or their complaints (so as to be able to deal with them).

A further point is that in this kind of situation the social status of the participants influences the ways they speak: this is especially true of guides, who have to be both pleasant and polite but at the same time not too distant in their dealings with the tourists, who are their clients. Consequently, they will try to avoid using expressions that are either too formal or too informal, or tones of voice that might be misunderstood. For example, when talking to English tourists they do not know, guides will probably try to avoid such things as:

- using slang ("See you in front of the boozer at five.");
- using first names, especially with older clients;
- using turns of phrase which might be mistaken for impoliteness ("Hurry up, or we'll be late!" instead of "We'd better try to hurry a bit if we don't want to be late for the show", for example.);
- sounding impatient, sarcastic or curt (see CEF 5.2.2)

When we speak our mother tongue, we usually know instinctively how to adapt to the situation, so that we select the right "wavelength" for the people we are addressing, according to how well we know them, what the topic of conversation is and what means of communication is being used (telephone, letter, postcard, etc). When we speak a foreign language, we naturally tend to communicate by transferring our usual habits to the second language. So we say thank you or apologise in situations that resemble those in which we would thank or apologise in our own culture. But it is by no means always the case that such behaviour is appropriate in the foreign culture. In fact, this can even give rise to misunderstandings. For example, Spaniards tend to find French people obsequious, because they always seem to be apologising or thanking unnecessarily; the French, on the other hand, may find Spaniards over-familiar, or even impolite, because they use the "tu" form with people they hardly know, whereas the Spaniards are simply applying their own rules, which work in Spain but not in France. (see CEF 5.1.1)

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they can foresee either roughly or precisely what they will probably need to be able to say and understand;
- what kinds of situations they are likely to find themselves in;
- whether the textbook or course they choose meets their communicative needs, as well as prepares them for cultural differences?

Part 2 – Comprehension and expression skills (see CEF 2.1.3 / 4.4.1 4.4.2)

In order to be able to communicate face-to-face, whether in our mother tongue or in a foreign language, we obviously have to be able to understand what our interlocutor is saying and to express what we want to say ourselves in an intelligible manner. As we have already seen in the first part of this booklet, what we need to understand in the foreign language may well be different from the sort of things we need to say, according to the social role we are playing (for instance, guide or tourist), and this has implications for learning. In this section, you will find

further information on these two skills, comprehension and expression, so that you can work more efficiently.

1. Mental mechanisms involved in comprehension and expression are different. The brain does not function in the same way when we are interpreting a message as it does when we are expressing our intentions, ideas or feelings. A knowledge of these mechanisms is not necessary in order to learn a language, but it may be useful in choosing learning activities that take account of the difference just mentioned.

The process of comprehension involves recourse to hypotheses: when we are trying to understand what someone else is saying we construct hypotheses about what is being said on the basis of our knowledge of the situation or of the topic of conversation. This knowledge allows us to make predictions of varying degrees of precision about what is being said, what might have been said earlier or what might follow. Clues picked up along the way while our interlocutor is speaking help to prove or disprove these hypotheses. These clues may be either linguistic (words we recognise, phrases or whole sentences) or visual (the person who is speaking seems pleased, annoyed, bored, threatening and so on). In fact, to understand it is not necessary to grasp every single sound or every word. (see CEF 4.4.2 / 4.5.2.1)

Expressing oneself, on the other hand, involves putting into operation in a given situation all the communicative resources available to an individual who needs or wants to express an idea or feeling, or to obtain something from someone, or to get to know someone. The priority is making oneself understood by one's interlocutors because we need to keep in mind the simple fact that expression is not a unilateral but a two-way process: it involves taking into account what our interlocutors say, using their reactions to continually adjust what we say and how we say it. For example, if one of the interlocutors clearly disagrees with what another is saying, or cannot understand it, this will usually cause the speaker to change/improve/simplify/modify or give up (perhaps momentarily) what he is saying. (see CEF 4.4.1 / 4.5.2.2)

The first priority of a speaker is always to achieve his or her ends, and sometimes even the most limited means may suffice. A fifteen-month-old child can make its mother understand quite complicated things with a single word, provided the word in question is relevant to the situation and to what the child wants to say: for example, the word "shoe" alone may be enough for the child to explain to its mother all sorts of different things, such as:

- that he cannot find his shoe;
- that he has just put his Teddy bear's shoe on;
- that he has hidden his shoe and wants to play at finding it with his mother;
- that he has put on one of his mother's shoes;
- that his foot hurts;
- that he wants his mother to take his shoes off, or that he wants his mother to put his shoes on.

2. We often come up against difficulties in understanding or in expressing ourselves in a foreign language. However, if we stop to think, we realise that even in our mother tongue there are things that we understand more easily than others, or that we have greater difficulty in expressing than others. It is generally the case that in our mother tongue we can usually understand more kinds of discourse than we can actually produce. For example, patients can follow the medical discourse of their family doctor without being doctors themselves, and students can understand a teacher's discourse even though they could not teach a class. We can understand children and foreigners, too, even though they do not talk like us. In all these cases,

we understand without necessarily being able to speak in the same way. Our ability to understand, however, has its limits. It depends, for example, on how familiar we are with the field of knowledge in question (see CEF 5.1.1.1 / 7.3.1.1). Similarly, our ability to express ourselves in our mother tongue also has its limits. Here are a few examples which show how our competence in expression or comprehension might be limited, even in our mother tongue.

- During an evening out, you find yourself listening to a conversation between musicians. If you are not a musician yourself, when the conversation turns to musical theory or harmony, or to the works of composers you have never heard of, you may well begin to feel lost and unable to follow, and with the impression that people are speaking "double Dutch". You do not have any doubts about your ability to understand your mother tongue, but you have to admit that you do not understand what people are saying.

- You may be a regular reader of books and newspapers of all kinds, but unless you are a professional you would probably have great difficulty in writing a magazine article or a novel yourself.

- Every day when you listen to the radio or watch TV, you hear professional broadcasters reading the news or giving the weather forecast. If you had to stand in for one of them at a moment's notice, unless you were a born mimic you would find it very hard to cope, because newsreaders have their own special way of speaking which has little in common with ordinary conversation, or a meeting at work, a sales meeting, and so on.

These examples will help you to realise that knowing a language or mastering it does not mean that you can understand or express yourself satisfactorily in every kind of situation. And if this is true in your mother tongue, it is even more so in a foreign language. So do not be too demanding: do not expect to be able to do things in a foreign language that you cannot manage in your mother tongue.

3. Another difference between comprehension and expression concerns the way the two skills are used in everyday life. Whilst we rarely speak unless listeners are present, we frequently carry out some kind of comprehension activity when we are on our own. In an age where the media are everywhere, we probably find ourselves listening or reading – understanding – more often than in situations where we need to express ourselves. When we get up in the morning, we listen to the weather forecast to know what kind of day it will be; on the way to work we might listen to the news in the car or read on the bus, train or tube; in the evening we watch television or read in bed. When we are occupied in doing any of these things, we are engaged in a comprehension activity which does not necessarily involve expression of any kind.

4. The points mentioned above have important implications for language learning. In the classroom, teachers and learners usually want to do a considerable amount of expression work, because they believe that learning to speak is both more important (one has things one wants to say) and more difficult (there are so many different things to deal with). So work on comprehension is often neglected at the expense of work on expression. But when learners actually come into contact with people whose language they are studying, they realise two things: firstly, that it is often easier to express oneself than they had thought because, as we have seen, one can often "muddle through" or "make oneself understood" with very limited resources indeed, but, secondly, that it is much more difficult than they thought to understand their interlocutors. They find that they speak "terribly fast", that they have "strong accents" or that

they "swallow their words", and so on (see CEF 7.3.2.2). Now if learners have difficulty in understanding native speakers when they are in the country where the language is spoken, it is because they have not been adequately or appropriately prepared (see section 4).

Work which focuses specifically on comprehension (studying authentic recordings of native speakers, for example) can also help to improve expression, because the more you are able to understand, the more easily you can grasp how the language works and how things are said. Improving one's ability to express oneself in a foreign language depends to a great extent on ability to observe and assimilate the way native speakers talk (see CEF 5.1.4.4).

To sum up: comprehension and expression are two separate activities which can be carried out at different times and which involve their own specific mental processes. There are language learning materials and exercises which train learners specifically in either of the skills. This training can be undertaken on one skill or the other, according to the needs of the moment, but it is important to remember that if you only practise speaking, you are unlikely to improve your capacity to understand. Try not to neglect either skill, even if you have a preference for one or the other, and remember that it is important to choose materials and tasks relevant to the skill you want to improve (see CEF 4.6.2 / 4.6.3).

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they devote more time to expression or to comprehension;
- whether the materials and techniques used are appropriate to the skill in question? (see CEF 6.4.3)

The advice given in section 4 of this booklet will help the user to answer these questions.

Part 3 – Work organisation

First of all, it is worth pausing for a moment to think about what learning is. This is because the word has a number of different meanings, which can sometimes lead to confusion (see CEF 6.2.1).

“Learning” and “acquisition”

Although everyone says "I want to learn English" (or French, or Arabic or Swahili), it would in fact be more accurate to say "I want to acquire English". Why?

Our aim is to be able to use the language we are learning, to do something with it: to write, to ask for an appointment, to listen to the news, to say what it was we liked about a film, to be amused by a friend's story. We would like not to have to keep thinking about how things are said, with words and phrases coming to us more or less automatically, so that only certain conscious choices remain to be made (choosing one's words carefully to avoid giving offence, asking oneself if one has properly understood the speaker's ideas, etc). When we find ourselves using language unconsciously this way, we can say that we have *acquired* a sufficient amount of the necessary knowledge and skills, since this knowledge and these skills are at our disposal in our brain, ready for use when we find ourselves in a communicative situation.

But if this is so, what is *learning*, then? We are going to keep the term "learning" to refer to all the activities we carry out consciously and in an organised way, in order to increase the knowledge and skills at our disposal (which, in this particular case, means knowing and being able to use more English or French, etc). Imagine, for example, that you have just done five exercises on the use of the past tense in English. You have just been learning how to use this tense. Later, though, during a conversation with an English speaker, you notice that you are still making mistakes, so you have not yet completely acquired the use of this tense. This does not mean that your attempt at learning is a failure, or that you are a bad learner, it simply means that there is a big difference between learning and acquisition, and that it is in the interests of efficiency to distinguish between the two. It is also important to remember that at one time or another we have all acquired certain kinds of knowledge informally, without learning them as if we were at school.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they remember if they really learnt how to ride a bicycle? Or to iron? Or to sing?
- whether they did exercises, or called on expert help?

The answers given to these questions will indicate which of these skills have been acquired without very much learning.

The acquisition process

You might find it useful to have a clearer idea of the modern approach to the acquisition process (see CEF 6.2.2).

In order to acquire new knowledge and skills, we have to be confronted with a new situation, where the knowledge we already possess proves inadequate so that it does not allow us to function properly, for example, to solve the various problems posed by the situation. This can happen in all kinds of situations, whether it is a matter of riding a bicycle, opening a new kind of packaging or using a foreign language.

First of all, therefore, we have to realise that our previous knowledge does not allow us to solve the problems in question, and we have to want to remedy this deficiency in a permanent way. (After all, we may well feel that it is not necessary to acquire new knowledge, because we can get along by, for example, ripping the new packaging open, or using gestures.).

Next, it is the brain which gets to work: it will try to impose some kind of organisation on this novelty, to attribute meaning to it. It will try to find new objects (the parts of a bicycle, the words of the language) and to discover the rules which govern how they work. To do this, the brain will call on what it already knows. So, for example, when we are faced with a new language, we try to find words because, as we know that there are words in certain other languages, we think there are words in all languages. Again, we will try to find some kind of connection between the situation and what is being said, because we are aware that in the languages we know such a relationship exists, so we imagine that even in a language we do not know people do not go around saying any old thing.

Scientists call this data processing and establishing the operating rules (see CEF 6.2.2.1). In performing this function, the brain constructs new knowledge, but the process of acquisition has only just begun: if it is to become really relevant and functional, this new knowledge has to be

tested and tried out in other situations. In other words, the brain builds up a considerable amount of know-how around this new knowledge: what contexts it can be used in, how it varies and how we can adapt it to suit ourselves (by taking into account the ways we prefer to do things or those which we find difficult, for example).

Once the rules have been applied without giving rise to further complications, that is, tried out successfully, we memorise them and they become new forms of knowledge and skills which we are going to be able to use. At this point, we have the impression of being able to function without difficulty in the situation in question. Acquisition has taken place, and we *know* it.

A little joke by way of illustration

An inhabitant of the planet Venus, whose name is Mungo Perry and who only speaks Venusian, comes on a visit to France. He puts up at a small hotel, where he eats every evening. On the first evening, another hotel guest, a Frenchman, comes into the restaurant and sits down at the table next to our Venusian, turning towards him and saying with a smile "Bon appétit". "Aha," thinks our hero (who, you will remember, does not understand French), "this man is introducing himself; he is polite, so I will be too", and smiling back, he says "Mungo Perry" to him. The following evening, when the Frenchman arrives, he again greets the Venusian with a cheerful "Bon appétit", to which our Venusian immediately replies "Mungo Perry" in the friendliest possible way. This little scene is repeated for several evenings, until the day when our hero, who has told a bilingual friend about the courteous Mr Bonapéti, learns the truth: "Bon appétit isn't the gentleman's name, it's the way French people wish one another an enjoyable meal!" That very evening, our Venusian, keen to put his new knowledge into practice, takes the initiative. The Frenchman has hardly taken his place before our hero greets him with a triumphant "Bon appétit", which is perfectly comprehensible, despite slight difficulties in pronunciation. Whereupon the Frenchman, not wishing to seem to lack intercultural good manners, replies in a very friendly way: "Mongopéri"!

As we have just seen, the operating rules which the brain deduces from a situation are not always correct, so it is important to test them out in other situations. This is why specialists talk about the importance of making mistakes, because (provided we are aware of them, of course) these mistakes allow us to verify the operating rules we have established, as well as see if they are being satisfactorily applied. This important point is referred to in the assessment section, part 5.

How to organise oneself (or from learning to acquisition)

Learning, then, can be seen as a way of consciously organising activities in such a way that they will parallel the brain's unconscious functioning, thereby optimising it. When what is to be acquired is very complicated, it may well be that learning helps us to acquire it more easily and more thoroughly. For instance, to acquire a language, it is often considered necessary to learn it, even though it is possible to acquire a language without learning it in a conscious, organised way (as is often the case with immigrants, for example). Doing drills and exercises, learning rules of grammar or memorising vocabulary lists are all conscious activities which we organise in order to learn.

One traditional way of learning in an organised fashion is by being taught. People often learn languages by arranging to have themselves taught: they sign up for a language course (even if it is a private one by telephone!) However, it is important to realise that the teacher can only *help to learn*; the actual acquisition is done by the learner. Moreover, it is not always possible to be

taught what one wants to acquire. On the other hand, there are more and more facilities available for learning without being taught. So it is clearly very useful for every learner to know how to go about learning (see CEF 6.3.5 / 6.4).

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- what learning activities they know; which ones they consider useful, or boring;
- whether they ever wonder about the value of particular activities;
- whether they can tell the difference between tasks which are helpful for improving comprehension and those helpful for improving expression.

In order to organise your learning programme better, three important phases need to be kept in mind:

There are different phases (see CEF 6.4.1 / 6.4.2)

As we have just seen, acquisition occurs in stages. It is important to plan your work so that it corresponds to these stages. We believe that this means that there will be three phases, though they will not be of the same length for comprehension and expression, since, as we saw in section 2, understanding and speaking involve different mental operations.

First phase: Discovery

During this phase, you are going to discover just what it is you have to learn, given the communicative aims which you have set yourself (see sections 1 and 2 of this chapter). For example, if you want to know how to disagree politely, you are going to have to find appropriate words and expressions, discover which ones are used in certain kinds of situation, etc. You can learn these things from textbooks and grammars or by asking teachers, for example, but above all by studying authentic documents. These are documents (including video and audio cassettes, as well as printed texts) which have not been produced for the purpose of language teaching (as is the case with textbooks), but for the purpose of communication. In an authentic document, then, you will find examples of how the language is used for communication (how this or that grammatical tense can be used to talk about the past or the present, for example, or how to thank someone for doing you a favour). In this way, you can study how the language really works in real communicative situations.

In our view, this phase corresponds to the data-processing and rule-making phases of the acquisition process. It is very important for doing work on expression, because it is essential to collect the various items one wishes to learn to handle. However, it is not so important for comprehension, where it is possible to start immediately on the second phase.

Second phase: Systematic practice

During this phase you work on the items you need to acquire one after the other. In terms of the acquisition process, this is still part of rule-forming, and it also involves a first stage of verifying and applying the knowledge concerned. Systematic work of this kind will sometimes cause you to carry out activities which may seem to be only loosely connected with knowing how to speak a language (some readers may find this to be the case with certain kinds of grammar exercise, for example), but it is through concentrating on specific points that this phase will prove fruitful. It can be compared to a tennis player who wants to improve and who therefore goes out jogging in

the forest, an activity which does not seem to be much like tennis but which helps him to improve his stamina, which is the capacity he needs in order to play tennis.

During this phase, working on your own should not cause any problems, because you will be studying items which are going to be necessary to you individually. But at the same time you must not forget to work on all aspects of the knowledge you wish to acquire: when you are working on expression, you do not want just to be able to produce grammatically correct sentences; you want above all to use them appropriately in the communicative situations in which you are going to find yourself (see section 4). And when you are working on comprehension, you must not forget to work on all the different kinds of documents you are going to have to deal with (short texts, long texts, recordings where people talk with particular kinds of accents, and so on) as well as on the different types of reading and listening you will have to do (knowing how to look for particular pieces of information, understanding so as to be able to criticise, etc.). Nor should you forget to allow time for memorisation during this phase.

***Third phase**: Non-systematic practice*

This phase corresponds to the parts of the acquisition process where we verify our knowledge and use it in actual communicative situations. This is going to help you to clarify your ideas and memorise things better as well as develop the know-how necessary to apply the knowledge to practical situations. You are going to learn how to react to the unexpected or the unusual, how to handle all the awkward little communicative problems which no amount of systematic work can prepare you for, any more than physical training, however well planned, can reproduce the conditions of an actual match. During this phase, it is important not to specify the linguistic details of the work you are going to do (the past tense, the vocabulary of the family, expressing disagreement politely, etc.). Instead, you will specify the situation: who you are speaking to, why, etc. (see section 1 above), so that you can see whether you can now use efficiently the knowledge you have tried to memorise during the systematic phase of your work. For this reason, this work cannot really be done alone. If you are working on expression, you have to have a partner. Ideally, of course, this should be a native speaker, but another learner will do, provided he or she plays the game in communicative terms. If you are working on comprehension, you must have authentic documents, and it is important for you to listen or read in the same conditions as those in which you are going to find yourself: if you are supposed to be able to understand a recording straight off, there can no longer be any question of listening to it ten times; but if you can use a dictionary, there is no question of doing without one either!

Section 4 of this chapter contains ideas for activities you can use in these different phases.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they take these three phases into account when organising work? If so, in what way? (see CEF 6.4.2.1)
- whether they tend to concentrate on one phase at the expense of the others?

Sometimes certain learners do large numbers of grammar exercises (phase 2) without verifying whether what they are learning is having any effect on their performance in communicative situations (phase 3). Others like conversation lessons (phase 3) but fail to notice that they are making no real progress because they are not working on their particular problems (phase 2). And yet others spend all their time looking up every single word in the dictionary when they are reading a text (phase 1), which leaves them no time for working on comprehension in the real sense (phase 2).

Do not be afraid to change your mind

In section 1, we considered the need to relate the language item one wishes to acquire to the communicative situations in which one may be called on to use them. The various learning tasks that you are going to organise for yourself will therefore depend directly on what we called analysis of your needs (section 1). This means you are going to establish your priorities. What are your most important aims? What language items are you going to start with? Are you going to work on expression or comprehension first? We think that this analysis is very important: in particular it will help you to see whether you are making any progress (this will be discussed in more detail in section 5). However, once you are in the process of learning a language, certain factors may come into play which mean that you should not feel absolutely obliged to follow your original plan.

- Your needs may change

The simple fact that one is acquiring new knowledge means that one's needs are developing. Learning is not like building a wall, brick by brick, with all the bricks ready before one starts. It is more like constructing one of those modular houses, with extensions being added and rooms being used for different purposes according to the situation. When building begins, you cannot say exactly what it will look like in a few years' time; you just have a general idea. As the progressive acquisition of new knowledge and know-how causes needs to evolve, it is not necessary to anticipate in every last detail the contents and order of the whole programme of work. The main thing is to have a clear idea of what you want to achieve in a given study session. When you assess what you have acquired, you will be able to choose new aims and, therefore, new items to work on.

- Learning is not just a matter of pure logic or of keeping one's nose to the grindstone

Taking pleasure in one's work is important in acquiring a language: we learn more easily if we enjoy doing the task in question; and if we find the document we are working on interesting, it makes us more willing to tackle any difficulties it may contain. By choosing activities and documents according to our tastes, we increase the motivation which is necessary if we are to learn. Here, the important thing is to be able to steer a middle course between business and pleasure: knowing, for example, that what you are doing does not fully coincide with the results of your needs analysis (transcribing a song, for instance, when what you really want to be able to do is listen to the news on the radio) but that you are doing it for pleasure, which means that you will get something out of it. At times you are bound to feel tired or discouraged; you will overcome these feelings more easily if you allow yourself a bit of fun.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they define their aims in detail when beginning a new task or activity;
- whether they spend a few minutes at the end of each exercise thinking about what has been learnt and how it will change what is to follow;
- whether they know which tasks they enjoy and what they can be used to work on;
- whether they feel guilty about doing something which is amusing;
- whether they feel obliged to do tasks they find boring. (See CEF 4 / Documents C1, C2, C3)

There is no ideal work tempo

For many people, learning is above all a matter of organising a regular time-table of work. The idea of regularity is often considered a very important ingredient in successful acquisition. However, this is not always the case. Firstly, when you are learning something, it is simply not always possible to work regularly, especially for adults. Some weeks you may have plenty of free time, but there are also weeks when you are completely snowed under with jobs. When you want to learn something, you just have to accept these things as they are, and sometimes that can even turn out to be an advantage. The main thing is to reconcile the time available with your objectives, and to choose activities which can be fitted into the amount of time at your disposal. When you have plenty of time ahead of you, you can begin working on the detailed comprehension of an article, looking up all the unknown words in the dictionary. When you have only a short spell of time, it is more efficient to choose to do something like quick grammar drills. Here again, personal preferences will have an influence: some people will doubtless prefer to work in relatively long periods, whilst others will find it better to work in shorter, more frequent spells.

Often, when we think about working time we only take into consideration those times when we can get out our books and cassettes, sit down at the table and get on with it. But, in fact, there are other free moments which can be used to work: the time you spend in your car, or in the dentist's or optician's waiting-room, for example, are potential periods of work. You can't use them to do everything, but you can find ways of using them.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they know their own preferences as regards work tempos and times;
- whether they prefer to work for half an hour every day, or on every Saturday morning for three hours, or just when they find a free moment;
- whether they sometimes find it difficult to finish the learning task they have chosen in the time available;
- whether they can draw up a list of the different times they could use, and of the activities they could do during them.

The last point that needs to be kept in mind here is that periods of rest are useful during the learning process. To put it in a nutshell, even when you are doing nothing, you are still acquiring the language. Obviously, this implies that you have done some work beforehand, but you should not worry too much if, having worked at a rate which suited you for two weeks, you then find yourself forced to interrupt your language study for the next two weeks. During this period of enforced rest from study, your brain will continue to work, memorising and organising new knowledge, so that when you take up your studies again, you may be surprised to find that you know more than you thought!

Broadly speaking, one can do what one wants when one wants, and at the pace one wants provided that these are informed choices. Knowing what one is doing at any given moment, what needs it is meant to satisfy, where it fits in with the various learning phases, whether it is motivating and, above all, what consequences these choices are going to have on the learning process as a whole – this is much more important than trying to find (inevitably in vain) the solution which will rid you of all your problems with one wave of a magic wand.

Part 4 – Methodology

In section 2 of this chapter, we came to the conclusion that it is very useful, necessary even, to distinguish between the work you do to improve your comprehension and the work you do to improve your expression. In this section, you will find further details on how you might go about selecting the activities, exercises and materials with which you are going to learn.

a. Comprehension

First and foremost: if you want to work on oral comprehension (understanding the spoken language), you will have to spend at least 50% of your study-time listening to recordings on an audio- or videocassette. If you want to work on written comprehension, you will have to spend at least 50% of your study-time reading written documents. This is important (see CEF 7.2.2).

Choosing an activity

The activity you choose to do should correspond to what you want to learn. So you should ask yourself first of all just what it is you want to improve, and then analyse the activities available to you to see if there is one that is suitable. Keeping in mind the fact that you want to learn to understand, suitable activities will be those that satisfy several criteria.

- As far as possible, they will involve authentic documents, because they are the only ones in which you will find language used naturally (see CEF 6.4.3.2). This is because they were created in order to communicate something. The people who produced them used the language naturally, without worrying about using only those words or rules of grammar that particular learners are supposed to know. So recorded documents of this kind allow you to work directly on the kind of language you want to learn to understand. Experiments have shown that, as far as oral comprehension is concerned, little is to be gained by using simplified recordings.

- It is unnecessary to try to understand everything in a recording right from the beginning. Decide, instead, what points you are going to work on and stick to them without worrying about everything you have left aside: you cannot learn everything in one go. Moreover, some authentic documents include aids of various kinds; spoken recordings, for example, may be provided with a transcript (comparison text, sub-titles, etc.) or even a translation (sub-titles of a film, for instance). These aids will help you correct your work more easily.

- One question you are sure to ask yourself is whether the exercise in question is easy or difficult (see CEF 7.3.2). The notion of difficulty is a subjective one. Of course, some activities are more difficult than others. For example, transcribing a recording word for word is more difficult than looking for occasional words in isolation, mainly because it requires a far higher degree of concentration, but also because transcription is hardly a natural activity. As we saw in section 2, comprehension is not simply a matter of understanding all the words: a document will also be difficult to understand if we do not know anything about the subject, or if there are several different speakers, or if it is contains a kind of language (a highly literary style, for example) with which we are unfamiliar.

- Nothing is more difficult than a document on a topic you know nothing about, so that you do not know even what you are trying to understand. This shows how important it is for you to choose texts that suit you, because they contain the points you want to work on, because you like them and because you know something about the subject. This will help you to clarify your objectives and make progress.

- The comprehension exercise you choose must require you to understand something, so you will have to give yourself an aim which will guide your reading or listening: "I am going to listen in order to . . ." (obtain some specific piece of information, for example). Let us look in more detail at a written comprehension exercise for learners of French, based on an authentic text, which illustrates the points we want to make.

Les fêtes de Noël: les services ouverts ou fermés (following page)

This exercise sets you a number of realistic reading objectives. The questions in the right-hand column require you to read not in a linear, word-by-word fashion, but in an organised way, using, for example, the headings, or certain items which are to be found in both the questions and the text, to guide you to the passage where you need to read in a much more detailed way.

Before choosing a comprehension exercise, users of CEF might ask themselves:

- what are the possible reading or listening objectives (not just what grammatical points or vocabulary) of this exercise;
- what reading or listening objectives they can set themselves for a text on the basis of its heading or sub-headings, or of what they already know about the subject;
- whether they can formulate questions which will set them more detailed reading or listening objectives.

Carrying out the task

Once you have chosen a task because it provides you with suitable listening or reading objectives, you can begin to work. This is the moment when you actually start learning, and you can now begin to prepare your listening or reading activity. Keeping in mind the objective you have chosen, you can try to predict the overall contents, or even some of the specific points, of what you are about to read or hear. This, in turn, may help you to guess some of the actual words that will appear. During this preparatory work, you are already learning. If you are working on reading, once you have tried to predict some of the ideas and topics that are going to appear in your text, you can turn directly to the text itself. If you are working on oral comprehension, you can look up new terms in the dictionary.

When you choose an exercise, you also have to ask yourself just how you are going to carry it out. It is important to remember that understanding is not the same thing as learning to understand*:* before you start, you should know whether you want to test yourself in the process (in which case, of course, it is important to succeed in understanding) or whether you want to learn in the process (in which case, you may be unsuccessful in understanding but still learn something, even if it is only that you are not yet ready to understand this kind of document). For example, during learning tasks (but not testing tasks) you can read the answer-sheet before listening to the cassette or reading the text: this will help you to identify the points to prepare and to orientate.

WRITTEN COMPREHENSION EXERCISE

Adapted from:
Ecritures 2, Capelle G., Grellet F., (1980), Hachette, Paris.

II/9

Page 28 – LE MONDE – Vendredi 21 décembre 1979

Les fêtes de Noël : **Les services ouverts ou fermés**

- PRESSE – Les quotidiens parisiens paraîtront normalement le mardi 25 décembre.

- BANQUES – Les banques seront fermées les lundi 24 et mardi 25 décembre.

- GRANDS MAGASINS – Tous les grands magasins parisiens seront fermés le mardi 25 décembre. Ils seront ouverts aux heures habituelles le lundi 24.

- P.T.T. – Le lundi 24 décembre les bureaux de poste seront ouverts et le courrier sera distribué. Les P.T.T. fonctionneront de la même façon que le samedi. Le mardi 25 les bureaux seront fermés et il n'y aura pas de distribution de courrier à domicile. Toutefois, resteront ouverts les bureaux qui le sont habituellement le dimanche et le bureau situé au chef-lieu de département (de 8 heures à 12 heures) qui assureront les services téléphonique et télégraphique, la vente des timbres-poste au détail, ainsi que, jusqu'à 11 heures, la distribution au guichet des objets de correspondance en instance ou adressés soit poste restante, soit aux abonnés des boîtes postales.

- R.A.T.P. – Service réduit des dimanches et jours fériés le mardi 25 décembre.

- SECURITE SOCIALE – La caisse primaire d'assurance maladie de la région parisienne indique que les guichets resteront ouverts le lundi 24 décembre dans les centres de paiement ou dans les services chargés de régler les prestations au public jusqu'à 14 heures. Pour les prises en charge et les renseignements, une permanence sera assurée jusqu'à 15h30. Les centres et les services seront normalement ouverts au public le mercredi 26 décembre.

- ALLOCATIONS FAMILIALES – La Caisse d'allocations familiales de la région parisienne indique que ses guichets et services d'accueil situés : 10-12 et 18, rue Viala (Paris - 15°), 64-68, rue du Dessous-des-Berges (Paris - 13°), 2, rue de Liège (Paris - 9°), 78, avenue du Général-de-Gaulle (Maisons-Alfort), tour Ouest-Carrefour Pleyel (Saint-Denis), 36, avenue F.- Joliot-Curie (Garges-les-Gonesse), 119-121 avenue Jules-Quentin (Nanterre), tour Essor, 14, rue Scandicci (Pantin), 2, avenue des Prés (Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines) seront fermés du lundi 24 décembre à 12 heures au mercredi matin 26 décembre. Cependant, le lundi 24 décembre après-midi, les centres de diagnostic et de soins ainsi que les cliniques dentaires resteront ouverts aux heures habituelles.

- MUSEES – Le lundi 24 décembre, les musées nationaux seront ouverts, à l'exception du musée Jean-Jacques-Henner et du musée national du château de Versailles. Le mardi 25, tous les musées nationaux seront fermés, à l'exception du musée Jean-Jacques-Henner. Le Palais de la découverte sera fermé les lundi 24 et mardi 25 décembre. Le Centre Georges-Pompidou sera ouvert le lundi 24, de 12 heures à 20 heures et fermé le mardi 25 décembre.

Au musée des arts décoratifs, le lundi 24 décembre, les expositions resteront ouvertes, les collections permanentes du musée seront fermées. Le mardi 25, le musée et les expositions resteront fermées. Le musée Marmottan sera fermé le lundi 24 décembre et ouvert le mardi 25. La Bibliothèque nationales sera fermée les lundi 24 et mardi 25 décembre. Les expositions seront fermées le 25 décembre uniquement.

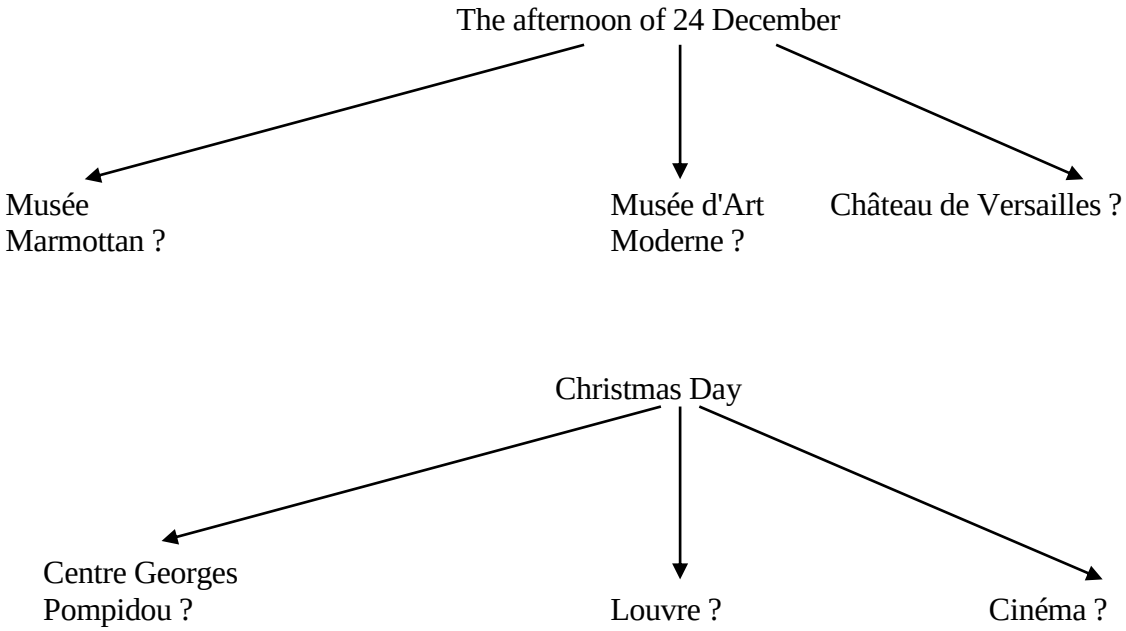
Les musées de l'hôtel national des Invalides (musées de l'Armée, des Plans-Reliefs, Dôme Royal – tombeau de l'Empereur) seront fermés le mardi 25 décembre. Toutefois, l'accès à l'église Saint-Louis des Invalides demeurera libre le jour de Noël jusqu'à 13h30 pour permettre aux fidèles d'assister à l'office matinal (messe solennelle à 11h30).

- SPECTACLES – Voir "Le Monde des arts et des spectacles – daté 20 décembre.

- LOISIRS – On peut obtenir une sélection des loisirs à Paris durant la semaine en appelant le 720-94-94 (informations en français) et le 720-88-98 (informations en anglais).

You live in Paris and friends are coming to spend Christmas with you (24 and 25 December), and you want to decide in advance what you are going to do together.

1. You are still hesitating between several possibilities:



After reading this article, what are you going to decide to do -

on 24 December?……
on 25 December?……..

2. You do not read the newspaper regularly, but you would like to know what film to go to see with your friends on Christmas Day. What could you do to find out?
…….

3. Will the Metro be open on Christmas Day? (RATP: Metro and bus service in the Paris area)
……..

4. Can you go to your bank for money on the morning of 24 December?
……..

5. Your friends would like to go shopping in the big stores during their stay in Paris. When can they go?
…….

Read the correct answers before listening to the cassette: this will enable you to see the points for which you need to prepare yourself or it will guide your listening or reading.
You can also decide how many times you are going to allow yourself to read or listen to the document, and how you are going to read it (introduction first, or last? The first sentences of each paragraph?) or listen to it (little by little, stopping frequently, using the rewind switch, or listening to the whole recording right through to start with?)

To learn, you have to be ready to do things more than once. Knowing what you have to do is only the starting point for knowing how to do it: the more one repeats an exercise, the more one acquires (in the sense we have used this term above) real know-how. So do not hesitate to do the same exercise more than once.

In the same way, a single task can be used twice: to start with, you do it to learn. As you do the exercise, you will discover the new items you are then going to memorise (vocabulary, expressions, ways of organising a document, etc.). But you can do the exercise again to see if you have learnt: to what extent are you now able to understand immediately what you have been learning, or to what extent do you find it easier to understand?

The last point to be mentioned here is that to improve your level of comprehension, you will need to undertake certain tasks which are not, strictly speaking, comprehension activities. For example, you will need to memorise vocabulary. However, you will do so in terms of comprehension; that is, you have to be able to recognise the words in question when they are spoken by other people, which means, as far as the spoken language is concerned, that you will have to recognise these words pronounced with different accents. To some extent, this is easier than finding words when you want to express yourself; but, on the other hand, you need to be able to recognise far more words than you yourself would use, because in comprehension it is not you who chooses the words, it is the person who is speaking to you.

You will also need to increase your knowledge on the various topics that you may hear or read about. For example, if you want to learn to read French newspapers, or to understand Germans talking about their daily lives, it will be useful to know what sort of things are to be found in

French newspapers, or to know different aspects of the German way of life. This kind of knowledge can often be acquired in your own language, by reading articles about Germany or France (see CEF 6.4.6.3). The more you know about the subject of the document you want to understand, the more you will learn to understand.

Before beginning a comprehension exercise, users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they need to prepare for the listening exercise by learning or revising points of vocabulary;
- how they will proceed during the exercise; how many times they will read or listen to the document;
- what they will use to check their answers;
- what they will do after they have done the exercise;
- whether they will choose to memorise certain items of vocabulary;
- whether they will do the exercise again and, if so, in how much time and whether in the same way.

b. Expression

Choosing activities

People often have many more ideas for expression activities and tasks than they do for comprehension, largely because when languages are taught at school the emphasis is often placed on expression, so that everyone has experienced many different possibilities. When you choose any task yourself, the most important factor to bear in mind is your overall objective, which is to be able to communicate your ideas and experience to your interlocutor. Now, most of the time we need to express things we have never said before. Of course, certain reflexes need to become automatic, but they are only of use to the extent that they allow us to communicate spontaneously and creatively.

Many activities for learning oral expression concentrate on these automatic reflexes. This is the case with the kinds of exercises called "structural drills", such as the one below:

Put the following sentences into the preterit:
Example: I (swim) in the sea – I swam in the sea

He (eat) an apple.
They (talk) to the girls.
You (work) in the office.

There are many similar kinds of exercises, and they will help you to learn to produce grammatically correct sentences (see CEF 6.4.7.7) or even, in some cases, the expressions which are possible in certain kinds of communicative situations:

Use one of the following expressions to ask for directions:

Excuse me, can you tell me… ?
Can you help me, please? I need to know . . .
Do you know . . .?

For example, to find out the time of the next bus to Chippenham, you can say:

Can you help me please? I need to know the time of the next bus to Chippenham.

Ask for the following pieces of information.

The way to Twickenham.
Where Bond St. is.
How to get to Hyde Park.

These expressions are only tools; you should also work on exercises which set real communicative objectives. This is true of another kind of exercise, often called role plays, because they provide you with a kind of scenario which you have to act out. Roleplays can be either very short:

Your interlocutor: I'm sorry you missed the party last Saturday.
You: (Say that unfortunately you were unable to come.)

or much longer:

Your interlocutor: I'm sorry you missed the party last Saturday.
You: (Say that you could not come.)

Your interlocutor: Oh dear, what a shame!
You: (Say that your car broke down)

Your interlocutor: I hope it was not too serious!
You: (Say what the problem was, and that it has been fixed.)

Your interlocutor: You should have called me!
You: (Say that you had not thought of that and thank your interlocutor)

Your interlocutor: It was a lovely party!
You: (Say that you are sorry to have missed it.)

Your interlocutor: Well, next time, maybe!
You: (Accept this suggestion and thank your interlocutor.)

These activities have the advantage of leaving the organisation of the expressions up to you. So, for example, in the role-play given above, you are still going to have to use the preterit; but this time you will be using it to say the things you yourself want to say, whereas in the structural drill you were manipulating it out of context.

Some tasks are easier than others. It is easier to repeat a ready-made dialogue than it is to talk on a subject without any preparation, even for just one minute and when the subject is one you know well. But both types of exercise have their uses. Here again, everything depends on your objective. For example, if you want to improve your intonation, it may well be more efficient to work with a ready-made text for which you have a recorded model.

Remember, too, what we saw in section 3: you are going to need to discover the expressions you are going to learn. Once you have found them and collected them together, you will work on expression in ways that are less and less systematic (see above). However, certain kinds of task are only suitable for working in a very systematic way on the items you want to acquire (structural drills, for instance), whilst others (such as role-plays) are much more flexible.

Before starting to work on an expression activity or exercise, users of CEF might ask themselves:

- what specific points the exercise allows them to work on;
- how exactly these points correspond to their objectives;
- what "freedom of expression" the exercise allows them;
- whether they can choose which expressions to use;
- whether the activity is set in a communicative situation;
- whether the sentences they have to construct are independent of one another.

You have most freedom when you, and you alone, can choose to say what you want. This is why you should not hesitate to talk to yourself. Imagine that you are talking to particular people you yourself have chosen: this is rather like those top-flight sportsmen and women you often see on television, mentally simulating their movements (the skiers imagining they are slaloming down a slope, the high-jumpers practising their run-up in their heads, and so on). This kind of practice can be very useful, because when you are busy imagining that you are talking, you are bound to realise what you can say and what you cannot yet say, and this is going to help to guide you in your future choice of work. Moreover, this "activity" has the enormous advantage that it can be done anywhere: in traffic jams, in the dentist's waiting-room, etc

This can be taken further, because you can use all sorts of things in your surroundings as a basis for expression tasks: small incidents that happen to you, street signs and advertisements, newspaper articles – they can all provide you with the opportunity of "saying what you want".

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- What the events in their everyday lives are that could provide them with topics for expression?
- Whether they would be able to talk about them in the foreign language?
- Whether they want to try?. (see CEF 4.1.2, Table 5)

Carrying out the exercises

As in the case of comprehension tasks, the preparatory work you do before you get down to the task itself is important. What are the expressions you wish to work on? Do you need to verify any rules of grammar or the pronunciation of certain words before you start? Do you need to try to anticipate what you are going to say, to look up any words in the dictionary, or to ask someone how to say this or that? Here again, it is worth remembering that, for some tasks, it can be very useful to look at the answer-sheet before doing the exercise: knowing what you have to do helps

you do it better, especially if you are learning something rather than ascertaining whether or not you can do something.

While you are learning, it is important to do exercises and repeat them, but not in just any manner. Before restarting, try to assess what you have done. This presupposes that before you did the exercise for the first time, you decided what points you were going to concentrate on.

In the case of the role-playing exercise we looked at earlier, for example, if what you want to practise was the use of the preterit, that is the point you will concentrate on when you do the exercise for the first time and when you are preparing to do it again. In order to be able to assess the work you have done, you obviously need to keep a record of some kind. There are many different ways of doing this: jotting down rough notes or asking another learner to take notes of what you say, for example. But, clearly, the most efficient way of all is to record oneself, even if it can be rather intimidating, especially to start with. Only a recording allows you to hear what you really said in its full, spoken form. Doing the role-play again, once you have been through and corrected your first attempt, will help to make things go more automatically and in a much more rewarding way than the superficially automatic reflexes induced by repetition exercises.

Repeating a task does not mean doing exactly the same thing twice. For example, in the case of the role-play, you might vary some aspect of the context, by imagining you are speaking to a different person, by going into greater detail, or by trying to speak less formally, for instance, or in a more relaxed way, or more rapidly, with fewer words or fewer hesitations.

And you can vary your working method: the second time, do not prepare what you are going to say in advance, or prepare it only in outline, for example.

Lastly, repeating an exercise can mean testing yourself by asking, "Do I know how to do it? How did I do?" In this case, it can be very important to work in conditions that are as realistic as possible. This is when you will have to decide whether you will allow yourself to prepare in advance or not, or whether you are allowed to make mistakes or not.

Before beginning an oral expression exercise, users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they need to prepare for the exercise by learning or revising certain points of vocabulary or grammar (see CEF 6.4.7), or certain ways of expressing themselves;
- how they are going to proceed with the exercise: by looking at the answer-sheet before starting, by making rough notes, or by recording themselves;
- how many times will they repeat the exercise, and what aids will they allow themselves to use.

Part 5 – Assessment (see CEF, chapter 3, Table 2 / 4, scales / 5, scales / 9)

Assessment is an integral part of acquiring a foreign language. In other words, far from being a final step, a judgement passed (often by someone else) on something the learner has finished doing, should occur throughout the learning process. As we saw in section 3 above, errors play an essential part in the process: the idea that a good learner never makes mistakes is completely wrong. A good learner is a learner who can tell what he or she does not know how to do at any given moment, and who uses this assessment to progress, to identify what remains to be learnt. So assessing yourself is not so much a matter of spotting your mistakes and correcting them as of

regularly monitoring what you have learnt or acquired. Nor is assessment an activity that takes place beyond the learner's control: it is up to learners to monitor their work constantly.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they have already judged their work completely differently from the way their teacher has judged it;
- what the differences were;
- whether they have already found strategies for identifying their mistakes and, if so, what kinds of strategy;
- whether they apply them as they go along, or only once the exercise is finished;
- whether they often made the same mistakes, and what they could do to prevent them.

For these reasons, assessment is not a responsibility you can leave to someone else. The kind of assessment that is essential for learning and acquisition is necessarily personal and individual. This is why it is often called self-assessment: it has to be carried out by the person who is doing the learning (see CEF 9.3.1.3). When learners assess the results of their own work, they are in no sense cheating, because they are the only people who have the information essential for analysing the results correctly. In your own case, for example, you are the only one who knows your personal objectives and needs (see CEF 9.2 / 9.3).

Self-assessment needs to be regular so that you can change course if you find there is a mismatch between what you thought you were doing and what you find you are doing. It allows you constantly to redefine and clarify your objectives as you proceed with your work. Learning is not a matter of blindly following a single path; it is the information provided by your self-assessment that enables you to adjust your route according to variations in your objectives, needs, wishes, etc.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- what their objectives in learning foreign languages are and in what situations they will be using them (see section I, "Needs Analysis");
- how they will use their answers to these questions to guide their choice of self-assessment techniques and topics.

As we have seen, any kind of acquisition implies self-assessment. But besides self-assessment, which is internal and personal, there may be other types of assessment. One of the most common is certification, such as a judgement passed at a given moment by an institution unconnected with the learner. Certification is usually the result of an examination. If, when you are learning a foreign language, your objective is to pass an examination, you need to take into account the contents of the examination (types of exercise, skills tested, examiner's expectations, etc.) in selecting your working objectives, then focus your own assessment on how far you are succeeding in meeting the examination requirements (see CEF 8.3 / 8.4).

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- whether they wish to take an examination and, if so, what kind of syllabus is involved?

However, you must not think that self-assessment is simply a matter of setting yourself an examination of the kind which institutions and teachers are responsible for organising. There are bound to be considerable differences, because the learner wants to know how well he is learning,

not simply what he has acquired. "Am I becoming a better learner?" is not at all the same question as "What have I learnt?" Capacity and level should not be confused.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:
- whether they are making progress in terms of their learning ability;?
- whether, as learners, they are becoming more efficient in terms of their linguistic knowledge and skills.

How can one assess one's own working methods and results? Firstly, by employing the widest possible range of techniques and criteria. There is no one single test that can assess pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, communicative practices, comprehension, expression, writing, speaking, etc.

Secondly, you have to be able to distinguish between a number of different points. What exactly are you going to assess? Is it the way certain rules of structure are applied, such as how to construct a grammatical sentence using "do"? Or is it the way in which certain rules of use are applied in various communicative situations, such as how to greet someone you do not know, how to make a promise to a friend, bargain in a shop or tell a joke, how to be polite or how to tease, and so on. Choosing what you are going to assess is not something that is done in a vacuum: you have to do it on the basis of the objectives you have chosen. It is therefore important to assess whether you are using the language in a way which is appropriate to the situation, to your objectives and to the social relationship in question. There is little point in learning a list of animals' names or preparing to give a public lecture unless these are things you really need to know.

Conclusion: For learning purposes, the best assessment is always self-assessment.

Part 6 – Learning styles (see CEF 6.1 / 7.3.1)

Not everybody learns in the same way. There are those who like to have an overall view before getting down to details and those who like to go step by step, those who like rules and those who prefer examples, those who like to take risks and those who prefer to avoid them, those who like to follow a highly organised course with a carefully structured syllabus and those who like to improvise or to change topic or task very often. And, of course, there are those (perhaps the majority) who do all these things at different times, depending on the mood they are in, whether they feel tired or not, their previous experience, the kind of task in question, their resources and their objectives. So it is clear that there are many different approaches to learning a foreign language, many different learning styles.

There is no single ideal style: many different people manage to learn foreign languages even though they have very different learning styles. And an individual may have a wider or narrower range of learning styles. But it seems reasonable to think that the more different approaches you have, the greater your chances will be of finding one that is efficient or appropriate for achieving a particular objective.

To be as successful as possible in learning a foreign language, you have to know both what suits you (what your preferred learning styles are) and what kinds of approaches exist. So you will have two main aims: identifying your own learning styles and increasing the range of styles you can call on. As regards identifying your own preferences, you could start by asking yourself what kinds of tasks you like to do, and what kinds you dislike. But you should not just stick to your usual tasks, because there may be a mismatch between your working habits (which are usually those acquired at school) and your personal style. In any case, you cannot hope to increase the number of approaches available to you unless you try out all kinds of different tasks. As the saying goes: practice makes perfect.

Users of CEF might ask themselves:

- what tasks, activities or exercises they like/dislike;(See CEF 7.3.1.2)
- whether they are in the habit of thinking about the way in which they work;
- whether they like learning rules or examples;
- whether they prefer to work on one thing at a time;
- whether they are willing to do tasks or activities they find boring;
- whether they try to get an overall view before starting an activity or task;
- whether they like going into details;
- whether they are in the habit of planning several study sessions in advance, or whether they decide at the beginning of each session;
- whether they prefer to work in a group or alone;
- whether they work strictly according to their immediate needs, or whether they sometimes do an activity or task just for fun or because it is interesting.

SOME SELF-ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES:

1. You can choose to take tests, fill in questionnaires, etc. that have been prepared for this purpose by other people.

2. You can choose to carry out an activity or task prepared by someone else for a purpose other than assessment, as if it were a test, etc.

Example: You do a grammar exercise without consulting the rules or examples provided, then you correct your work and give yourself a mark.

3. You can devise a test yourself, or prepare a task you can use for self-assessment, or you can use tests or tasks produced by another learner.

Examples: You cover up the "translations" of a vocabulary list.

You prepare a test by blotting out words on the photocopy of an article or transcript, and a little later you do the exercise and compare your results with the original text.

You answer oral comprehension questions that have been prepared by a friend.

4. You can repeat an exercise that you have already done some time earlier, to see if it now seems easier, or more difficult, and in what ways.

5. You can keep a diary, where you note down all the problems you have encountered during your work (whether you have solved them or not), as well as your own judgements, feelings and impressions about your work. By re-reading your diary regularly, you will be able to see how your work is progressing.

6. You can arrange to have conversations with a native speaker (or do simulations with another learner, or even alone) which you record and then work over again later.

Example: A learner who wants to improve his or her pronunciation and expression can examine recordings of conversations by asking himself or herself such questions as: "When did I have to repeat things?" "What sorts of things did I have to repeat?" "How many times did the person I was speaking to seem not to understand me?" "What corrections, criticisms or remarks did the person make?"

7. You can measure some specific aspect of your linguistic or communicative abilities.

Examples: You can time how long it takes you to get the gist of a written text or recording.

You can count how many times you had to use the dictionary or the rewind button on your cassette recorder.

You can draw up a list of your favourite mistakes.

8. Rather than trying to assess your own performance, you can try to judge the replies and reactions of your interlocutors: were they appropriate, satisfactory, clear?

Examples:
Did I get my money back?
Did I find the street I was looking for?
Did they thank me?
Did I make him laugh?
Did I manage to make an appointment?

9. You can compare yourself with other learners, or ask other learners to assess your work for you.

Examples: A learner who is a member of a group can ask himself or herself:
Am I at the same level as Marie-José?
Am I beginning to catch up with Sophie?
Is Philip better than me?
In what regards?
Why?

The group can jointly assess the general level or a specific effort of one of its members.

10. Introspection: you can ask yourself questions about various emotional and psychological aspects of your work or performances:

Examples:

Am I still as nervous when I use the phone?
Do I feel I am making myself understood more easily?
Do I translate from my mother tongue less often?
Why is it easier for me to speak better French to Jean than to Marie?

CHAPTER 3 – GUIDANCE TO TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

By Sean Devitt

The guide at this point moves its focus onto teachers in the classroom and their learners. These are, after all, the people at the heart of the whole language learning process. It was decided to prepare the section for both groups together, with the main purpose being to provide teachers with suggestions as to how to mediate the ideas of CEF to their learners.

The whole guide, in fact, is meant to be read by teachers in the classroom, as well as by teacher trainers. It is intended for all sorts of teachers working in all sorts of conditions under a great variety of constraints and with widely different sets of objectives. The attached questions and tasks cannot therefore all apply to all teachers all the time. However, the questions posed and the tasks set may help to identify problem areas in the systems in which teachers work so that they can make representations for reform. Teachers must decide for themselves which parts are relevant to them and which questions and tasks are appropriate.

It is possible that there will be many teachers who will not have the time to read CEF, or who feel that CEF is just too complex. It may also be the case that they simply do not have the time to reflect on their own language teaching, on **what they are doing**, or **on how** or **why** they are doing it. For these the guide may act as a kind of *vademecum.* This section of it is specifically designed in such a way as to encourage and help teachers to reflect more on what they are doing and so make their objectives clear and their methods and assessment consistent with them. It sets out to reduce as much as possible of CEF's apparent complexity by providing tasks and questions in a number of key areas that will help teachers to work out for themselves in advance the components/facets of language use that are being discussed in the main document. Having done that they may be in a better position to discuss these issues with their learners.

It is certainly unlikely that language **learners** will have either the time or the opportunity to read CEF; in any case they would probably find much of it too difficult and technical. For this reason, a set of worksheets[1] related to the different issues will be found at the end of the section. These deal with both learners' first language and the language(s) they are being taught in school. The purpose of the worksheets is to enable teachers to help learners to become aware of what they do when they use their own language, so that they will be more aware of the issues involved when they set about learning another language. This awareness of language and of language use is stressed right throughout CEF as part of the overall development of the person.

The section is made up of a number of subsections, each of which can be considered as a unit. Only a limited number of the issues dealt with in CEF are covered[2]. Each unit begins with a discussion of the relevant section(s) of CEF. This is followed by an analysis of one's own language in some detail, using the terms of CEF. There follows a similar analysis of the same issues as they relate to a second or foreign language. This section is different from the rest of the guide in that, as well as questions, certain tasks are proposed as a means of reflecting more meaningfully on the issues being discussed. It is suggested that, having done those tasks that he/she considers relevant/helpful, the reader should go to the relevant section of CEF and consider the questions that appear at the end of it. At that point it may be feasible to take time to discuss the issues involved with the learners, using the worksheets as part of the process. If, as a

[1] The worksheets are intended as photocopiable materials that will give learners access to the ideas and concepts developed in the *Framework.* Obviously you will need to adapt and edit them for your particular set of learners.

[2] In this short section of the guide Chapters 4, 5, 8, and 9 are dealt with in detail as having the most immediate relevance to everyday teaching/learning. Chapters 1 to 3, and 6, on the other hand, must be considered essential preliminary reading.

result of this process, teachers and learners decide to examine their views about language learning and teaching and how they go about it, then this section of the guide will have fulfilled its purpose.

Part 1 – Aspects of communication (CEF 4, sections 4.1 to 4.4)

CEF, chapter 4, deals with language use and the language user/learner. This unit covers the first four sections of the chapter: the context of language use, communication themes, communicative tasks and purposes, and communicative language activities and strategies[3].

The word communication, has two parts, COM which means together and UNI which means one, so communication normally involves at least two people, me and the other, being brought together into one shared space. Obviously, for communication in which we are involved, we are one of the key components; so also is the other, – the person(s) with whom we are communicating, called the interlocutor(s). But the shared space is also important; both partners must be on the same wavelength. So, it is not just who the partners in communication are in general that is important, but what each is thinking, feeling, remembering, etc. at the moment of communication.

Section 4.1 of chapter 4 gives details of the **contexts** in which communication takes place - the where and the who. We generally think of situations as associated with particular places, such as home, street, school, bank, post-office, etc. However, these can be grouped together into broader domains – private, public, work, educational, etc. Within each of these domains there are different institutions, for example, the family in the private domain, the school authorities in the educational domain. In each domain and for each institution, there are different people and different objects involved (in school, for example, teachers, classmates, on the one hand, and books, school furniture, on the other). We know all of this is the case, but what we may not realise is that certain critical elements of the **language we use can vary considerably**, depending on where communication is taking place and who is involved.

A second aspect of communication is the **theme** or **topic**. Section 4.2 of CEF uses an example (taken from *Threshold Level 1990*) to illustrate how the themes of communicative acts can be classified. In the personal domain, possible themes are: personal identification, house and home, environment, daily life, free time and entertainment, travel, etc. Within the theme of free time and entertainment there are the sub-themes of leisure, hobbies and interests, radio and TV, cinema, theatre, sport, etc. Sport can be subdivided into the places where it takes place, the people involved, the event in question, the actions, such as playing, watching, etc.

Another aspect of communication is the **tasks** involved and the purposes each partner in the communication has. It is almost impossible to list all the possible tasks one could perform using language. Two examples are given in CEF section 4.3 (again taken from *Threshold Level 1990*), the first from the domain of work, the second from the personal domain. They should be enough to give some idea of what is meant by tasks and purposes in communication.

> Domain of work: "As temporary residents, learners should be able to seek work permits etc, . . enquire about the nature, availability and conditions of employment . . ., read employment advertisements, write letters of application and attend interviews, …"

[3] It will be noted that many of the distinctions made here are reflected in recent course materials, many of which have been influenced by the Council of Europe's work in this area.

Personal domain: "The learners can say who they are, spell their name, state their address, give their telephone number, say when and where they were born, state their age, . . . nationality, say where they are from, . . . describe their family, . . . state their likes and dislikes . . ."

The final aspect of communication to be considered in this unit is **communicative language activities**. This refers to how one is involved in a communicative act: whether one is producing a text on one's own (speaking or writing), receiving it without changing it, (listening or reading), interacting with someone, or passing on messages for someone.

1.1 Aspects of communication: one's own language

Who, with whom, and where? (participants and situation)

Communication depends critically on the people involved and where they are. To use language means knowing who we are, who the person is that we are communicating with, and where we are communicating. All of these things will make a difference to the language we use. To appreciate these differences, we can think, for example, of the language we might use in these two circumstances: a) in the staff room chatting with a colleague; b) making a speech to assembled pupils, teachers and parents after the school football team has won an important match.

Task 1a: How language changes because of who, with whom and where you are communicating (participants, situation)

- Make a list[4], of at least ten **people** you used language with today (or yesterday). Color code the ten people listed according to whether the kind of language you used with them was the same or different. What were the differences in the language you used for the different sets of people?

- Make a list of at least ten **places** you used language in today (or yesterday). Color code the ten places listed according to whether the kind of language you used in them was the same or different. What were the differences in the language you used for the different sets of places?

- Make a list of at least five **roles** you played when using language today (or yesterday) (for instance, teacher, customer, colleague, etc.). Color code the roles listed according to whether the kind of language you used was the same or different. What were the differences in the language you used for the different sets of roles?

About what? (communication themes) To do what? Why? (tasks and purposes)

Another important aspect of communication is what we are communicating about. This too can make a difference to the kind of language we use. We will also almost invariably have some reason for our communication; we will be performing some task or other. It is obvious that once again the kind of language we use will vary depending on the task. If we are asking a colleague to stand in for us on a Friday afternoon, the language we use is likely to be markedly different to what we would use if we were just asking him or her to meet for a drink after work.

[4] You may like to use Postits (re-usable self-adhesive labels) for this task, since this will allow you to group the items together.

Task 1b: Changes in language because of what you communicate about (themes) and what you are doing (tasks)

- Make a list of at least ten **things** you communicated about today (or yesterday). Color code the themes listed according to whether the kind of language you used was the same or different. What were the differences in the language you used for the different sets of things you communicated about?

- Make a list of at least ten **things** you did with language today (or yesterday). Color code the tasks listed according to whether the kind of language you used was the same or different. What were the differences in the language you used for the different sets of tasks?

Task 1c: Changes in language in complex contexts

- Now place your lists beside one another. Select individual items from each list and combine them together in such a way as to have a whole complex context of communication.
- What kinds of changes in language were involved (for example, changes in vocabulary, in care with grammar or syntax, in pronunciation, intonation, in register, etc.)?
- Were there some contexts in which changes were made as a result of more than one item?

With what kind of involvement on our part?

As teachers we frequently tend to divide language up into a set of four skills: two productive (speaking and writing) and two receptive (listening and reading). However, CEF suggests an alternative way of dividing up the use of language, according to the way people are involved in the communication.

- ***Interaction****:* much of our use of language during the day involves face to face communication with some other person; there are at least two people involved, both producing and receiving language in turns.

- ***Production****:* we speak (or write or sign) for some length without interruption.

- ***Reception***[5]*:* we listen to someone else speaking, or watch someone else signing, or read what someone else has written.

- ***Mediation****:* we sometimes have to use language that does not involve us directly, where we have to pass messages back and forth between two people who cannot communicate directly; for example, when we have to pass messages between someone on the phone and a son or daughter who happens to be in the shower.

In each of these four cases our involvement in the communication is different. This is likely to have an effect on the type of language we use.

[5] "Reception" here does not mean that we are not active. When we listen to or read something, we are interacting with the person who is speaking or has written the text. This is a very active process. Receptive processing here simply means that we do not have any control over the text that we are listening to or reading. The same is true, incidentally, of "production": when we are giving a speech or writing an essay we are also interacting with our audience or reader, even if they do not have to possibility of responding.

In what medium?

Most of the examples used so far have involved speaking and listening only. The medium was spoken. There are, of course, other media – written, (on paper, on computer or TV screens, etc.), signed (Sign language), touched (Braille). Our choice of medium will certainly have an effect on the type of language we use.

Task 1d: Changes in language because of <u>how</u> you are communicating

For each complex context of communication described in Task 1c, add in the new elements (a) the type of involvement you had, and (b) the medium you used. Now take one or two of these clusters and imagine the changes in language that would take place:

(i) if you changed the nature of your involvement in the communicative activity (for instance, from interactive to mediational);
(ii) if the medium of communication was different;
(iii) if you or the person you were communicating with was deaf or blind.

Summary of aspects of communication in one's own language:

We have looked so far at seven different aspects of communication: our role, that of the people with whom we are communicating, the place, the subject, the task, the nature of our involvement, and the medium. We may feel that we are using the same language all the time, but each of these aspects can change in some way the nature of the language we use.

1.2 Aspects of communication: the new language

In general, communication in a new language deals with more or less the same problems and issues as communication in one's own language, except that in the new language one is more conscious of certain problems. We need to be able to use the language in the same kinds of places, in the same kinds of roles with the same kinds of people, perform the same kinds of tasks and so on. There are, however, some important differences. In the next few paragraphs we will need to imagine we are learners of a new language in a classroom environment.

The role of learner

The fact that we are language learners means that, when communicating in the new language, we have to add this role to the list we made out in the previous section. In this new role we will have to perform some tasks that we do not normally have to perform in our native language – to indicate to someone that we do not understand, to request them to speak more slowly and clearly, to ask them to repeat, to ask the meaning of a word, to ask how we say something in the new language, etc.

The classroom as the situation in which communication takes place

One physical situation will dominate the use of the new language: the classroom. Within this context communication may be in the new language or in the native language, or in both. The nature of the tasks we have to perform through language will also change somewhat. Tasks may involve real communication (the same as if they were in our first language), or they may be simply rehearsals for communication at a future time, or they may not involve any real

communication whatsoever. Furthermore, tasks may have a language learning focus instead of, or as well as, a communicative one.

The new language as a topic in communication

A further new element is that there will be more focus than in our native language on the forms of language itself. These forms may frequently be the topic of the communication. We may, therefore, have to learn how to talk about language in a new way.

Worksheet 1a draws together these seven aspects of communication in one table for learners, and asks them to identify the changes that occur in language when any one aspect changes. Worksheet 1b looks at the same aspects for the learners' new language and asks them to consider what they are able to do, and what their likely problem areas are. Worksheet 1c deals with the classroom as a context, specifically with the tasks and themes that are found there. On the basis of their responses to these worksheets, you may begin to help them to create a profile of themselves as language learners, as a preparation for using a version of ELP referred to in chapter 2.

Questions for reflection:

Given that changes in any of the areas discussed above may lead to changes in the language used, you may wish to consider now these issues from CEF point of view and examine whether your scheme of work/syllabus states clearly:

- the communicative tasks in the personal, public, occupational and/or educational domains which your learners will be required to tackle and the reasons for the choices made;
- the types of activities your learners will be involved in, in order to achieve particular objectives- the themes, sub-themes and specific notions with which your learners will need to operate;
- for what writing purposes you intend them to be equipped;
- for what sorts of reading and listening you intend them to be equipped;
- what kinds of interactions will be required of your learners;
- what mediating activities**,** if any, your learners will be required to engage in.

1.3 Strategies

At the end of each section in chapter 4 dealing with language activities there is a discussion of strategies that people use in order to get around problems that the use of language causes. "The use of communication strategies can be seen as the application of the metacognitive principles: **Pre-planning**, **Execution**, **Monitoring**, and **Repair Action** to the different kinds of communicative activity: Reception, Interaction, Production and Mediation" (*CEF*, 4.4).

The strategies for the different types of communicative activities have been grouped here for ease of reference.

The strategies we use in producing language (including in interaction)

Obviously the type of involvement we have in the communication will alter the details of these general strategies; face-to-face interaction will involve different applications of these strategies to those we require if we must produce something on our own.

For example, if we have to break some bad news to a colleague (such as that he/she has been unsuccessful in a job interview) we need to organize in advance what we have to say. This is the planning phase. Imagine that we are now in the colleague's home, and actually carrying out the task; this is the execution phase. As we speak, we will be watching carefully the reactions that our statements produce, and checking that they are about right; so we monitor our progress carefully. If something goes wrong, we try to repair it.

Now, let us suppose that we wish to break the bad news over the phone. In that case we may have a similar plan as for a face-to-face meeting. However, if we find that the answering machine is on, what then? We have to go back to the drawing board, because an extended speech will require different planning to one in which we can monitor reactions. If we change the medium to writing (a fax, for example), the planning, execution, monitoring, and repair will all have to be done in advance.

The strategies we use in receiving language

The same general principles of planning, execution, monitoring, and repair can be applied to receptive communication, but different skills are involved: framing, inferring, hypothesis testing, revising hypotheses. These are clearly illustrated in section 4.4.2.4 of CEF. Some of the worksheets contain sections that relate to strategies, notably Worksheets 1b and 1c.

Questions for reflection:

Does your scheme of work state clearly
- which strategies are relevant to which learners at which level?
- how they are best to be presented to learners?
- how they are to figure in assessment?

Part 2 – Skills and competences (CEF 4.5, parts of 4.7)

2.1 The skills we have in our own language

Section 4.5 of CEF lists the processes that come into play when we communicate. We are unlikely to have realized just how complicated the process of communication is, what the various steps are, and what each step involves. For example, when we are producing language, we have to plan what we want to say, write, or sign; get the right muscles working to express this (these are different for each medium); check that everything comes out as we planned it; where necessary add physical actions, use body language, intonation, etc., use illustrations, pictures, diagrams, types of print or writing, or add special signs. Reading also involves a complex set of processes. When we read efficiently what we are really doing is comparing the information coming to us from the printed page with information we already have in our heads. This information is of various types: the ability to recognize groups of letters as words and to check out their meaning (vocabulary knowledge), to combine words into groups that make sense (knowledge of the world), to check out the way the words are put together (knowledge of grammar), to combine the groups (sentences) into larger units and make sense of them (knowledge of the world and of how things happen normally), etc. We can generally do the comparing of the incoming information about words and basic sentences with the information in our heads at such a fast rate that we do not even notice it; it is almost automatic.

Different kinds of general and specific knowledge (CEF section 5.1)

These processes involve the use of different competences, or types of knowledge. CEF speaks of four different types of *savoir*. We will focus on just one or two here.

Each of us has a range of different types of knowledge which come into play when we are communicating. First of all there is our knowledge of the world, which helps us to interpret what we see and hear. We also have a general knowledge of how acts of communication are structured. We also have specific types of knowledge related to the society we live in – how people live, relate to one another, what their values are, etc. The first two types of knowledge are still very useful when we are dealing with a new language and culture. We also have the knowledge of how to organize our language to match what we want to do.

Our knowledge of the world, and of how acts of communication are structured

As we built up our experience of the world from childhood we created for ourselves scenarios or scripts of the way the world is organized, of what is likely to happen in given circumstances and in what order. These scenarios were and are essential for our survival; just think of how, when crossing a road, our ability to predict the speed and general behaviour of traffic is very important. This ability to predict is particularly important when we communicate with others. We can predict words one fifth of a second after hearing the beginning. We can predict a lot of what is to be said or written about something before we even start listening or reading, because we are probably familiar with about 80% of the contents. In fact, much of the information we get in reading and listening comes not from the words or from the sound waves, but from the scenarios we already have in our head which these symbols activate.

We have another important type of knowledge, that of how particular acts of communication are structured. We are able to predict, for example, how a news broadcast will be structured, how weather forecasts are given in newspapers, how fairytales are told, and how interviews are conducted.

Our knowledge of how to use language appropriately in society (CEF 5.2.2)

In Unit 1 above we examined the different situations in which we use language, and suggested that our language might change in character depending on where we are, who we are communicating with, and what our role is in relation to that person. This ability to make the appropriate changes to our language is called sociolinguistic competence. This competence is dependent on the specific knowledge we have of our society and culture – how people do things, such as socializing, working, and enjoying leisure activities – and knowledge of ourselves, our attitudes, values, beliefs, what motivates us, and how we come to terms with new experiences. This knowledge is largely unconscious; we take most of it for granted. It is generally only when we have reason to question it that we begin to notice it. Being able to adapt our language to the social circumstances in which we find ourselves means that we know not one but several native languages. Of course, it is true that some have acquired greater knowledge and skill in this area than others, but everybody has the ability to some level.

Task 2a: Looking at your specific knowledge of your society

List the following for your country:

- the means of identification you carry around with you (if any);
- what racial and religious groups are to be found in your country;
- what time meals are taken;
- what kind of present is acceptable when you are asked to dinner.

These may be banal and ordinary things for you, but when you see the problems foreigners have with them you begin to realize that they can be quite important. The same will hold for geographical, historical and political information.

Our knowledge of how to organize what we do with language (pragmatic competences) (CEF 5.2.3)

Pragmatic competence can be described as our ability to pick the appropriate bits of language and to package them appropriately to do what it is we want. For example, if we have to explain to our bank manager that we need a loan for a somewhat questionable project, we know that we cannot begin in the same way as if we were asking a colleague for the loan of a book. We will be very careful about how we organize what we have to say, and how we phrase the awkward bits. As in the case of sociolinguistic competence, some have acquired better skills in this area than others. That is why, if several people are involved in the project, it is usually the one who has the best pragmatic competence that will be chosen to perform the difficult task of explaining our ideas.

2.2 Skills and competences in a new language

Using our different types of knowledge in a new language

If we look back at what was said about the skill of reading at the beginning of this unit we will notice that two types of information are involved: the information coming to us from the printed page and the information we already have in our heads. We know from our ability to read in our own language that these two types of information or input have to be compared so that we can get the message in the text. In a new language, some of this information may be missing: we may not have the ability to recognize groups of letters as words; we may not be able to check out their meaning, because we do not have the necessary vocabulary knowledge, and we may not be able to combine words into groups that make sense, because we do not have enough grammar. However, if we know what the text is about, we may be able to guess at the meanings of unfamiliar words, and so be able to combine the groups of words (sentences) into larger units and make sense of them (knowledge of the world and of how things happen normally), etc. Even when we do not know exactly what a text is about, a knowledge of what the words mean may be enough for us to be able to make it out to some extent.

What this indicates is that much of the knowledge we already possess is transferable to the new language. This is particularly the case with the first two types of knowledge mentioned: knowledge of the world and knowledge of how texts are structured. They act as a kind of scaffolding for working out the meaning and for the language learning process.

Task 2b: Using different types of knowledge for a language you do not know (see Worksheet 2A for a related task for learners)

Find a short text in a language you do not know about a topic with which you are familiar. This may be a newspaper or Internet text about an event or person of international importance, or a fairy story, or even a religious text or prayer.

- Highlight or underline any words you already know, including names of places or people.
- Draw a mind-map or schema of what the text is about.
- Using the words you know and the schema you have drawn, try to work out the meaning of any other words in the text.
- Look at the way the words are combined. Do you notice any patterns? Can you work out rules?

Your students will have the same kinds of knowledge. Being able to use this knowledge involves having the appropriate strategies. They may need to be trained to develop these strategies.

A problem area: using language appropriately in society

However, the knowledge of a new society and culture is a different matter. It has to be learned specially. CEF warns in section 5.1.1.2, ". . . that knowledge of the society and culture of the community or communities in which a language is spoken is . . . of sufficient importance to the language learner to merit special attention, especially since unlike many other aspects of knowledge it is likely to lie outside the learner's previous experience and may well be distorted by stereotypes." Part of this knowledge involves knowing how to use language appropriately in society, for example, to mark social relations (choosing the right way to greet someone depending on who he or she is and where we are), to show politeness, to register differences of attitude, and to recognize differences of accent and what they mean. One of the key areas to which we need to pay particular attention in the new language is this sociolinguistic competence. It is very easy to use a foreign language inappropriately in society, to miss the social implications of what we do and say, and consequently to create misunderstandings and friction. Language is far more than simply a means of communicating; it is one of the key ways in which people express their identity. The fact that people in different countries use language to do the same things in the same situations does not mean that they do these things in the same way. Each culture handles language in its own unique way, and we have, as learners, to learn the hidden meanings and implications of what others say, as well as how what we say and do will be interpreted.

Task 2c: Your sociolinguistic competence in the language you are teaching (see Worksheet 2B for a related task for learners)

Write out the dialogue you might have if you were approaching a bank or a building society for a loan for an apartment, when you have only 30% of the price. Then answer the following questions:

- Did you have any problems in the area of appropriateness of language (for example, in greeting the manager, in leading up to the topic, etc.)?
- If you had to discuss the loan over the phone instead, would you know how to begin and end the call?
- If you had to send a fax or email, would you know how to begin and end it?

Questions for reflection:

To what extent can sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences in learners and the use of strategies be assumed or left to develop naturally?

What methods do you use to facilitate their development?

Part 3 – Knowledge of how to use language (CEF 5.2.1)

This unit deals with various aspects of our linguistic knowledge, beginning with our own language and looking at how this knowledge can or cannot be transferred to a language we are learning.

3.1 Our knowledge of language itself (linguistic competence)

Our knowledge of language concerns a wide range of things: words, word changes, putting words together correctly, knowing the meaning of words and sentences, knowing how to pronounce and recognize the sounds of our language6. Each of these is treated separately in CEF in section 5.2. If we are reading the original, we may find this section difficult to follow because it uses a lot of technical terms. In fact it is not nearly as technical as it might be. People who study the nature of language argue about the precise meaning of many of these terms, and about the very nature of many aspects of language itself in a way that is far more technical than what we find here. Instead of giving a summary at this point, the remainder of the unit will deal with pronunciation, writing ability, vocabulary, and grammar in turn[7].

3.2 Knowledge of sound (phonological competence: CEF 5.2.1.4)

One of the things that is most difficult for a language learner over a certain age is getting the sounds, rhythm and intonation right. We are so used to these in our own language that we do not realize how complicated this type of competence is. For example, foreign speakers of English have difficulty with the *th*- sounds, with vowels and diphthongs, with the stress pattern (where do we put the stress in the following: *telephone, telephonist, telephonic*?) and with understanding the differences in meaning that intonation can convey (*He CAN'T be serious*, meaning, "He must

[6] As well as that we have the ability to use language appropriately in society (sociolinguistic competence) and a knowledge of how to organize what we do with language (pragmatic competence).

[7] The order followed here is slightly different from that found in the Framework.

be joking; this cannot possibly be true", versus *He can't be serious* said with normal intonation). Very often problems in the area of sounds, rhythm and intonation make a great difference to understanding. Take the word *development,* for example. A wrong stress will cause a native speaker to wonder what word is being used and may cause a breakdown in communication, whereas somebody who pronounces the *v* as a *w,* but has the correct stress, will be understood.

3.3 Knowledge of written symbols (orthographic and orthoepic competence: CEF 5.2.1.5, 6)

Reading and writing in our own language involve skills of which we are not conscious. In the first place, there is the simple deciphering of a set of symbols, or the creating of the symbols. We do not usually even think of these skills until we face some difficulty with them, for instance, the symbols are not clear because of smudges, or we have injured the hand with which we normally write. Worksheet 2C has an activity with phonetic script that will give some small sense of the skills we take for granted in reading or writing our own language. While it is designed for language learners, it may be a useful activity for teachers to do as well, particularly if they are not very familiar with phonetic script.

3.4 Knowledge of words (lexical competence: CEF 5.2.1.1)

In *Words in the Mind* (published by Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987) page 7, Jean Aitchison speaks about the number of words people know in their native language and the speed at which they recognize them.

Native speakers of a language generally estimate their own vocabulary at only a proportion of the real level. The number of words known by an educated adult is unlikely to be less than 50,000 and may be as high as 250,000. These high figures suggest that the mental lexicon is arranged on a systematic basis.

The second reason why words are likely to be well organized in the mind is that they can be located so fast, literally in a split second. This is apparent above all from the speed of normal speech, in which six syllables a second, making three or more words, is fairly standard. And experiments have confirmed this figure, showing that native speakers can recognize a word of their language in 200 ms (milliseconds) or less from its onset, that is approximately one fifth of a second from its beginning. In many cases this is well before all the word has been heard.

Storing words

We must have a very efficient storage system for words if we only need one fifth of a second to recognize a word in our own language. Words are stored in two main ways, by meaning and by sound. We generally store words in meaning groups (called semantic fields). These meaning groups often overlap, and the same word can belong to several meaning groups. Rather than one system we have a web or network of systems. Thus the word *wine* will be stored in the "drinks" group, in the "agricultural produce" group, in the "colours" group, and will have links with other meaning groups such as "parties", "restaurants", etc.

Besides being stored by meaning, words are also stored by sound. We can, for example, recall words quickly by their first letter(s) or by the pattern of their rhythm. This means of storage seems to be quite independent of the storage by meaning.

Task 3a: Looking at how words are stored in your memory (this task is replicated for learners as Worksheet 3a)

See for yourself how you store words in your native language.
In the space of 60 seconds for each set below, count all the words you can think of that:

- belong to the meaning group *food*;
- are associated in your mind with *chair,* (or *chaise* in French);
- begin with the sound *pl…;*
- have the rhythm/stress pattern of *bicycle,* (or *télévision* in French);

Were there any words that occurred in more than one set?

3.5 Knowledge of meaning (semantic competence: CEF 5.2.1.3)

However, knowing the meaning of words is not a simple thing. Words have been called the building blocks of language. They can be used as building blocks because they combine form and meaning; they pin forms onto aspects of the world around us. They have, therefore, two faces. One face is the form and the other face is the meaning. The form of a word does not change very much. However, its meaning is different; it is slippery, hard to pin down, it shifts, it blends into other meanings, and there can be several meanings to one form. To take but one example, in English, what is the precise meaning of the word *cup*? It can refer to a something we drink from, but it can also refer to something we play for in a competition. In the first sense a cup is like a mug or a bowl, while in the second it is more like a vase.

We have seen above that words are stored in our memory according to meaning. We have this ability to cope with the slipperiness, fuzziness of word-meanings. We also have the ability to relate words to their opposites (antonomy) and to other words whose meanings are included in them (hyponomy, for example, *animal* with *cat*).

How well we know words

We must now ask ourselves how we got those words into our memory in the first place. In order to store words in our memory we must first of all know them. But what exactly do we mean by knowing a word? It is not simply a question of knowing or not knowing; we can know words at very many different levels. Let us consider how we know the pupils in our own school. Some we simply do not know because we may never have noticed them. Others we recognize for having seen them before, but if we met them out of school, we would not remember where we knew them from or who they were. Others we know both in and out of school, but we cannot remember their names. Others we can put a name on, but cannot say what they do. And so on, until we reach those we know best: we know their names, what they do, almost everything about them.

Words are like that. We can know them at different levels. We start by being aware that we have seen them before, but without knowing where; then we recognize them when we meet them in context, but not out of it. Eventually we get to know them in any context, knowing all their meanings, and how to use them. This also happens in our native language for words about topics we are not familiar with, such as, for example, medicine or linguistics.

Task 3b: The different levels of our knowledge of words (corresponding worksheet for students)

Try to classify your knowledge of the following words (taken from a book about memory):

psychogenic, confabulation, amnesia, connectionism, blindsight, refractoriness

Arrange them in a graph, those you know least well at bottom left, those you know best on top right, and label them as: have never seen it before, have seen it but don't know it, etc.

But knowing how to handle meaning does not stop with individual words. It includes, among many other things, knowing which words normally go together, being able to see the differences of meanings created by different word orders, realizing that what is said often implies a lot more than the actual words seem to be saying.

3.6 Knowledge of grammar (grammatical competence: CEF 5.2.1.2)

Our knowledge of grammar basically concerns our ability to put words together in the proper way. This means knowing the different categories of words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. and how they relate to one another, how they change in certain circumstances (for example, a verb, when it refers to a past event), in what order they must be put, and so on.

Much of this knowledge for our own language is unconscious, but we are likely to be very conscious of the formal rules of the language we are teaching, much more so than native speakers. We may also feel that one of the problems our students have is that they do not have a sufficient grasp of grammar generally. It is a debated question whether formal knowledge of the grammar of a foreign language is a necessary requisite for being able to communicate in it. However, it is probably very important and useful for learners to realize that they actually do use grammar rules in their first language, even if these rules may be quite different to those found in the standard language.

Task 3c: Your awareness of the formal rules of your own language

Examine the following set of sentences in English.

Oliver left for Canada. Who went with him? When did he leave? He didn't leave yesterday.
He always travels on a Monday. He doesn't take his wife.
She isn't well. Is she staying at home? Can she take time off? Unfortunately, she can't leave the children.

Give the rules for forming negative sentences and ordinary questions in English. Make sure that you cover all the examples given above. Where does the negative element come, before or after the verb?
Does inversion always occur in questions? What elements get inverted?
Look at the path of acquisition of the verbal system of English by learners in Table 1. Can you explain why this path is the way it is?

Part 4 – Tasks and texts (CEF 7, 4-4.6)

4.1 Tasks

The every-day, non-technical meaning of task is a piece of work that can be undertaken by a person. Tasks are the thousand and one things we do every day, either for ourself or for others, either freely, or for reward, or because we feel obliged. Brushing our teeth, writing an essay, borrowing a book, are all examples of tasks. Many, if not most, tasks we perform involve processing language in some shape or form. It is tasks in this sense that are the topic of chapter7 of CEF.

Performing a task properly depends on two things: the different kinds of competences we have available, and the difficulty and complexity of the task itself. Let us take the example of making an omelet. This task involves a number of subtasks, – reading the recipe, collecting the ingredients, breaking and whisking the eggs, heating the frying pan, etc. It is, therefore, a moderately complex task in itself. Our skills at each of the subtasks may vary. Even if we have never made an omelet, we may be able to break an egg competently. However, we may have other competences available in the form of another person or persons to help us. The moderate difficulty of the task may be increased by time pressure, or by the knowledge that the product is to be assessed. Thus the inherent difficulty of the task and the competences we have available play a key role in how we will perform the task.

When the task is a purely linguistic one, the same holds, except that this time all the different language-related competences listed in the previous units come into play. When the task is in a language that we are learning, our competence in the language, (and that of the others involved with us in the task) and the difficulty of processing that language will have a major effect on how well we perform the task. As we have seen more than once already, all the different aspects involved in communication play a role in the type of language to be used, and therefore in the difficulty of processing language.

4.2 Texts

Once we produce language, we have produced a text that is independent of us. When we are chatting to someone, what we say is a text, or at least part of a larger text, just as a novel or a poem produced in the written medium by a writer is a text.[8] A text serves as input to be processed by some other language user; when we are chatting, the text we produce is processed by our friend, who in turn produces a text which we process. We may be the producer, or the receiver, or both at the same time, but both partners in communication must process it. So, what we and our colleagues say to one another on the train on the way to work is a text, even though the sound is gone as soon as it is produced (unless we are recording it). The conversations of other people in the train (including that of the girl in front of us using her mobile phone) are also texts, as are the advertisements, the ticket or pass we use, the announcements, the lyrics on the headset of the person behind us to which we are half-listening.

As CEF says: “The text is central to any act of linguistic communication, the external, objective link between producer and receiver, whether they are communicating face to face or at a distance.” Obviously the relationship between the producer(s) and receiver(s) of a text on the one hand, and the text itself on the other, will vary depending on the involvement of each of the

[8] This may come as a surprise to some as it did to Monsieur Jourdain, in Molière’s play, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, when he discovered that he had been speaking prose all his life!

partners in the communication. When chatting with a friend, we both take part in the production and reception of the bits of the larger text (or discourse), whereas, when we are translating a letter for a receiver who uses another language, we have no real say in the actual content of the text. Similarly, the medium in which a text is carried will affect the nature of the text. Written texts do not use the same means of emphasis as spoken texts.[9] Different kinds of written texts also vary in important ways. CEF compares the durability, succinctness and solemnity of a stone inscription with the disposability and ephemeral nature of an air-letter.

Texts and tasks are related in that many tasks involve processing texts for their proper performance, but the performance of a task frequently also involves the production of further texts – those involved with the management and organizing of the task itself that is to be performed. The kind of text produced or received will, therefore, vary in quite important ways depending on a whole series of aspects of the communicative act, such as where it is taking place, who is involved, the medium being used, etc.

Because tasks and texts are so intimately related, with most tasks we perform requiring some type of text, and all texts involving some task or other, we may need to look in some detail at how tasks and texts relate in our daily life. Even in the relatively simple task of getting to work by public transport in the morning, a number of texts are involved: a bus or train timetable, the indication of the destination, a bus- or train-pass or ticket, an interaction with the bus-driver, a signal to the driver to stop. We are unlikely to have processed most of these linguistic texts for some time. For example, when was the last time we read what was on our bus or train ticket?

However, the task of taking a bus or train takes on a totally different perspective if we are in a foreign country whose language we do not know very well. Any one of the texts listed above is a potential source of difficulty. We may have to call for assistance before or during the performance of this quite banal task.

4.3 Tasks and texts in classrooms

Classrooms are special types of contexts and involve tasks and texts of a type that is often different to the "real world". Students in classrooms do not always have control over the tasks they are required to perform, or of the texts they have to process. This is true for lessons in other subjects besides those concerned with language per se. It is worth looking at some of these in detail before considering language lessons proper in the next section.

4.3 T*ask 4a: Looking at the tasks and texts of the classroom*

Consider a typical lesson in a non-language subject (for example, history, chemistry, art, etc.)
- List the kinds of tasks that a student has to perform in such a lesson.
- For each task list the texts that have to be processed.
- Look at one of these texts in detail and examine in what ways it is similar to, and in what ways it is different from,

a) texts used in the "real world"; b) texts used in a language lesson.
- Do any of the tasks resemble those found in a language lesson, such as, for example, collaborating with other students?
- Would learners have to request assistance from the teacher for any of these tasks?
- What are the overall aims and objectives of such a lesson? Do they resemble those of a language lesson?

[9] For example, writing in all capitals in a text on the Internet is considered as impolite as shouting in the spoken medium.

4.4 Texts in the new language

In Unit 1 certain aspects of language were seen to be specific to language learners. Among these were the role of language learner itself, which means that, when communicating in the new language, learners have to perform some tasks that they do not normally have to perform in their native language, such as indicating that they have not understood, and asking for repetition or help. A second aspect considered was the physical situation of the classroom in which language learning normally takes place. It was also noted in Unit 1 that the nature of the tasks learners have to perform in the language classroom may often be different from those in real life, or even from those in lessons whose subject is something other than language, because tasks in the language classroom will generally have some kind of language learning focus.

Tasks in daily life are usually judged to have been successful if the piece of work is completed correctly. Language is used generally only as one component in the successful completion of the task. In a language classroom, on the other hand, language takes on a different role within a task. Learners will frequently be expected not only to perform a given task, but to do so using appropriate and correct language. This is the case even within those teaching approaches where tasks in the language classroom are expected to mirror real-life tasks closely, because the purpose of language lessons is, after all, the learning of the new language. Even within such an approach there has to be a focus on the form of language as well as on the content of the task. Thus, in a classroom which involves so-called task-based teaching, a balance must be reached between the need to perform a task correctly, and the need for the learner to learn and use the appropriate language to do so. It sometimes happens that the new language fossilises at a certain point, because the learner is more concerned to perform a given task successfully even with inadequate language. In other classrooms the total focus may be on the forms of the language and the tasks related to this focus may have no real communicative purpose. In this case the learner may learn the forms, but not be able to apply them to the successful completion of real-life tasks.

Related to the type of task is the type of text that is used in language classrooms. These can be authentic – produced in the first instance not for learners of a language, but for real communication between native speakers or graded – produced in such a way as to make them suitable for learners of a particular level.

Task 4b: Looking at the tasks and texts of the language classroom

Consider a recent language lesson you have given.

- List some tasks that your students had to perform in this lesson.
- For each task list the texts that they had to process.
- Look at one of these texts in detail and examine in what ways it was similar to, and in what ways it was different from

a) texts used in the "real world"; b) texts used in a content subject lesson.

- Did the tasks involve real communication, even with emphasis on language forms?
- Did any of the tasks focus *completely* on language forms?
- What were the overall aims and objectives of the lesson? How did they compare with those of the content subject lesson?

Whatever the approach you use in your language classroom, your learners still need to be able to perform tasks in the real world with their new language.

Part 5 – Language learning and teaching (CEF 6.1/7.3.1)

Chapter 6 of CEF draws the earlier chapters together, going back over the range of issues discussed, and relating them to the learning context. The issue here is how best the language classroom can help to enable learners "to carry out the tasks, activities, and processes, and build up the competences necessary for communication". In order to participate in speech events, they must have learned or acquired the different competences listed in Unit 2 above, the ability to put these competences into action in the production and reception of spoken or written texts, and the ability to employ plan, execute, monitor and repair their communication as appropriate.

It has been stressed in the earlier part of this guide that CEF provides descriptors of levels of performance for all of the skills listed. This means that learners can be given (or can make out for themselves) a profile of their performance under most of the headings dealt with in this guide. It also means that learners can have different profiles for different languages, and at the same time an overall "plurilingual" profile. The discussion of plurilingualism in CEF is particularly interesting and stimulating, and should certainly be read in the original document. (In fact all of chapter 6 should be read with great care.)

Learners may feel that they do not need or want to be able to do all the things listed so far, and may prefer to confine themselves to certain aspects of communication only. They may feel, for example, that they are likely to have little need to speak the new language, but only to read and write it. However, it is likely that they will find that the different aspects of language support one another, and that their learning will be more efficient if they take every aspect into consideration. Thus, for example, they are likely to find that being able to pronounce words is actually a great help in remembering them (see the section above on knowing words), and can even enhance their silent reading skills. However, the final decision about what their needs are has to be their own, in consultation with a teacher you.

Chapter 6 also raises a number of important issues related to language learning. First of all, there is the question of whether language is acquired subconsciously or learned consciously. We acquire our first language largely in a subconscious manner. Some researchers believe that we also acquire other languages subconsciously, and that we simply need to be exposed to language that is meaningful, and that is at a level just beyond our current ability, for acquisition to happen. They go so far as to claim that formal learning of languages does not lead to real language development. Others believe that we need more than just exposure; we need to take an active part in communicative interaction in the new language for language development to occur. At the other extreme, some believe that learning the vocabulary of a language and its rules of grammar is sufficient to prepare one for using the language in communicative contexts when the need arises. Most learners and teachers will take a position somewhere between these two extremes, and will try to have access to tasks and texts that are meaningful. However, it is quite possible that for some learners one or the other of the extreme positions reflects their preferred way of coping with a new language.

For each aspect of the language learning situation CEF goes on to give the whole range of possible approaches to learning and teaching, from learning of words by rote to learning them through exposure to authentic materials; from the learning of grammar through formal explanation to picking it up from reading and listening. This is not an attempt to dodge the issue, but simply a recognition that learners are different and what suits one will not necessarily suit another, or what may suit a learner at one time may not suit the same learner another time.

In this unit the whole focus will be on the learning (and teaching) of the new language. The first part deals with how language is acquired naturalistically; the second part deals with how one's language learning is organized; the third part goes on to make some practical suggestions for learning languages.

5.1 Learning words

In Unit 3 language competence was discussed under a number of headings. One of the key competences we have is our knowledge of words. Mention was made of the different levels of knowledge we have of words in our own language. In a foreign language our knowledge of words is also going to be extremely variable. The question to be discussed here is how we learn words.

How is vocabulary learned? As far as first language is concerned, there are two schools of thought. One argues that words must be learned naturally in context, while the other advocates formal vocabulary teaching, especially for weaker learners. The research evidence supports both groups. On the one hand, vocabulary growth occurs *via* reading, but in very small increments; words move slowly along the continuum described in the last unit. However, the more the learner reads, the quicker this process becomes and the greater the number of words on the continuum. On the other hand, formal vocabulary teaching has also been shown to be very effective, especially for moving certain key words more rapidly along the continuum. In particular it has been found that vocabulary is learned more rapidly when it is taught in semantic fields related to the kind of texts that learners need to be able to read. Accordingly, the most efficient way of developing the vocabulary store would appear to be one that combines both approaches. Ideally, explicit teaching of a word should combine the citation form with examples of the word in use so as to aid recognition and begin to develop a sense of how it behaves syntactically.

5.2 Learning the grammatical system

The point is made in CEF that there is very little consensus amongst researchers about how languages are learned. There are many theoretical positions on this issue. There is, however, quite a substantial body of data about the facts of language acquisition, and the paths that learners follow in learning (or acquiring) a language. What we have done here is to present some of the findings of researchers and to suggest checking these against our own experience to see if the findings match what we have found out about our students (and about ourselves).

Most of the research done in the area of language acquisition has examined learners in naturalistic contexts, that is, learners who are learning the language simply by being exposed to it in the country where it is spoken. While these are different from learners like ours (in a classroom in a country where the language is not spoken), nevertheless what has been found for them is relevant in a number of ways discussed below. The following general patterns have been discovered in the speech of such learners at the earlier stages.

The features listed below do not generally come in sudden bursts, but develop over an extended period. One of the most striking things about this progression is the quite late appearance of features that one would take to be reasonably easy, especially the regular past *–ed,* and the third person singular *–s.* What native speakers do not realize is just how complicated these forms are:

they appear only in the declarative forms; in negative and interrogative forms the verbs are stripped, and the endings are put on a "dummy" verb, *do*[10].

Some researchers believe that these features also hold for language learning in the classroom, in other words, that our students will learn a language in the classroom in the same way as someone living in the foreign country would. Most would accept, however, that this is true only to a certain extent, and that formal learning does make a difference. In the end, our learners are the only ones who can tell whether that is the case for them as they learn the new language.

[10] See the discussion of the use of questions for different purposes below.

TABLE 1:
Some general patterns of grammatical development in a second language (You may wish to photocopy this for your learners and get their comments about their own experience)
Worksheet 5 is related to this table.

Earliest stage:

- Words are a major problem; the learner simply does not have enough of them and communication breaks down constantly because of this.
- What words the learner has are strung together, without concern for link words or changes that should be made, such as, for example, the *-s* in the 3rd person singular of the English verb, or the *-ed* in the past tense; in fact in the early stages there are very few verbs.
- Utterances are strung together in the most obvious order; for example, in telling a story, events are told in the order in which they happened.
- There is a heavy dependence on the person(s) to whom the learner is speaking for help in providing words, and for understanding of what he or she is trying to say.

Intermediate stage:

- There is a gradual development of grammatical features. Thus, for example, in English,
  - the *-ing* of the Present Continuous begins to appear, without the verb *to be*;
  - some past tenses (mostly irregular) appear;
  - the negative is expressed by *no, not,* or *don't* before the verb for most verbs, but may sometimes be expressed correctly with modal verbs and the verb *to be*, for example, *cannot, is not*;
  - questions are formed without inversion, except for the modal verbs and the verb *to be.*

More advanced stage:

- As the learner advances he or she gradually gets more control over the different parts of the system. Thus, for example, in English,
  - the negative is expressed correctly with modal verbs and with the verb *to be*; the use of *do* to form the negative of main verbs begins to spread – *he does not comes, he did not came*, then later the correct forms, *he does not come, he did not come*;
  - questions are formed with inversion, using the auxiliary *do*;
  - the regular *–ed* of the past tense of the verb and the third person singular *–s* are used correctly.

5.3 The way language learning is organized

At the beginning of Unit 1 the distinction was made between communication in its various aspects on the one hand and the means by which this communication is realized. What we will now be aware of is that many of the features of communication will not change drastically between two languages, and that much of the knowledge and many of the skills a learner already possesses can be used for the new language. What they have to learn is, to a large extent, a new means of doing what they already do in their own language.

What has not been stressed to quite the same extent is the fact that the same features of language crop up in all communicative contexts. While we do make choices in the language we use depending on features of the context, nevertheless our choices are limited to what is allowable in the language. A simple example should make this clear. To ask a question in English with one of the so-called *wh*-words (*who, what, when, where, how,* etc.) we put the question word at the beginning of the utterance, and if this question word is not the subject, we invert the verb and the subject, where necessary using the auxiliary *do* for the inversion. Thus, in the question *What did he eat? what* has been moved to the first position in the sentence, the auxiliary *do* is used, and the subject *he* and the auxiliary *do* have been inverted. (Notice also that the main verb has been changed from the past form *ate* to the neutral form *eat.*) These rules will apply no matter what the features of the act of communication happen to be. So we will greet someone with *How are you?* (sometimes shortened to *How're ye?* in familiar settings) or, more formally, *How do you do?* We may ask for help with *How do you fix this?* We may ask for directions with *How do I get to the city centre?* The same language structure is found in these three quite different communicative events. In other words, language as a system is to a large extent independent of language as it is used. Much of what we have to learn concerns this system – words, and rules for putting words together.

Bearing this in mind we can see that there are two basic approaches we can take to the task of learning a new language, either: a) learn the system (the language forms and rules) first, and then apply them to different communicative events; or b) learn how to perform certain communicative events first and then transfer the language system we have learned to new events. The advantage of the first approach is that we learn something that is usable in a wide variety of contexts, but the disadvantage is that we do not really learn how to structure any complete communicative event. We may be able to ask a question but not ask for directions, for example, or we may be able to talk of cars, but not of computers. The advantage of the second approach is that we learn how to perform in a full communicative event, (such as, for example, the buying of clothes in a shop, or apologizing for an accident), but the disadvantage is that it is difficult to know what and how much can be transferred to new situations, and so we may not learn the general principles of the language so well.

There is a third approach: allow ourselves to be exposed to the language, explore it, try to perform and communicate, experiment with it, gradually structure "our own" language through studying the rules and the system, compare notes with other learners, with the teacher and with native speakers. A fourth approach is to learn a language through learning another subject, focusing more on the content or message, and less on the form. Language learners will differ in which approach they prefer. In fact, for adequate language learning some combination of all three or four approaches seems to be best. Whatever the approach, learners should be encouraged to bear in mind the points made about the general path that most learners seem to follow.

One thing learners could start with, therefore, is a type of needs analysis: they work out for themselves what situations and roles are likely to be the most important for them when using the new language, what tasks they wish to be able to perform, what topics they want to be able to deal with, what type of involvement they wish to have in communication and what media they are likely to use. Each learner has a different profile of needs. It is up to each one to establish his or her own. Students might then, with their teacher, examine the official instructions and objectives and see how they might build their own personal curriculum within the framework of the official one.

When they have done this, they might be asked to examine the textbook they are using to see on what basis it is organized. The titles of the lessons or units are usually instructive in this regard.

Do they refer to situations (for example, *in the bank)* or tasks *(asking for directions)* or themes *(pets),* or to language as a system *(present tense).* They are likely to find that somewhere in each lesson or unit there is a summary of what the lesson contains. In what way is this expressed? They might then compare the profile of needs that they drew up with what is in their textbook.

The analysis that they have done will give them an idea of their needs as they see them, but there may be other aspects of language that they have not listed that it would be useful to know. Sometimes it may be useful to learn to do things that are not in their profile of needs simply in order to learn better something on their list. For example, they may not have listed writing and spelling as important elements, yet they may find that they need to see words written down in order to be able to remember them. The same may be true in reverse: if they need the language only for reading, they may still find that it would be useful to have the pronunciation as a help to memory. It is also important to keep re-examining their needs profile, because as they learn the language, their needs are likely to change. For example, in the area of pronunciation, they may be happy at an early stage with a pronunciation that is far from what a native speaker would have, but as they begin to mix with native speakers, they may get embarrassed with how they say things and feel the need for a lot of work on the sound system.

5.4 Some practical suggestions for language learning

The introduction to this unit made the point that there is very little consensus among researchers about how languages are learned. Neither is there agreement among teachers and course material writers about the best way to teach languages. It makes sense, therefore, to keep an open mind on different approaches to learning. The following general points are worth noting.

Learners should use a range of techniques for learning vocabulary. They should not simply think that words can be learned once and for all. Words need to be worked with intensively in order for them to remain in our long-term memory. Some suggestions follow:

- The use of mnemonics has been shown to be very useful at the early stages; learners could examine the mnemonics they use for remembering words and compare them with those of other learners. These mnemonics can be provided by teachers or generated by learners themselves. The more unusual and striking they are, the more useful they are likely to be.

- If words are being learned in a semantic set it is very helpful to try to categorize them in a variety of ways. For example, when trying to learn the words for different means of transport, they can categorize them in the following ways: according to their speed, according to the number of wheels, according to their level of pollution, according to size, alphabetically, and so on. Doing this type of activity in groups generates discussion about the features of the means of transport, and involves meaningful use of the words, which in turn helps to make them stay in the memory[11].

- If key words from a text are to be learned, they might be categorized according to the categories of *who,* (the people), *what,* (the objects and events?), *where,* (the places), or *when* (the time); if this is done in a Venn diagram, it will be found that certain words fit in the intersection of the sets. It is then useful to take out certain words and see which other words can be used with them. Finally, learners might be asked to use the words to create a

[11] An interesting development of this is to ask different groups in a class to categorize the words according to some principle that you as a teacher provide them with or which they come up with themselves, and having other groups try to work out what that principle is.

skeletal text, in other words to build a possible scenario with these words. This can then act as a preparation for working on the original text.

These suggestions are based on the principle that new words need to be processed intensively if they are to be retained in the long-term memory. The last set of suggestions above dealing with words from a text can be used at a very early stage in language learning, and can lead to meaningful reading of simple texts by learners who might be only at the very basic stage of language learning. It combines the two features of intensive work on individual words with meeting these words in their natural context.

Learners should increase their exposure to their new language. If we count up the number of hours of contact our learners have with the target language in the classroom, we will find that it will be very little compared to what they would get if they were in the country where it is spoken. Learning language in many classrooms is still like being drip-fed; learners get only a small amount of nourishment. They will need to increase their exposure to the new language by every means at their disposal outside of the language classroom.

They should use language meaningfully with native speakers through receptive processing.[12] If they are not in direct contact with speakers of the language, meaningful use may have to be confined to receptive processing (listening or reading). This receptive processing will provide them with very important linguistic data. In Unit 4 we saw that reading a text in a foreign language when we already know the topic makes the words and grammar more readily understandable. This does not necessarily mean that learners will learn these words and this grammar immediately, but at least, having met them in context, formal study of them will be more meaningful. Reading, listening to radio, and watching television should be a major part of any language learning programme.

They should use language meaningfully with native speakers through productive and interactive processing. With modern technology, it is now possible for many learners to enter into direct contact with native speakers of the language they are studying. Our learners no longer have to wait to go to the country where the language is spoken or to wait for an answer to your letter to get in touch with native speakers. They can chat on the Internet with people of their own age and interests. This is bound to make a major difference to language learning. It is especially important in helping them to get in touch with the social aspects of language use at first hand.

They should reflect on their language learning. Being aware of what they are doing as they learn a language is also generally regarded as being helpful to learning. Reflecting on the strategies they use as they learn, and evaluating their effectiveness, will allow them to alter or improve them. Keeping a journal of their learning is one way that may enable you to do this more effectively. ELP is an excellent tool for this.

In most classroom learning environments learners do not take an active role in decisions about what is to be learned or how. Teachers, course books, syllabuses and examinations dictate much of what has to be learned, yet learners are the ones who have to do the learning. They are the only ones who can ultimately decide what is best for themselves. It is important, therefore, that they be allowed and encouraged to develop their independence, that they can make decisions about their own learning. Once again, ELP is an extremely useful tool.

[12] See footnote 2 above

Having reflected on these questions they should have a clearer picture of themselves as learners, and be in a position to take decisions about their own future.

Questions for reflection:

Vocabulary

- Is the vocabulary to be acquired by learners stipulated as such or are topic areas designated within which vocabulary is largely implied?
- On what criteria are the choices implied in the previous question made?
- In what ways do you present vocabulary items for learning for reception/production?
- What is the size and range of vocabulary needed at various levels and what is expected to be learnt for reception/production?
- By what means is meaning conveyed to or elicited from learners: by translation; by definition/explanation in the L1 or the L2; by induction from context?
- Do we teach our students strategies for learning vocabulary? Are they aware of different levels of knowledge of words?

Grammar

- Is the range of grammar that learners are to acquire at different levels defined?
- What criteria govern the order in which grammatical elements are presented to learners?
- What is the relative importance you attach to range, fluency and accuracy in grammatical constructions?
- To what extent is the grammar of the mother tongue or other language(s) used to facilitate learning of the target language?
- To what extent are learners made aware of the contrasts between the L1 and L2 grammars and what use is made of them?
- Are we aware of stages in development of grammar in our students? Do we train them to develop this awareness in themselves?

Prononciation, intonation, etc.

- What sound units and intonation patterns do learners need to acquire?
- What degree of accuracy and fluency is required at what levels?
- Do we develop our students' strategies for learning pronunciation, intonation, etc.?

Some final remarks: Assessing learners' progress

Every learning task has to have built into it some type of assessment. Unless learners have some way of checking whether they have successfully learnt something, they will easily get discouraged.

Now that we are aware of all the different aspects of language that are involved in communication in our own language and in a new language, it should come as no surprise to us that any real assessment of language learning will have to bear a lot of things in mind. Chapters 8 and 9 and the appendix in CEF deal with evaluation and assessment in language learning in a remarkably thorough way. Chapter 3 deals with the problem of establishing levels of language, while chapter 9 deals with assessment in general. Right through CEF each of the levels established is related to all the different aspects of language.

The way in which the different levels are established is through: (i) the range and (ii) the quality of the learners' communication. The more tasks they can perform in a language, the higher their level; but this level will be reflected also in the quality of their performance of particular tasks.

So, at a very basic level (called here *A1-Breakthrough*) a learner can, for example, understand familiar questions about him- or herself and his or her family, and (in the written medium) recognize familiar names and words on simple notices; he or she can understand very simple questions or commands, and ask people for things; his or her vocabulary will be limited to a very basic range, and the question of his or her grammar is unlikely to arise. As the learner goes up the scale, he or she will be able to listen to, and read about, more topics with greater ease, and to talk about them with more accuracy and fluency.

Three main levels are identified: basic user, independent user and proficient user. Each of these main levels can in turn be broken down into two, three, or more sublevels depending on how finely one wants to make distinctions. The emphasis in CEF is on what the learner can do, rather than on things he or she gets wrong.

It was said at the beginning of this guide that the key objective of CEF is to enable all those involved in language learning and teaching to use a common set of terms, so that we all know what we are talking about when we refer to the different aspects of language and language learning, and that we are all talking about language and language learning in a way that makes sense to everyone. One of the consequences of this should be to establish a set of guidelines for testing that would be usable by all language teachers and learners. While a lot of progress has been made in this direction, we are still some way from agreement. Some testing bodies stress certain aspects of language more than others. In other cases, there is a lack of clarity in the criteria required in particular tests.

On the other hand, learners can benefit greatly from learning how to assess their own progress. Research has shown that learners can be as good judges of their own progress as their teachers, provided (i) standards of proficiency are clearly described; (ii) assessment is related to a specific experience, (even a formal test); and (iii) they receive some training in self-assessment. The basic principle for this training in self-assessment involves comparing one's impressions of what one can do with the reality; for example, if one ticks off on a checklist that one can understand weather forecasts, checking with a teacher or a native speaker whether one actually got the information right will help to sharpen one's ability to judge performance.

This is a part of developing learners' independence in learning. They are, after all, the only people who have the full picture about what aspects of language they want to focus on, and what level (involving breadth as well as depth of coverage) they want to reach. Monitoring their progress will help them in many ways they may not realize. One may be a person who does not like to take a chance in public: he or she may not have the courage to speak, or may be reluctant to make mistakes. Being able to assess him- or herself is likely to help them realize that they are actually progressing, and that, even if they continue to make mistakes, this does not mean they are not learning. In fact, if one remembers what was said about learning in a natural environment, making mistakes is not the way to express what is happening, but rather that one's language is developing naturally. Similarly, when learners have the impression that they are not learning simply because the teacher or a native speaker is not present to monitor them, self-assessment should show them that this is not true. Finally, self-assessment is something they can continue to do inside and outside of school; it relates to the full extent of their language development, not just to what is going to be tested in examinations.

Conclusion

This guide is intended to be read as an accompaniment to the *Modern Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of Reference.* CEF was written to allow all of those involved in language learning and teaching to "speak the same language", that is, to have a common understanding of what is involved in language use and in language learning. Many questions are raised in this document, and many are left unanswered. This is because we still know very little about language and especially about learning languages. As our learners set about the task of learning a new language, they will be in a certain sense experts. They will have things to say about language learning that no one else can say. It is important to let them share what they learn about the process with others involved in it, especially with you, their teacher. Language learning has become a major issue in the new Europe. It is important that it is done in the most effective manner possible. This guide was intended to help make their learning and your teaching more effective, but their experience and yours will in turn help to make this type of guide more useful.

CHAPTER 4 – GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER TRAINERS (PRIMARY AND SECONDARY)

By Barry Jones

Introduction

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) sets out to:

- promote and facilitate cooperation among educational institutions in different countries;
- provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications;
- assist learners, teachers, teacher trainers (…) to situate and coordinate their efforts.

CEF, therefore, envisages different readers, each of whom may consult it with a particular focus. The aims, however, remain the same.

This chapter assumes a readership responsible for or engaged in the education and training of modern foreign language teachers and the teachers themselves. Its intention is to explore how training and teaching programmes can be developed to promote coherent, efficient, effective modern language learning for all types of learners in primary and secondary schools.

The chapter draws on three publications in the previous series of user guides to CEF, namely:

- Guide for Teacher Trainers (Primary Education) by Rita Balbi
- Guide for Teacher Trainers (Secondary School) by Barry Jones
- Guide for Teachers by Brian Page

The discussion takes chapters of CEF and considers each from the perspective of a teacher trainer and teacher educator, and a teacher in the classroom. Readers are encouraged to situate themselves and their own training and teaching programmes, question their own practices and reflect on what is involved in the training and teaching process.

Training programmes

The pattern of a majority of training programmes is that they either:

(i) run parallel with foreign language learning (concurrent courses);

(ii) or occur after formal, institution-based language learning has taken place at a university or an institution of higher education (consecutive courses);

(iii) or are organised, once a person has obtained a teaching post, in a programme of in-service training.

This chapter will apply equally to all such training programmes, no matter when they take place. It will also consider:

(iv) the relationship of CEF to a modern language teacher's professional development after a period of initial training has taken place. This will be referred to as in-service education of teachers.

The content of training programmes may also be further determined by:

(i) a nationally agreed description of the competences or standards required of a modern language teacher,

(ii) a description of the aims of modern language teaching in a particular country; this may exist in the form of guidance or it may be a national requirement,

(iii) guidelines or requirements for teacher training at local, regional or national level,

(iv) constraints within a teacher training programme imposed nationally, locally or within an institution; where the training takes place, in school or in a training college, the number of hours available, opportunities for linguistic training or enhancement, re-orientation programmes, etc.

The reader is invited to situate himself or herself within a particular context from the outset to determine the degree of relevance of what follows. It is likely that all aspects will apply but at varying levels of importance.

In common with CEF the guidance given in this chapter seeks to be:

- multi-purpose: usable for the full variety of purposes involved in the planning and provision of facilities for language learning;
- flexible: adapted for use in different circumstances;
- open: capable of further extension and refinement;
- dynamic: in continuous evolution in response to experience in its use;
- user-friendly: presented in a form readily understandable and usable by those to whom it is addressed;
- non-dogmatic: not irrevocably and exclusively attached to any one of a number of competing approaches.

Part 1 – The CEF in its political and educational context

This section sets out the intended functions of CEF, in the light of the linguistic and cultural diversity in the field of education. Accordingly, CEF is not intended to promote any single system of, or approach to, language teaching and teacher training but to provide a comprehensive framework which will help practitioners (learners, teachers, teacher trainers) to situate and orientate their exercise of options and to inform each other accordingly in a transparent and coherent way.

The aims of CEF for language teaching and learning are to overcome barriers in order to:

- increase personal mobility;
- increase the effectiveness of international cooperation;
- increase respect for identity and cultural diversity;
- improve access to information;
- intensify personal interaction;
- improve working relations;
- achieve a deeper mutual understanding.

Questions of relevance to a teacher trainer and to teachers may be:

Consider the teaching or teacher-training programme for which you are responsible, or in which you are involved. Do you as teacher or do your trainees have a similar list of language learning aims for all learners? Are these aims made explicit? Do your trainees and do you as teacher consider some of these aims more important or more relevant than others? Is there a preferred hierarchy? Are some of these language learning aims more applicable to younger learners, and some to older/adult learners? Do all those who work with you share the same language-learning aims?

If such questions are asked and debated, then the chapter will have fulfilled its prime function, as outlined in CEF: to stimulate practitioners to reflect upon and, if they consider it appropriate, to rethink or restate their current practice. The treatment is by no means exhaustive of the issues raised. Experienced practitioners will no doubt be concerned with some issues which have been passed over, and may well be dissatisfied with the options as they are set out. In many cases they may feel them to be too crude to express a position which may be more *nuancée* or deserving of a fuller treatment.

Part 2 – Approach adopted

This part of CEF explains the approach adopted. Its basis is an analysis of language described as:

2.1 "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". (CEF, page 9)

The words in bold designate the parameters for the description of language use and the user/learner's ability to use language. Progress in language learning can then be calibrated in terms of a flexible series of levels of attainment defined by appropriate descriptors. This apparatus should be comprehensive enough to accommodate the full range of learner needs and thus the objectives pursued by different providers, or required of candidates for language qualifications.

Terminology is important in all discussion and debate about language teaching and learning. . In order that CEF is mutually comprehensible, chapter 2 defines the terminology which is used within the document. Teacher-training programmes and teachers could perhaps adopt such definitions and use the same or similar terminology and concepts with their trainees and amongst themselves. This would mean, in practice, that trainees and teachers had a common understanding of the following:

1. general competences
2. communicative language competences
3. contexts

4. language activity/activities
5. language processes
6. text
7. domain – the public domain
   – the personal domain
   – the educational domain
   – the occupational domain
8. strategy
9. task
10. existential competence – *savoir-être*
11. declarative knowledge – *savoir*
12. skills/know-how – *savoir faire*
13. ability to learn – *savoir apprendre*
14. a linguistic component
15. a socio-linguistic component
16. a pragmatic component
17. reception – receptive
18. production – productive
19. interaction – interactive
20. mediation

Given that there are only twenty terms on this list, would you, as teacher or as teacher-trainer, wish to use this core terminology? Would not teachers, teacher-trainers and trainees gain from using a common terminology?

For those readers who do not use English/French as their medium of discussion, are there problems of translation in your native language?

Although this and later chapters in CEF discuss many of these concepts in greater detail, readers may wish to begin to clarify and exemplify each of the terms listed.

2.1.1 The general competences of an individual (section 5.1)

Factors such as personality, certain character traits, willingness, self confidence, explicit expectations, world knowledge, etc. are believed by language-learning theorists and practitioners to affect language learning. CEF, whilst not commenting on how well founded these beliefs may be, mentions conditions which may favour language learning and others which may not.

Readers may wish to consider:

1. How to help teachers and trainees discover more about learners, their learning styles, their abilities, their cultural 'baggage' and beliefs, and their world knowledge?

2. The conditions which seem to support language learning and those which do not, and, once defined, how to create favourable conditions for different groups of learners.

3. Background knowledge (technical, scientific, academic, etc.) or declarative knowledge – *les savoirs* – which learners may bring to their language learning.

4. Elements of daily routine – daily programmes, meals and mealtimes, transportation to and from school, institution, or place of work – which provide a common and shared understanding between programme planner and learner, or otherwise.

5. Whether language-learning is a means to other kinds of learning, as happens, for example, in immersion programmes, sections-bilingues, or learning (for example geography) through the medium of a foreign language, etc.

6. Whether language-learning is or can be based on procedural operations, such skills and know-how as in performing some kind of sequential action (driving a car, making a meal from a recipe, etc.) *savoir-faire* already known to the learner, or which the learner needs or wishes to perform.

7. Whether language-learning presumes or develops the ability to learn – *savoir-apprendre* – and a predisposition to find out about another language, another culture, other people, etc.

8. Whether the learners are risk-takers in face-to-face language encounters, and are prepared to seek clarification, ask for more information or repetition, etc.

Does your training programme develop strategies to help trainees find out more about the learning styles, knowledge, expectations, and skills which learners bring to the task? Do teachers do this?

2.1.2 Communicative language competence (section 5.2)

To develop communicative language competence trainees and teachers need to:

1. understand that such competence is composed of:

   (i) a sociolinguistic component – for example, sensitivity to social conventions, linguistic rituals within a society, etc.;…

   (ii) a linguistic component – for example, lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills;

   (iii) a pragmatic component – for example, reacting within interactional exchanges, mastering discourse, cohesion, identifying irony, etc.

2. exemplify and develop such components in their classroom practice.

Do your programmes analyse these components and provide opportunities for trainees to develop these forms of knowledge and these skills in their learners? Do teachers share these understandings?

2.1.3 Language activities (section 4.4)

The language learner/user's communicative language competence is activated through various language activities, related to **reception, production, interaction,** or **mediation** (in particular interpreting or translating), each of these activities being possible in oral or written form, or both.

Given the exemplification of these language activities in CEF, (see 2.1.2 – 2.1.3) readers may wish to consider whether their training programmes seek to develop their trainees' competence to, or whether they as teachers, devise:

1. **'interactive** learning activities, where at least two actors participate in an oral or written exchange in which production and reception alternate;

2. **receptive** and **productive** language activities, where the student acts alone, reading, listening, speaking or writing without a partner;

3. written and/or oral activities of **mediation**, through translation or interpretation, a summary or a record, to produce for a third party a (re) formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access.

It may be helpful to consider the forms which these different language learning activities can take for different ages and ability of learner, and how each can be organised and carried out by both teacher and learner in a range of different situations (in school, at home, with others, alone, etc.).

2.1.4 CEF Language activities within domains (section 4.1.1)

CEF suggests that although **domains** may be very diverse, in relation to language learning they can be broadly classified as: the *public domain*, the *personal domain*, the *educational domain* and the *occupational domain*.

The *public domain* refers to everything connected with ordinary social interaction (business and administrative bodies, public services, cultural and leisure activities of a public nature, relations with the media, etc.). Complementarily, the *personal domain* comprises family relations and individual social practices.

The *occupational domain* embraces everything concerned with an agent's activities and relations in the exercise of his or her occupation. The *educational domain* is concerned with the learning/training context (generally of an institutional nature) where the aim is to acquire specific knowledge or skills.

Does your teacher-training programme prepare trainees in such a way that they can, or do teachers:

1. choose which domain is, or which domains are appropriate for their target learners?

2. devise learning materials which relate to each of the domains defined in CEF (2.1.4)?

Do you consider some domains to be more appropriate for different ages or ability of learners, or for learners who have specific needs or purposes?

2.1.5 Tasks (CEF 7), strategies (section 4.4) and texts (section 4.6)

"Communication and learning involve the performance of **tasks** which are not solely language tasks even if they involve language activities and make demands upon the individual's communicative competence. To the extent that these tasks are neither routine nor automatic, they require the use of **strategies** in communicating and learning. In so far as carrying out these tasks involves language activities, they necessitate the processing (through reception, production, interaction or mediation) of oral or written **texts**." (CEF, page 15)

Does your training programme give trainees opportunities to, and do teachers develop in their learners:

1. appropriate strategies given the nature of the task?

2. appropriate strategies given the nature of a range of tasks?

Readers may wish to consider how helpful it is for students and for teachers in pre-service or in-service training to be given tasks and texts, which demand the same learning strategies that they, the teachers, wish to develop in their learners. For example, in order to illustrate reading strategies, trainees and teachers can try to read texts presented in an unknown language. They can be asked collectively to list and describe the reading strategies they have used to perform a range of tasks on each text.

Such first-hand experience and analysis can often exemplify convincingly the relationship between task, strategy and text.

2.2 CEF so far (2.1) has provided a descriptive scheme. Teachers and trainees can consider how to plan for and take account of learner progression. The vertical dimension referred to here is useful in this respect. It can be used in:

- defining learner proficiency over time;
- planning transparent and realistic learning objectives;
- organising learning units;
- mapping progression;
- providing continuity;
- assessing gains in proficiency.

There should, however, be opportunities, when considering a learner's progression, for:

- taking account of incidental learning;
- recognising uneven profiles and partial competencies;
- setting and assessing appropriate standards;

Question:

How within a teacher-training course or a teaching programme can progression and continuity for different groups and age ranges of learners be planned, organised and assessed? How do you develop these aspects?

Part 3 – Common reference levels

In any kind of teaching there will be assessment of learning. This may have two main orientations:

- **What** the learner can do:
  for use by the learner and/or by the teacher.
- **How** well he/she performs:
  for use in a diagnostic and/or assessment context for learner and/or teacher.

Chapter 3 is concerned with description and measurement of language learning performance, and proposes common reference levels to enable public recognition of achievement.

3.3 The tables here illustrate these two aspects. Table 1 presents common reference levels making communication of learner performance relatively simple in the form of global representations. Table 2 is an example of self-assessment and will help learners "profile their main language skills … and self assess their level of proficiency". (CEF, page 25)

3.4 Table 3 sets out to describe a learner's competence, in terms of range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence, matched to a set of common reference levels.

Question:

How, within a teacher-training course or a teaching programme do you illustrate description and measurement of language learning? If you illustrate the theme with a nationally agreed system how far does this relate to the three tables shown in CEF? Do the tables provide a useful basis for discussion of systems which already exist in your context or of innovative practices with which trainees and teachers could experiment?

Part 4 – Language use and the language user/learner

This chapter is particularly important for those responsible for, or engaged in planning, delivering and/or evaluating pre-service or in-service training programmes. It is also essential for teachers since it focuses on the learner and considers communicative language activities and processes, texts, as well as user/learner competences and strategies. Readers may wish to consider these as main headings for a teacher-training programme or for professional

development. Each aspect requires discussion, illustration and implementation, in order that the learners, for whom we are responsible, develop their language learning competently and confidently.

4.1.1 Domains

"Each act of language use is set in the context of a particular situation within one of the domains (spheres of action or areas of concern) in which social life is organised. The choice of the domains in which learners are being prepared to operate has far-reaching implications for the selection of situations, purposes, tasks, themes and texts for teaching and testing materials and activities." Teacher-trainers will need to discuss with their trainees, and teachers may need to consider the "motivational effects of choosing domains of present relevance in relation to their future utility. For instance, children may be better motivated by a concentration on their present centres of interest, which may leave them ill-prepared to communicate later in an adult environment." (CEF, page 45)

For general purposes of language learning and teaching it may be useful to distinguish at least the following:

- the **personal** domain, in which the person concerned lives as a private individual, centred on home life with family and friends,
- the **public** domain, in which the person concerned acts as a member of the general public, or of some organisation and is engaged in transactions of various kinds for a variety of purposes,
- the **occupational** domain, in which the person concerned is engaged in his or her job or profession,
- the **educational** domain, in which the person concerned is engaged in organised learning, especially (but not necessarily) within an educational institution.

It should be noted that in many situations more than one domain may be involved, for example, there is often some personal aspect to shopping, eating out, etc. For a teacher the occupational and educational domains largely coincide.

Teachers and teacher-trainers may wish to consider whether their course planning:

1. includes discussion and illustration of the concept of **domain**.
2. relates the concept of domain as analysed in CEF document to national policies, prescribed national curricula, course book content, schools' programmes of study or schemes of work, and lesson content.
3. illustrates how the concept of **domains** has an effect on and can be translated into learning content for different ages and abilities of learner.

4.1.2 Situations

In each domain, the situations which arise may be described in terms of:

- the **locations** in which, and the **times** at which, they occur;
- the **institutions** or **organisations**, the structure and procedures of which control much of what can normally occur;
- the **persons involved**, especially in their relevant social roles in relation to the user/learner;
- the **objects** (animate and inanimate) in the environment;
- the **events** which take place;
- the **operations** performed by the persons involved;
- the **texts** encountered within the situation.

Table 5 shows clearly, as a helpful summary, how domains can be illustrated in practice in relation to locations, institutions, persons involved, objects, events, operations and texts.

Teacher-trainers:
Does your programme of training include discussion and analysis of **situations** to help student-teachers or teachers in training plan learning content in ways which are relevant to learners' needs, interests, experiences, preoccupations and aspirations?

Teachers:
How do you make learning content relevant to learners' needs, interests, experiences, preoccupations and aspirations?

Teacher-trainers:
Does your programme make your trainees aware of tables such as that shown in CEF Table 5: **External Context of Use**, and/or similar tables which may be published in national curricula, or in examination boards' syllabi?

What use are such tables in in-service or pre-service training?

In discussion of such a table trainees can be encouraged to explore the effect on their lesson planning and teaching of a curriculum organised around the concept of identified domains and external situations, and one organised around grammatical features and grammatical progression.

Teachers:
What is the effect on lesson planning and teaching of a curriculum organised around the concept of identified domains and external situations, and one organised around grammatical features and grammatical progression?

4.1.3 Conditions and constraints

The external conditions under which communication occurs impose various constraints on the user/learner and his/her interlocutors, for example:

- physical conditions
- social conditions
- time pressures

Does your training/teaching programme consider, and, where appropriate,

1. state how the physical conditions under which learners will have to communicate will affect what they are required to do?

2. state how the number and nature of the interlocutors will affect what the learner is required to do?

3. state under what time pressure the learner will have to operate?

4. analyse what constitutes difficulty given a range of conditions and constraints?

5. devise learning materials/situations in which such difficulties are present, for learners of different ages and abilities?

Teacher-trainers:
Do you give trainees the possibility to experience first-hand, and then to analyse a range of external conditions under which communication occurs?

4.1.4 and 4.1.5 The user/learner's mental context and the mental context of the interlocutor(s)

There would seem to be several elements of this section in CEF which are relevant to teachers and trainee-teachers and their understanding of the language learners they teach. Lesson planning and delivery would be enhanced if they have an understanding of their learners' needs, drives, motivations, as well as what feelings, ideas, impressions they bring to communicating in the target language. Teachers and trainees need to make their learners aware that an interlocutor may or may not share similar values, beliefs, politeness conventions, motivations, etc. "unless they have acquired the relevant intercultural awareness". (CEF, page 51) They may be encouraged to reflect on teacher-learner relations and classroom communication generally.

Teacher-trainers:
Does your training programme explore ways of helping your student-teachers or teachers in training to:

1. take into account the learner's mental context and/or the mental context of the interlocutor?

2. encourage learners to reflect on their experience?

3. prepare their learners to make adjustments where appropriate?

Teachers:
How do you as teachers respond to these three questions?

4.2 Communication themes

Primary and secondary school learning programmes frequently include a number of identifiable themes or topics. These may form the categories by which a programme or scheme of work is organised, or may be integrated in less structured ways into what is taught. Within **domains** we may distinguish a number of **themes** or topics.

These often include:

1. personal identification
2. house and home, environment
3. daily life
4. free time, entertainment
5. travel, etc.

All of these may be subdivided. CEF gives the example of free time and entertainment which can be subdivided into:

1. leisure
2. hobbies and interests
3. radio and TV
4. cinema, theatre, concert, etc.

Further categorisation can be made in terms of specific notions. For sport, for example, there can be:

1. locations: field, ground, stadium
2. institutions and organisations: sport, team, club
3. persons: player
4. objects: cards, ball, etc.

The themes, sub-themes, etc. listed in CEF (personal identification, house and home, environment and daily life, free-time, entertainment, etc.) relate to presumed communicative needs of learners.

Teacher-trainers:
Does your training programme:

1. encourage and help trainees to investigate/define their learners' needs?
2. demonstrate how to build a learning programme on the results of such an analysis?
3. illustrate and experiment with self-access as well as taught learning programmes?

Teachers:
Do you:
1. investigate/define learners' needs?
2. build a learning programme on the results of such an analysis?
3. illustrate and experiment with self-access as well as taught learning programmes?

When preparing trainees to teach, or when teaching different year groups or learners it may be helpful if there is thought given to:

1. which themes, sub-themes, and specific notions learners might need or be required to handle in the selected domains, especially if, as is the case in some national contexts, there is scope for learner choice and teacher initiative.

2. how the learners themselves react to and/or may wish to adapt or change the thematic content of the language(s) taught.

4.3 Communicative tasks and purposes

4.3.2 Learners, it is claimed, find 'concrete task specifications very meaningful and motivating as learning objectives (…). It is for practitioners to reflect upon the communicative needs of the learners with whom they are concerned and then (…) to specify the communicative tasks they should be equipped to face.'

Does your training/teaching programme:

1. encourage concrete task specification for target learners?

2. make such task specification an explicit or implicit element in lesson planning, or in setting up learning activities?

3. explore ways in which such specification, if thought relevant, can be implemented using the target language, if this is considered appropriate?

4. analyse the effect of task specification i) by the learner, ii) by the teacher with or without reference to an assessment of learner needs?

4.3.3 Tasks (see also notes on CEF 7)

There is an important distinction made between 'the tasks which learners are equipped/required to tackle as language users and those in which they engage as part of the language learning process itself.'

Does your training/teaching programme:

1. clarify this distinction?
2. illustrate tasks which learners will need or be equipped to undertake in the educational domain
   a) as participants in guided, goal-oriented interactions, projects, simulations, role-plays, etc.
   b) in other ways when the L2 is used as the medium of instruction in teaching of i) the language itself, ii) other curricular subjects, etc.?
3. include illustration of the use and evaluation of such tasks ?

4.3.4 – 4.3.5 Ludic and aesthetic activities and uses of language

Does your training programme encourage your trainees to, or do you as teacher, devise, experiment with and evaluate teaching situations, games, puzzles, media games, verbal jokes, imaginative and artistic uses of language, etc.?

4.4 Communicative language activities and strategies

Communicative language activities traditionally were defined as reading and listening (receptive skills), and speaking and writing (productive skills).

4.4.1 – 4.4.4 These divisions are defined more helpfully in CEF as:

productive: oral production (speaking)
written production (writing)
production strategies

receptive: aural reception (listening)
visual reception (reading)
audio-visual reception
reception strategies

interactive: spoken interaction
written interaction
interaction strategies

mediating: (acting as a channel of communication between persons who cannot communicate directly, often, but not necessarily, in different languages)
mediating activities and strategies

Does your training programme include developing the trainees' ability to, or do you as teacher:

1. devise / select a range of **oral production** (speaking) activities for specific ages and abilities of learners;

2. devise/select a range of **writing activities** for specific ages and abilities of learners, with a definition of their presumed readership;

3. devise/select a range of **receptive activities** (listening and reading, and audio-visual reception) for specific ages and abilities of learners, to include the development of appropriate listening/reading skills, given a range of listening/reading modes and purposes;

4. devise/select a range of **interactive (spoken) activities** for specific ages and abilities of learners, to include the development of:
   i) reception and production strategies
   ii) cognitive and collaborative strategies and a recognition of roles being played in the interaction;

5. devise/select a range of interactive (written) activities for specific ages and abilities of learners, to include interactive human – machine communication, using a range of computer software;

6. devise/select a range of **mediating** activities for specific ages and abilities of learners, to include oral mediation and written mediation?

How would you use the illustrative scales in a teacher-training/teaching programme?

Would these form the basis of detailed planning and subsequent feedback to learners of different ages and abilities and/or self evaluation?

4.4.5 Non-verbal communication

Do you consider that aspects of non-verbal communication should feature in teacher-training/teaching programmes? If so, which and in which contexts would you wish to develop them?

4.5 Communicative language processes

These processes are summarised in CEF (4.5.1 – 4.5.3) as:

1. planning
2. execution
   - production
   - reception
   - interaction
3. monitoring

Although not all communicative language processes are fully understood, the observable stages of certain processes, however, are well understood.

Teacher-trainers:

1. What does your programme do to raise the trainees' awareness and understanding of the psychological, physiological and physical processes involved in the production and reception of speech and writing?

2. Does your programme equip trainees to diagnose and correct faults in their learners' (a) perception and (b) articulation of speech sounds in the target language?

3. What importance do you attach to this aspect of language learning?

Teachers:

Does your teaching programme:

1. take account of the psychological, physiological and physical processes involved in the production and reception of speech and writing?

2. set out to diagnose and correct faults in learners' (a) perception and (b) articulation of speech sounds in the target language?

3. What importance do you attach to this aspect of language learning?

4.6 Texts

Text, whether spoken or written, is fundamental to communication. It can be delivered by different media (voice, telephone, radio broadcasts, TV, cinema films, e-mail, manuscripts, etc.). Text itself may be classified into a number of text types:

spoken: public announcements, commentaries, debates, etc.
written: books, manuals, leaflets, signs, etc.

Teacher-trainers:

Does your programme include guidance for trainees on:

1. the selection/creation of spoken/written text types?

2. the receptive/productive/interactive use and the use in mediation of spoken/written text types?

3. using receptively/productively/interactively/in mediation a range of media for learners of different ages and abilities?

Teachers:

1. Do you create and use a range of spoken/written text types? By what criteria are these selected?

2. Do you include the receptive/productive/interactive use and the use in mediation of spoken/written text types?

3. Do you include receptively/productively/interactively/in mediation a range of media for learners of different ages and abilities?

The different text types, shown in 4.6.4.1 – 4.6.4.2, and the media which carry them (4.6.2) may help trainees and teachers plan learning activities for a range of learners. Teacher-trainers and teachers may like to consider which media learners will need or be required to handle (a) receptively (b) productively (c) interactively (d) in mediation. Teacher-trainers may like to consider how to familiarise their trainees with their range and use.

Does your training/teaching programme seek to:

1. develop in learners appropriate skills, such as:
   - memory
   - decoding skills
   - inferencing
   - predicting
   - rapid scanning
   - comprehension, using dictionaries, grammars, etc.

since all these skills cannot be presumed? (see 4.5)

2. develop in learners the ability to match actions to words, and vice-versa, being aware, at times, of cultural differences? (see 4.4.5.1)

3. develop in learners paralinguistic behaviour; body language, extra linguistic speech-sounds, prosodic qualities, whilst being aware that there may be cultural differences which change meaning? (see 4.4.5.2)

4. develop in learners the ability to (a) recognise and respond to, and (b) use paratextual features in written texts? (see 4.4.5.3)

Part 5 – The user/learner's competences

Chapter 4 was concerned with what language users have to learn to do in order to communicate. Chapter 5 now turns to the knowledge and abilities (competences) which enable them to act. Not all these competences have to be taught.

5.1. General competences

Learners bring a range of competences to the learning task. CEF describes these as:

5.1.1 Declarative knowledge (*savoir*)

i) knowledge of the world
ii) sociocultural knowledge
iii) intercultural awareness

Does your training programme or teaching create opportunities to:

1. discover more about learner competences?

2. assess what new experience and knowledge of the world learners need to acquire in order to meet the requirements of L2 communication?

3. develop in learners an awareness of the relation between home and target cultures, so as to develop an appropriate intercultural competence?

5.1.2 Skills and know-how (*savoir-faire*)

CEF also includes within its definition of user/learner's competences:

iv) practical skills and know-how – *savoir-faire*
v) intercultural skills and know-how

Does your training programme or teaching create opportunities for learners to: 1. develop practical skills, intercultural skills and appropriate know-how? 2. experience the target culture? 3. act as cultural intermediary?

5.1.3 Existential competence (*savoir-être*)

Learners also have attitudes, motivations, values, beliefs, cognitive styles, and personality factors, which affect not only their roles in communicative acts, but also their ability to learn.

Does your training programme/teaching consider learner characteristics? Does it access how these characteristics may affect language learning and how they may be provided for in language learning, teaching and assessment? Do you consider whether language teaching should try to contribute to the development of the learner's personality and, if so, how this should be done?

5.1.4 Ability to learn (*savoir apprendre)*

The ability to learn is the "ability to observe and participate in new experiences and to incorporate new knowledge into existing knowledge, modifying the latter where necessary" (CEF, page 106). It has several components:

1. language and communication awareness (5.1.4.1)
2. general phonetic skills (5.1.4.2)
3. study skills (5.1.4.3)
4. heuristic skills (5.1.4.4)

Does your training programme or teaching create opportunities to develop these four sets of skills as well as increase independence in learners' learning and use of language? At what ages do you believe a programme of awareness-raising can begin? How would you plan to develop these sets of skills in learners?

5.2 Communicative language competences

This section in CEF would appear to be of key importance for teachers and in teacher-training whether this is pre-service or inservice, primary or secondary. Its focus is on 'identifying and classifying the main components of linguistic competence defined as knowledge of, and ability to use, the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated.' Trainees and teachers must have an understanding of what is meant by linguistic competence in order to plan, coherently and over time, what they are to teach and what learners are to learn. They also need this understanding to be able to describe learners' competence and for progress to be logged and scaled in a detailed and comprehensive way.

Decisions about short- and long-term objectives can be based on understandings which are illustrated here. The chapter, with chapter 4, does, however, set out what a 'fully competent user of language is able to do and what knowledge, skills and attitudes make these activities possible'. These chapters provide a comprehensive map by which different learners with different needs, abilities and motivations can be guided according to their individual or collective objectives. Some routes may remain unexplored, some partially explored and some explored in depth.

Readers may wish to consider:

1. how and to what extent training and teaching programmes should include definition, discussion and exemplification of lexical competence, grammatical competence, semantic competence, and phonological competence (5.2.1.1 – 5.2.1.4);

2. which lexical elements the trainee or teacher includes for learners to recognise and/or use (5.2.1.1);

3. which grammatical elements, classes (5.2.1.2), structures, processes and relations, syntax, the trainee or teacher includes for learners to recognise and/or use, and/or explain, using L1 or L2;

4. what:
   - semantic competence (synonyms, antonyms, translation equivalence, etc.)
   - phonological competence (sentence stress, rhythm, intonation, etc.)
   - orthographic competence (proper spelling of words, punctuation use, etc.)
   - orthoepic competences (knowledge of spelling conventions, ability to use a dictionary, etc.) (5.2.1.3 – 5.2.1.6)

   the trainee or teacher includes for learners to build up/demonstrate and at which stage in their learning;

5. to what extent trainees and teachers should make their learners aware of the grammar of
   (a) the mother tongue
   (b) the target language
   (c) their contrastive relations,

   and what metalanguage should be used in explanations by trainee, teacher and/or learner, and whether this should be done in L1 or L2;

6. which markers of social conventions, politeness conventions, register differences, expressions of folkwisdom, dialects and accents trainees and teachers should help their learners
   (a) recognise
   (b) use (5.2.2.1 – 5.2.2.5);

7. which aspects of discourse competence (ordering sentences, achieving coherence and cohesion, using appropriate style and register, etc.) trainees and teachers should help learners control and/or demonstrate;

8. which aspects of functional competence (5.2.3.2)
   - micro functions (identifying, reporting, correcting, etc;)
   - macrocytaires (description, narration, commentary, exposition, etc.)
   - interaction schemata (patterns of social interaction) trainees and teachers should help learners control and/or demonstrate.

Part 6 – Language learning and language teaching

This section considers the processes of language learning and teaching and deals with the relation between acquisition and learning, as well as with methodological options of a general or more specific kind. Those training to be teachers, and teachers themselves, need to understand ways in which learners 'come to be able to carry out tasks, activities and processes and build up the competences necessary for communication'. It is from such an understanding that these processes can the more effectively be promoted and facilitated.

6.1 What is it that learners have to learn or acquire?

Learning and acquisition are dependent on factors already described comprehensively in chapters 4 and 5. This is why, as has been suggested in this chapter, it seems worthwhile to help trainees and teachers to investigate and define, as far as possible, learners' intentions, needs, prior knowledge, cognitive styles, as well as the match between L1 and the target language. However, as CEF acknowledges, the longer term career needs of younger learners in primary or secondary school cannot be foreseen. Therefore, language learning has to have a wider justification. Teachers and trainees should have principled ways of formulating such a justification and of describing learning aims and objectives which relate to it. They should be able to state the criteria used when deciding which tasks, activities and strategies are objectives in themselves, or means to achieving them, and which should be included in or omitted from a learning programme. There will, of necessity, be discussion of how to chart learners' progress, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in order that learners have a measure of their competence and performance and learning can be planned systematically within a detailed, logical and coherent framework.

This chapter of CEF offers discussion of learning objectives with key issues identified for consideration. It also explores how learners learn and how teachers can help the learning process. Detailed scaling has already been illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 in chapter 3, and in chapters 4 and 5 of CEF so monitoring, assessment, reporting and recording are not discussed in detail here. However, the development of profiles of plurilingual and pluricultural competences (6.1.3) may be usefully debated and illustrated if language learning aims include:

- an improved awareness of identity (6.1.3.1)
- developing a choice of strategies for task accomplishment (6.1.3.2)
- developing linguistic and communication awareness (6.1.3.3)

It would seem of the greatest importance in a teacher-training programme and in a teacher's planning that there be consideration of developing learner competences which may ' to some degree accelerate (…) learning in linguistic and cultural areas', and 'promote the respect for the diversity of languages and of learning more than one language in school'. It is, as CEF states, 'a matter of helping learners:

- to construct their linguistic and cultural identity through integrating into it a diversified experience of otherness;
- to develop their ability to learn through this same diversified experience of relating to several languages and cultures.'

Teacher-trainers may wish to decide with their trainees, and teachers with their colleagues:

1. how they would justify foreign language learning within their particular context (primary or secondary school) and what their general and specific aims would be for their learners and their learning programme;

2. the implications of plurilingualism for language learning, teaching and assessment;

3. how teachers of other foreign languages and teachers of the mothertongue can work together to develop the learners' plurilingual communicative competence.

6.1.4 Variation in objectives

The four types of objectives for teaching and for learning as outlined here need careful consideration by teachers and trainees.

The first is defined in terms of developing a learner's **general competences** (see section 5.1). This may focus on 'imparting declarative knowledge to the learner' exemplified as '(knowledge) of the grammar, or the literature or certain cultural characteristics of the foreign country'.

The second is considered in terms of the extension and diversification of **communicative language competence** (see 5.2) where the main aim may be competent use of syntax, phonetic system, etc., or concern with the pragmatic or sociolinguistic components.

A third type of objective may be defined 'in terms of the better performance in one or more specific **language activities**' (see chapter 4.4) with a focus on **reception**, **production**, **interaction** or **mediation**. Such an objective will affect choice of content and learning tasks, decisions about how progression will be structured, choice and selection of types of text, etc.

A fourth type may concern itself with learners operating successfully in a given **domain** (see chapter 4.1.1), a feature of, for example, teaching and learning materials which often make such objectives explicit. Since formulating this type of objective has consequences for teaching and learning trainees need to understand what is involved.

For objectives to be met learners need to develop appropriate **strategies**. Teachers and trainees may benefit from a discussion and exemplification of strategies and how these can be developed and improved to make learning more efficient and effective.

Tasks can be considered as objectives 'to be achieved in relation to a given domain'. To formulate objectives in terms of tasks has the advantage of 'identifying in practical terms what the expected results are.' Trainees and teachers will be quick to appreciate the advantages of this formulation when learners' short term motivation may be one of their pedagogical concerns.

Teacher-trainers and teachers may wish to consider the four types of objectives outlined in 6.1.4. Discussion with trainees and teaching colleagues can focus on how such definitions illustrate the 'possible diversity of learning aims and the diversity to be found in the provision of teaching.' The example of the waiter in the restaurant (6.1.4.2) may be a useful starting point to illustrate:

- a focus on a particular domain
- oral interaction
- communicative competence with a focus on:
  - certain lexical fields
  - certain sociolinguistic norms
  - certain aspects of *savoir-être*.

Discussion with trainees or colleagues might develop other examples through which they can illustrate their understanding of different kinds of objectives and how to formulate these in a systematic and informed way.

6.2 The processes of language learning

CEF aims to be comprehensive, open, dynamic and non-dogmatic. For that reason it cannot take up a position on one side or another of current theoretical disputes on the nature of language acquisition and its relation to language learning, nor does it embody a particular approach to language teaching. Research itself does not provide a consensus view on how learners learn. Nevertheless, there are theories, and practice is based on these. For the benefit of trainees there is a need for training programmes to be explicit about the theoretical basis on which their practical procedures are founded; without such transparency, trainees will be unable to form their own judgements in a sound and principled way. It is important, therefore, that, within a particular training programme, the terms 'language acquisition' and 'language learning' are defined to avoid ambiguity and misinterpretation.

6.2.2 How do learners learn?

Given differing views on how learners learn, and the fact that learners do not always learn what teachers teach, it is important that teachers and trainees respond to learners' needs for 'substantial contextualised and intelligible language input as well as opportunities to use the language interactively'. They need also to recognise in their planning that 'learning is facilitated, especially under artificial classroom conditions by a combination of conscious learning and sufficient practice to reduce or eliminate the conscious attention paid to low-level physical skills of speaking and writing as well as to morphological and syntactic accuracy, thus freeing the mind for higher level strategies of communication.'

Readers may wish to consider how can this best be achieved within a training/teaching programme, what kinds of opportunities can be created in and out of classrooms, and what exactly is meant by low-level physical skills…?

6.3 Some methodological options for modern language learning and teaching

The Council of Europe has for many years 'promoted an approach based on the communicative needs of learners and the use of materials and methods which will enable learners to satisfy these needs.' However, CEF does not promote one particular language teaching methodology; it is for each user – here teachers and teacher-trainers – to determine their own methodology and objectives.

6.3.1 General approaches

Teachers are generally asked to provide exposure to authentic use of language, use textbooks, devise specially constructed tasks and course materials, produce and administer tests, make decisions about classroom activities and understand their learners' learning processes.

It may be helpful if, before such practices are considered, they decide how they are expecting their learners to learn a second or foreign language.

CEF here provides a useful checklist.

Are the learners for whom you are responsible expected to learn a foreign language by:

a) direct exposure to authentic use of L2;
b) direct exposure to selected texts (oral or written);
c) direct participation in authentic communicative interaction;
d) direct participation in specially devised tasks in L2;
e) self study;
f) presentation, explanation, drill and exploitation with some use of L1;
g) presentation, explanation, drill and exploitation with exclusive use of L2;
h) some of the above with a reduction in the use of L1 and increasing self study;
i) combining the above with group and individual planning, negotiation according to individual needs, teacher support, etc.

The list does not do justice to that shown in 6.4.1. It does, however, begin to ask important questions, the responses to which will determine pedagogic practices.

In general, learners may be expected to learn/acquire an L2 by:

a) direct exposure to authentic use of language in L2;
b) direct exposure to specially selected spoken utterances and texts;
c) exposure to content and participation in activities negotiated according to individual needs.

Readers may wish to consider how to help trainees or how they, as teachers:

1. prepare a range of classroom activities which reflect:

   – authentic uses of language and those which are specially selected spoken utterances and written texts in L2.

2. select, adapt, compose, order and present texts, and according to what principles?

3. are flexible in lesson planning to adjust to pupil responses?

4. identify and analyse learning problems as encountered by individuals, and develop learning strategies to suit individuals?

Some classroom activities, as has been said, may be a combination of presentations, explanations, (drill) exercises and exploitation activities, all conducted in **L2** only, and some a similar combination of activities, but with **L1** as the language of classroom management, explanation, etc.

Do you, as teacher or as teacher-trainer, consider:

1. what is more appropriately done in L1/L2?
2. how to formulate instructions, explanations, rubrics and to use classroom language effectively in L2?

6.4.2 Role of teachers, learners and media

Teachers and learners each have roles and responsibilities in the learning process. Teachers make decisions about how class time is spent. They are also a role model for learners since their actions reflect their attitudes and beliefs. Learners are expected to behave in certain ways; sometimes they may work collaboratively with the teacher, sometimes with their peers, sometimes independently. Instructional media are used in different ways all of which are the result of decisions even if these involve not using certain resources.

Does your planning as a teacher, or your training programme, clarify the different roles a teacher assumes when engaging learners in different kinds of activity? Is what is expected of the learners made clear to them? What use is made of instructional media and for what purposes?

6.4.3 The use of texts

Spoken and written texts can take a number of forms; they can be authentic or specially composed for use in language teaching. They can also be used in a variety of ways. Learners can also produce texts as well as process them.

Have you or your trainees explicit criteria to:

1. select different types of texts?
2. analyse textbooks and materials?
3. adapt or compose your own texts?
4. say how learners are to respond to a range of text types, and develop different listening and reading styles?
5. be flexible in lesson planning to adjust to pupil responses?

6.4.4 Learning from tasks and activities

Decisions have to be made about how learners are expected to learn from tasks and activities. Teachers decide whether simple participation is sufficient or whether some involvement in pre-planning or post-task analysis and evaluation is helpful or whether explicit awareness-raising with reference to 'goals, the nature and structure of tasks, requirements of participant roles, etc.' is necessary. Similarly, to use communicative strategies learners may need explicit help. Teachers may choose tasks to facilitate the operation of certain strategies, or employ awareness-raising techniques or require learners to follow explicit strategic procedures.

Do you consider the place of activities, tasks and strategies in the language teaching/learning programme?

6.4.6 General competences

General competences (see chapter 5.1) include knowledge of the world, sociocultural knowledge and intercultural skills, existential competence, and study skills. These need to be outlined in order that their development in foreign language learning, and learning in other parts of the curriculum are co-ordinated. Also, an approach to their development needs to be made explicit.

Does your training/teaching programme consider ways to develop general competences of learners?

Teachers:
How do you provide for the further development of relevant general competences?

Teacher-trainers:
Does your programme provide for the further development of the relevant general competences of the trainees? In what respects is this likely to be needed?

6.4.6.5 Study skills and learning to learn

Promoting the development of pupils/students as responsible independent language learners is perhaps one of the most fundamental areas within a teaching programme. This is also true within a training programme. Developing the trainees' own ability for learning to learn and that of their learners can be considered in tandem. A range of methodological options and awareness raising as well as the transfer of responsibility can be integrated into an experiential approach developed by both teachers and by trainees towards their own learning. Such approaches would need to be documented and evaluated so that comparisons are made, and most effective models developed.

How do you help promote learners' independent language learning?

Teacher-trainers:
How do you help trainees develop their own independent language learning? Do you use an experience-based approach within your training programme?

6.4.6.5 Autonomous learning

Autonomous learning must be the ultimate goal of teaching.

Teacher-trainers:
Does your training programme develop the trainees' understanding of how to develop learners' ability in learning to learn, proactively, rather than reactively by:

1. developing an awareness of options available?
2. helping learners articulate the choices they make?

You may wish to consider which methods and techniques you would use to help trainees become aware of, and further develop, their own strategies before they develop a similar awareness in the learners they teach.

Teachers:
How do you develop learners' ability in learning to learn?

6.4.7 Linguistic competences

Developing linguistic competences is the essence of language learning. This will focus on different aspects:

6.4.7.1 Learning vocabulary

Does your training/teaching programme develop learners' strategies for learning vocabulary items? Is it based on any kind of classroom research?

6.4.7.4 Grammatical competence

Attention must be given in training programmes and in teaching, especially when planning lessons, to what is the high 'communicative yield' of (some) grammatical categories. Trainees and teachers have to make decisions about:

1. which elements of grammar they, as teachers, might wish to concentrate on and which they should emphasise less;

2. the relation between grammatical progression and the development of communicative competence; for instance, delaying the ability of learners of German to talk about the past until the formal complexity of strong verbs is ready to be taught;

3. the part contrastive factors might take in a learning programme – for example, hindrances for English speakers in learning German;

4. what constitutes (language learning) difficulty; whether some language/grammatical features are inherently more difficult than others; and what is basic;

5. whether learners may be expected/required to develop their grammatical competence inductively or deductively;

6. which formal exercises (6.4.7.8) are to be used.

Does your training/teaching programme:
1. consider how learners' grammatical competence can be facilitated? 2. discuss and evaluate the role of contrastive grammar? 3. consider the question of grammatical terminology and what might constitute a common core for modern language teachers and learners?

6.4.7.9 Pronunciation

Does your training/teaching programme:
1. evaluate ways of helping learners develop their ability to pronounce the target language? 2. include ear-training and phonetic drilling? 3. include explicit training for learners of different ages? Is some training more effective in early years, or when learners are older?

6.4.7.10 Orthography

Does your training/teaching programme investigate and exemplify:
1. how learners may be helped to handle the writing system of (named) languages including cursive handwriting? 2. problems for learners in the orthography of (named) languages? 3. how memorisation can be developed?

6.4.8 Sociolinguistic competence

Training and teaching programmes might include texts, selected or constructed, to show socio-linguistic contrasts between the society of origin and the target society.

Training programmes can also focus on and discuss:

1. examples of marking and subsequent analyses;

2. different approaches to the explicit teaching of socio-cultural components.

Teachers and teacher-trainers:

Do you agree that trainees would benefit from such discussion or should this be left until after pre-service training?

6.4.9 Pragmatic competences

Teacher-trainers:
Do you agree that, in a training programme, it is helpful to ask trainees to analyse the complexity of discourse structure so that they can help learners develop pragmatic competences?

Teachers:
Do you, as practising teachers, help learners develop pragmatic competences?

6.5 Errors and mistakes

You may wish to consider whether a discussion of attitudes to, and action in response to, learner errors (6.5.1 and 6.5.2) should form part of a training programme (6.5.3).

Teachers:
What is your attitude and response to learner errors?

Part 7 -Tasks and their role in language teaching

7.1 Task Description

CEF makes a significant distinction between three categories of **task** in which language learners engage:

1. **real-life, target** or **rehearsal tasks**, chosen on the basis of learners' needs outside the classroom, or learning environment.
2. **communicative, pedagogic tasks**, which have their basis in the social and interactive nature and immediacy of the classroom, where learners engage in a willing suspension of disbelief and accept the use of the target language. Such communicative pedagogic tasks have identifiable outcomes.
3. **pre-communicative pedagogic tasks**, which are exercises focusing specifically on decontextualised practice of forms.

Does your training/teaching programme attempt to define categories of tasks?

Readers may wish to consider:

1. how an understanding of the nature and function of tasks helps when planning lessons, learning sequences and/or self-access packages;
2. how teachers and trainees can make the purposes of different categories of task clear to their learners;
3. how they can achieve an effective balance between fluency/accuracy and content/form.

7.2 Task performance: competences, task, conditions and constraints, and strategies

Learners have a variety of competences, and are confronted with different task-related conditions and constraints.

Does your training/teaching programme explore ways to:

1. activate appropriate skills and/or knowledge in learners, so that the latter are more likely to complete tasks successfully?
2. see how to make comprehension, interaction and production tasks easier or more difficult?
3. develop an awareness in learners of different strategies which may help them in the performance of different tasks?

7.3 Task difficulty

The difficulty of a task is a complex relationship between learner competences and characteristics, the conditions under which tasks are carried out and the nature of the tasks themselves. Difficulty, therefore, cannot be predicted with certainty.

Teacher-trainers:
Do your training programmes help trainees:

1. understand the complexity of task difficulty?
2. consider ways of helping learners to complete tasks successfully, using a carefully planned preparatory phase?
3. developing criteria, so that they can modify the level of task difficulty?
4. plan for differentiated tasks, which take into account:

i) **cognitive characteristics** of learners:

(a) type of task, theme, type of text, necessary background knowledge, etc. and the extent to which the learner is familiar with these
(b) learners' skills: organisational, interpersonal, intercultural, etc.
(c) learner's ability to operate with the concrete or abstract, etc.

ii) **affective characteristics** of learners by devising tasks which consider a learner's self esteem, involvement, motivation, physical or emotional state, and attitudes

iii) **linguistic** demands, language complexity, text types, presentation, length of text, relevance to learner, type of response required

iv) the presence or absence of **support**: availability of language assistance, contextual features, task rehearsal, reference works, relevant models, and assistance from others

v) **time** available

vi) the nature of the task **goal**: task outcomes which have to be negotiated, in contrast to those which do not

vii) the presence or absence of the **predictable** and/or the unexpected

viii) **physical conditions**: background noise, studio recordings, and natural settings

ix) the nature of **participants**: cooperative, sympathetic interlocutors, varying speeds of speech, and coherence

x) **task support**: the presence/absence of instructions, which are uncomplicated, sufficient, complex, tasks which are to be done with others or alone

xi) **text characteristics** - linguistic complexity, text type, discourse structure, physical presentation, length, relevance to the learner

xii) **type of response required**

Teachers:
How much of the above is reflected in your teaching programme?

Part 8 - Linguistic diversification and the curriculum

This chapter is concerned with the implications of linguistic diversification for curriculum design and considers such issues as: multilingualism and multiculturalism; differentiated learning objectives; principles of curriculum design; curricular scenarios; life-long language learning; modularity and partial competences.

Curricula seek to develop multilingual and multicultural competences. Such competences may vary between languages learned and may, quite legitimately, focus more on developing cultural competences in one language and predominantly linguistic competences in another. Curriculum design implies choices between kinds and levels of learning objectives within differing contexts of teaching.

Teacher-trainers:
Does your training programme consider the aims and objectives of the curriculum and its design? Do you believe such discussion is an important element in pre-service education or does it belong only in an in-service programme? If in both, which issues should already be discussed pre-service?

8.3.2 Differentiated curriculum scenarios

The two examples shown in CEF relate to primary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school.

Teacher-trainers:
Does your training programme consider curriculum design? Does it discuss the interrelationship within your national system between primary and secondary phases? Should your trainees training for primary school have any knowledge and/or experience of secondary school and vice versa?

Teachers:
Does your curriculum or curriculum planning take account of the interrelationship within your national system between primary and secondary phases? Which elements work to your advantage and/or which could be developed further in your particular phase?

8.4 Assessment and school, out-of-school and post-school learning

CEF believes it is 'useful to think of the school curriculum as part of a much broader curriculum' and that it should give learners 'an initial differentiated plurilingual and pluricultural repertoire (…) and a better awareness of, knowledge of and confidence in their competences and capacities. ..'. The development of ELP is a way in which an individual's language profile and language journey can be officially recognised.

Does your training/teaching programme refer to and/or use ELP? Do you or your trainees experiment with recording any learners' language experience in a Portfolio of this kind for official recognition?

Part 9 – Assessment

Chapter 9 discusses the various purposes of assessment and corresponding assessment types, in light of the need to reconcile the competing criteria of comprehensiveness, precision and operational feasibility.

Assessment in this chapter of CEF is used in the sense of 'the assessment of the proficiency of the language user'. It discusses the concepts of validity and reliability and accuracy of decisions (9.1), adding a helpful distinction between what is assessed, how performance is interpreted and how comparisons can be made. There is no assumption that teacher assessment is inferior to public examinations; both can be related to the Common Reference Levels within CEF.

9.2.2 The criteria for the attainment of a learning objective

In considering assessment it is useful to ask what purpose it is to serve. If a teacher or a learner wants or requires a detailed picture of the learner's language ability built up during a course of instruction, then of relevance are the descriptors of communicative activities (9.2.2.1) illustrated in chapter 4. If, on the other hand, a diagnostic profile of proficiency is required, descriptors are needed which serve 'as a shared frame of reference among the group of assessors concerned'; of use in this instance will be the descriptors of aspects of proficiency related to particular competences (9.2.2.2) detailed in chapter 5.

9.3 Types of assessment

Practical systems of assessment take a number of different forms. CEF lists thirteen types:

1. achievement – proficiency
2. norm referencing (NR) – criterion referencing (CR)
3. mastery learning CR – continuum CR
4. continuous assessment – fixed point assessment
5. formative – summative
6. direct – indirect
7. performance – knowledge
8. subjective – objective
9. rating on a scale – rating on a checklist
10. impression – guided judgement
11. holistic – analytic
12. series – category
13. assessment by others – self assessment

Teacher-trainers:
Given the system and context for which your training programme is designed, you may wish to consider:

1. which types of assessment are relevant to the needs of learners within your particular context or system;
2. how to help trainees become familiar with these types of assessment;
3. how to create opportunities for trainees to put relevant types of assessment into practice, explore a range of techniques, and evaluate, for each, 'backwash' effects on teaching.

You may also wish to investigate with trainees more generally:

4. how communicative performance can be assessed as well as linguistic knowledge;
5. to what extent assessment can be used as a stimulus to learning and to teaching;
6. how to use different assessment techniques and how to interpret results;
7. how and when to use continuous assessment//fixed point assessment, and for what reasons;
8. how to involve learners in assessment and how to help them assess their own proficiency and learning.

Teachers:
Which of the questions above are important for you?

9.4 Assessment and the use of scales of language proficiency

CEF illustrates, in its appendices, "scales for tasks which learners can do. Such scales in communicative activities, for example, can be used to give a profile of target attainment for the person, group or module concerned". An obvious use for scales of descriptors is to help make subjective rating of particular performances more reliable.

Teacher-trainers:
Does your training programme consider and exemplify scales for communicative activities? Is there a coherent frame of reference in your system with which trainees need to be familiar? Do your trainees have an opportunity to use scales of descriptors and to evaluate how easy/difficult they are to apply? Which of the scales in the appendix to CEF would your trainees be able to use?

Does your training programme consider different ways of creating scales, and the advantages/disadvantages of adopting existing scales or developing individual systems?

Does your training programme help trainees consider and measure learners' progression?

Teachers:
Do you use scales for communicative activities? How easy/how difficult are they to apply? Which of the scales in the appendix to CEF are you able to use?

Have you considered different ways of creating scales, and the advantages/disadvantages of adopting existing scales or developing individual systems?

Do you consider and measure learners' progression?

WORKSHEETS:

Worksheet 1a – How you use your own language

In this table, the first column lists seven different aspects of communication. Column 2 gives an example of the seven aspects involved in one communicative act, – explaining to the head teacher about a broken window. Fill in each of the other columns for different contexts. Some cells have been filled in to restrict your choice! Then, for each column indicate what kinds of changes in language would be involved.

	Context 1	**Context 2**	**Context 3**	**Context 4**
Where?	School			
Your role?	Pupil		Customer	
Interlocutor? (the person you are talking to)	Head teacher			
Doing what?	Explaining	Asking permission		
About what?	Breakage			
Involvement in communication?	Interactive			Mediating (for instance, passing notes)
Medium?	Spoken			
Changes in language				
	Context 1	**Context 2**	**Context 3**	**Context 4**

Worksheet 1b – How you use your new language

This worksheet is essentially similar to Worksheet 1. In Columns 2 and 3 you fill in the different aspects involved in two communicative acts that you feel you are able to perform in your new language.
Fill in each of the columns for different contexts. Then, for each column indicate: (i) what you can do, and (ii) what kinds of problems you feel you would have.

	Context 1	**Context 2**
Where?		
Your role?		
Interlocutor?		
Doing what?		
About what?		
Involvement in communication?		
Medium?		
What you can do with reasonable ease		
	Context 1	**Context 2**
Problems you think you will have with language		
	Context 1	**Context 2**
How you would get around the problem right now		
	Context 1	**Context 2**

Worksheet 1c – How you get help in your new language and how you talk about language

This worksheet is again similar to Worksheet 1. This time both columns are filled in for you. For each column indicate: (i) how much you can already do in the new language, and (ii) what you feel you need to learn.		
	Context 1	**Context 2**
Where?	Classroom	Classroom
Your role?	Learner	Learner
Interlocutor?	Teacher (or other learner)	Teacher (or other learner)
Doing what?	**Asking for help** (such as asking what something means)	**Discussing language**
About what?	Your use of language	Forms of language (sentences, nouns and verbs, etc.)
Involvement in communication?	Interactive	Interactive
Medium?	Spoken (or written)	Spoken (or written)
What you can do with reasonable ease		
	Context 1	**Context 2**
What you would need to learn		
	Context 1	**Context 2**
How you I would get around the problem right now		
	Context 1	**Context 2**

Worksheet 2a

Part 1: Your skill of using your general knowledge when reading

Take a look at a newspaper or magazine that you have bought recently.
- Pick an item that you have not yet read, but one you know a bit about.
- Write down what you know about the subject matter in advance.
- Try to create a mind-map for what one article is about.
- Read the article and see if you were right.

Part 2: Your skill of using your knowledge when reading in another language

In the language you are learning find a short text about a topic with which you are familiar. This may be a newspaper or Internet text about an event or person of international importance, or a fairy tale, or even a religious text or prayer.
- Highlight or underline any words you already know, including names of places or people.
- Draw a mind-map or schema of what the text is about.
- Using the words you know and the schema you have drawn, try to work out the meaning of any other words in the text.
- Look at the way the words are combined. Do you notice any patterns? Can you work out rules?

You should try to develop this strategy of making the most of what you already have in dealing with texts in another language.

Worksheet 2b: Your knowledge of how to organise your language

Imagine you have to explain a minor disaster (such as breaking a window) to a person in authority (such as a school principal).

With a friend,

- write out the actual dialogue you have with the principal in that context;

- make the necessary changes for leaving the message on an answering machine;

- rewrite the message as a fax.

Worksheet 2c1: Looking at your specific knowledge of your own society

List the following for your country:
- the means of identification you carry around with you (if any);
- what racial and religious groups are to be found in your country;
- what time meals are taken;
- what kind of present is acceptable when you are asked to dinner.

These may be banal and ordinary things for you, but when you see the problems foreigners have with them you begin to realize that they can be quite important. The same will hold for geographical, historical and political information.

Worksheet 2c2: Looking at your knowledge of the society of your new language

Try writing out, in the language you are learning, the same dialogue as in Worksheet 2b – explaining a minor disaster (such as breaking a window) to a person in authority (such as a school principal). Then answer the following questions:

- Did you have any problems in the area of appropriateness of language (for example, in greeting the principal, in apologizing, etc.)?
- If you had to leave a phone message instead, would you know how to begin and end it?
- If you had to send a fax or email, would you know what changes to make?
- Do you know what would be the appropriate attitude of a pupil of your age towards a school principal in the community whose language you are learning?
- How would you go about learning these things?

Worksheet 2d: Looking at your knowledge of the sounds of your language

Try the following task to find out more about the sounds of your own language.

- List the combinations of consonants that can start words in your language. What pattern is there in these combinations (for instance, in English, *cl, cr, gl, gr, pl, pr, bl, br, tr, dr* all have the letters *l* or *r* after the first consonant, which is itself of a certain type).
- List any combinations of consonants that cannot start words in your language (such as *pf* in English).
- What is the largest number of consonants that can be found at the beginning of a word in your language? (Three in English, provided the first one is *s*).
- Are there are any consonants, or combinations of consonants, in your language that certain foreigners have difficulty with? (such as *th* in English)? Why do you think this is?
- Are there are any vowel sounds in your language that certain foreigners have difficulty with?
- Do foreigners have problems with stress, rhythm, intonation, etc., in your language?

Worksheet 3a: Looking at how words are stored in your memory

See for yourself how you store words in your native language.

In the space of sixty seconds for each set below, count all the words you can think of that:

- belong to the meaning group "**food**";
- are associated in your mind with *chair*, (or *chaise* in French);
- begin with the sound ***pl****…;*
- have the rhythm/stress pattern of *bicycle*, (or *télévision* in French).

Were there any words that occurred in more than one set?Compare your results with those of others in your group. Were the numbers of words in each set roughly equivalent? Were there similarities of choice?

Now do the same activity for the language you are learning.

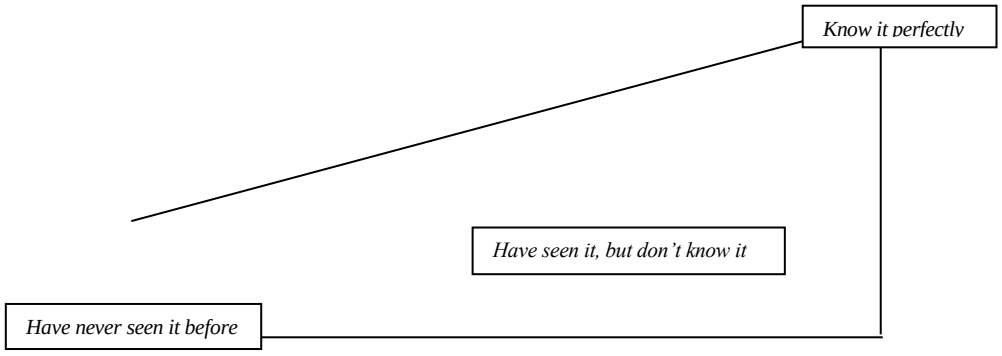
Worksheet 3b: Looking at the levels of your knowledge of words

Try to classify your knowledge of the following words (taken from a linguistics book):

acoustic, articulatory, proposition, complement, words, context

Arrange them in a graph, those you know least well at bottom left, those you know best at top right.

Then do a similar graph for words in your new language



Worksheet 3c: Looking at your knowledge of different aspects of word meaning

- Take the word *soft* in English, or *doux* in French.
- Combine it with as many words as you can. (Two examples: *a soft chair, un temps doux.*)
- What is the opposite of *soft* or *doux* in each case?
- What is common to the meanings of *soft* or *doux* in the combinations you have thought of?
- If you ask someone in English: "Is the ice-cream soft yet?" what are you implying?

What kinds of knowledge did you need to be able to do this task?

Worksheet 3d: Looking at your knowledge of the grammar of your own language

For the sentence: *The visiting student came to school this morning on a motorbike,* or *Mon frère a acheté un nouveau vélo*

- Without changing the sense, try putting the words in a different order.
- Create as many sentences as you can with any or all of the words in the sentence, and no others. (Obviously the sense will be different!)
- Put the words in an order that is not allowable in English, or French, as appropriate.
- Then try to make up a rule for word order in the language.
- Make a series of question based on this sentence. What kinds of changes did you have to make in order to create the questions?
- Then try to write out the rule for making a question.
- How many different forms can you think of for the verb *walk* or *acheter*?
- Can you think of any other verbs that have forms similar to *walk* or *acheter*?

Worksheet 4: Looking at the skills involved in reading and writing

The International Phonetic Alphabet is a set of symbols designed to represent sounds as they actually occur in spoken language.

Below is a sentence in English with its phonetic equivalent.

Reading the guide is sheer drudgery and a waste of thinking time.

[ridiŋ ðə gild iz ʃiːə drʌʤri ʌnd ə weist əv θiŋiŋ taim]

- With this information write out the English words the phonetic symbols stand for:

θəuzənd _____ ritʃ_____læŋgwiʤ_____ brʌðə _____

- List the problems you had in deciphering these words.
- Now try **writing** the following words in phonetic script:
- *Shaving* _____ *with* _____ *this* _____
- How was writing in phonetic script different for you?

In writing or reading in normal script, you generally use skills that are second nature to you.

Doing this task was like having these skills work in slow motion.

Worksheet 4a: Looking at the kinds of texts that you have produced today

List as many as you can of the different texts that you have processed so far today. Then try to group them according to

- whether they were spoken, written, signed or touched;
- where they occurred;
- who else was involved in producing and/or receiving them;
- what physical medium was used;
- what their purpose was.

Worksheet 4b: Looking at the texts involved in taking public transport from A to B

- Make a list of **all** the texts that are involved in using public transport in a city in your country. Where possible collect real samples.
- With a group of friends, write out each of these texts in full.
- Make a list of the potential sources of difficulty that these texts might cause for someone who does not know your language very well.
- For each potential source of difficulty, list the added tasks the visitor may have to perform in order to solve the problem.
- For each of these added tasks, imagine the text that the visitor must produce and/or receive.

Worksheet 4c: Looking at your ability to process texts in the new language

- Choose **three** common tasks you perform in the real world every day.
- Break each one down into its different bits.
- List the texts that have to be processed for each subtask.
- Of the three tasks, which one would you be able (a) to perform most successfully in the new language, and (b) to perform least successfully. Evaluate your ability to use correct and appropriate language for each of the tasks chosen.

Worksheet 5a: Looking at the sounds, words and grammar of your new language

Try the following task for the language you are learning.

Get a native (or a fluent non-native) speaker of the language you are learning to record an interview with you in which you talk a bit about yourself, and tell a story. Transcribe five minutes of the interview.

- Listen to yourself, and note the sounds that caused you problems.
- List the types of words that caused you problems.
- Look at the transcript. Were there rules you followed for the different verb forms you used?
- What were the main things you succeeded in doing in the interview?

Worksheet 5b: Looking at your language needs, course book, and syllabus

- Make a table for your new language, similar to the one in Worksheet 1, but larger, on which you specify the places where you hope to be able to use the new language, who you will be communicating with and in what role, what you will be doing through the communication, what you will be communicating about, what kinds of involvement you will have in the communication and in what media.
- Create a similar table for your language learning course book or other materials. Try to work out on what principles the materials are organized, using, where possible, the categories of language use given in CEF.
- Finally, create a similar table for the language syllabus you have to follow.
- Compare the three tables. How closely do they correspond?

Worksheet 5c: Reflecting on your learning of a new language

Try the following activities, which involve reflection on the learning process as it affects you.

- Examine your use of the foreign language over a period of time.
- Does it show any of the features of the type listed in Unit 3 above for beginner or intermediate learners? Is your use of verbs, for example, consistent, or do you find that it varies all the time? Are there any contexts in which it varies more than others? Why would this be so?
- Keep a record over a period of time of the strategies you use for learning. Which approach do you prefer, reading and listening to large amounts of the language, or studying a textbook or grammar and learning the system in a formal way? Do you use a mixture of both approaches?
- Examine how dependent you are on textbooks and teachers for guidance in your learning. Are there any decisions you consistently make on your own initiative, because you know that certain things work or do not work for you?
- How important for you are tests and examinations?
- What motivates you to continue learning the new language?
    - Your interest in the language and the people who speak it?
    - Your interest in languages generally?
    - Your success to date in learning languages?
    - The enthusiasm of your teacher, parents, friends?

SECTION III

FOR THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE PLANNING, ORGANISATION, DELIVERY AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Introduction

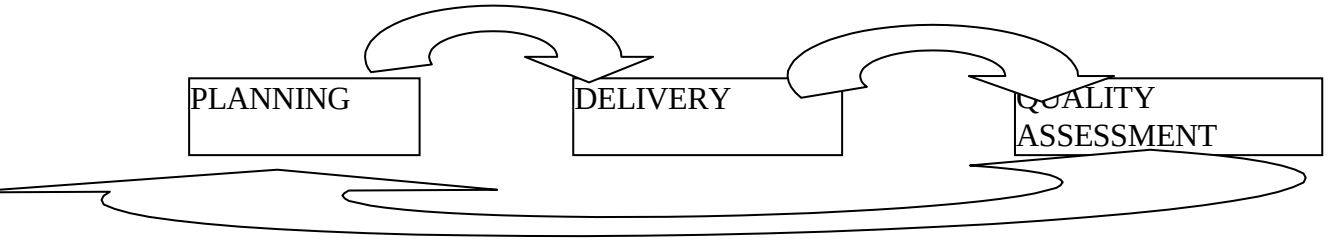
This section is intended for those responsible in different ways for the management of language education. Although most of those involved in this either are or have been directly involved in teaching, this chapter deals with issues which need to be addressed outside the classroom. These include decisions concerning planning – especially with regard to curriculum design at national, regional and institutional levels; concerning the delivery and organisation of language learning activities, and concerning the processes and procedures of quality assurance and quality control. It is hoped, therefore, that it will be relevant and useful to members of curriculum reform committees, academic managers in schools, inspectors and others involved in the administration of language education, heads of language departments, and teachers who wish to gain a fuller understanding of the context in which their teaching takes place and of the considerations which influence the decisions which affect their work.

This guide draws on four previous works in the series of user guides to the CEF:

- *Educational Policy Decision Makers*, by André Baeyen & Rune Bergentoft
- *Curriculum Developers*, by Gé Stoks
- *Adult Educational Providers*, by Tony Fitzpatrick & Mike Makosch
- *Quality Assurance and Quality Control*, by Peter Brown & Frank Heyworth

The issues described in these user guides are presented here as an educational and management process which is, or should be, coherent. Decisions on national curricula are taken in a broad context of political and educational aims.

Decisions on regional, institutional or local curricula are mainly influenced by questions concerning the practicalities of delivery and organisation, such as teachability and learnability, the availability of suitably trained educators and appropriate resources, and the optimal use of the time devoted to language learning. Similarly, planning decisions need to take account of measures taken to assure and assess quality – are the aims being achieved? Are the needs and wishes of the client constituencies – learners, parents, employers, etc. – being met? The concerns could be seen as linear: before – the planning process and curriculum design; during – issues of organisation and delivery; and after – the assessment of the outcomes and the control of quality. This, in fact, is the order in which they are treated in the different sections of this guide, but only for the sake of convenience. The different elements form part of a continuous process in which a feedback loop should, for example, permit the results of quality assessment procedures to influence the planning, design and delivery of language teaching and the decisions and curriculum objectives to determine the criteria applied in quality assurance processes.



The guide is organised in three sections and each section consists of two parts.

section 1	curriculum design & revision	general issues references to relevant CEF-sections
section 2	organisation of language learning	general issues references to relevant CEF-sections
section 3	quality assurance & control	general issues references to relevant CEF-sections
There are worksheets at the end of each section		

The first section is a description of the main principles and issues involved in, respectively, curriculum design and revision, mainly focused at the school sector.

In the second section the delivery and organisation of language learning activities will be considered, but in a broader perspective, also taking into account other language learning contexts such as private language institutions.
Section three deals with aspects of quality assessment and control of language education.

The second part of each section will provide references and pointers to parts of CEF particularly relevant to the principles and issues described in section one. This does not imply that the whole of CEF is not of relevance, but attempts rather to illustrate the use of the guide to illuminate particular principles and contribute to informed consideration of the options available and the decisions to be taken.

In each section the first part will provide a general orientation and can be read without constant reference to CEF. In the second part the reader is referred to the relevant CEF sections. In addition to the issues raised at the end of the sections in CEF, a number of other questions pertinent to the planning, organisation, delivery and quality assessment of language education will be provided for reflection.

At the end, a number of worksheets have been included. They expand on the questions for reflection contained in CEF and the original user guides. The worksheets provide a framework for structured consideration of the issues and principles involved and suggestions for ways in which they might be applied to the users' professional environment. They are designed to be used by groups in in-service training activities, or as part of a planning process, for instance when a curriculum reform committee starts its work but can, of course, also serve as a basis for individual reflection.

The guide is intended to complement the contents of CEF and to introduce topics which are either not included or only cursorily dealt with in that text.

CHAPTER 5 – CURRICULUM DESIGN AND REVISION FOR THE SCHOOL SECTOR

By Gé Stoks

Part 1 – Introduction

This chapter consists of three main parts:

In section 1, the main issues related to curriculum design, revision and updating will be discussed. It is a discussion of the major issues that have to be addressed by ministries, curriculum reform committees, or other bodies entrusted with the task of reviewing or updating curricula for modern languages for the school system. The definition of the term curriculum used in this guide is that of R. Walker and does not only include the written document but also the wider perspectives of educational processes: 'The curriculum refers to the *content* and *purpose* of an educational program together with their *organization*' (Walker 1990).

Curriculum development seldom starts from scratch. Even when major reforms in the education system are to be implemented, there is always a tradition and people responsible for the curriculum design will take the previous versions and the traditions into account. It is, therefore, perhaps, more appropriate to use the terms revision and updating of curricula. In addition to these general issues, we will also briefly examine the role and function of curricula for modern languages. Although this section is meant for general orientation, occasional reference will be made to relevant sections of CEF. This section is meant to give the reader a general introduction which can be read without constantly referring to CEF.

In section 2.1 the issues addressed in section 1 will be dealt with in more detail. Now the reader is invited to consult the sections of CEF mentioned and to consider them. A few questions, in addition to the ones posed at the end of the section of CEF, will guide the reader in his/her reflections.

Section 3 contains a number of worksheets or assignments. They are meant to be used either for individual reflection or in group activities, for instance, when a committee starts work on a curriculum revision. They are meant to raise awareness, to show the value that using CEF will add to the curriculum work and give prospective users a hands-on experience with CEF.

1. The main issues and principles involved in curriculum design, revision and updating

- *General trends*

In a society that is changing at an ever-increasing pace, educational authorities are faced with the need to update the educational provisions to prepare young people for their future roles in society. These developments also make it necessary for curricula for schools to be regularly adapted to the changing needs of society. The area of modern languages is not unaffected by these developments. From the many changes we have witnessed over the past decades, the following are of particular relevance to the planning and design of curricula for modern languages:

- *The changing population in schools*

In many countries, the school population has changed over the past forty years from a relatively ethnically homogeneous school population into a highly diversified multilingual population. This is due to such factors as migration as a result of family reunification, the arrival of large numbers of refugees, and the internationalisation of the world of work. Many schools are now faced with the enormous challenge of providing education to children with highly diverse language backgrounds and language learning preferences. This has already led to a reconsideration of the L1 curriculum, since the children no longer have the same mother tongue, but it also makes a reconsideration of the languages on offer in the school curriculum necessary. Whilst taking into account the plurilingual backgrounds, and the wish to further develop this plurilingualism, a coherent and co-ordinated approach is needed. CEF can give guidance when these issues are addressed in a curriculum reform committee, or when these principles, once they have been accepted, are implemented.

- *International mobility*

Closely related to the previous issue is the growing awareness that in every sector of life, there is a need for modern language skills. The globalisation of the economy will entail that more and more people will work in an international environment in which language skills are of vital importance. In the New Member States of the Council of Europe, in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, much effort and energy has already been given to the reform of curricula for modern languages, from language learning strongly dominated by Russian to a more diversified approach to learning modern languages. But also in the so-called old Member States, languages have been high on the political agenda.

Many countries have taken action to promote the learning of modern languages. CEF may offer support and guidance concerning matters such as how to cater for the new needs of society and individual learners, how to create a transparent system of language qualifications, and how to create space in the curriculum through partial qualifications, forms of bilingual education or crediting out-of-school language learning experiences.

- *New information and communication technologies*

In the area of information and communication technologies, developments have been breath-taking. Less than ten years ago, the Internet was a communication network mainly used by academics. Now it is used by millions of people. Governments and ministries consider it of vital importance to familiarise students with these new technologies. In addition, these new technologies have opened up enormous possibilities for language learning, through new multimedia courses delivered on CD-Rom, DVD or the Internet, by e-mail, chat boxes and large amounts of data/texts available in almost any language. Many of these new technologies have not yet been fully exploited for the purposes of language learning. The learning of languages in a digital learning environment makes new demands on the teacher, the course designer and the learner. CEF may again offer guidance when these developments are taken into account.

- *Less government interference*

Whereas in some countries we find detailed rules and regulations for schools in a mainly centralised education system, in others, there is the tendency of governments and ministries to step back and give more autonomy to schools. It is felt that a centralised system is no longer equal to the task of centrally organising measures for a school system with very different local

needs and problems. Instead of providing ear-marked budgets for special purposes, schools now tend to get lump-sum funding and are encouraged to make their own decisions. Schools can spend the money in different ways and create specific school profiles, for instance with special emphasis on modern languages, science, the arts or new technologies. This policy affects curriculum development, since it affects the degree of detail with which a national curriculum is described and the relationship between the curriculum at the national level and the curriculum that is elaborated at the regional, local or school level. CEF can offer guidance in that it can help to consider the choices to be made at the different levels.

- *Curricula for modern languages*

This section addresses the curricula drawn up by government controlled or government-funded educational institutions, for example regular schools for primary, secondary and vocational education, children between the ages of 5 and 18, with a special emphasis on the secondary education sector, 10/12 – 18/19.

Curricula for this education sector will generally specify the following components:

- The languages that are offered. Often a distinction is made between first and second, third and even fourth languages. In primary school some countries offer a choice of languages, others prescribe one. In secondary education, English is the dominant foreign language in all countries outside the United Kingdom and Ireland, but most countries offer a wide range of additional languages. Unfortunately, there is often a broad choice in theory, but in practice it is not always easy to teach a less-widely taught language due to the lack of teachers or of a sufficiently large number of students interested in learning such a language. Another issue of language policy is also the position of languages used by minorities in a given country. Are the children who speak that language offered an opportunity to study the language at school and get credits for it? Is the time spent on mother tongue maintenance offered only at the expense of foreign languages? Or is the offer even extended in the sense that children who do not belong to the minority are enabled to learn that language? For example, are Turkish children enabled to choose Turkish, as an alternative for, say, German, where most children in the class would opt for German, or are the provisions extended to the degree that also non-Turkish children can learn Turkish?

  Many countries now also teach the languages of neighbouring countries. New approaches are being developed for teaching neighbouring languages and their position in relation to other languages in the curriculum should be made clear, especially when these are already taught at primary level so as to ensure proper continuity at secondary level.

  Finally, in order to diversify the modern languages curriculum and to promote the learning of several languages, solutions for the time problem are sought by offering partial qualifications and forms of bilingual education. All these issues are addressed in chapter 8 of CEF.

- National curricula usually provide a certain common core and a specification of levels to be attained. CEF can help reconsider the choices made in the past. It is important that one coherent curriculum for all languages taught at school be developed, so that co-ordination between the teachers of languages in a school is encouraged and learners can benefit from the skills acquired in each language class. Chapter 4 of CEF describes the categories to be considered, and points out which categories have lent themselves to scaling. In that

sense, CEF offers a highly coherent framework for describing both general levels as well as a set of calibrated scales for a number of subcategories. The level of specificity remains to be decided in each case. Generally, the school system will need more detailed level descriptions than the six broad levels presented in CEF chapter 3. Otherwise, it would be difficult to differentiate within classes or even show progress within an acceptable period of time. CEF also provides guidance on how to subdivide the levels for school-internal purposes (see example 1 in 3.5).

- A national curriculum usually also contains a kind of rationale, a statement in which the approach chosen, the choices of levels, and categories are accounted for. There being no universally accepted theory of language learning and teaching, CEF yet offers an overview of the currently held views in this matter. Users of CEF are referred to chapter 6 on this issue.

- Since a curriculum for modern languages usually forms part of a larger curriculum for a specific school sector, it is important to describe in what way the modern languages curriculum can contribute to broader educational goals such as the promotion of learner autonomy, the acquisition of social skills and learning to learn. Suggestions are to be found in the section on general competences, CEF section 5.1 and 6.4.6.

- Finally, it is important to be aware of the fact that language learning is not restricted to schools and that it does not end when school ends. Ideally, school should also enable students to make full use of the opportunities to learn languages, in the family, through media, information and communication technologies (ict), exchanges, travel abroad, etc. and to find ways of crediting these learning experiences. ELP is a tool that can play an important role in this. This portfolio is briefly mentioned in chapter 8.

2. Curriculum design, revision and updating: guidelines for the use of CEF

This section looks at the issues presented in section 1 in more detail and refers more directly to the relevant sections in CEF. The main issue will be briefly summarised. The reader is referred to a section of CEF and invited to consider both the questions raised there and to the additional questions included in this guide.

- The choice of languages in the curriculum or how to create opportunities to develop and enhance plurilingualism
- Common reference levels and the school system
- Categories for describing languages in the curriculum
- A rationale for a modern languages curriculum
- Languages and information and communication technologies
- Crediting out-of-school language learning

2.1 Plurilingualism and the curriculum

One of the key principles of the Council of Europe is the promotion of plurilingualism. In addition to their mother tongue, European citizens should be enabled to learn more than one other language. However, this is not always easy in view of the pressures exerted on the curriculum in which many subjects claim time. In chapter 8 of CEF, the notion of plurilingualism is developed. It is argued that learning several languages should not be seen as a process whereby an individual acquires one language after the other or next to the other, but that plurilingualism is a composite competence on which the user may draw.

It is important to bear this in mind when curricula for modern languages are laid down and to design a system in which the teaching of one language should always be seen in conjunction with the teaching of other languages.

It is also worthwhile considering how the linguistic diversity already present in many schools as a result of the multi-ethnic school population can be exploited in the development of plurilingualism.
In addition to the questions raised at the end of chapter 8, readers may wish to consider the following issues:

1. How can the linguistic diversity already present in schools be exploited to develop plurilingual competence?

2. How can teachers be encouraged to look beyond the confines of their own language and to co-operate in developing plurilingual competence?

3. How can teachers be adequately prepared for coping with the linguistic diversity in many schools?

4. What are the consequences of partial competence or bilingual education on the satisfaction teachers experience in their work?

2.2 Common reference levels and the school system

In most curricula, indications of levels to be achieved are included. The problem is that often the level descriptions are not clear to people outside the system. Gradually everybody within the system – teachers, parents, and students – get some idea of the level attained by an average student in, say, upper secondary education, but a given mark means little outside of the system. When a student goes abroad with his school-leaving certificate which mentions "English mark 7", an employer in another country will have no idea of what that 7 means.

As mobility has increased, so has the need for a more transparent system of describing levels. In chapter 3 of CEF, but also in section 2.2, the backgrounds to these developments are described. More technical details and examples of scales are presented in chapter 9 and the appendices.

The common reference levels are internationally recognisable reference points. They can be used in different ways. They can be included in a portfolio and be used for self-assessment. The self-assessment function is important when learners have acquired skills for which they have no formal certification. They can use the reference levels and the descriptors to assess their own proficiency and to see how good their language skills are. However, national authorities can calibrate formal qualifications against them and thus also indicate what level a given mark indicates on the common reference levels. In this way, learners leaving secondary education can describe their competence in an internationally transparent manner. In addition, if learners wish to continue their studies at a private institution, they can also make clear what level they have already attained.

However, the six levels are not always sufficient for the purposes of the school-system, in which finer distinctions are required to show progress over a shorter period of time. CEF gives guidelines on how to make these finer distinctions in sections 3.4 and 3.5.

In addition to the questions raised in chapter 3, the reader may wish to consider the following issues:

1.	To what extent do you think, are the level descriptions used in your context transparent for people outside of the system?
2.	Do you find it desirable for your national qualifications to be linked to the common reference levels?
3.	Do you think the six reference levels are satisfactory or that finer distinctions or subdivisions are needed for your system?

2.3 Categories for describing languages in the curriculum

When a curriculum is drafted, the people in charge are faced with a wide range of options from which they may choose. The categories are selected depending on the function of the document. A document meant to be prescriptive will have different categories than a document that is meant to offer guidance or criteria to be elaborated at the regional or local level.

CEF's main function is to assist developers in making informed choices. By going through the different chapters, they are constantly invited to reflect on a particular aspect of language learning and teaching and to consider the relevance of it for their contexts and purposes. From the experience gained so far, we know that it is not easy to go through it and to have an opinion on each section of CEF. The immense range of options can be daunting, even for experienced practitioners. Besides, the work of curriculum reform committees is almost always carried out under time pressure. An initial draft is usually written and sent out for extensive consultations. Users of CEF might begin by reconsidering the categories in which their present document is written. In addition, they may wish to consider a limited number of questions, rather than asking them all. To begin with, the following selection of issues is suggested:

- does it make sense to include the context of language use in the curriculum?
- is it appropriate to make the finer distinctions made in CEF and distinguish for instance between oral interaction and oral production or to include mediation?
- are the themes as mentioned in documents such as *Threshold Level 1990* relevant for the curriculum to be drafted?
- should text-types be mentioned?
- should tasks be specified?
- what is the role of strategies and should they be specified?

After discussing these issues, readers may wish to go through chapters 4 and 5 and consider the questions at the end of each section. They may then decide whether to include the categories in their curriculum.

2.4 A rationale for a modern languages curriculum

When a curriculum for modern languages is revised or updated, this is done because the old version is no longer felt to be adequate. In section 1 we have outlined some developments that make it necessary to update curricula such as the changing school population and developments in the field of information and communication technologies.

However, views on teaching and learning modern languages also change. Though "there is at present no sufficiently strong research-based consensus on how learners learn for the Framework to base itself on any one learning theory" (CEF, section 6.2.2.1), yet there are developments, sometimes controversial, that a curriculum reform committee may wish to implement.

Teachers who have taught modern languages over the past thirty years are sometimes frustrated by this lack of consensus and the inconclusiveness of much research. They have seen fashions come and go and are sceptical when in a new curriculum new approaches to the teaching of language are presented. There is much uncertainty about such aspects as the role of grammar (how much and when), pronunciation (being tolerant with respect to error at the initial stages or being strict), strategies (the place of compensation strategies), learner autonomy (how can the teacher develop learner autonomy, how much freedom can the teacher give students, etc).

Therefore, a rationale for the choices in the curriculum is often given, an explanation of the options chosen and suggestions or guidelines for the practical implementation in the classroom. This does not necessarily have to be included in one curriculum document. In an educational reform process, many interventions are necessary and the aspects mentioned here are often addressed in supporting documents, in initial or in-service teacher training or workshops.

Readers are referred to CEF chapter 6, and particularly to section 6.2and 6.4.

In addition to the questions raised in these sections of chapter 6, the reader may wish to consider the following issues:

1.	What are the main innovations in the new curriculum?
2.	In what areas is resistance to be expected?
3.	What are strategies to implement the critical innovation points of the reform?

2.5 Languages, information and communication technologies

Section 1 mentions the use of ict as one of the factors affecting language learning and teaching. Ict-literacy may be seen as one of the non-language specific competences mentioned in section 6.4.6.3 of CEF. Within the scope of this guide we cannot go into detail discussing the possible uses of ict for language learning and teaching but restrict ourselves to the following uses:

- e-mail for exchanges or contacting individuals through the internet for instance to ask specific information;
- chatboxes or net-meetings to exchange information in a written form of language that closely resembles spoken language (but sometimes with highly specialised codes, abbreviations or so-called smileys);
- video-conferencing: a way to have face-to-face communication;
- the use of the Internet to get access to all kinds of data such as audio- and video enhanced texts, non-linear "hyper" texts, databases, libraries, etc.;
- the use of language learning courses on CD-Rom, DVD or also on-line through the Internet;
- the use of electronic writing tools such as word processors, on-line dictionaries, spelling and grammar checkers, etc.

People involved in curriculum development for modern languages may wish to consider whether and to what degree the learners can or should have access to ict for language learning. In view of CEF, the following issues may be considered:

1. Should learners be familiarised with so-called netiquette, the code of conduct for communication on the Internet?
2. Should learners be familiarised with hypertext and/or other kinds of audio and video enriched texts?
3. How are electronic writing tools to be integrated into the writing curriculum?
4. How can learners be encouraged to explore the Internet to help them use this medium for autonomous language learning?

In addition to these issues, curriculum developers can use CEF for reference purposes in all those instances where digitised materials are used instead of paper.

2.6 Crediting out-of-school language learning

Language learning cannot end at the end of schooling, but is a life-long process. Besides, many students learn languages outside of school:

- because they grow up in a plurilingual family;
- because they have opportunities to travel abroad;
- because they can spend a year at a school in another country.

The problem is how to give due credit to these language learning experiences. Students who have spent a year at an American high school can acquire language skills at a level not attainable by his/her classmates who do not have such an opportunity.

In CEF a small section is devoted to ELP (section 8.4.2). This is a document, currently being piloted in fifteen European countries, which enables learners to document their language learning experiences. ELP consists of three parts: a language biography, a passport and a dossier. In this document learners can record their formal and informal language learning experiences, the ones for which official recognition is given and the ones that were informally learnt. In ELP, the common reference levels of CEF (chapter 3) are included, so that the reporting function has international currency. The dossier part has a mainly pedagogical function in that it allows the learner to store specimens of work carried out in the area of language learning and intercultural experiences.

Several models of ELP piloted within the framework of the ELP project of the Council of Europe are available through the Internet. References to national portfolio sites are to be found at the website of the Council of Europe at http://culture.coe.int/portfolio

In addition to the questions raised at the end of chapter 8, the reader may wish to consider the following issues:

1. How can credit be given to students for language learning experiences outside of the school?
2. Are special provisions taken for students who already have a good mastery of the languages taught at school?
3 Who is responsible for crediting out-of-school language learning experiences, especially in the case of languages not taught at school?

3.3 CEF in practice

This section contains a number of practical assignments for use either for self-reflection or for use in group work such as to familiarise the members of a curriculum reform committee with CEF and to show its application for concrete practical purposes.

The form chosen is that of worksheets with practical assignments. Some of these have been piloted at a seminar on CEF and curriculum development which took place at the European Centre for Modern Language (ECML) in Graz, Austria in May 1998.

Bibliography

Walker, D., *Fundamentals of curriculum*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitsch, 1990

Worksheet 1

Developing a curricular scenario for developing plurilingual competence

Context
Even though decisions concerning the choice of languages that should be available in the curriculum are usually taken at the political level, it would be interesting to try and design a scenario for diversified language learning for your particular situation. Assume that the curriculum is open and should encourage schools to experiment with various language offerings and give guidelines for diversified language learning. Read chapter 8 of CEF on *Linguistic diversification and the curriculum* and consider the following assignment.

Task
Design a scenario for diversified language learning in your school system, taking into account such factors as:

- the choice of languages
- the amount of time that can reasonably be expected to be available for modern languages at the different levels of the system (primary, junior secondary, upper secondary)
- practical consequences such as the availability of teachers.

Consider the following options:

- language learning in primary school
  - one centrally prescribed language or a choice of languages or freedom to choose any language
  - the role of neighbouring languages in border areas
  - a course of language awareness
  - the role of the pupils' native language background and the possibility to further develop this native competence

- languages at secondary level
  - which languages
  - distinction between first and second/third and fourth modern languages?
  - levels to be achieved
  - how to credit out-of-school language learning?
  - means of diversifying language learning (bilingual education, partial competence).

You may use the following grid:

Language	**primary**		**junior secondary**		**upper secondary**		**vocational**	
	lessons	**status**	**lessons**	**status**	**lessons**	**status**	**lessons**	**status**

status:
You may use the following categories, but feel free to add categories of your own.

X: mandatory
O: optional
PQ: partial qualification
B: beginner's course
BE: bilingual education
NL: neighbouring language
ML: minority language

Practical consequences for teachers:

_____

_____

_____

Worksheet 2

Linking national qualifications to the common reference levels

Context
People are not always aware of the difficulty of describing levels adequately. An easy awareness-raising activity is to take the level descriptions in use in your education system, put them in random order, and ask members of the working party to put them back in the right order.

This exercise can also be done with the descriptors used in the scales in chapter 4.

Before doing this, one may ask the members of the working party to assess their own language competence by referring to the scale in section 3.3 of CEF. You may consider collecting the data, importing them into a histogram or graph, and using a PowerPoint presentation to present the outcomes. Use this as a basis for discussion.

Tasks

1. Look at section 3.3. of CEF and read the descriptors carefully. Assess your own skills in the languages you have learnt on the scales A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. You may use the grid below to fill it in.

	A1	**A2**	**B1**	**B2**	**C1**	**C2**
Listening						
Spoken interaction						
Spoken production						
Writing						

2. Select a scale (for instance, overall spoken interaction section 4.4.3.1), put the descriptors in random order and put them back into the right sequence.

3. Look at section 4.4.1 (productive activities and strategies) and see how the finer level distinctions were made. Look at the subdivision at level A2 and how this level can be broken down into A2.1 and A2.2.

4. Analyse the level descriptions used in your system and compare them with the level descriptors in CEF. To start with, select one activity/skill and try to improve the level descriptions of your system and relate them to CEF-levels.

Worksheet 3

Identifying curricular categories for modern languages

Context
Everyone involved in curriculum development for modern languages has experienced the learning of at least one modern language. The purpose of this activity (task 1) is to make members of a working party reflect on possible categories for the curriculum to be developed by reflecting on past language learning experiences.
Alternatively, participants may be invited to take the existing curriculum as point of departure and do task 2.

Task 1

1. Share your language learning experiences in the group. Which languages have you learnt and in what way? What are your experiences? What was the approach? What did the textbooks look like? What kind of activities and exercises did you do? In how far do they differ from the approach favoured now?

2. Look at the table of contents of chapter 4 of CEF and see if the categories mentioned in chapter four can be identified in your own experiences. Which categories do you think should be included in the new curriculum to be drafted?

Task 2

1. Take the existing curriculum document that is to be revised or updated. Select one or two categories mentioned in it and find the section of CEF that addresses these categories.

2. What do you think of the choices in the original document?

3. Would you like to change anything on the basis of the options offered by CEF?

Some ideas and examples:

- Does it make sense to include domains, situations, themes (section 4.1 and 4.2)
- Traditionally four skills – listening, reading, speaking and writing – were distinguished. In CEF, further distinctions are made, including oral interaction, oral production, mediation, written interaction, written production, etc. (section 4.4). Would it be useful, in your context, to extend the four traditional categories into more?
- should text-types be mentioned? (section 4.6)
- should tasks be specified? (for an extensive discussion on tasks see chapter 7)
- what is the role of strategies and should they be specified? (section 4.4)

Worksheet 4

Identifying curricular categories for modern languages

Context
Members of a curriculum reform committee may have different views on the learning and teaching of modern languages in schools. Much of the research available is inconclusive, but members of the committee (or members of the modern languages section of a school or educational institution) may wish to explicitly state, share their views and perhaps arrive at a common approach to language learning and teaching. The purpose of this activity is to guide the discussion through a number of provocative statements.

Task
Consider the following statements:

1. Languages are learnt best by giving the learner as much exposure to the language as possible.
2. The almost exclusive use of the target language in the classroom is one of the most effective aspects of language teaching.
3. Authenticity of texts and communication events is always to be preferred over constructed materials.
4. At the initial stages, learners should be encouraged to use the language as much as possible even if they make errors with respect to grammar and pronunciation.
5. Compensation strategies are best taught when the learners have already learnt the language for some time.
6. Especially at the early stages, the use of drills is indispensable.
7. Vocabulary books are the best way to ensure that learners acquire a basic vocabulary.
8. E-mail exchanges take up too much time and hardly contribute to the language learning process.

CHAPTER 6 – ORGANISATION AND DELIVERY OF THE CURRICULUM

By Mike Makosch

1. Principles and issues

Organising and delivering language education are complex undertakings. It is useful to view the results of such undertakings as attempts to interpret curriculum policy so as to develop an operational language teaching programme. It is usual to define such programmes in terms of the parameters listed under "scope" below. But other parameters and concerns also play a role in developing, introducing and managing any given programme.

The following principles and concepts are commonly related to organising and delivering language education:

Learner-orientation
The improvement of the learner's competence in one or more foreign languages is the fundamental aim of all provision of language learning opportunities. All efforts at organising and delivering such language learning opportunities need to be justified in terms of how they benefit the learner. In this context it is necessary to address the issue of the learnability of that which is being proposed to any given learning population.

Teacher-orientation
The great majority of learners are to a large extent dependent on teachers to provide them with guidance, input and encouragement within the curriculum. Teachers play the central role in organising and delivering language learning opportunities and should therefore be at the centre of all attempts to communicate or change the curriculum. On the one hand this begs the question of the availability of suitably trained teachers and their development. On the other hand it presumes that the issue of teachability of any given syllabus has been addressed.

Scope
Any given language teaching curriculum necessarily addresses one given cross section of society, a given range of languages and levels and set of learner needs with regard to age, time, learning styles, levels of competence, objectives and certification. It is necessary for authorities and/or institutions to describe their programmes with respect to these parameters in order to be able to focus their activities effectively.

Transparency
Partners in language education are numerous: learners, teachers, parents, school managers, publishers, other sectors of education, employers, public authorities, examination boards, etc. In order for the numerous partnerships to function, transparency is required in terms of programmes, courses, objectives, contents, teaching methodology, evaluation and possible certification.

Coherence
Within a network of partnerships as listed above and because programmes and courses need to be oriented clearly to learners' perceived and actual needs, providers of language education need to ensure coherence in terms of the articulation between language teaching objectives, contents, methodology, evaluation and certification within their institution and in terms of co-ordination with other educational sectors.

Flexibility
The perceived and actual needs of individual learners, other educational sectors and society as a whole are subject to constant change. The requirement that language teaching programmes should be flexible is especially pertinent in view of their presence in and/or interface with practically all other educational activities.

Evaluation
Evaluation plays a particularly crucial role in ensuring continuity in phases (cycles) of language learning which are often organised and delivered by differing schools or sections of larger institutions. Evaluation of programmes, courses and teachers occurs at regular intervals and is practised directly and indirectly by all the partners mentioned above.

1.1 From the formulation of policy through to learning and back: the curriculum as a non-linear process

An issue which regularly occupies curriculum developers is the apparent opposition between top-down approaches on the one hand and learner-centred models and perceptions of curriculum design on the other. Top-down or specialist approaches assume a linear "chain of command" in which roles and responsibilities for decisions made at various stages of curriculum development are clearly defined and adhered to. Learner-centred approaches assume no "chain of command" but rather participation of all partners in all decisions.

The underlying assumption in this guide and one of the key features of CEF is that it is open, it is not in any way prescriptive with regard to any particular approach to curriculum design. A consequence of this openness is that it provides curriculum planners, developers, administrators, managers, teachers and learners alike with a common frame of reference within which they can operate according to the setting they are working in. The curriculum is seen as a process in which many factors and stages interact. CEF then, is not merely concerned with one-way traffic: with how that which has been planned can be brought to bear on acts of learning. Rather, it is concerned with the options open to those who are charged with the organisation and delivery of the curriculum and the constraints they face.

Whether we are talking about a national educational setting such as planning a reform of the curriculum for secondary schools or whether we are addressing the problems facing one single institution, the organisation and delivery of any given curriculum implies that a general policy has already been formulated, and that in formulating this policy account has been taken of the way in which the curriculum is to be implemented and evaluated.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, planning, implementation and assessment cannot be seen as three discrete phases of the curriculum process, but rather three interacting aspects of one process.

1.2 Who is organising and delivering?

Committees of experts, administrators, testers, teacher trainers, head teachers, senior teachers, authors, inspectors and many others are involved in organising and delivering the curriculum. In all sectors of education the last decade has witnessed an increased professionalism and a concomitant increasing number of professionals in implementing language teaching programmes. Lagging behind this potential improvement has been a sense of common purpose characterised by efficient and effective communication between these professionals. Each new profession (materials authors, teacher trainers, academic managers, testers, quality controllers, etc.) has first had to establish itself or is still in the process of doing so. At the same time the aims

and constraints in each educational sector are unique and tend each to be populated by their own experts.

Demographic trends, broader political and educational aims, the role of languages in the curriculum as a whole, resources in terms of trained teachers, time available and infrastructure, the demands of trade and industry as well as learner and teacher needs are all very different depending on whether we are discussing primary schools or adult education, secondary or tertiary sectors of education.

Before embarking on any curriculum project roles and responsibilities need to be clearly documented as should the frame of reference within which these are to be enacted. CEF provides a framework within which such clarification can take place.

1.3 CEF as a system of points of reference

The delivery of language education can be described and steered from a number of different angles. The concerns of teacher trainers are not the same as those who are involved in preparing timetables or those selecting materials or those involved in testing. One of the major issues in implementing revisions to or innovation in the curriculum is the danger that the concerns of the various partners in the process tend either to militate against each other or, at best, to be formulated but not understood by others. Programmes are interpreted and implemented inconsistently by the different partners involved.

CEF provides a comprehensive frame of reference for all partners in the curriculum process. As such it allows for a situation in which areas of responsibility can be mapped out, interfaces between participants in the process can be delineated and general goals jointly formulated. Thus the two principles of transparency and coherence as described above can, theoretically at least, be upheld.

1.4 Managing or coping with change

Organising, implementing and delivering the curriculum implies change. Change inevitably involves risks, but it also involves the opportunity to create and benefit from chances. Whether those involved in steering these processes actually manage them, creating opportunities for improvement and guiding them through to success, or whether they are reduced to a more passive role of merely coping with whatever developments are put into motion, depends on a number of factors:

Partners/Agents
The various partners involved in organising and delivering any given language teaching programme need to share a common understanding as to what needs improvement and why, as well as a shared vision with regard to how change can be brought about successfully. Should the dissatisfaction with the status quo not be shared by one or more partners in the process then resistance to change could well undermine the best designed programme. At the same time, given the central role teachers play in delivering language education, attention must be given to providing appropriate opportunities and encouragement for teacher development.

Resources
Curricular development more often than not implies an investment in terms of human, financial and structural resources. Readiness and commitment to change still have to outweigh the cost of such resources for any programme to be successful. A new programme of language teaching designed for a second language at primary level for example, is hardly likely to succeed if the

cost of training teachers and providing for support staff lies beyond the financial capacity of the authorities concerned. It is the job of those in charge of designing programmes and delivering them to marshal not only the commitment of all involved but also the financial and structural resources needed for success.

Method of change/Level of intervention

The choice of method as to how any given process is to be initiated and pursued is just as crucial to the success of such a process as are the required commitment and resources. The choice of level of intervention (where and how can we most effectively deliver our message?) involves such factors as: selection of materials, the degree of obligation on the part of teachers to deliver certain materials, the imposition or not of a given test at the end of a programme, the delivery of teacher training through external "experts" or through local "informants", the amount of time devoted to the subject/language concerned versus time devoted to other subjects, etc. Such choices often reflect the cultural preferences and traditions of the authority, institution or school in question. In order to avoid the risk of merely coping/following the process, such choices need to be aired openly and understood and agreed to by all partners.

In the following section the options available with regard to levels of intervention in organising and delivering curriculum change are discussed and the way in which CEF can inform these choices are outlined.

2. Levels of intervention and uses of CEF in the organisation and delivery of the curriculum

Whichever level of intervention is chosen to act upon in the organisation and delivery of the curriculum, all partners in the process can draw on CEF for support in and input in the form of checklists, summaries and systematic accounts of areas to be covered. This section provides references and pointers from CEF according to the different possible levels of intervention.

2.1 Programme design

Chapter 2 of CEF assumes that delivering language education involves specifying syllabuses including language learning objectives in terms of tasks, themes, competences, etc.:

- the development of the learner's general personal competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes and knowing how to learn);
- improving communicative linguistic competence;
- the better realisation of one or more language activities (reception, production, interaction or mediation);
- improvement within a given domain (public, occupational, educational or personal);
- enrichment and diversification of learners' communicative strategies and the ability to tackle a greater range of tasks.

- In what ways do your programmes emphasise one or more of these areas (language learning objectives) above others? How is this made clear to your learners and teachers?

CEF lays out the options available to those charged with taking decisions on organising and delivering language education within the context of an overall objective of promoting linguistic diversity. This means that programmes of language courses should be examined in conjunction with the possible paths which learners have already taken and might choose to follow in the

future in their efforts to develop a variety of language skills in more than one language. The consequences of these considerations are numerous:

- programmes of language courses offered by any given institution should make reference to and complement provision in the rest of the education system (modularity);
- an international dimension is desirable (diversity, mobility);
- a broad offer of possibilities in terms of language learning paths is necessary (different languages, levels, objectives, modes of delivery, etc.);
- accreditation of prior (potentially out-of-school) language learning.

- How are the language teaching and learning objectives of your institution situated with respect to other providers of language teaching in the education system?
- Does your programme and its statement of objectives make explicit the dimension of mobility? Is this relevant for your learners?
- Does the way in which your programmes are delivered provide learner-guidance? How?

Chapter 2 of CEF proposes a set of parameters within which discussion, comparison and co-ordination of language teaching syllabuses can take place:

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.

- How can your institution's framework be described in the terms of CEF, so that the aims of mobility and portability can be achieved?
- How does your institution's language teaching syllabus compare to those of other institutions in the same or other educational sectors?

2.2 Teachers

To organise and deliver changes to language curricula, teachers need to be incorporated in the process. However, bringing about change and initiating development with the teaching body of a given institution is a delicate task. Teachers are the funnel through which the curriculum flows. Teachers are expected to have a comprehensive understanding of language use, learning processes, the rationale for and design of the course they are teaching together with the materials they are using and the form(s) of evaluation applied to their course, as well as to be able to take and apply methodological decisions both in preparing their teaching and minute-by-minute during it. This tall order for teachers is implicit in CEF's treatment of language learning and teaching and the role of tasks therein (chapters 6 and 7). Readers are invited to examine these options in detail in CEF.

- Does your institution have a clear, professional profile for teachers?
- What is the minimum expected of language teachers entering your institution?
- How is this monitored and measured?

The socio-economic situation of language teachers, the availability of recognised qualifications and the delegation of responsibility for the types of decisions described above differ from institution to institution, from language to language, from level to level and from teacher to teacher.

Teachers of less widely taught languages often find themselves alone in planning, executing and evaluating their teaching. Teachers at higher levels are often either bound to a textbook preparing for an examination or, in adult education situations, completely free in their choice of materials and methods for so-called conversation classes. Some institutions provide regular programmes for teachers, other institutions cannot do this for financial reasons or consider such investment unnecessary. Some teachers take advantage of chances to collaborate with their colleagues, others do not share their experience.

- In what way(s) can teachers develop professionally in your institution?
- Do your teachers work together or alone?
- Do you encourage this?

CEF both implicitly and explicitly aims at making certain options and choices transparent and coherent. However, going beyond CEF, the delivery of any given curriculum demands coherence not only between the views of language, language use and language learning, but also between these approaches and the views of language teaching, and therefore how teachers are to be addressed. Teacher development can aim at training teachers to follow a given syllabus as closely as possible, using prescribed materials within a given timetable. Teacher development can go further and promote ever higher degrees of mastery of the craft of teaching (for example, understanding teaching as a set of clearly defined skills and knowledge to be expanded and perfected) or it can be aimed towards developing teachers as researchers in their own classrooms (hypothesising, testing and evaluating continuously their own teaching and their learners' learning).

- In interpreting the relevance of CEF to teacher development, do you view it as: a) additional support in specifying what teachers are expected to teach, b) a further support in achieving mastery of the craft of teaching, or c) a tool for teachers as researchers?

2.3 Syllabus and materials design

Syllabus and materials designers make concrete detailed decisions on the selection and ordering of language, tasks, texts and activities to be presented to the learner. They usually provide detailed instructions for the classroom and/or individual tasks and activities to be undertaken by learners. Their products influence the learning/teaching process and must inevitably be based on a string of assumptions as to the nature of language, its use and the language learning process. In short, they are based upon what is considered to be teachable and learnable by the given target group in the time given. As such, curricular development is often delivered through changes to the syllabus and through new materials.

CEF adopts a comprehensive approach to defining language use and provides a common working model of language use and learning within the parameters specified above. In doing so, chapters 4 and 5 of CEF establish in some detail categories of description of language use and the competences of the learner *per se* whilst chapter 7 goes on to discuss in greater detail the role of tasks as a means of analysing and packaging language use in a language learning and teaching context. All these areas are fundamental to language course design, providing a basis for the analysis or development of language teaching materials.

Underlying the analysis and development of language teaching materials are also assumptions regarding the process of language learning and teaching. Chapter 6 of CEF discusses these issues and encourages practitioners to make their assumptions explicit.

Chapter 3 of CEF addresses the issue of levels of language competence, their description and use. Level descriptors provide syllabus and materials designers with bookends for their work. Organising and delivering language education requires careful consideration of the levels of competence being asked of learners and aimed at by any given programme.

- Are the assumptions underlying your syllabus and/or materials with regard to the view of language, its use, the way it is learned and with reference to CEF scale of levels transparent?
- If so, are they coherent with the approach adopted by the general curriculum?

2.4 Learner support

In their language learning career, students will pass through a number of educational sectors and institutions offering language services as well as gaining out-of-school language learning experiences. This implies that, as well as being able to map out parameters of language use and methodological options in their course and material design, those charged with delivering language education should also be able to map out a "vertical dimension", outlining an ascending series of levels for describing learner proficiency. It is the projection of possible language learning objectives and paths on to a scale of levels which allows learners to gain some sort of perspective on what they are doing.

All institutions organise their courses according to a variety of systems of levels. Such systems are often arranged almost by default around numbers of teaching hours, textbooks in a series, entry tests or external examinations. The organisation of course programmes in ways such as these (which, although not very rigorous, do usually become in some way accessible or meaningful to learners within any given institutional setting) is necessary in order to offer learners, teachers and managers points of orientation. Chapter 3 and the appendices of CEF lay out a comprehensive set of options for scaling and levels and in doing so provide the basis upon which institutions can review their own scaling with a view to offering transparent and meaningful support to their learners.

CEF sets out the options available for the development, orientation and presentation of scales of proficiency, thus providing an excellent resource to those organising the provision of language education.

- Would a scale relating to the categories of description offered by CEF help your learners?
- Do you share CEF view that a common scale would be advantageous to you and to your learners in terms of: setting objectives, co-ordinating syllabuses, assessment of proficiency, assessment of incidental learning, recognition of language proficiency profiles or communicating between different educational sectors?

ELP can be seen as a logical development out of CEF and its concern to provide support for learners which is coherent with the principles of learner-orientation, transparency and flexibility. The guidelines and templates which are available for the ELP from the Council of Europe provide the basic tools for individual institutions and whole sectors of education to provide their learners and teachers with the support they need to map out their language learning achievements and plans. As such, the ELP represents a new departure, offering an instrument which

independently of any given syllabus or any given set of materials is a vehicle for communicating to teachers and learners about their language teaching and learning and encouraging them to formulate their own views, aims and paths.

- Would the ELP fit in to your language teaching provision without any major intervention at the level of course planning, teacher-training and/or syllabus and materials design?

2.5 Assessment of learning and teaching

CEF as a whole, and specifically chapter 3 on Levels, implicitly provides a comprehensive set of assessment criteria. Chapter 9 discusses the numerous purposes to which assessment may be put; it describes different types of assessment and offers advice and examples with regard to applying these feasibly in a metasystem. In doing so, it provides a rich source of options for the organisation and delivery of language education. For example, in chapter 9 of CEF, examples are given of practical solutions to the problem of reducing the mass of potential assessment categories to manageable instruments for assessors and transparent measures for learners.

Probably one of the most common (and effective?) ways of bringing about change in response to curriculum development is to revise or update the ways in which language achievement is assessed. By describing such assessment options CEF leads readers to reflect on the role of assessment in their institutions.

- Which types of assessment are practised in your institution? By whom?
- To what extent are your methods of assessment coherent with: a) your course objectives and b) your learners' previous experience and future needs?

Although it is important not to limit the scope of assessment to the preparation for public examinations, the relationship between any institution's programme and external examinations has to be addressed.

- Does your system of assessment reflect a transparent frame of reference?
- Would it be desirable and/or feasible to relate public examination systems to a common frame of reference?

Worksheet 1

Materials selection and use

Context
Efforts to engender a more positive attitude to language learning in any given population of learners often concentrate on making materials more relevant and attractive for learners. With young learners, for example, this often results in materials designed around what adults believe to be young themes (such as pop culture, relationships, sports, etc., all set in the target culture) but which otherwise follow traditional syllabuses. A critical examination of materials often reveals deeper, covert reasons as to why language learners may well feel less than enthusiastic about learning with them. On closer examination, it becomes evident that it is common for materials to adopt an apathetic approach to learners' knowledge, feelings and experiences, assuming that they need spoon-feeding or, as in the case of materials for youngsters cited above motivated with pale imitations of youth culture.

Task
With reference to CEF 6.4.6 critically examine the assumptions regarding learners' socio-cultural, existential and learning competence underlying the materials in use in your institution. Are learners served cultural stereotypes, or are they invited to explore the culture(s) of the target language for themselves? Are learners treated as knowledgeable partners with their own personalities, expected to contribute to the subject matter being dealt with, or do the materials prescribe what learners are to do, leading and guiding them step by step?

What criteria would you formulate and apply in the selection of new materials with regard to their approach to learners?

What guidelines would you give your teachers with regard to respecting and working with their learners' own world knowledge, experience and feelings?

Worksheet 2

Strategies: definition and delivery?

Context
CEF 4.4 states that

"To carry out communicative tasks, users have to engage in communicative language activities and operate communicative strategies".

This section of CEF continues to specify and illustrate which strategies are meant here according to the following scheme:

	Planning	**Execution**	**Monitoring**	**Repair**
Production				
Reception				
Interaction				
Mediation				

Experience thus far with CEF has shown that expanding the traditional four skills model to incorporate the dimensions implicit in this table can provoke fruitful discussions and encourage fresh insights into the communicative strategies and activities in which our learners engage.

Task
To what extent are communicative strategies defined and explicitly stated in your syllabus specifications?

Using the scaled descriptors and using all four categories (production, reception, interaction and mediation) in CEF 4.4, draw up a profile of the learning objectives for a specific group of learners for whom you are responsible.

With reference to CEF 7.3.2, what recommendations would you give with regard to the design of language learning tasks designed to achieve the objectives you have described above?

Worksheet 3

Teacher profiles and development

Context
"Teachers are generally called upon to respect any official guidelines, use textbooks and course materials (which they may or may not be in a position to analyse, evaluate, select and supplement), devise and administer tests and prepare pupils and students for qualifying examinations. They have to make minute-to-minute decisions about classroom activities, which they can prepare in outline beforehand, but must adjust flexibly in the light of pupil/student responses. They are expected to monitor the progress of pupils/students and find ways of recognising, analysing and overcoming their learning problems, as well as developing their individual learning abilities. It is necessary for them to understand learning processes in their great variety, though this understanding may well be an unconscious product of experience rather than a clearly formulated product of theoretical reflection, which is the proper contribution to the partnership for learning to be made by educational researchers and teacher trainers."

This quote from CEF 6.3 describes a tall order for your teachers.

Task
Does this description apply to your teachers? Would you agree with all aspects of it? If not, what is missing, or what does not apply to your situation?

What opportunities do your teachers have to develop further in the following areas:

teaching skills	
classroom management skills	
ability to engage in action research and to reflect on experience	
teaching styles	
understanding and ability to handle testing, assessment and evaluation	
knowledge of and ability to teach socio-cultural dimensions of the target language	
inter-cultural attitudes and skills	
knowledge and ability to develop students' aesthetic appreciation of literature	
ability to deal with individualisation within heterogeneous classes	

CHAPTER 7 – QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY CONTROL IN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

By Frank Heyworth

1. Quality issues in language education

"Are we doing the right things?" and "Are we doing things right?" are key twin questions in the application of quality procedures in any domain of activity. The first section of this chapter, on planning and curriculum design, addresses the issues contained in the first question – the principles involved in deciding what languages should be taught, at what age and with what aims and objectives. The second section, on the delivery and organisation of language education, deals with the implementation of the curriculum, with "doing things right". CEF provides a conceptual basis for finding answers to both of these questions – not prescriptively, but by indicating the options among which those deciding on the nature of language teaching and learning activities must make their choice.

The third section will deal with the need for processes and procedures to assess quality and their application to both the planning and delivery phases. It will describe issues related to quality assurance and quality control; and by reference to the general field of the management of quality outside the domain of language teaching will examine how far the procedures can be applied to it. It will illustrate how the application of quality assurance and quality control can help identify successful practice and suggest where change is required.

In the field of language education there is a need to have a clear and coherent idea of what are the "right things" that we are doing, and procedures for checking that we are "doing things right". This means that among many issues, the following must be addressed:

- What criteria can be applied to the decision-making process to ensure that curricula take account of relevant factors?
- What are the models against which the quality of teaching/learning activities are to be measured?
- What are the processes by which teaching/learning is planned, organised and delivered?
- How are these models and processes described and communicated in such a way that those involved are aware of them and contribute to their definition and development?
- What are the responsibilities with regard to quality of the different actors – teachers, learners, administrators, parents, etc. – participating in the learning activities?
- What are the procedures for observing and getting feedback on the teaching /learning activities?
- What are the procedures for quality control? Who undertakes it? How can the results of the quality control be fed back into the planning and delivery processes?

In order to address issues of this kind we need to examine how quality assurance and control procedures are typically applied to teaching in general and to language education in particular, and to compare these with the approaches commonly used in other fields. This may suggest the application of different approaches to language learning and teaching activities.

1.1 Quality assurance and quality control in general

The concepts and methods which are the basis of quality procedures were developed mainly in the United States and Japan in industrial environments during and after the Second World War. The aim was to make production processes more efficient by reducing faults and errors – one of the watchwords was "zero tolerance of error" – and to produce goods of consistently high, and standardised quality. In order to achieve this, a number of procedures and principles were developed:

- a need to analyse the function of the finished product and of the constituent parts;
- careful design of the components to do what they were intended to do;
- clear standards for the performance of the finished products.

It was realised that improved quality was not to be achieved through technical progress alone. Especially in Japan it was emphasised that the responsibility for the quality of the product should lie with those producing it, not with outside inspectors, and that people worked best if they formed teams able to organise their own work flexibly and intelligently. Quality circles, small teams who were encouraged to provide suggestions and to take quality initiatives, were devised as a way of promoting the desired approach and attitude. It was stressed that correcting mistakes was expensive and time-consuming and that the aim, therefore, was to get it right the first time, every time.

The concept of quality management is also applied to the provision of services as well as the production of goods. Since these are not tangible in the same way as goods, the idea of customer satisfaction has been introduced and quality has been equated with this – slogans such as "quality means meeting customer expectations" or "quality means exceeding customer expectations" have been used. In the provision of services the contract between the provider and the consumer of services is a relational one and the quality of the service is often defined through the keeping of promises which are expressed in the form of customer charters or service guarantees. For example, a railway promises that if its trains do not arrive within x minutes of the announced time, the customers will have part of their fare re-imbursed; or a hotel chain will give guarantees about the speed or range of services provided. An essential element of quality in services is to establish a clear description of what is offered – "say what you do/do what you say you do".

The idea of quality as an important feature of the production of goods and the provision of services has led to its being an important factor in the management of companies and other organisations. The procedures are divided into "quality assurance" – the steps which need to be taken to produce goods or provide services of high quality; and "quality control" – the procedures devised to check that the aimed for or promised quality is achieved. The idea of quality has been introduced into the public domain, with governments promising specific standards in the provision of health services or education.

There have also been attempts to define all working relationships as being influenced by client satisfaction, with every person in an organisation having clients, either internal or external, whose needs s/he must satisfy, and providers, who provide services which enable people to carry out their tasks efficiently.

Various organisations have been set up to establish standards, either general or for a particular activity, and to validate that the standards are being kept. The International Standards Organisation (ISO) has a series of norms – for example, ISO 9000, which is applied to service industries, including a range of schools of different kinds. The ISO certification checks that proper procedures for ensuring quality standards are applied, but makes no judgement of the

quality of the product or service itself. In an educational context, it would check that there were procedures for observing and assessing the quality of the teaching, but it would not make an assessment of the work in the classroom.

There is a general awareness of these concepts of quality as a feature in most areas of activity they take part in, certainly wherever there is provision of goods and services either provided by the state or by commercial enterprises. Language learning and teaching can also be viewed from the aspect of quality and its assurance and control.

Pause for reflection
Think of every day transactions and activities you carry out.
What criteria do you apply to judging good quality and low quality in goods and services?

1.2 Quality assurance and quality control in educational contexts

In state education the management of quality has generally been inexplicit and often unsystematic. In many countries the responsibility for quality control has lain with ministry of education inspectors whose jobs have involved both the inspection of schools and their accreditation; in some countries they have also inspected individual teachers, grading them in ways which influenced their salaries and careers. In recent years the emphasis of inspectors' work has been more on advising schools and on promoting good practice than on control and sanctions.

The procedures for internal quality assurance have varied widely. Typically there has been relatively little close observation of the teaching activities and in many environments it has been possible for teachers to work alone in the classroom for years once they have gone through their probationary period. In some schools there is provision for observation of classes by heads of department or for peer observation, but this is far from being generalised and is more common in private education than in state systems.

In recent years, nevertheless, there has been increased concern with the need for schools to be accountable for standards and quality and in a number of countries schools have been encouraged to produce school programmes – statements of their aims and the means by which they plan to achieve them. A small number of institutions have obtained the ISO 9001 certificate.

In the field of private language schools, more concerned with the need to find and keep students in competition with other schools, there has been considerable development of inspection schemes to check and accredit good practice. The British Council administers the English in Britain accreditation system and has been carrying out inspections for both private and further education institutions. There are a number of national associations promoting quality through accreditation and granting of quality labels for schools; SOUFFLE for French, IQDeutsch for German, CEELE for Spanish, QUEST for schools in Romania are just a few examples of these initiatives. EAQUALS (the European Association for Quality Language Services) has an inspection system based on a code of practice with charters for learners, staff and for information, and has accredited schools in eleven different countries and for a wide range of languages.

1.3 The application of quality assurance and quality control in language teaching and learning

It is in no way the intention to suggest that quality models from industrial and commercial contexts can be applied en bloc to educational activities, nor that achievement of the aims of language teaching can be measured by a simple criterion of customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, language education, like most fields of activity, must satisfy the needs of its clientele – learners, parents, employers, and society in general in state education, and those who are purchasing language courses in the private sector. Therefore, it is useful to take account of experience outside the language teaching field and to assess how far it can – or cannot – be usefully applied.

Language learning and teaching are complex matters and cannot be reduced to a single, simplistic model of quality. They are influenced by the personalities of learners and teachers and by the relationships between them. The content is also defined by what is happening in the world around them and the topics they choose to discuss. Nevertheless, it is important to aim for high standards and to set criteria by which the quality of teaching learning operations will be judged. Factors which might be taken into account in setting quality criteria include:

- The basic educational principles and beliefs underlying school systems

Is there a consensus on the aims of language teaching and learning? CEF is deliberately not prescriptive – "We do NOT set out to tell practitioners what to do, or how to do it . . .", but at the same time clearly sets out broad principles. CEF "supports methods which help learners build up attitudes, knowledge and skills they need to become more independent in thought and action and be more responsible and co-operative in relation to other people".

North, Lasnier, Morfeld, Borneto & Spàth in the *Quality Guide for the evaluation and design of language programmes*[13] propose a number of quality principles, shown in the table below:

Principles	**Sub-principles**
Relevance	Learner centredness Accountability Appropriateness
Transparency	Clarity of Aims Clarity about Achievement Clarity of Presentation Clarity of Rationale
Reliability	Consistency Internal Coherence Methodological Integrity Linguistic Integrity Textual Integrity Practicality
Attractiveness	User friendliness Interactivity Variety Sensitivity
Flexibility	Individualisation Adaptability
Generativeness (does the learning generate further learning or development?)	Transferability Integration Cognitive development
Participation	Involvement Personal Interest Partnership
Efficiency	Cost effectiveness Ergonomy
Socialisation	Social skills Intercultural awareness

- A process-oriented model of the organisation of language teaching and learning

Is there a clearly stated curriculum with clear level descriptors? Is it applied with suitable resources? Is there appropriate assessment to place learners in groups, to evaluate progress and to certify achievement? Are there systems for observation of teaching and for getting feedback from learners so that the efficiency of the process can be monitored?

- A client-centred view of teaching/learning

This includes analysis both of the uses to which learners will put the language they have learnt and of their learning needs and preferences. It will also analyse other stakeholders in the language education system – parents, potential employers, the needs of the society, etc. The

[13] A Guide for the Evaluation and Design of Quality Language learning and teaching Programmes and Materials, European Commission 2000

system will include procedures, such as questionnaires or focus groups, to ascertain clients' satisfaction with the learning activities.

- Criteria focussing on the management of human resources involved in the teaching/learning process.

Are there proper opportunities for the training and development of teachers? Are there arrangements for peer observation and reflection on the teaching process? Are there appropriate resources available?

- Evaluation of the results of the teaching/learning activities

Are objectives set for progress and achievement? Are these objectives attained? Are the results in public examinations satisfactory?

Institutions involved in language teaching will need to take factors such as these into account in order to define the criteria they will apply to assessing whether they are doing things right and the standards they set for themselves.

Pause for reflection
What model(s) do you, explicitly or implicitly, apply to assessing the quality of language education in your institution?

Is this model relevant?	What standards do you apply?
Customer satisfaction	
Educational principles	
Efficient process management	
Evaluation of results	
Focus on human resources	

1.4 The application of quality assurance in language teaching

By quality assurance we mean the steps to be taken to ensure that high standards are set and met; checking that the standards are maintained is the domain of quality control.

"Say what you do"

Transparency and coherence are essential features of setting standards. At the level of a national curriculum, this will mean that clear statements of the purpose and content of language education, together with the ways in which it is to be organised, must be available and communicated. This means that decisions must be taken on what languages are to be taught in schools, at what age and with what aims. The level of attainment required to pass from one part of the school system to the next must be defined as must the means for assessment of this. In order to ensure that these decisions are taken in a reasoned way, it will be necessary to have systems for taking account both of parents' wishes, of the needs of society and of educational and linguistic experts. It will also be necessary to define feasible objectives and to avoid unrealistic expectations. CEF will be an instrument of major importance; the definition of objectives for language teaching at some point must include statements of the level sought. "One of the aims of the Framework is to help partners to describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards, tests and examinations in order to facilitate comparison between different systems of qualifications. For this purpose the Descriptive Scheme and the Common Reference Levels have

been developed. Between them they provide a conceptual grid which users can exploit to describe their system." (CEF)

In language teaching this will mean that curricula should not only exist but that they should be made available to learners and teachers and complemented by syllabi, schemes of work, weekly plans, etc. Clear and understandable level descriptors provide a necessary framework for setting objectives and measuring progress. The Common European Scale of Reference of CEF is a means of linking the levels defined by of a particular institution or system to a rigorously drafted scale expressed in terms of real world communicative competence.

Both public and private sector institutions have sought to communicate their standards through public statements of their educational principles and of the promises they make to their clients. The public statement can be made in many forms and at many levels – of national curricula, for example, or in school prospectuses. It is, however, an essential part of quality assurance that there should be some visible statement.

Here is an extract from a student charter [14]

Members of the association uphold the following Student Charter:

All schools guarantee*:*
high teaching and educational standards
professional conduct and integrity
regular independent inspections to maintain standards
total accuracy and veracity of all information and publicity
efficient administration and auxiliary services
suitable premises and facilities for language learning
accurate placement-testing to determine language competence
a structured course of studies that is divided into levels and appropriate to students' needs
appropriate and effective teaching methods
appropriate, regular assessments, reports and end-of-course assessment procedures leading to a certificate of attainment
experienced and competent teachers working under the supervision of an appropriately qualifie academic manager
regular observation of the teaching activity
opportunities for obtaining information and advice about the course of studies.

Pause for reflection How does your institution communicate its quality standards to learners and other stakeholders?	
By a charter or guarantee	
In a published school programme or plan	
In the curriculum	
None of these	
Do you think that the promises in the student charter are appropriate for your teaching environment? What would you add or take away?	

[14] from a document from EAQUALS, the European Association of Quality Language Services

Benchmarking – standards cannot be done purely on the basis of the institution's own standards. It is necessary to see standards in the context of a more general environment. Benchmarking is an approach which attempts to identify "best practice" – in another institution doing the same thing, in other contexts, and to apply these standards as a measure, a benchmark for what is done in one's own institution. For example, a school might set targets for results in public examination based on what the most successful schools are achieving – taking into consideration the local environment and constraints.

"Do what you say"

The corollary of a transparent system for communicating standards is the setting up of systems for making sure that they are maintained. There are a number of approaches to doing this in a school setting.

- *Self-assessment* – From time to time it is useful for an institution to go through a process of self-assessment. By using a structured questionnaire or checklist, first individually and then in groups, it is possible to get an idea of whether standards are being applied and maintained. There are frequently differences of perception between, for example, teachers and management or the schools and its learners, so it is useful to make sure that all stakeholders have opportunities to take part in the self-assessment process. Here is an extract from a self-assessment questionnaire for teachers:

Course Planning (Teachers) [15]

9 What tools do you use for course planning?

10 Is there a curriculum or course programme?

Yes No

Comment

11 Do you have a copy, or know where to find one?

Yes No

Comment

12 Do you refer to it when planning your teaching?

Yes No

Comment

13 Do you get sufficient information about your classes before they start?

Yes No

Comment

14 In general, are the students' expectations of the course content realistic?

Yes No

Comment

15 In general, are the students' expectations of the teaching methods used realistic?

Yes No

Comment

[15] from A Guide to Self-Assessment, Hilary Maxwell Hyslop, London 2000

and from a questionnaire for learners in a language school: [16]

1 What are three things you like about the school?
2 Was it easy to get information about the school and to enrol?
3 Could you do the course you wanted at a convenient time?
4 Is the school as you expected (for example, teaching methods used, fellow students, etc.)?
5 What things are different?
6 Is there anything you would have liked to have known about the school before you enrolled which you know now? (for example, examinations available)
7 a When you arrived, was it easy to find your way around the school?
b What made it easy?
c If not, why?
8 Is it easy to get information?
- From staff?
- From written documentation?
- From the notice-boards – which ones do you look at regularly?

9 Do you find the staff friendly and approachable?
10 Do you know what to do if (or where to find out what you should do if) you
- were worried that you weren't making progress?
- wanted to take an examination?
- wanted to change the time of your class?
- wanted to enrol for another course?
- had a query abut your course fees?
- had a complaint.
- heard the alarm bell go.

11 Do you know what might happen if
- you were persistently late for class?
- you were absent for a number of lessons without giving advance notice?

If the students generally know the answers to these questions, ask them how they found out (for example, written information, told on first day etc).

12 Do you think the premises and classrooms are suitable for your classes? (for example, big enough, suitably equipped, etc.)
13 Do you have any suggestions for the school?

Quality assurance is not possible without the involvement of all those concerned and this makes regular self-assessment a particularly important instrument in setting up systems for maintaining standards. Clearly, however, awareness of problems and how the learning activities are perceived must be complemented by procedures for putting things right. Teaching is the core activity of schools and therefore it is essential that there are systems for regular observation of teaching activities. The idea of teaching observation is often confused with inspection and sanctions, but there are numbers of ways in which it can be organised to be more constructive and positive:

[16] from A Guide to Self-Assessment, Hilary Maxwell Hyslop

peer observation – where teachers observe each other's classes and exchange feedback. This can be organised within a mentoring system with a more experienced teacher providing help and advice to a less experienced one, or teacher tandems, where two teachers work together co-operatively for a six month period. Peer observation works best if it is designed to provide information rather than evaluation, and checklists can be devised which provide frames for observing specific areas of teaching – the participation of members of the class, the amount of teacher/learner talking time etc. Peer observation needs proper time allocation to free teachers to be able to observe and to allow time for proper feedback.

observation by a teacher trainer who acts in a counselling and training mode and takes time to build up teaching skills.

observation of video lessons in training activities can be a useful way of focussing on techniques; there are published sets of extracts from lessons or they can be from lessons videoed in the institution. If this is done, it is good practice to let the teacher concerned choose and edit what s/he wants to show to colleagues.

observation by the academic manager responsible for teaching standards is a necessary part of quality assurance. Standards for observation procedures would usually include good advance notice of the observation, a checklist seen in advance by the teacher concerned and enough time for systematic feedback afterwards.

Systematic observation will lead to continued work to maintain and develop standards. It may also lead to a realisation that steps must be taken to make changes or improvements. This will lead to the development of projects, accompanied by in-service training. There is frequently resistance to change in schools and it is important that change projects should be properly organised and the cost of change assessed.

The cost of change is not, of course, simply to be seen in terms of money, but in effort, use of resources, etc. An institution applying steps for quality assurance is likely to be one that is always learning and seeking to improve continuously. It is, nevertheless, dangerous to be in a state of constant change and useful to confirm and reinforce the things which are being done well. A possible procedure is:

- Check what you are doing
- Is it OK?
- If yes, confirm it
- If no, innovate

The confirmation of good practice is as important as the innovation phase.

A Guide for the Evaluation and Design of Quality Language [17] *learning and teaching Programmes and Materials,* of the European Commission divides the process of quality assurance into the three phases of Design, Implementation and Outcome and provides series of checklists, in print and interactively on CD-ROM, to assess practice against statements of good practice.

[17] A Guide for the Evaluation and Design of Quality Language learning and teaching Programmes and Materials, European Commission 2000

Pause for reflection
What arrangements do you have in your institution for:
- observing the teaching activities?
- providing help for less experienced teachers?
- regular review through organised self-assessment?
- innovating through projects?
- focused in-service training?
- comparing practice with best practice?

1.5 The application of quality control in language teaching

The distinction between quality control and quality assurance is that the former frequently places the emphasis on the external assessment of quality and is often linked to the accreditation of institutions or the validation of courses. There are, however, internal instruments for quality control. Tools for getting systematic and regular feedback from learners include questionnaires to be completed during courses or after a teaching cycle. They are of most use if applied over a period of time and if they include questions which can be analysed statistically to provide comparative accounts of improvement or deterioration. Focus groups where a small number of learners are asked to give a more detailed account of their views on the institution and its courses, provide freer, more qualitative information.

At an institutional level, the main instrument for external quality control will be through the application, voluntary or compulsory, of systems for audit or inspection. These normally consist of visits from external auditors who carry out a detailed study of the institution's activities and report back on it, recommending or confirming accreditation where this is relevant. Good inspection systems aim to be both transparent and coherent, basing their judgements on clearly stated standards and the institution's stated aims and objectives. They would commonly work on a system of checklists and of agreed ways of verifying that standards are being maintained. Here is an extract from such a framework[18]:

[18] Source - draft document from EAQUALS

CODE OF PRACTICE	REQUIRED STANDARD	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
1.5.1(a) high teaching and educational standards	• clearly written evidence of a sound pedagogic approach (one which makes sense to the inspectors given the context), of which both staff and students are aware	⇒ lesson observation, documents (for example, curriculum), discussion with teachers, focus-group meeting with students
1.5.1(i) appropriate and effective teaching methods	• efficient organisation of lessons, with written plans and/or records, a logical flow in which students understand what they are doing and how it will help them learn; • teachers' ability to use a variety of teaching techniques, and to organise students in different working groups (individual, pairs, groups) as well as to present information, monitor and provide support, and manage changes of activity efficiently and clearly; • attention to the needs and interests of individual students as well as of the whole group, for instance, by ensuring that different needs and abilities within the group are catered to without affecting the work of the group; • use of various different teaching media which are appropriate to the age, type, and level of the group and to the aims of the lessons: textbook, board, handouts, audio cassettes etc; • achievement of learning by all or majority of students; • a good level of student satisfaction, interest, involvement, participation.	⇒ schemes of work (for example, plan for a month's lessons, supervised by academic manager and put on class notice-board) and lesson records ⇒ lesson plans, lesson observation, discussion with teachers, focus-group meeting with students ⇒ lesson observation, focus-group meeting with students, academic record-keeping for individual students ⇒ lesson plans, lesson observation, review of quality, appropriacy and range of teacher resources ⇒ lesson observation, focus groups with students, student records and reports, etc. ⇒ feedback systems and records, focus-group meeting with students, lesson observation.

In the private sector, and in some cases in the public sector, the audit gives accreditation which gives the institution a seal or label which it can use as evidence that the quality of its services has been verified and validated.

Procedures for quality control are also applied to other areas of language education. ALTE (the Association of Language Testers in Europe) has developed criteria for a Code of Practice for public examinations and is in the process of harmonising both levels and the construction of tests and examinations.

Quality control is also applied to project management and criteria for project assessment have been worked out. Here is an example from one approach to project management:

The following framework for evaluating educational projects has been developed by Charles Alderson[19]

PROJECT STRUCTURE	INDICATORS OF ACHIEVEMENT	HOW INDICATORS CAN BE QUANTIFIED OR ASSESSED	IMPORTANT ASSUMPTIONS
WIDER – such as on a national level – what are the wider problems with which the project will help?	What are the quantitative ways of measuring, or qualitative ways of judging whether these broad objectives have been achieved?	What sources of information exist or can be provided cost-effectively?	What conditions external to the project are necessary if the immediate objectives are to contribute to the wider objectives?
IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES – what are the intended immediate effects on the target group or institution? What improvements or changes will be brought about by the project?	What are the quantitative ways of measuring, or qualitative evidence by which achievement and distribution of effects and benefits can be judged?	What sources of information exist or can be provided cost-effectively? Does provision for collection need to be made?	What are the factors not within control of the project (for example, availability of staff and resources) which are liable to restrict achievement of the immediate objectives?
OUTPUTS What outputs (kind, quantity, by when) are to be produced to achieve the immediate objectives? (for example, new curriculum implemented, people trained)		What are the sources of information?	What external factors must be realised to obtain planned outputs on schedule?
INPUTS What materials/equipment or services (people trained, etc.) are to be provided at what cost, over what period, by whom?		What are the sources of information?	What decisions out of the control of those managing the project are necessary for it to be carried through?

[19] In Evaluating Second Language Education - Alderson & Beretta 1992

Pause for reflection
What quality control systems are applied to your institution?

Feature	***How is it applied***
Outside inspection of the institution? Does it give accreditation or a quality label?	Are the criteria clear? Are there checklists on what will be observed?
Feedback questionnaires for learners?	Are the results collected and compared?
Are the internal and external examinations checked to see that they meet quality standards?	
If projects are undertaken are there systems for controlling the quality?	What criteria are used? Are they clear at the beginning of the project?

2. The relevance of the CEF to quality issues

The Council of Europe's CEF provides a coherent and comprehensive description of the field of language learning and teaching which can be applied to the improvement of quality in the following areas:

2.1 For analysing learner needs and setting objectives

A transparent system of describing purpose, content and levels is essential for setting standards and for measuring them. Chapter 3 deals with scaling and levels and examines the issues related to describing learner proficiency. It describes the difficulties involved in producing level descriptors which clearly distinguish between different levels, which are comprehensible to the learners and other users and which contribute positively to the learning process. A distinction is made between user-oriented scales, which are designed for learners, employers and other judges of level reached – they tell us what the learner can do – and assessor-oriented scales, which guide the evaluator and tell us how well the learner performs. The chapter explores the issue of the optimal number of levels for different purposes. It concludes that it is possible to produce understandable, meaningful, measurable scale descriptors and proposes a set of common reference levels, defining basic users, independent users and proficient users, each divided into two levels.

Chapter 4 of the revised version of CEF gives a comprehensive account of language use and the needs of the language learner. Of particular relevance to needs analysis is the diagram in CEF 4.1 concerning the context of language use, which provides categories for describing how learners use language and therefore how they can set learning objectives. The concepts of domain – personal, public, occupational, educational – and the descriptive categories of location, institution, person, object, event, operation and text provide a framework for the design of needs analysis questionnaires and for the definition of outcomes.

Section 4.3 describes communicative tasks and purposes and gives comprehensive accounts of communicative tasks at different levels of linguistic competence.

Section 4.5 describes the communicative language processes and the three major processes of production, reception, interaction and mediation. Section 5.1 outlines the general competences required by a language learner.

Pause for reflection

Do the level descriptors of CEF provide a suitable basis for defining learners' objectives and a framework for assessing their needs?
Do the six levels provide enough steps to show progress through the learning cursus or do you need to add further levels?

2.2 Designing high quality language courses

- Quality assurance principles in general require that close attention be paid to the design of the components which make up a product or activity, and for language learning a comprehensive approach to curriculum design is required. CEF provides this comprehensive description of the categories which need to be taken into account. Chapter 2 of CEF outlines an action-oriented approach to the categories involved in language use and language learning. CEF defines five major features of language use – specific language activity, text, domain, strategy, and task (dealt with in chapters 4 and 7) – related to language learning which are crucial to the definition of the components of language instruction activities.

CEF also distinguishes among different competences – existential competence (*savoir-être*), declarative knowledge (*savoir*) and skills and know-how (*savoir faire*).

CEF 5.2 defines these general competences further and specifies the components of

- linguistic competence (lexical, grammatical, morphological, semantic, phonological);
- socio-linguistic competence (social markers, politeness conventions, register, dialect and accent);
- pragmatic competence (discourse, functional and schematic design competence).

CEF 4.4 deals with strategies and strategic competence under the four main categories

- reception;
- production;
- interaction;
- mediation;

each involving four main processes – planning, execution, evaluation and repair.

CEF chapter 8 deals with the more political elements of curriculum design, asking questions such as:

- At what level of competence is it reasonable to aim?
- What do we mean by plurilingualism?
- When do partial competences provide suitable objectives for language learning programmes?
- How can the learning of different languages be made complementary?
- How can profiles and portfolios help promote motivation for language learning and the portability of acquired language skills and knowledge?

Chapter 8 is particularly relevant to those planning curricula in the context of state school systems.

The analyses and descriptions in CEF chapters 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 provide a set of guidelines and instruments which permit a detailed definition of the complex processes required for language teaching and in this way they provide a basis for producing a curriculum which meets high standards of quality and which can be transparent and specific in its aims.

2.3 Implementing the teaching processes

CEF chapter 6 deals with the processes of language learning and teaching. It distinguishes between learning and acquisition and points out that the learning process involves both the learning and acquiring of competences and also developing the "ability to put these competences into action in the production/reception of spoken utterances/written texts to express and understand meanings, to interpret and negotiate meaning in context and to engage in communicative activities". It outlines in 6.5 the various theories of how languages are learned – including the debate as to whether it is a more or less innate human information-processing activity requiring only exposure to language or whether explicit teaching and study are needed to accelerate the process. The place of conscious learning and structured practice is discussed.

It is clear that the analogy with quality criteria in other domains applies with far more relevance if the view is taken that instructional programmes can be designed which contribute to the efficiency of language learning. Section 6.7 describes methodological options for modern language learning and teaching. It examines both general approaches, including the uses of the target language alone or a combination of the learner's first language and the target language in teaching, and specific aspects of the language learning and teaching process. These include the following elements:

- texts
- tasks and activities
- roles of teachers, learners and media
- general competences
- linguistic competences
- socio-linguistic competences
- pragmatic competences
- strategies

Each section describes the options open to teachers and learners in the area concerned and the parameters which can influence teaching/learning success or failure.

Section 6.5 deals specifically with errors and mistakes and the different options open to teachers in treating errors and mistakes as tools to promote learning.

CEF chapter 6 provides a useful guide to teaching processes and the options open to teachers. It is closely related to the descriptions and categories which will have defined the needs analysis and the design of the components. It does not, however, give strong guidelines on how the different options can be combined in a coherent process – CEF does not seek to be prescriptive – and those responsible for ensuring quality in the implementation of the teaching/learning processes will need to choose their options in specific areas, and also to articulate the various processes into a unified and flexible approach. This requires clear criteria for describing and assessing the quality of the teaching.

Pause for reflection

How far does your institution include the learning /teaching of competences other than linguistic competence?

Competence	***How is it provided for?***
socio-linguistic	
inter-cultural	
strategic competences	
pragmatic competences	

Do you think that the division of language use into production, reception, interaction and mediation offers advantages over the usual division into listening, speaking, reading, writing?

Has the institution a teaching strategy with regard to the balance between input and output, and between opportunities for acquisition and structured learning?

2.4 Assessing the outcomes of learning/teaching programmes

Assessment is the final element in the quality cycle. The needs to be addressed have been analysed; the components have been defined and designed; they have been applied in a coherent, transparent process. We now need to know whether the whole process worked. Did learners learn what they needed to know? Could they apply their knowledge? Was the process economical in the use of time and resources? In order to answer these questions we need to have criteria for measurement and instruments to do the measuring.

Chapter 9 deals with assessment and describes in detail the different options which need to be taken into account in the development of language learning/teaching activities. It distinguishes between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment, between achievement and proficiency testing, between formative and summative assessment. It raises the problems of how to measure communicative as well as linguistic competence and quotes examples of different approaches to these.

The common reference levels are key elements towards the achievement of a common vocabulary and a common set of standards for talking about language knowledge, skills and achievement. As such they are important factors in assuring proper quality and measurement of it. The appendix provides an important set of specific scales with comprehensive coverage of the different components of competence in language knowledge and use. These could be used for assessment of present level and aims, for specifying the objectives and assessing the outcomes of a course. The self-assessment grid on pp. 26-27 with descriptors beginning "I can . . ." can be used for learners to situate their own competences on the scale.

Taken together, chapters 3 and 9 provide a comprehensive guide to achieving meaningful, rigorous and comprehensive assessment of language achievement and proficiency. The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) has carried out considerable development of quality criteria related to language and, for the most commonly learnt languages at least, there are now sets of reliable and valid examination and testing systems. The ALTE “Can do” statements of language performance provide a valuable tool to help define and refine descriptions of language objectives, levels and assessment and are in appendix D.

Pause for reflection List the different kinds of assessment used in your institution:	
Purpose of assessment	**Type of assessment used**
for placement in learning groups	
to check progress	
to measure achievement	
to diagnose learning needs	
for end-of-course certification	
other purposes	
Does this provide a high quality assessment and evaluation system?	

Summary
CEF provides descriptions of quality issues and describes the options available as follows:

ISSUE	CEF
Analysis of learner needs	Chapters 3 and 4 (passim)
Designing courses	Chapters 3, 4.6 to 4.8, 7
Implementing the teaching processes	Chapter 6 (passim)
Assessing the outcomes	Chapters 3 and 9

In conclusion, CEF provides an indispensable set of principles and descriptors. These make a more systematic approach to quality assurance in language teaching feasible. If the common criteria, descriptive categories and proposals for scales of reference can be generally adopted, it will become possible to carry out sensible standardisation of needs analyses and definition of the components of language learning activities. It will facilitate informed choice of options in the implementation of language teaching processes and establish a common vocabulary for describing achievement and its measurement. It does not, however, deal with the practical aspects of quality assurance – how to promote working environments in which the actors can contribute to self-help in achieving quality, how associations of teachers and schools can promote standards in the profession, and how external quality control and inspections schemes can be implemented and improved to enhance standards in the profession.

Worksheet 1

What do you mean by quality?

An essential first step in quality assurance is to make a statement of your standards. One way of doing it is to produce a charter or mission statement for your institution of what you promise to the various stakeholders.

Make a list of the five most important promises you would want your institution to make:

……. school/languages department makes the following promises to its **learners**:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

…….school/languages department makes the following promises to its **teachers**:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

…….school/languages department makes the following promises to **society**:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Worksheet 2

Checking quality

Checklists are useful tools for quality assurance and quality control.

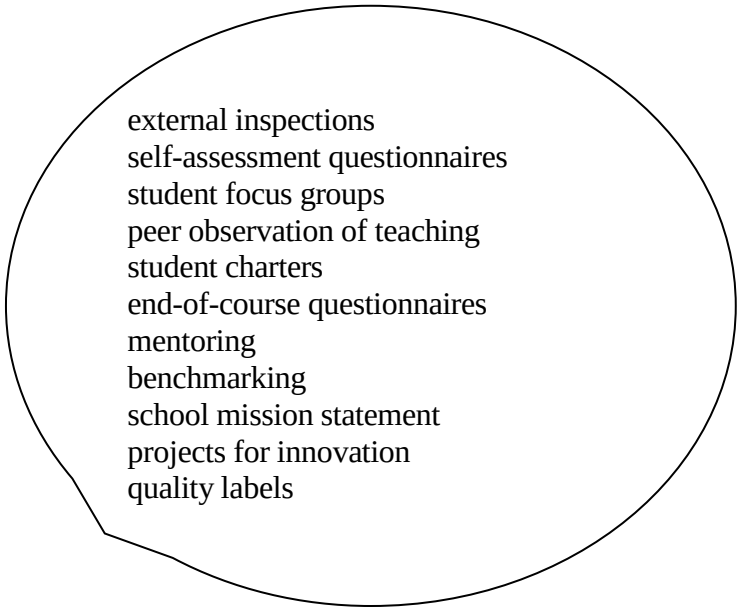
Use the framework below to say how you would set and check standards – an example is given for point 1.

Area of activity	Standards	Evidence
1 high teaching and educational standards.	• clearly written evidence of a sound pedagogic approach (one which makes sense to the inspectors given the context), and of which both staff and students are aware	⇒ lesson observation, documents (for example, curriculum), discussion with teachers, focus-group meeting with students
2. Planning lessons		
3. Checking learner progress		
4. Good administration		
5. In-service training for teachers		
6. You choose the area		

Worksheet 3

Quality assurance and quality control

Here are some of the procedures for quality assurance and quality control. Put them in the relevant columns in the table below and reflect on what would be useful systems for your own institution.



Quality assurance	Quality control

SECTION IV

FOR THOSE ENGAGED IN THE PRODUCTION AND SELECTION OF TEACHING MATERIALS

CHAPTER 8 – USERS' GUIDE FOR TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS WRITERS

By Andy Hopkins

Introduction

Why this? Why here? Why now?

This is really a one-sentence summary of everything that follows in this document: Professional materials writers (those who write materials in a professional way) should consider and be able to justify every single element of their materials in terms of these questions.

At any point in the writing process you should be able to provide satisfactory answers to these questions too:

What are the learners' aims? Does what I have provided help them achieve those aims? Is what I have provided sufficient to allow them to achieve those aims?

If you can look at what you have produced and answer all these questions to your satisfaction, you are probably an experienced textbook writer! If you are not satisfied with your answers, we hope this guide will be of value.

Aims

The main aims of this specific chapter are to highlight key areas of decision-making in which textbook writers are necessarily engaged, and to describe to developers, designers and writers of textbooks and language learning materials specific options for working with the document:. *A Common European Framework of reference for languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe 2001) and ways in which it can assist with the materials development process. It will also be of value to teachers who engage in smaller-scale development of in-house materials and to those who have to make decisions about textbook selection.

This chapter is organised around some of the key questions and decisions that any serious materials writer, and particularly textbook writer, needs to consider. It is not a description of the overall Framework, but an orientation to CEF as a flexible resource for materials writers.

What key questions do materials writers need to address?

These are the main areas of decision-making that are dealt with in this document:

1. What characterises the contexts in which the materials will be used?
2. In what terms will the aims of the materials be described?
3. What information is available regarding learners' needs and wants?
4. What media are desirable and practical for the materials?
5. How will the materials be weighted, grouped and sequenced?
6. What kinds of approach are appropriate?
7. What range of tasks should the materials contain?
8. How will texts be selected for inclusion?

Appendix A: Tips on the materials writing process
Appendix B: An example of stages in a writing process
Appendix C: A checklist for selection of textbooks

1. What characterises the contexts in which the materials will be used?

Materials writers are almost always in the position of producing materials for particular types of learners and learning situations, and it is obvious that we should take the significant characteristics of these into account. Consider, for example, how the characteristics of the following contexts are likely to affect textbook design:

- a course produced by an international publisher aimed at adult learners of Spanish all over the world;
- a course produced in Germany aimed at preparing first-year Business Studies students in Germany for attending the second year of their course in Britain where they will be taught through the medium of English;
- a course produced in Estonia aimed at preparing residents of foreign origin wishing to become Estonian citizens for an Estonian language test;
- a French primary course produced in Britain for British children.

As teachers, we are perhaps most familiar with the ways in which the characteristics of different types of learners affect course design; but other factors also need to be taken into account. For example, learners and teachers almost always operate within some kind of institutional system which specifies or implies possibilities and constraints within which a materials writer has to work. Systems often feature explicit or implicit specifications or guidelines relating to, for example, curricula, assessment procedures and approaches, and are characterised by the availability of particular resources to do with media, space, time, class size and staffing. There may also be institutional requirements for courses to be used linearly or in a modular way, to be used in class with a teacher or in a self-study or distance mode. A well-received textbook will be one that takes all of these institutional characteristics into account.

Materials writers should also build up as clear a picture as possible of the characteristics of teachers who will work with the course. Is their knowledge of the target language good? Are they highly experienced? Do they expect step-by-step guidance for working with the materials or do they see textbooks as providing flexible resources? Do you need to build teacher development activities into the support materials in order to orientate teachers to some of the more innovative aspects of the course? Figure 1 below lists some of these variables and suggests some of the implications for textbook design.

CEF recognises variation in all of these areas and offers a flexible, clearly formulated and coherent resource that can be adapted to any particular learning context. This desire to retain flexibility is stated most clearly in one of the conclusions of the report of the Intergovernmental Symposium held in Rüschlikon, Switzerland (*Transparency and coherence in language learning in Europe*, Council of Europe 1992, 3.2):

"The construction of a comprehensive, transparent and coherent Framework for language learning and teaching does not imply the imposition of one single uniform system. On the contrary, the framework should be open and flexible, so that it can be applied, with such adaptations as prove necessary, to particular situations."

Figure 1. Some variables in learning contexts and their implications for textbooks

Learners

Variable	*Possible implications for (examples)*
Age	Topic, characters, knowledge
Monolingual/multilingual groups	Use of mother tongue
Cultural backgrounds and aspirations	Topic, settings, roles, tasks
Gender	Separate textbooks
General education	World knowledge
Educational and professional aspirations	Course aims, topics, roles, settings, tasks
Familiarity with types of learning media and modes	Learner development/training
Current ability in target language	Course aims, tasks, level

Institutional Systems

Variable	*Possible implications for (examples)*
Curriculum, syllabus and examination frameworks, teaching and learning cultures, course length and intensity, class sizes, staffing, availability of media and resources, in-service development possibilities . . .	Course aims, length, structure, learning media and modes

Teachers

Variable	*Possible implications for (examples)*
Ability in learners' target language, level of pedagogic training, degree of familiarity with types of learning media and modes, teaching culture and degree of flexibility, expectations of materials and attitudes to innovation . . .	Degree of support and guidance in Teacher's Book and ease of use of classroom materials; balance between innovation and meeting teachers' expectations

Learning mode

Variable	*Possible implications for (examples)*
Classroom based; distance (traditional/ Internet) open learning with teacher available for consultation; mixed modes; self-study; modular/linear courses	Course length, task types, media, degree of written support, learner training, teacher development

Questions for materials writers

1. Who are the intended learners? How specifically can they be characterised in terms of: age, gender, mother tongue, cultural background, educational and professional aspirations, needs and wants, likely familiarity with different learning media and modes, and current ability in the target language?

2. What are the significant features of the institutional system(s) within which the materials are likely to be used? How will the materials relate to existing/planned curricula, assessment procedures and approaches? To what extent will the materials acknowledge practical realities to do with media, space, time, staffing, class size, etc.? Is the course to be used linearly/modularly, with or without a teacher, in a group/individual setting?

3. Are there any significant generalisations one can make about the teachers who are likely to work with the course? What degree of support and reference will they expect/require from the materials?

2. In what terms will the aims of the materials be described?

It may seem odd to start with this question; shouldn't our first consideration be – what do our learners need and want to learn? The problem is, of course, that we cannot address this second question until we have the categories with which to frame our answers. And it is with these categories that CEF offers most help.

One of the earliest decisions that a textbook writer needs to make concerns the features that will organise the course. Ur (1996) identifies ten types of syllabus in terms of their driving features. They are: grammatical, lexical, grammatical-lexical, situational, topic-based, notional, functional-notional, mixed or multi-strand, procedural (defined in terms of tasks), and process (negotiated). One could add others, focusing on discourse, genres/text-types, language skills, professional/academic skills, sociocultural knowledge and skills, learner strategies, etc.

What will the underlying organising principles behind your syllabus be? Will it be organised in terms of a grammatical sequence? Will it be based on themes deemed to be of value to the learners? Will it be primarily lexically-driven, perhaps based on frequency of use? Will it be organised in terms of communicative tasks? Will it be arranged in terms of useful genres and text-types? Perhaps you would like it to include all of these elements.

Although it is becoming common for modern language learning textbooks to claim to be based on a multi-strand syllabus, one could argue that the process of designing materials is, by necessity, driven by one or two key syllabus elements that organise the course. The selection of these key elements of organisation has a serious effect on how other elements feature. Let's take an example of a grammar-driven course. We may decide (as many course writers have over the years) to sequence our course in terms of what we believe to be increasingly difficult aspects of the forms and uses of sentence and text grammar. The rationale for sequencing might be that some elements of grammar are easier to understand, learn and use, and should therefore be encountered first, while others are felt to be more difficult. If our focus is on grammar and we work within our own scripted texts and language examples, we inevitably find ourselves to some degree introducing lexis as a grammatical slot-filler to exemplify a particular structure. If, on the

other hand, we have the patience and energy to seek real examples of texts where the grammar occurs in a way that matches our requirements (and this is extremely difficult) we certainly would have no control over the lexical content, or the communicative qualities of the texts. Equally, if we start with genuine communication, we encounter the same problem. Selecting real pieces of language for their communicative qualities will in turn render it difficult to have control over grammatical or lexical content.

What this seems to suggest is that while it is very easy to design a multi-strand syllabus in the abstract, it is extremely difficult to produce multi-strand materials. In reality we have to decide which strands will drive our course. It is not the function of this guide nor of CEF to state a preference for one strand over another. The choice of driving strands will depend on your own beliefs and preferences about language and language learning. However, CEF does suggest a number of ways in which learners' needs and wants can be described.

For many teachers and materials writers it may be useful to refer to the highly influential Threshold and Waystage documentation produced by the Council of Europe, which began to appear in 1975 in first versions and was revised and extended in 1990.

Threshold Level 1990 lists a series of categories that might feature in syllabuses. Any or all of these can be utilised as organising features of a textbook. They include:

- language functions
- general notions (semantico-grammatical categories)
- specific notions (often also referred to as topics or themes)
- verbal exchange patterns (common functional sequences)
- dealing with texts: reading and listening
- writing
- sociocultural competence
- compensation strategies
- learning to learn
- grammar
- vocabulary
- pronunciation and intonation

It is important to note that these listings do not in themselves constitute a syllabus. They do, however, provide categories which can help in deciding what to select as syllabus strands, and include information about what the main features of these syllabus strands might be.

But what is the relationship between a detailed document like *Threshold Level 1990* and CEF? The Framework encourages materials writers to think through and collect information on relevant questions relating to the needs and wants of their learners in terms of the target language. The *Threshold Level 1990* specification is one way of answering the questions CEF sets. It is a particular interpretation and provides a useful, partial model for a way of working with CEF.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to the questions and categories that CEF sets up in order to help us think through what we might wish to include as learning aims in our language courses and textbooks. These questions are presented in more detail in CEF, but it is worth examining here the categories that are offered to assist this thinking on the part of the materials writer.

2.1 The context of language use

One of the first questions a textbook writer needs to ask is, what are the contexts in which the learners are likely to use the target language?

2.1.1 Domains (CEF 4.1.1)

This question can be considered in terms of what CEF calls domains. Are these domains: personal – concerning life as a private individual, centred on home life with family and friends; public – concerning learners as members of the general public engaged in transactions of various kinds; occupational – concerning learners engaged in their jobs or professions; educational – concerning learners engaged in organised learning?

The domains in which language use takes place may be difficult to predict for general learners, while for specialised learners (for example, on LSP courses) they may be very particular indeed. CEF suggests that materials writers consider how the context of language use might be described under the four fundamental domain headings above, and how each will have a bearing on the aims of the materials.

Examples
We can imagine that for the majority of younger school students, the emphasis will be on the personal and public domains, while for students preparing to study through the medium of another language, possibly in another cultural setting, the educational domain will have particular relevance. Occupational domains may be highly specific and focused on current working situations, or less specific (such as commerce) focusing on general predictable future needs (for example, operating in a commercial capacity in other European countries and beyond).

2.1.2 Situations (CEF 4.1.2)

When we have decided on the relevant domains we can go into more detail and consider the various situations that are likely to arise within these domains, described in terms of: locations, institutions and organisations, the social roles of people involved, relevant objects in the environment, events which are likely to take place, operations to be performed, and texts likely to be encountered.

Examples
Figure 2 gives examples of typical situations and their possible components (CEF 4.1.2, Table 5). The list provided is illustrative only.

Table 1 EXTERNAL CONTEXT OF USE

Domain	Locations	Institutions	Persons	Objects	Events	Operations	Texts
Personal	Home: own) house of family) rooms of friends) garden of strangers) Own space in hostel, hotel The countryside, seaside, etc.	The Family Social networks	(Grand)Parents, Offspring, Siblings, Aunts, Uncles, Cousins, In-laws, Spouses Intimates, Friends, Acquaintances	Furnishing & furniture Clothing Household equipment Toys, tools, personal hygiene Objets d'art, Books, Pets, Wild /domestic animals, 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, etc.) DIY, gardening Reading, Radio & TV Entertaining Hobbies Games & 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, etc. Public transport Shops (super)markets Hospitals, surgeries, clinic Sports stadia, fields, 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 Programmes Meals, Drinks, Snacks Passports, Licences	Incidents Accidents, Illnesses Public meetings Law-suits, Court trials Rag-days, Fines, Arrests Matches, contests Performances Weddings, Funerals	Buying and obtaining public services Using medical services Journeys by road/rails/ship/air Public entertainment and leisure activities Religious services	Public announcements and notices Labels & packaging Leaflets, Graffiti Tickets, Timetables Notices, Regulations Programmes Contracts Menus Sacred texts Sermons, Hymns
Occup-pational	Offices Factories Workshops Ports, railways Farms Airports Stores, shops, etc. Service industries Hotels	Firms Civil Service Multinational Corporations Nationalised industries Trade Unions	Employers/ees Managers Colleagues Subordinates Workmates Clients Customers Receptionists, Secretaries Cleaners, etc.	Business machinery Industrial machinery Industrial & craft tools	Meetings Interviews Receptions Conferences Trade fairs Consultations Seasonal sales Industrial accidents Industrial disputes	Business admin. Industrial management Production operations Office procedures Trucking Sales operations Selling, marketing Computer operation Works office Maintenance	Business letter Report Memorandum Life & safety notices Instructional manuals Regulations Advertising material Labelling & packaging Job description Sign posting Visiting cards, etc.
Educa--tional	Schools: Hall Classrooms, Playground, Sports fields, corridors Colleges Universities Lecture Theatres Seminar rooms Student Union Halls of Residence Laboratories Canteen	School College University Learned societies Professional Institutions Adult education bodies	Class teachers Teaching staff Caretakers Assistant staff Parents Classmates Professors, lecturers (Fellow) Students Library & laboratory staff Refectory staff, cleaners Porters, Secretaries, etc.	Writing material School uniforms Games equipment & clothing Food Audio-visual equipment Black-board & chalk Computers Briefcases & School bags	Return to school/entry Breaking up Visits and Exchanges Parents' days / evenings Sports days, Matches Disciplinary problems	Assembly Lessons Games Playtime Clubs & societies Lectures, Essay writing Laboratory work Library work Seminars & tutorials homework Debates & discussions	Authentic texts (as above) Textbooks, Readers Reference books Blackboard text OP text Computer screen text Videotext Exercise materials Journal articles Abstracts Dictionaries

2.1.3 Conditions and constraints (CEF 4.1.3)

Going deeper into the specification of contexts of use, we can consider the conditions and constraints of each situation. For the materials developer these will have implications for types of text and task. The following external conditions are felt to be significant: physical conditions (such as background noise), social conditions (such as number and status of speakers), time pressures (limitations on time available).

Examples
Interpreters engaged in simultaneous interpretation for a politician on tour in another country will be required to carry out their work very rapidly, between individuals and groups, in a variety of places and often under extreme stress. Airport announcers, however, make the same routine monologue announcements at their own pace and expect no feedback. Business people engaged in meetings on which their jobs might depend operate under very different conditions from tourists chatting with acquaintances from other countries in a hotel bar. Highly motivated learners may respond positively to materials that learners with lower motivation would not find of interest.

In reality, it is often very difficult to guess the likely future contexts of language use, not only for children and secondary school students, but even for students who appear to have quite specific needs. Nevertheless, a materials writer has to make decisions about which contexts of use to present through the materials, from information and intuitions based on experience as a foreign language learner/user and educationalist.

2.1.4 The user/learner's mental context (CEF 4.1.4)

The external context is filtered and interpreted through the user's perceptual apparatus, the personal mental constructs that affect memory, associations and connotations, and the way in which the user classifies objects and events. Other relevant factors include: state of mind, needs, drives, interests, intentions, and lines of thought.

2.1.5 The mental context of the interlocutor(s) (CEF 4.1.5)

Interlocutors may share the same external context but may observe and interpret that context differently. Two people talking to each other on the phone may not only be subject to different conditions and constraints (for example, a poor line at one end while the person at the other is in a hurry), they may have quite different purposes for the communication, be motivated by differing needs, and be in very different states of mind. Effective communication requires interlocutors to adjust to each other's mental contexts.

2.2 Communication themes (CEF 4. 2)

These relate to the subject matter of communication – often referred to as topics by teachers. In general language contexts it is in the area of themes that we often pay most attention to learners' wants. It is essential that themes are relevant to our learners – and relevance arises from the themes being not only useful (in that they are relevant to predicted contexts of use and can act as a vehicle for essential language) but also interesting. In fact, themes in themselves are often fairly bland. We can make them interesting by deciding to focus on them in a particular way, and by dividing each theme into sub-themes.

Example
Let's take work as our theme. We may choose a sub-theme focus of holiday jobs in a foreign country for students. This would lead us to think about further sub-categories, which CEF refers to as specific notions, and which imply whole areas of vocabulary. We might focus on a particular holiday job – such as working in Euro Disney outside Paris. This would generate word groups relating to locations (rides, eating places, first aid posts, reception, car parks, etc.), persons (cartoon characters, visitors, customers, guides, etc.), objects (tickets, food and drink, souvenirs, etc.), actions (see, visit, listen to, watch, go in/out/round, start, finish, win, lose, take part in, ride, etc.).

In this way the general identification of thematic areas can lead to quite detailed specification of useful bits of language to build in to the course.

2.3 Communicative tasks and purposes (CEF 4.3)

Decisions about contexts of use and relevant communication themes allow us to start considering in more detail the language requirements of particular situations. What communicative tasks do we believe our learners will need to engage in, and for what purposes? There has been a lot of LSP research over the last twenty or so years that can be of assistance in thinking about the language used to carry out particular commercial, professional and academic tasks in fairly restricted settings. There is comparatively little advice about language related to `general' tasks in less predictable settings. Nevertheless, as materials writers we need to decide what communicative tasks will most likely be encountered by and required of our learners. Here is an example from *Threshold Level 1990*:

1.12 Communicating at Work
1.12.1 As temporary residents learners should be able to:

- seek work permits, etc., as required
- enquire (for example, from employment agencies) about the nature, availability and conditions of employment (such as job description, pay, hours of work, free time, holidays, length of notice)
- read employment advertisements
- write letters of application and attend interviews giving written or spoken information about own personal data, qualifications and experience and answer questions about them
- understand and follow joining procedures
- understand and ask questions concerning the tasks to be performed on starting work
- understand safety and security regulations and instructions
- report an accident and make an insurance claim
- make use of welfare facilities
- communicate appropriately with superiors, colleagues and subordinates
- participate in the social life of the enterprise or institution (for example, canteen, sports and social clubs, etc.)

[Note: the numbering here is from *Threshold Level 1990*]

2.4 Communicative language activities and strategies (CEF 4.4)

In order to engage in communicative tasks, users have to be involved in communicative language activities and operate communicative strategies. This grouping of activities and strategies is often referred to by teachers and textbook writers under the general heading of skills. CEF identifies four major types of language activity: *productive* (spoken and written), *receptive* (spoken, written and audio-visual), *interactive* (spoken and written) and *mediating* (for example, as an interpreter/translator). Any one of these communicative activity types includes a range of communicative tasks that we will need to build in to our materials. Of course, most situations will require a mixture of activity types.

Examples
Oral production might involve speaking from notes; spoken interaction might involve taking part in a discussion; mediating could be very formal and written (providing an exact translation of legal documents) or quite informal and spoken (interpreting menus for a visitor).

CEF explains strategies as follows:

"Strategies are a means the language user exploits to mobilise or balance his or her resources, to activate skills and procedures, in order to fulfil the demands of communication in context and successfully complete the task in question in the most comprehensive or most economical way feasible depending on his or her precise purpose."

Communication strategies involve the application of planning, execution, monitoring and repair action to the different kinds of communicative activities of reception, interaction, production and mediation. Section 4.8 of CEF gives detailed descriptions of communication strategies that help to maximise effectiveness.

Example
A learner is required to give a short talk. We can consider this an example of production. Planning might involve rehearsing, thinking about the effect of different ways of presenting (considering audience) and perhaps looking up words or asking for help (locating resources). Having mobilised resources, the learner may now be more or less ambitious about execution of the task in terms of the nature and extent of the talk (task adjustment) and particularly about its linguistic content (message adjustment). The learner is likely to encounter difficulties, but we hope he or she will cope by using whatever resources are available to get the message across by compensating, building on previous knowledge and trying out. Audience reaction will allow the learner to monitor success and this may lead to a certain amount of *self-correction* as repair action.

The development of these strategies, and others concerned with **reception, interaction** and **mediation**, is an important aspect of language learning courses. They are also useful to the development of native-speaker communication skills in a wide range of professional areas. Courses aimed specifically at developing these strategies are common in areas where the quality and effectiveness of communication are vital, for example, in counselling, doctor-patient communication, and sales presentations.

How do we give time and space to the development of strategies when there is so much relevant linguistic focus that has to be included? This is a legitimate question (often in the form of a complaint) from teachers and materials writers. One answer is that we *can* work on the development of language processes, learner competences and learner strategies, and that this can

best be accomplished through task design. The types of tasks we select can encourage the development of learning and communicative procedures and can also raise awareness about ways of approaching and monitoring communication. This is taken up further in section 7 below.

CEF contains an extremely detailed and useful set of performance descriptors at six levels that describe language ability in terms of communicative language activities and strategies.

Questions for materials writers

1. Which strategies are relevant to the communication needs of your learners?
2. How can these strategies be developed through the materials? Do they require a specific, separate activity focus or are they best developed through procedures encouraged by task design?

2.5 Communicative language processes (CEF 4.5)

It is not enough to specify what learners are required to *do* with language. Teachers and materials writers also have to consider how they can prepare learners to carry out these communicative tasks effectively. These days most textbooks offer learners the opportunity to grapple with relevant communicative tasks. However, one of the most common omissions in language learning textbooks is activities that help the development of the underlying communicative processes involved in operating in a foreign language. Materials writers must offer not only practice in the task itself, but assistance towards the successful completion of that task.

CEF identifies nine key features of communicative language processes. We need to consider the skills involved in dealing with: planning, execution, production, reception, interaction, monitoring, practical actions, paralinguistic behaviour and paratextual features.

An awareness of the skills involved in communicative language processes is fundamental to all materials development. Section 4.5 of CEF offers guidance concerning the nature of these processes. The challenge for materials writers is to incorporate development of these processes into materials.

Example
A woman is at a railway station and needs to find out when a particular train is leaving, buy a ticket and get on the train before it leaves. Focusing on just one aspect of this task reveals the importance of communicative language processes. She will probably want to study a timetable. To get the information she wants involves: locating and recognising the relevant text (perhaps by using paratextual information, or by asking someone); understanding it; and retrieving the information she needs quickly. This will involve skills like: finding, decoding, inferencing, predicting, rapid scanning, referring back and forth, etc. We can assist learners in dealing with texts like this by ensuring that the tasks we write in our materials take account of the language processes involved.

Questions for materials writers

1. What are the communicative language processes involved in the tasks your learners are expected to carry out?
2. How can you incorporate development of these processes into the materials? Will they be a specific direct learning focus or will they be dealt with indirectly through, for example, a combination of task design and text selection?

2.6 Texts (CEF 4.6)

The term *text* is used here to refer to any piece of spoken or written language used as communication. Materials writers need to have a clear idea of the types of text their learners are likely to have to deal with in terms of:

Media	(e.g. live spoken, print, film, radio, telephone, videophone)
Text-type	(e.g. spoken – public announcements, public debates, entertainment)
	(e.g. written – books, magazines, brochures, packaging, signs)

Clearly, materials should contain texts that are similar to, or that help to prepare learners for, texts they will encounter in the real world, in terms of media, genre and text-type, roles of interlocutors, purposes, etc.

Question for materials writers

Which texts will your students encounter in terms of media and text-type?

2.7 The user/learner's competences (CEF 5)

In section 1 above we have already referred to the importance of characterising the learners who are likely to use the materials you write. CEF goes into greater detail regarding the competences that different learners bring to a language course. It divides competences into two main areas. General competences are to do with: life experience, sociocultural knowledge, ability to engage practically and successfully with people and institutions in the target culture, personality features that have an effect on a learner's roles in communicative acts, and learning skills. Communicative language competences are concerned with abilities to bring linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge and abilities to bear on particular communicative tasks. They are to do with grammar, vocabulary, phonology, understanding and use of markers of social significance (such as politeness, accent), and discourse, functional and schematic abilities.

This section of CEF is extremely important as it gives detailed listings of categories that writers should consider including in their materials. Not only does it cover the more familiar areas of linguistic competence associated with grammar, lexis and phonology, it also includes reference to areas that have become significant features of modern language learning materials such as: sociocultural knowledge, existential competence (concerned with individual personality factors), language awareness, study skills, pragmatic competences associated with discourse, functional and schematic design abilities. Although these categories are increasingly featured in language learning materials, their coverage and presentation have often seemed rather random. CEF attempts more detailed descriptions.

Questions for materials writers

1. To what extent do you believe that materials writers can take account of the type of general competences referred to above?
2. Is it a legitimate aim of a language course to try to modify personality features that we might feel affect language learning and communication?
3. How do we make decisions about aims for the development of linguistic competences at each level (vocabulary, grammar)?
4. To what extent do you feel we need to teach discourse and schematic organisation on a foreign language course?

Summary

This section has referred to a range of areas where it is relevant to ask questions in relation to the learners for whom you are writing. They can also all be regarded as possible categories of aims for a language course or set of materials. The task for the materials writer is to collect information and make decisions in all of these areas. It is up to you to decide which set(s) of aims will organise your syllabus and which others will be main strands that receive a direct focus. The next step is to consider how other aims which can be targeted indirectly (possibly through text selection and task design) will be built into the materials in a coherent way.

3. What information is available regarding learners' needs and wants?

The categories mentioned above provide us with ways of describing our learners' needs and wants, and in turn, the aims of our course. For LSP courses, we may now wish to proceed with detailed needs analyses involving observation and analysis of relevant communicative events and collection and analysis of texts and other data. We may also want to consult specialised lexicons and corpora as well as published research on language analysis in the field of interest. It is also extremely valuable to examine other coursebooks that have been written for learners with similar needs.

For learners with more general aims a similar approach is recommended, although in reality we are more involved in exploring our and others' intuitions than in analysing data. The questions in chapter 3 of CEF lead one through a thinking process, but the answers that you give should be checked against information from other sources – for example, stated course aims, examinations, other educationalists' institutions, externally-produced checklists, and other relevant textbooks.

It is not the purpose of CEF to suggest actual verbalisations of the relevant communicative tasks (in relevant activities, themes, situations, domains). So, while answering the questions in chapter 3 of CEF may lead you to decide that your learners need to, for instance, enquire about the nature, availability and conditions of a job (communicative task) via oral interaction (communicative language activity) in a job centre, with a job centre employee, while looking at job advertisements (situation) where the domain is occupational (domain) and the subject is employment (communication theme) involving certain communicative language processes, competences and strategies, it will still be necessary for you to decide how users of the target language actually verbalise such spoken enquiries. It is the verbalisations of all of these communicative tasks that provide the actual language that learners need to learn. It is from the verbalisations (spoken and written) of communicative tasks that the grammar and lexical content of your course can most obviously be derived.

Questions for materials writers

1. What sources of information can you consult about learners' needs and wants?
2. What procedures will you use for collecting this information and data?
3. While collecting information, can you also collect useful texts to use/adapt for your materials?
4. If your course is a general one, are there useful reference sources that can be consulted (for instance, *Threshold Level 1990*)?
5. Are there published guidelines for course aims available from official. Does the course lead to examinations that assume certain language work has been covered in particular ways?

4. What media are desirable and practical for the materials?

We would perhaps all wish our learners to have access to the full range of learning media: paper-based, audio, video and the latest computer software and hardware. But materials writers always operate within particular contexts that constrain the choice of media. Educational institutions all over the world have budgetary constraints and one of the first things to bear in mind when thinking about media and course components is – how will this particular medium contribute to the learning aims of the course – and – will it add something that is unique (that other media cannot supply) to the overall course package? This way of thinking is extremely helpful to the materials writer because it is apparent when designing materials for particular media that they should exploit the unique possibilities that those media offer. For example, there is no value in using a computer for presenting texts if the required interaction between the learner and the text is no different from that with a text in a book. There is little point in using (expensive) video rather than (cheaper) audio if the visual element of the video is not exploited. Equally, of course, there is no point in having parts of the course that depend on expensive hardware if users, whether institutional or individual, have little or no access to such equipment.

Successful courses that exploit the maximum range of available media often do so in such a way that the expensive and more exotic components are optional extras and not absolutely central to the course, while the core components are as cheap and accessible as possible – usually paper and audio-based. A common configuration for an extended classroom package is given below. Optional components are marked with an asterisk.

Example * – optional components

- Classroom Book: containing all materials for use in the class
- Classroom Audio (Cassette/CD): containing all audio materials related to the classroom book
- Workbook: containing practice and reference by learners working alone, perhaps at home
- Workbook Audio (Cassette/CD): containing all audio materials related to the workbook
- Teacher's Book: providing teacher support materials such as photocopiable task sheets, role cards, information gap activities
- *Video: containing additional materials that extend the classroom materials
- *Video Workbook: containing materials related to the video
- *Video Teacher's Guide: providing teacher support materials for the video and video workbook
- *CD-ROM: containing further practice, reference, tests, databases for projects, etc.

- *Internet support: online dictionaries, reference grammars, additional practice materials, etc.
- *Internet interaction: discussion groups (spoken/written), e-pals, help lines, etc.

While there may be certain courses, focusing mainly on reading and writing skills, from which an audio component may be omitted, the increased interest in spoken language development and aural comprehension generally makes an audio component essential. This is particularly true when the teacher is not an expert speaker of the target language.

The choice of components for a course package does, of course, have some effect on methodological options, but we should not exaggerate the constraints of a simple paper and audio-based programme. Certainly the addition of other media offers the potential for a course to have an increased range of modes of learning, and there is no doubt that interactive CD-ROM or Internet-based courses are beginning to offer exciting opportunities for individual learning modes.

When thinking about the addition of exotic media components the writer must always bear in mind the implications that their introduction will have for the learner, and indeed, for the teacher. What skills will teachers and learners need to get the best out of the different media components? How much orientation to the course itself and its learning modes is likely to be necessary?

Questions for materials writers

1. What components does the learning context suggest are desirable and possible?
2. What degree of access will teachers/learners have to the hardware necessary for certain media?
3. Will all the components be necessary parts of the course, or will some be optional?
4. How transitory do we believe certain hi-tech modes are likely to be? (How much should we invest in CD-ROM?)
5. What is the learning value of each of the components? Is the likely learning pay-off economically viable?
6. How fully do the materials exploit the unique possibilities of the different media types?
7. To what extent will hi-tech media components involve teachers and learners in developing new skills necessary for working with the course?

5. How will the materials be weighted, grouped and sequenced?

When general decisions have been reached about the aims of the materials and the media available, it is time to start considering the detailed structure of the different parts. For the purposes of this document we will be concentrating on the central feature of most courses – the classroom, or student book.

You will have decided a number of things by now on the basis of your learner needs/wants information; for example, which communicative tasks you want students to be able to deal with in what situations, with which implications for functions, grammar, lexis, phonology, etc. In other words, you will have made lists of the communication competences and activity/strategy-related aims of your course. All of this is essential preparation, but the task of actually beginning to structure the textbook begins here.

One of the contextual parameters that we mentioned earlier related to learning time available to students. As an example, let us take a typical European secondary school curriculum with three to four hours a week devoted to a foreign language. Most institutions require a classroom textbook to be used over a full school year. In these circumstances, therefore, our course materials will need to cover approximately 80 to 100 class hours plus homework and self-study time. We may choose to produce separate learning materials for homework and self-study (such as a workbook). But how can we begin to construct a classroom-based programme of 80–to 100 class hours?

The first step is to divide the course into units. These units will vary in aim and duration depending on the context. What do we understand by a `unit' of learning materials? Here are some thoughts.

A unit . . .
- has specific (and often multiple) learning aims and usually moves the syllabus forward in all the areas identified in that syllabus (while an individual classroom lesson is unlikely to);
- has a beginning and an end;
- is internally coherent and has a specified relation with other units (perhaps as part of a linear sequence, perhaps as a module in a group of units);
- is engaging (in terms of interest value); is useful (in terms of learning outcomes); is varied (in terms of types of student activity); is seen to be relevant (has face value); is developmental and generative (helps learners to move on in the course and in their own learning);
- is (usually) expected to be covered in a specified amount of classroom time.

Grouping learning aims for a unit is a key step in materials design, for it is at this stage that a checklist of what we hope students will learn is crafted into a syllabus. Look at this grouping that the writers used for a unit from a typical general English language coursebook. *(Look Ahead 1).*

Example
Theme: Shopping

Sub-theme 1: Shops

Context	Preparing to go on a trip
Vocabulary	Types of shop
	Objects to buy for the trip (clothes, toiletries, containers)
Grammar	Irregular plurals
	Genitive `*s* for types of shop (such as the newsagent's)
	Revision of *have got* with *a, some, any*
	Revision of present simple tenses

Sub-theme 2: Buying things in shops

Communicative	Carrying out a transaction in a shop involving the following functions …
task	Asking for something *(Can I have… ?)*
	Asking about prices *(How much is…?)*
	Stating wishes *(I'd like…)*
	Asking for clarification *(Sorry? How much?)*
	Giving someone something *(Here you are.)*
	Greeting and leave-taking *(Good morning…Goodbye)*

Grammar	Pronoun – one, ones
	Questions with …*which (one)?*
	how many? … (with countable nouns)
	how much? … (with uncountable nouns)

Sub-theme 3: Buying the things you need

Speaking	Buying things in shops
Listening	Discussing what you would take on a trip
Reading	Understanding advertisements for shops
Writing	Writing a packing list of things to take on holiday

This shows how elements of aims can be grouped in a coherent manner. Here the (six-page) unit takes a theme and further divides it into three (two-page) sub-themes. Progression through the unit leads to the carrying out of particular communicative tasks related to shopping, and the lexis, grammar and functions needed to carry out those tasks form the language aims of the unit. The grouping of language aims is determined by the language content of the target communicative tasks within a particular theme. This is one option for grouping.

There are many other options. Let's take another example of a course to prepare university students for following their undergraduate or graduate course through a foreign language. In this case it may be that theme is not a useful concept for labelling a unit of learning. Many academic courses for students with a mixed range of specific subject interests are divided along academic macro skill lines such as listening to lectures and writing essays. Here the focus is on the development of the skill, and content areas are often just vehicles through which the skill is perceived and practised. Further, we can imagine that the need for grammatical accuracy in a course of lecture comprehension is far less important than in one on essay writing. In the lecture comprehension course we may divide teaching material into units on the basis of types of communicative chunks (often referred to as moves in genre analysis literature; see Swales 1990) that the speaker is likely to offer in a lecture monologue.

Here are some of the elements that might be involved in a science-oriented course:

- starting and finishing a lecture
- introducing and closing topics
- defining terms
- describing equipment and materials
- describing method
- talking through numerical calculation
- interpreting graphs, tables, etc.
- presenting classifications
- describing research
- comparing and contrasting
- explaining tasks
- a range of interactional functions in monologue related to: focusing, recapping, pre-structuring, reviewing, checking, eliciting, justifying, deducing, summarising, reminding and rephrasing.

A unit of such a course might be organised under the headings above, and our analysis of (or predictions about) the verbalisations of these chunks will yield rich linguistic material (concerning discourse organisation, intonation, sentence grammar, text organisation, vocabulary,

etc.) that we can use to specify the linguistic aims that might be part of a unit of learning under each heading. The coherence of the materials in this case relies on the communicative chunks and their accompanying linguistic features. In such a course it is hard to see how one can build in a sequencing rationale based on supposed difficulty of grammar or lexis, except as a separate, linear course strand with less immediate pay-off.

Questions for materials writers

1. How will you divide the course aims into unit aims?
2. What label will you use for each unit? Will it be based on, for example, a theme, a macro-skill, a communicative task?
3. Will the unit have further sub-divisions?
4. Do the units and their sub-divisions need to be followed sequentially or can they be used in a modular way?
5. What features of language will be highlighted as unit aims?
6. How will you decide on the different weightings given to different aims?
7. What principles will you operate in order to group different aims together into a coherent unit?

6. What kinds of approach are appropriate?

Chapter 6 of CEF outlines a range of processes of language learning and teaching. Approaches vary according to teacher beliefs and preferences, learner type, resource availability and institutional context, and wise textbook writers will, at the very least, acknowledge all these factors in the materials that they produce.

It is probably uncontentious to state that most practitioners and learners believe that a foreign language can, to some extent be learned as the result of a planned process, such as a course, and that language can also be acquired either from direct exposure to text and/or from direct participation in communicative events. The extent to which the materials writer gives prominence to these beliefs will have a considerable effect on the resulting materials.

"… most `mainstream' learners, teachers and their support services will follow more eclectic practices, recognising that learners do not necessarily learn what teachers teach and that they require substantial contextualised and intelligible language input as well as opportunities to use the language interactively, but that learning is facilitated, especially under artificial classroom conditions, by a combination of conscious learning and sufficient practice, to reduce or eliminate the conscious attention paid to low-level physical skills of speaking and writing as well as to morphological and syntactic accuracy, thus freeing the mind for higher level strategies of communication." (CEF 6.2.2.2)

Textbook writers should be able to state the beliefs that underpin the materials they write. Section 6.4 of CEF provides help with the formulation of these beliefs.

We perceive approaches in materials most clearly through the way in which a lesson is organised. What do we mean here by a lesson? Firstly, it is a period of time, or unit of study, within which we try to achieve specified teaching/learning aims. Secondly, it is a structure imposed by an institutional system, a teacher or textbook writer on that time or unit of study. A sequence of tasks and activities in a good lesson is arranged in the way it is because the teacher/institution believes that this approach will be effective for his/her learners. A writer sequences lesson materials towards the same end.

Good materials writers will be able to write all kinds of materials – whether teacher/learner centred, whole-class/group/individual-oriented, instructional/exploratory, etc. This ability is an essential skill of being a writer. But the appropriateness of these approaches to particular parts of the course must be considered. It may be that different approaches are useful for materials in different media and/or with different purposes.

Example
You may wish to focus on grammar in the classroom through a cooperative discovery mode, so that students experience the grammar in context/use and try to generalise about rules of use and usage from these samples in the presence of their peers and with a teacher on hand. One might describe this as guided exploration. However, if you are preparing supplementary grammar materials for home use, the purpose of which is to offer further practice and back-up explanations, you may feel there is a role for flexible instructional and straightforward closed-answer practice materials.

Questions for materials writers

1. What beliefs and expectations about approaches do you feel teachers and learners using your materials will have? To what extent do the materials acknowledge these?
2. What beliefs about language learning and teaching underlie the materials?
3. To what extent do the materials guide learning in the sense used above?
4. To what extent do the materials offer opportunities for acquisition?
5. What is a lesson in terms of your materials? Are there discernible structures to the lessons? If so, can you describe them and relate them to your beliefs about language learning/teaching?
6. Are there different structures/sequences for other modes of learning that the course might involve? Can you explain the rationale behind each pattern?

NB. The discussion about approaches is developed further below under 7.3.

7. What range of tasks should the materials contain?

If you ask learners what a language learning textbook contains, they will probably say something like – texts and exercises and perhaps reference information. And actually, they would be more or less correct. Leaving aside reference materials, the course itself is delivered through texts (spoken and written) and tasks; a key skill of a materials writer is to incorporate all the many course aims and his/her beliefs about language and language learning into these. Whatever principles we operate concerning text selection, texts remain texts. They have little value until we create ways for learners to interact with them – by presenting tasks. So the decisions we make about tasks are crucial. In fact, task design is almost certainly the single most important feature of a textbook. Bad task design can render a textbook lifeless and irrelevant; good task design can make a textbook a joy to work with and learn from. Unfortunately, quality and range of tasks is not really apparent until the textbook is used in the classroom. Those who select textbooks by looking at them rather than by trialling them rarely perceive this key aspect of a book.

It is through task design that the materials writer has an opportunity to incorporate not only some aspects of focus – perhaps in the areas of linguistic and communicative competence – but also to encourage the development of particular strategies and processes.

7.1 Task types and task focuses

In terms of language learning textbooks, a task is an activity that is built into the materials, the accomplishment of which " . . . involves the strategic activation of specific competences in order to carry out a set of purposeful actions in a particular domain with a clearly defined goal and a specific outcome". (CEF 7.1).

Tasks may be similar to those that the learner needs to be able to carry out in real life (referred to in CEF as 'real life' or 'target' or 'rehearsal' tasks such as booking a hotel room by fax; reading a manual; making notes from lectures) or they may be pedagogic tasks that have a more indirect relation with learner needs; creative writing tasks can, for example, be motivating and useful in that they help learners to explore the possibilities of language, but creative writing is unlikely to be a real-life requirement in a foreign language. One must also bear in mind the value of communication that is generated amongst learners while they are engaged in the process of carrying out a task – through selection, management and evaluation.

It is worth distinguishing in one's mind between task focus (**what** elements of language, content, learner development, etc.) and task type (**how** learners are required to engage with the materials, their fellow learners, the teacher and perhaps the real world).

The selection and combination of task focuses and task types along with appropriate texts is at the heart of the materials writing process, for the decisions and choices that are made here fundamentally affect the vitality and usefulness of the materials. We need to think not only about individual tasks but how they are juxtaposed and sequenced to form a unit of learning or, from the perspective of teachers and learners who use them in class, a lesson.

We can classify tasks in a variety of ways, according to responses to these questions:

- What kind of procedures do they involve?
- Are they simple (single-stage) or complex (multi-stage)?
- Are they real-life tasks (similar to a relevant communicative task in the real world) or pedagogic tasks (where the justification is preparation for carrying out real communicative tasks)?
- What conditions and constraints are present?
- What degrees of difficulty are associated with the tasks?
- What kind of learner processes do they involve?
- What kind of competences do they involve?
- What kind of strategies do they encourage?
- What kind of role is the learner required to take in the discourse of the task?
- Are they closed (with one correct outcome) or open-ended (with many possible acceptable outcomes)?
- Are they product-focused (are we mainly interested in what students produce) or process-focused (are we mainly interested in what occurs during the carrying out of the task) or both?

Chapter 7 of CEF includes extremely useful perspectives on task design and readers are referred particularly to the section on task difficulty (7.3).

However, an easy way to think about and to some extent classify task types is to consider single words that suggest task types to you. The list of task type words in Figure 3 below is particularly resonant for some. Most of them are instructional words that occur in the rubrics of tasks in textbooks. When combined with task focuses such as those shown, one can see that a matrix is created that allows the generation of an almost infinite number of particular tasks. Of course, not all task types lend themselves to all task focuses. Commentate, for example, is particularly useful as a video task where learners might prepare a voiceover commentary to accompany a visual sequence of events. Interrupt is useful as a listening task and/or watching task, where an audio or video cassette is stopped and learners are asked to predict what is coming next. Expand/Continue is particularly useful in a creative writing context where students work from given minimal input and expand to tell their own story or describe their own vision according to particular constraints provided by the teacher. But, of course, these particular tasks are personal examples suggested by these one-word prompts. The prompts may suggest completely different tasks to you.

There are a number of advantages to using a task matrix like this. In devising your own you necessarily consider the range of focuses for the materials and the options for types of task. It reminds you of possibilities for task design that may otherwise not have occurred to you, in particular by juxtaposing a conventional task focus with a surprising task type.

The list also reminds the materials writer about variety of task. Variety is vital in task design. Variety not only has interest/motivational value, it also allows us to address students' different preferred learning modes, and helps to develop awareness of different learning skills.

Figure 3. *A Task Generator*

	T A S K F O C U S E S				
		Vocabulary	Grammar	Listening	etc.	etc.
	Predict					
	Answer					
	Question					
T	Interrupt					
	Label					
A	Match					
	Transfer					
S	Select					
	Find/Identify					
K	Group/Classify					
	Order/Rank					
	Compare/Contrast					
T	Deduce/Guess/Infer					
	Recall					
Y	Complete					
	Insert					
P	Correct					
	Remove/Delete					
E	Expand/Continue					
	Transform/Alter					
S	Improve					
	Describe					
	Discuss					
	Explain/Justify/Argue					
	Demonstrate/Act out/Do					
	Narrate					
	Commentate					

Example
Look at this text.

A man sat on a bench.
He looked at the sea.
He thought of his son.

The first part of the task is to create a personal picture of what the text suggests to you (the learner). The second part of the task is to expand the text in order to convey your picture as precisely as possible. But there are constraints: you can add any words, phrases, clauses you like, but you must use all the words in the original text in their original order; you may only have a total of three sentences.

What does this task do? Firstly, it focuses on grammatical and lexical competences – there are clear clues and restrictions concerning which words and types of words can be added. Learners will almost inevitably (depending on level) want to add adjectives, adverbs, prepositional phrases, relative clauses, etc. There are collocational constraints on the lexical items they choose. The task will raise interesting cultural issues, from the trivial (what benches are like at the seaside) to the fundamental (the cultural significance of a man being parted from his son). There will be text perspective: some will have a sunny day and a happy scene while others will present a dark, depressing picture. Learners will be encouraged to take risks with language because there is no correct answer to this task, for each text is based on a personal picture. By providing the motivation to describe a personal picture, learners will struggle to convey exactly what they are trying to mean. This 'struggle', one could claim, mirrors the struggle to mean in a genuine and genuinely important communicative situation in the real world. The task draws learners into considering and exploring language processes and communicative strategies while the direct focus (which provides the face value for the task) appears to be concerned only with linguistic competences.

7.2 The sequencing of tasks

A particular task type does not belong to one kind of approach or another. Tasks are simply one of the tools we have for structuring lessons and materials. The way we combine and sequence tasks affects how teachers teach and it is the choice of sequence in a lesson or unit that is associated with teaching approaches, beliefs about learning and classroom methodologies.

Types of lesson structure
There has been a lot of debate over the years about the sequencing of stages in a language lesson. This debate, often fierce, raises fundamental questions about our beliefs concerning how languages are best learned in formal settings. On the one extreme there are those who believe in a more teacher-centred approach whereby the teacher actively presents small chunks of graded language, encourages rigorous practice and then requires students to produce them in some way. On the other extreme there are those who feel that random exposure is all that is required and that learners will pick up what they want and need to. The beliefs that appear to underlie a vast body of modern language learning textbooks seem to lie at varying points on a continuum between these extremes.

However, very few teachers would disagree with the claim that there are key events that characterise a good language lesson. This is an attempt at a minimal list of what language lessons should probably contain (in no particular order):

- some reference to the purposes of the lesson
- a transfer of information about the language
- a link with lessons that have come before
- an indication of follow-up study, practice or exploration and future lessons

as well as opportunities for learners to …

- use the language they already know
- look at, hear and perhaps see real or quasi-real language in use
- practise elements of the target language with a certain amount of guidance and support
- use the language to carry out relevant real and/or quasi-real tasks
- make notes about the content of the lesson

…all in a context that motivates learners to take part.

How these key elements occur in any particular lesson, and who is involved in such decision-making underlies much of the recent debate concerning language teaching/ learning sequences. This is not the place to go into the detail of the debate. Traditional teaching sequences such as the widely referred-to P-P-P, in which (in a strict interpretation of the term) teacher presentation (P) of the target language is followed by controlled practice (P) and then by student production (P), can incorporate these events. So can views offered as alternatives to a P-P-P lesson structure where discovery learning and learner-centredness in general are given more prominence. For example, Scrivener (1994) suggests a modified, more flexible set of lesson stages that can be put together in different sequences for different purposes, based on A (Authentic Use), R (Restricted Use) and C (Clarification and Focus). Willis (1996) describes a framework for task-based language learning in classes: a pre-task phase in which learners are introduced to a topic and a task; the task stage, which involves learners doing the task itself, then the planning stage, during which learners, in groups, reflect upon how they attempted to carry out the task and attempt to correct, rephrase and rehearse the task language. This is followed by the report stage, during which learners report to the class and the teacher gives feedback on content and form. In this way, the author claims, a need for language input on the part of the learner is created and it is therefore at this final stage that language focus is appropriate and most valuable. The list above is equally relevant to all these descriptions of what can happen in lessons.

Figure 4 below shows one way in which tasks might be sequenced in a unit of work. It is a theme-based unit, the aims of which are: to present new language through exposure to an interesting text; to help learners combine that new language with language they can already use; and to use the new language in a purposeful communicative context.

Key features of this sequence are that learners are: prepared for each stage; offered new language in motivating texts; encouraged to look at texts for meaning, as pieces of communication, before having their attention drawn to form; encouraged and guided to discover rules of use and usage and to develop vocabulary beyond the text; offered practice of the key language; encouraged to try out the new language in quasi-real communicative contexts. The description is written from the teacher's perspective. One could just as easily write it from the learner's perspective.

Figure 4. *A sample lesson sequence*

A. Prepare for text input by

- Activating knowledge
- Activating expectations (of genre, text-type, lexis, grammar, etc.)
- Revising/referring to related material
- Personalising

B. Encourage the development of strategies for dealing with text input by

- Setting while-reading/listening tasks
- Encouraging different processing modes by
  - dealing with the text as a piece of meaningful communication
  - focus on understanding meaning
  - recognising text purpose/genre/participants
  - reading/listening for general gist
  - reading/listening for details
  - identifying communicative function of parts
  - understanding/inferring word meaning
- Viewing the text in terms of its formal features – focus on
- recognising how and why features of form occur

identifying formal features (such as grammar)
relating formal features to communicative function

C. Move out from the text by

Discussing content, (by relating it to own experience)
Generalising about use and usage of formal features
Relating text vocabulary to other vocabulary, related in form, meaning or use

D. Practise new language by

Using meaningful and mechanical drills and exercises
Checking understanding against reference materials

E. Incorporate and use new language in a personal and productive context through

Communicative tasks with personal relevance, purpose, specified
Audience, etc.

Questions for materials writers

1. Which task types do you intend to use in the materials?
2. What will be the focus of the tasks in each unit of work and each lesson?
3. Do the tasks include all the real-life (including examination) tasks that learners are likely to be required to carry out?
4. Is there a sufficient variety of task in terms of, for example, task type, task outcome; numbers of interlocutors; numbers of texts?
5. Do the tasks require learners to take different roles – as initiator and responder in interaction; as receiver, producer, mediator?
6. Is there a need to focus on developing learners' awareness of useful strategies for coping with the demands of certain tasks?
7. Are the tasks appropriate in terms of: cognitive and linguistic difficulty; interest and relevance to the learner; support and time provided; clarity of task-setting and rubric?

8. How will texts be selected for inclusion?

Finding or producing appropriate texts for inclusion in a textbook is an extremely challenging task for the materials writer and it is a skill which it is important to develop. Where LSP textbook writers have a certain amount of help with choosing appropriate texts, due to the constraints and opportunities of relevant subject matter, the general textbook author has little more than his/her own beliefs and intuitions for guidance. The importance of good text selection cannot be stressed enough. When teachers look quickly through a range of new textbooks, it is the texts and their surrounding visual material that attract or repel them. And this is equally true for learners.

It is worth noting that although the writer may not have control over this element of book design and production, that the way texts are presented visually is of vital importance. The language textbook is a learning world into which the writer must draw learners by persuading them that what is on offer is interesting, relevant and stimulating. Illustrative material should accompany text wherever possible, and the more a text looks as if it comes from an authentic source, the better.

There are, of course, constraints on text selection when planning a book-based course. Because publishers usually require textbooks to be planned so that there is a relation between space allocated in terms of pages and classroom time, there is unlikely to be room in a course textbook for very extended reading passages or multiple texts relating to one set of learning aims. It is therefore a somewhat unfortunate constraint on text selection that each lesson will normally include only one or two texts which are limited in length.

8.1 Should texts be real or scripted?

The debate over whether texts should be extracts of real communication or written for the purposes of language learning will rage forever. The debate, however, is about theoretical issues rather than the practical ones with which the materials writer has to deal.

Discourse analysis, genre analysis and others studies based on corpus analysis have provided, to date, a certain amount of information about natural features of language as used in communication – particularly in English. In certain LSP contexts this information is quite detailed and provides insights into text organisation, lexical features, grammatical features and micro and macro functional features. However, there is far vaguer information available about general language use, where the variables of situation, location, participants and purposes present exponentially greater possibilities.

Even if we were to have more information about natural features of language in all possible general contexts we would still find it very difficult to select texts. Any particular real text, for example, an extract of spoken interaction, will only contain very few examples of the natural features to which we would wish to expose our learners. We then have to decide whether to use this real text and accept that it offers minimal exploitation, or to produce a scripted text that contains more of the naturalistic features we want to highlight.

A powerful view is that materials writers need to become aware of what these natural features are, then take real samples of texts and adapt them in ways that lend them to greater exploitability and bring them into line with whatever parameters we feel should apply to our texts. Good texts certainly cannot be adapted or scripted without a close look at a similar real text. If materials writers do not consult real texts they will generally produce texts that are not only dull but, more worryingly, will display few of the features of natural use. This is particularly true for spoken texts where scripting often leads to the complete omission of all interactive features of, for example, a two-way conversation, and produces a rather turgid over-explicit series of questions and answers. One way of testing your scripted conversations is to ask two friends (and even better, friends who are professional actors!) to act them out. They will notice immediately how far your words are from what the situation seems to invite them to say. Another well-tried method is to ask actors to generate spoken language from notes rather than scripts. But this can be dangerous as actors tend to over-dramatise in circumstances where we might be looking for a fairly routine, natural exchange!

8.2 What text variables should we take into account?

Texts included in textbooks should be relevant in terms of their communicative value and language features and should be presented in as interesting a way as possible to stimulate and engage learners. The range in the course should be varied, and writers should take into account these aspects of texts: their approximation to real texts; the genre/text-type; the medium; the length, structural complexity and lexical load; their exploitability as vehicles for language learning tasks; whether learners are required to deal with them receptively, productively, interactively or in mediation. (CEF 4.6)

Texts might also be included as part of a ludic process where a text input and/or output does not necessarily correspond to a real text but the interaction between learners around its processing or production has real motivational and pedagogic value. Learners play creatively with language in texts to explore the parameters of what is possible. It is important to bear in mind that when we encourage creative writing in the classroom it is not because we believe learners will have to do this in a foreign language in the real world. Its inclusion is to do with the pedagogic value of the process of creation rather than the product of the writing.

Questions for materials writers

1. Is the text likely to be of relevance and interest to the learners?
2. Is the text-type one with which learners are likely to have to deal?
3. Is it presented in a way that is visually attractive?
4. Does it look similar to a real-life text?
5. Is the text appropriate in terms of length, structural complexity and lexical load?
6. Is the medium appropriate?
7. Does the text lend itself to exploitation for language learning purposes?
8. Do the tasks based on the text mirror the ways in which learners have to deal with texts like this in real life – receptively, productively, actively, in mediation?

Appendix A. Tips on the materials writing process

- Never believe that you can edit your own work adequately.
- Always back up word-processor files!
- Listen to editors. They may not know as much as you do about language learning, but they usually know more than you do about editing and book design.
- Space in books is expensive. Don't waste it. Every mark you make on a page must be there for a purpose!
- Consider having a regular unit length to structure your writing.
- Consider working in double-page spreads within a unit, where two pages corresponds to either one or two lessons.
- Consider laying out the page in columns. This is often more flexible and easier on the eye for larger books. It also gives more flexibility for artwork.
- Decide with your editor on how many lines are available per page. Think about the layout of the page as you write, leaving room for artwork and other text support material.
- Your first draft will not be satisfactory. Textbooks often go through several drafts.
- If possible ask a colleague to try out your materials. Remember, you are writing for other teachers, not for yourself.
- When writing tasks, write the answers at the same time.
- When you are happy about the general content of the book, read it through again with particular aims such as standardising (and reducing the length of) rubrics; standardising numbering and heading systems; checking inclusion of regular features.
- If you are writing a classroom course book, try to ensure someone else writes the accompanying teachers' book.
- Writing materials for other colleagues to use can be a frightening experience. Try not to become defensive and treat feedback and criticism as an essential and valuable part of the writing process.

Appendix B. An example of stages in a writing process

- Establish as clearly as possible the characteristics of the circumstances in which the materials will be used.
- Establish the publishing parameters within which you need to write – media, components, book length (course hours and number of pages), page size, opportunities for artwork and design …
- Establish deadlines, relations with editors and publishers, etc.
- Decide on course aims and list them.
- Decide on book sub-divisions (such as units)
- Group aims together into unit aims.
- Decide on relationship between pages and classroom time.
- Collect written and spoken texts that can form the core of the input materials for the units.
- Make general decisions about the structure of a lesson, and divide your unit aims into lessons (for example, a single period of classroom learning). Ask yourself these questions: What is the rationale for this sequence of lessons within a unit? What is the rationale for the sequence of tasks in different kinds of lessons?
- Produce sample materials. The first unit and a later unit are recommended.
- Trial the sample materials if possible. If not, seek comments from teachers who will use the course.
- Produce first-draft materials. If you are writing a textbook that is to be used linearly, it is almost always better to write materials in that order.
- Revise the materials according to your feelings about the feedback you have obtained. Learn to be positive about feedback even though criticism may seem to be harsh – it will improve the materials.
- Go through the entire text checking for: variety of task type; coverage and weighting of focuses; degree of personalisation possibilities; range of texts; clarity of rubric; coherence of units; relationship between classroom materials and others such as home-based practice materials; visual appeal.
- Produce your second draft … and successive drafts. When you can't bear to look at the materials any more – check and revise them again. Go the extra mile – it is always worth it when the materials are published!

Appendix C. **A checklist for selection of textbooks**

1. Contents

- Do the textbook writers state a clear rationale for what is included in the materials?
- Are the main aims of the course and the units clear?
- Do the materials justify these aims? Do you think learners are likely to achieve these aims using these materials?
- Are the aims of the materials appropriate for your learners?
- Is the level of the materials appropriate?
- Is the anticipated pace of learning appropriate?
- Are the topics likely to be of interest and value to your learners?

2. Media

- Is the course presented through media that are useful and practical in your context?
- Are different media exploited for their unique possibilities?
- Are all the components of the course essential or are some optional?

3. Methodology

- Is there a pattern of organisation to the units? Are the lessons organised according to clear learning principles?
- Do you feel that the materials represent beliefs about language and learning with which you feel comfortable?
- Do the materials include different approaches for different purposes (components/media)?
- Do the materials include opportunities for learning and acquisition?
- Is there adequate recycling of new language?

4. Learner support

- Do the materials contain resources that allow learners to study on their own outside the classroom?
- Are there helpful reference materials?
- Are there useful learner development materials?

5. Teacher support

- Do the materials provide appropriate support, guidance and development for the teachers who might work with them?
- Are the materials sufficiently flexible to enable experienced teachers to exploit them in different ways? Do they lend themselves to supplementation?
- Do the materials include background cultural and language information that will help teachers?

6. Themes/topics

- Are they likely to interest, engage and stimulate your learners?
- Do they offer opportunities to relate to your learners' personal experiences, likes and dislikes?

7. Texts

- Are they likely to interest your learners?
- Are they relevant in terms of language, text-type, task, etc.?
- Do they look real?
- Are they presented in ways that are visually attractive?

8. Tasks

- Is there a wide range of task types?
- Will your learners find these task types relevant, interesting, stimulating?
- Do the task types allow adequate variation of learner role in communication?
- Do the task types encourage development of learner competences and strategies as well as language competences?

9. Checking progress

- Do the materials provide instruments for checking progress?
- Are there additional tests available?
- Are there any external examinations that relate to the materials?

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