

The Role of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* in teacher training

Lecture delivered by J.L.M.Trim, Graz September 2005

It is a great pleasure to be back in Graz and to have the opportunity to talk with teacher trainers at a Council of Europe workshop, especially, perhaps, those of you who are entering on that career as I reach the end of mine. It is now almost 50 years since the Council of Europe first took up the promotion and modernisation of language teaching, following a dark period of almost 20 years in which normal international interaction was totally disrupted first by war and then by the financial restrictions and introversion of the post-war years of national reconstruction. For half of Europe, the Cold War extended the restriction of travel and foreign contact for a further 30 years. Under such conditions, language teachers became quite out of touch with the up-to-date realities of the languages and cultures they were teaching and concentrated their attention on puristic formal correctness and the heritage of the classical national literature. My own studies of French and German left me knowing more of the language and literature of the medieval period and the early modern period up to the mid-nineteenth Century than anything spoken or written in the 20th Century. From about 1960 travel became easier and cheaper for those outside the iron curtain, and teachers and young people took full advantage of the opportunities open to them. Language teaching began to improve and the principles of language teaching for communication and the use of educational technology were formulated in the framework of an emerging applied linguistics. However, educational systems are quite resistant to change and the process of changing values, beliefs, ideas and working practices in the classroom is slow and difficult. What are the keys to success? They are many and coherence has to be achieved among the many often independent agencies involved. First there is the framework of ministerial curriculum guidelines. Then the processes for the award of qualifications: examination syllabuses and testing procedures. Suitable course materials have to be developed, perhaps authorised and made available: not only textbooks, but audio-visual materials, readers, interactive computer-based materials etc. To bring this supportive material together from diverse sources takes time, particularly if it is significantly innovative. Even so, it is a giant further step for it to be used effectively in hundreds of thousands of classrooms across

our continent. Teachers and students have to be both willing and able to make the changes involved. There are quite powerful forces making for conservative attitudes among teachers. They are, after all, the successful products of the system under which they were taught and it has often been pointed out that one of the strongest influences on teachers are their own teachers and the methods they employed. Furthermore, teaching, especially language teaching is largely a female profession, and many mature teachers, having found a method that works with materials they are used to, working to tests and examinations they are familiar with, do not necessarily welcome changes which may demand extra-curricular study and preparation which conflicts with the demands on their time and energy made by a growing family. The co-operation of classroom teachers in educational innovation cannot be taken for granted, or coerced, They must be informed, motivated, encouraged, empowered, and their workload must be made manageable. For this reason, though the Council of Europe has sought to inform and support high-level policy making and the work of support services, it has seen the essential key to successful innovation to lie in teacher-training, both initial and in-service. In the two major series of workshops for teacher training in the 80s and 90s 72 workshops were held in 21 countries, with over 2000 participants and well over 200 animators. You will find the reports of all the workshops in the library, with a consolidated report of the first series. The impact of the workshops was powerful , in broadening and deepening the conceptual basis of language teaching for international communication and understanding through the participation of leading researchers, in influencing high-level policy-making through the direct personal involvement of senior ministry officials and the national inspectorate, and changing classroom practice through the large-scale involvement of teacher trainers and teachers with training responsibilities. Together, they played a central role in developing a strong consensus on the aims, objectives and methods of language teaching across Europe and indeed more widely, which until now has remained essentially unchallenged. The success of these workshops prepared the way for two very important developments in the last years of the 20th Century. First, it gave the governments of the member states of the Council of Europe the confidence to do what they had declined to do in 1960 and 1977, and to set up, on the generous initiative of the Austrian government, a permanent European Centre for Modern Languages here in Graz to carry forward the Council's activities in close support of modern foreign language teaching in the classroom, with special emphasis on

workshops for those with a multiplier function, thus freeing the section in Strasbourg for high-level policy development.

Secondly, the strong sense of common purpose, of shared educational aims and objectives, encouraged them to respond to an initiative of the Swiss government and to commission a Common European Framework for Languages. An International Symposium was held in Rüslikon in November 1991. It defined the aims of the Framework as:

to promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries

to provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications

To assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts.

The task of authorship was entrusted by the Council's Working Party to a small group consisting of Brian North (Eurocentres, Switzerland), Daniel Coste (St. Cloud, France) and myself. With successive drafts, field consultations and revisions, the development took a decade. The Common European Framework for Languages: learning, teaching and assessment was published simultaneously in English and French in February 2001, marking the European Year of Languages. A German version followed shortly afterwards and others, e.g, Spanish, Catalan, Basque, Italian, Finnish, have followed. A Japanese version, published in 2004, attests to the world-wide interest it has evoked. This enthusiastic response may be said to make it the best-known document in language pedagogy in recent years. From another point of view, however, it may be said to be little known. Attention has been concentrated on the second aim: to provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications at the expense of the other two. This is understandable. Increasing educational and vocational mobility in Europe make it a matter of some urgency for schools and universities as well as employers to know what the qualifications brought by candidates from other countries actually mean in terms of the applicants ability to use the language. It is much to be welcomed that governments now recognise the

value of objective international standards which will allow their qualifications to be situated relative to others. So attention has focussed on the scales of language proficiency and the six levels for which descriptors are given. The global scales, especially the self-evaluation grid used in versions of the European Language Portfolio have been widely reproduced. They are well-known, to the extent that many people think they are the Framework, the rest of the 200+ pages being a vague background to them. Teachers may then feel that the Framework is of concern only to those planning examination syllabus and teaching procedures at a higher level. This is unfortunate, since the Framework is designed to be accessible to all concerned with language learning, teaching and assessment, particularly classroom teachers and students.

The descriptors of levels of communicative proficiency were selected from some 30 existing lists by submitting them to a large sample of language teachers in Switzerland, retaining those which the teachers were confident in rank ordering. Those which made up the self-assessment grid are formulated so as to be understood in a common-sense way by pupils as well as teachers, so that both can get a clear idea of where they stand on the ladder and what they are aiming at as the next step. Of course, the six-level system marks the objectives for only the major steps in the educational system. As a very rough guide, A1 (breakthrough) is appropriate to progress in the first foreign language at the 10 or 11 year primary/secondary interface, A2 (waystage) to around 14, B1 (threshold) to 16+, the lower secondary goal, B2 (vantage) to 18+, the completion of upper secondary education, and C1 and C2 to specialist university level. I say a rough guide since the speed of learning depends greatly on such factors as the learner's age and aptitude, the curricular time available, extra-curricular contact, the relation of L1 to L2, etc. The awareness of an overall scheme of progress in learning may actually help to make teaching more flexible. Flexibility and diversification of language learning and teaching are indeed emphasised throughout the Framework document. One of its main functions is to provide the profession with an overall view of its aims, objectives and methods which will enable individuals to situate their own activity relative to others and to be aware of the full range of options open to them when deciding their own course of action. This is what makes it a valuable tool for teacher education and training, both initial and in-service.

Arrangements for initial teacher education and training across Europe are very diverse. For one thing, language teachers are inevitably the successful products of whatever methods were used in their own education. That experiential background is always a powerful influence on their own practice and is one of the factors which make for conservatism. As to the organisation of initial education and training in higher education, it ranges from simply releasing young teachers into the classroom after a language degree that pays no attention to lower level language teaching to courses in which advanced work in language and culture is combined with teacher training throughout. One of the valuable aspects of a workshop like this is to enable you to exchange experience of teacher preparation across systems and to evaluate the pluses and minuses for your own personal and professional development, (bearing in mind, of course, that you are the successful products of whatever system you were exposed to!)

Given that a period of pre-service preparation is provided, it has, I suppose, two main objectives. One is to build confidence and reduce anxiety in facing the daily reality of classroom management and language teaching. The other is to give a broad perspective on the nature, aims objectives and methods of language learning and teaching.

It is in this latter respect that the Framework can be of particular value in teacher education and training. The proficiency scalings presented in Chapter 3 already provide an overview of the progressive development of knowledge and skills from the earliest stages of learning (A1) to the most advanced levels of near-native proficiency attainable within an educational system (C2). This scaling is presented in a number of ways: Table 1 gives a brief global description at 6 levels. Table 2, the self-assessment framework breaks this down into 5 activity areas (listening and reading, spoken interaction and spoken production, ie monologue and writing. Table 3 defines progress in terms of the quality criteria; range, accuracy, fluency, interaction and coherence, to be expected at each level. Chapter 3 also brings these aspects together in relation to a brief characterisation of the notions, functions, grammar and vocabulary implied, and points to the existing, detailed specifications available for the Threshold Level (B1) in some 25 European languages and also for English and Greek at

Breakthrough (A1), Waystage (A2) and Vantage (B2) levels. These specifications are not at all rendered redundant by the general descriptors of the Framework,. However, the Threshold Level model is not concerned with qualitative judgements. It specifies what has to be done and known, rather than how well. Moreover, it specifies in detail one possible objective at B1, namely to enable a learner to act as an independent agent in a country where the language is in everyday use. This may well be what most learners want and need, but it is not the only possible objective. CEFR does not specify the content of a learning objective, but sets out more comprehensively the parameters of language use and competences, and the criteria to be satisfied if a learner is to be said to have reached a particular level of proficiency

Finally scaling is provided for as many as possible of the activities and competences detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, which we will discuss shortly. Overall, then, the characterisation of the main stages of progress in foreign or second language proficiency is rich and valuable to a new teacher for general orientation in the field.

Many users have simply looked at the most global scale, but as you see, a much more detailed scaling is available for profiling proficiency or attesting partial competences.

Using the whole of these resources, a multinational team from Germany, Austria and Switzerland has produced Profile Deutsch, based on the material from the German T-level Kontaktschwelle, but reorganising and extending it to make a 4-level specification structured according to the categories developed in CEFR. The team is currently working to extend the system to Levels C1 and C2. A similar project is being conducted for French and is expected for English.

The scales and descriptors have been of special interest to authorities who want to situate their language qualifications relative to those of others, and to the users of qualifications gained in other systems, such as employers in deciding who to appoint to jobs involving language use to a greater or lesser extent and educational authorities in establishing entry requirements for courses at different levels. Many authorities were very quick to state that their qualifications were at a particular level, which of

course attracted the critical attention of the language testing professionals, who drew attention to the wide differences possible in the interpretation of words and phrases like, simple, basic, familiar, everyday, main ideas, without too much effort reasonably accurate, etc They also felt that it is one thing to claim that the holders of an examined qualification have reached a certain level of proficiency, and another to substantiate the claim. What if a university claims that its graduates reach level C2, but then, in its teaching and testing, uses only translation of literary texts and essays in the mother tongue, with the pass level set at 33 %? Or if a central examining body awards its highest grade (A*) to candidates with 47 % and an acceptable C grade to those with 17 %? Transparency is needed not only on syllabus objectives, but also on test procedures and standards of marking. The Framework discusses the issues involved in Chapter 9, but does not go into technical detail, which was in fact offered in a separate guide written by Dr.Milanovic on behalf of ALTE and is now the main content of the manual prepared by a group of leading experts in the field. The same can be said of the Framework in relation to other specialist users, such as teacher trainers, textbook authors and educational authorities. Each group of specialists has to consider whether and how to make use of CEFR for its own purposes, amending, adapting and supplementing it as they find necessary and then letting the profession know what they have done so as to improve provision everywhere..

The Council of Europe has neither the power nor the desire to issue directives to member states or to independent examining bodies. However, the Council is currently conducting a project to assist governments and other agencies in developing examinations geared to CEFR. Leading test experts from a number of countries are producing a manual of principles and procedures. A draft is already on the Internet. It will be supported by sets of audio and video recordings of learners from different countries at different levels of performance, which will make it possible for testers and examiners to co-ordinate their judgements, and for classroom teachers to have a clearer picture of what to expect from students at different levels. So there is no doubt in my mind that CFER will powerfully influence the structure and conduct of national qualifying examinations across the globe and is in fact already doing so.

A further development is now being planned, to produce “A Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of School Education”. A conference has been

announced, to be held in Krakow in April 2005, organised jointly by the Council of Europe and the Jagellonian University. It will review the whole field of language in school, including mother tongue education, looking at the basis of the diverse terms in use, analysing current curricular policies and also considering again proficiency descriptors and attainment issues. So, as you can see, the Framework is far from a dead end, but is generating new and more focused thinking in the fields it covers.

You may, though, by now be thinking that CEFR is concerned only with high-level policy-making, affecting national policies, curricular guidelines and examinations: matters over which the classroom teacher has little control. You may be inclined to share the fear that your students will be made to teach to European norms which take little account of their particular situation. Some critics have expressed the fear that CEFR will be treated as a 'Bible' and that authorities will try to follow its recommendations blindly and uncritically. One German professor has gone so far as to say that if CEFR is followed, all research in applied linguistics and language didactics will come to an end! Well, I can state quite categorically that CEFR gives no instructions or even recommendations to its users as to what they should or should not do. Its function is to stimulate reflection, to invite all those concerned with language learning, teaching and assessment to ask themselves questions, to lay out options and to offer a common means of calibrating learner proficiency in fairly broad terms. We have never wanted teachers to feel themselves reduced to mere retailers of decisions made at a higher level, unthinkingly accepting curricula, materials and methods and imposing them on learners in a mechanical fashion. At the heart of the Council of Europe's work in education is the concept of education for democratic citizenship. This means that whilst national and regional authorities must provide a framework that safeguards and promotes the public interest, decisions should so far as possible be made as close as possible to the point of learning, taken by those directly involved: the teachers and the learners. That, in turn, requires of them a strong sense of social responsibility and the necessary knowledge, understanding and technical skill. For teachers, this comes from their own education and training, their reading, discussion with colleagues and their day-to-day classroom experience. For pupils, it is built up during those 10-12 formative years of full-time education by their experience of classroom learning, mediated by teachers, and their experience outside the classroom, mediated by parents, older siblings and other children and adults, as well as by their

own independent efforts as their physical and mental powers develop and mature. It is the overarching aim of education for democratic citizenship that by the end of their full-time education, young people should have acquired the knowledge and understanding, and developed the powers of judgement and sense of social responsibility, that will enable them to exercise freedom and independence of thought and action responsibly, to achieve success and fulfilment in facing the challenges of living in a modern democratic society.

In our view, all teachers have a part to play in guiding and empowering the next generation in this way. Language teachers, concerned with developing the powers of understanding, expression and communication central to all human society, have a particularly important role. They need a deep understanding of the act of human communication, not only of the observable actions involved but the different kinds of knowledge and skill that a person has to call upon in order to act effectively. For me, the primary objective of CEFR is to set out, clearly and comprehensively, what a competent language user knows and does. Of course, CEFR is not a manual, but a framework, a catalogue rather than a description. But it does focus attention on the many parameters of language use and language competences, inviting the reader to reflect on the relevance of each for his or her own work.

Allow me to begin by reminding you of the aspects of language use in relation to the language user treated in Chapter 4

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CHAPTER 4: LANGUAGE USE AND THE LANGUAGE USER/LEARNER

4.1 The context of language use:

4.1.1 domains

4.1.2 situations

4.1.3 conditions and constraints

4.1.4 the user/learner's mental context

4.1.5 the mental context of the interlocutor(s)

- 4.2 Communication themes**
- 4.3 Communicative tasks and purposes**
- 4.4 Communicative language activities and strategies:**
 - 4.4.1 productive**
 - 4.4.1.1 oral production (speaking)**
 - 4.4.1.2 written production (writing)**
 - 4.4.2 receptive**
 - 4.4.2.1 aural reception (listening)**
 - 4.4.2.2 visual reception (reading)**
 - 4.4.2.3 audio-visual reception**
 - 4.4.3 interactive**
 - 4.4.3.1 oral interaction**
 - 4.4.3.2 written interaction**
 - 4.4.4 mediating**

As you see, CEFR first deals with the context in which language is used, then the themes, or subjects which are spoken of, then the tasks and purposes - what results we try to bring about through acts of communication - and then the actual activities of speaking, writing, listening and reading taken first in isolation, then linked together - in communicative interaction. Where possible, these activities are individually scaled. Note that special attention is paid to mediation, such as interpretation and translation, where language users are called upon, not to express their own ideas, but to act as a channel of communication between a people who would not otherwise understand each other. Important though face-to-face communication between plurilinguists is, it is in fact through innumerable acts of mediation that humanity overcomes its cultural and linguistic fragmentation to share a common pool of knowledge experience and understanding of the world and to function as one evolving culture, differentiated but interactive

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- 4.5 Communicative language processes**

- 4.5.1 planning**
 - 4.5.2 execution**
 - 4.5.2.1 production**
 - 4.5.2.2 reception**
 - 4.5.2.3 interaction**
 - 4.5.3 monitoring**
 - 4.5.4 practical actions**
 - 4.5.5 paralinguistic behaviour**
 - 4.5.6 paratextual features**
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- 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**

CEFR then follows through the actual processes of language production and reception, the chain of neurological, physiological and physical events, from the planning and formulation of an utterance, or written text, via its execution in the bodily actions which produce speech and writing, through to its perception, identification and understanding. We should not forget the monitoring of one's own activity while speaking, as well as the various actions, such as gesture, mimicry and body language, that accompany speech and are part of the communicative event. Lastly, texts themselves are considered and classified, not only according to their type and function, but also in relation to the media which carry them and the activities which produce them.

As you can see, all this is concerned with language in action, the what, how, when, where and why of what people do when they use language to communicate. I think you will agree that it is quite complex. Language communication is perhaps the most demanding of all human activities. To handle this complexity, we need an equally complex array of skills and different kinds of knowledge, much of which does not normally enter into our conscious awareness. In chapter 5 of the Framework, we have attempted to make a survey of these 'competences'.

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Chapter 5 THE USER/LEARNER'S COMPETENCES

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

5.1.4.4 heuristic skills

The first thing to notice is that in order to use language properly, we call upon a number of competences which come out of our general experience of life and do not seem to be particularly concerned with language. We know what sorts of things exist in the world, their properties and the relations between them, what events are possible and actually occur or can be imagined. We expect anything said or written in any language to make sense in such terms. A very important aspect, worth separate consideration, is concerned with the way human societies work and patterns of

everyday living, interpersonal relations, values, beliefs and attitudes, various conventions and rituals called for in defined situations. We may then develop an awareness of the relation between our own cultural and societal values and those of another people. Then, in addition to this body of knowledge about the world we live in, we have at our disposal a range of skills for handling practical affairs and for dealing with personal relations. Then, beyond these, is a dimension less easy to place. This is the area of personal qualities, partly inborn, partly the result of experience, such as character, intelligence, sympathy, personality, which influence the way we react to people and to circumstances. For this we use the perhaps paradoxical French term *savoir être*. Intangibles, but who doubts that they have a great deal to do with the success of a teacher, and are also an important determiner of the methods a teacher will find appropriate and feel comfortable using.

The last of the general competences is *savoir apprendre*, the ability to learn. In addition to study skills, such as the ability to use learning materials and to organise one's own strategies and procedures in accordance with one's own characteristics and resources, we also include here very general linguistic competences: knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and organisation of language and the ability to perceive and produce speech sounds in general. We also attach a good deal of importance to heuristic skills, i.e. the ability to find things out for oneself, to observe accurately and then to make intelligent deductions from limited experience, going beyond what you already know..

This brings us to the communicative language competences themselves.

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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

5.2.2 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

Firstly, and obviously, come the linguistic competences narrowly defined: knowledge of the language system in its lexical, grammatical, semantic and phonological dimensions and skill in its use. These linguistic competences are necessarily at the core of language use and language learning. Without them there is no language!

However, the Framework also deals with other language competences which play an important part in communication. The socio-linguistic competences guide the way we use language in social life. They include such markers of social relations as forms of address, honorifics, etc. Politeness conventions involve not only the use of 'please' and 'thank you' but more generally whether and how one may intrude on another person's thought and action without giving offence. We have included what we have termed 'expressions of folk wisdom', because our everyday use of language is rich in common expressions, often stereotyped formulae, which imply a body of shared assumptions and attitudes which are often not directly referred to. Register differences, from the highly formal through the general colloquial to the intimate, serve to establish in the mind of the participants the nature of a social situation.

Compare, for example, 'May I suggest we postpone further consideration of this matter until our next meeting' with 'Let's leave it till next time'. Who says which of these to whom, where, when and why? Lastly in this section come the features of dialect and accent that proclaim the regional and class provenance of a speaker and upon which listeners are led, rightly or wrongly, to base assumptions about these and perhaps other personal characteristics of an interlocutor.

The general heading of 'pragmatic competences' is given to different aspects of the

language user's ability to produce and understand language above the level of the sentence. Discourse competence covers the principles and mechanisms involved in stringing sentences together to form coherent discourse: ways of referring back and forward, logical ordering and clarity of expression, as well as features of text design, that is, how descriptions, narrative and argumentation are structured and essays, say, composed. These are matters with which mother tongue teaching is largely concerned. They become of increasing importance at higher levels of FL proficiency. Indeed, we hope that common reference to the model presented in the Framework may help teachers across the curriculum to realise that they are engaged in different aspects of a common enterprise. Functional competence covers our ability to impart and to seek factual information, to express and find out attitudes, to get people to do things and to socialise. It is dealt with briefly in the Framework, though it forms the basis of the Threshold Level model. 'Schematic design competence' refers to our ability to steer our way through a structured interaction, from simple question and answer to conducting an interview or buying a new suit or dress..

In all, it can be seen that what a fluent, mature language user knows and does is very complex. How much of this complexity is relevant to a teacher of foreign languages? I can imagine some hard-pressed classroom teacher saying: 'Look! With the hours I've got with a class, the amount I'm supposed to cover in the syllabus and the kind of children in my class, I've got my work cut out to just get enough vocabulary and grammar into them to pass the exams they need to get a job. The rest of it is just frills, irrelevant to me. I will give them the language; what they do with it is up to them.' Now I do not see that I am in any position to condemn such a teacher, who may be trying her best to get her pupils a qualification they must have for employment, under near-impossible conditions. She may, in fact, be making the best use of the resources, human and material, at her command. I certainly would not want her to feel threatened, anxious and guilty, afraid that regardless of circumstances, unless she manages to teach all that is in these chapters of the Framework, she is somehow failing in her work. What I would ask of such teachers - as of any others - is to think through their teaching situation and their response to it more critically and in greater depth. Are pupils in fact becoming proficient in manipulating the formal language system? Are they then able to use it effectively for some purpose? Have you got the best balance between receptive and productive skills? Between vocabulary

development and grammatical organisation? Between the competing criteria of range, fluency and accuracy? If the syllabus is overloaded in relation to the time available, are you trying to cover the whole grammar, but allowing too little time for it to be mastered? Or, if you are insisting on accurate and fluent use of all that you are teaching, is this achieved at the cost of a very narrow range of experience, leaving learners unable to understand much of what they may hear or read? Above all, perhaps, are pupils well-motivated and drawn into the language, or is it a chore, a grind of mechanised exercises remote from real life, to be dropped and forgotten at the first opportunity? Does classroom teaching give you an enjoyable and satisfying professional life? Are you over-preparing, over-rehearsing examination techniques rather than developing the resources which will enable pupils to do a lot more than perform in tests, which they will in fact take equally or more successfully as a result? Are you making full use of whatever freedom of decision the syllabus leaves open to you? Or confining yourself to an unnecessary extent to acting as the agent for authorities at a higher level, whom you expect to take all the decisions for you? Only you can answer these questions. The aim of the Framework is to open your eyes to the questions that you ought to be asking, not to answer them for you.

It is for these reasons that I feel the Framework to be an invaluable tool for teacher education and training. Individual teachers may easily mistake its purpose, look for quick fixes and be disappointed. They may find its style and density daunting, and feel that they are unable to answer the questions posed. They may jump to the conclusion that it is too academic, remote from the day-to-day realities of the classroom. In the hands of an experienced teacher trainer, misconceptions can soon be overcome and I really do believe that it will provide a student setting out on a teaching career with an invaluable mind-map, a resource of continuing relevance at different career stages. In in-service training, it can give a teacher trainer the basis for getting teachers who may have got stuck in a rut and have closed down their options, to reassess their values, aims, objectives and practices in dialogue with other experienced course participants. It is much easier for the relevant, challenging questions to be raised and debated in a group under skilled management than by any individual in isolation.

A skilled animator can, for example, help teachers not to jump too easily to the

conclusion that some sections are irrelevant. For instance, I was told that teachers in Hungary could see no use for the section on conditions and constraints in the context of language use. In reply, I gave the example of language training for airline pilots, who must rely on 100% accuracy in digit recognition in noisy and distracting conditions. The pilots rely on the ability of air traffic controllers to produce clearly articulated speech. Indeed, this ability is required of all those called on to make public announcements. Behind them, those who write such announcements need to learn to phrase them in such a way as to make clarity easier – simple sentences with key words in positions of prominence! These are matters of concern regarding the vocational aspects of education. In any case, classroom management imposes severe time constraints on the nature and extent of communicative activities as well as questions of noise control. Both are serious considerations for testing. These are very practical questions that affect all teachers. The Framework cannot solve them – indeed we insist that the best solution comes from a proper understanding of the specific local conditions, but I do sincerely believe that all teachers will benefit from passing each of the categories of use and competence under review, both as individuals and, wherever possible, in dialogue, exchanging experience and ideas with colleagues.

The later chapters of the Framework are concerned with language learning and teaching, curriculum development, and assessment. Here too the approach is non-directive. No methodology is recommended. We simply set out the options, inviting teachers to identify their present practice and to reflect upon it in the light of the other options available to them. The chapter on assessment is particularly aimed at demystifying testing and freeing teachers from fear and from devoting too much attention to test techniques at the expense of the sound development of communicative abilities. It is of course of particular value to teachers given responsibility for assessing their own students, who are introduced to a wider range of techniques, with their various uses and limitations. The chapter on language teaching is especially concerned with laying out the widest range of options. As an example; we may take the general approaches to language learning and teaching set out on p.143:

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6.4.1 General approaches:

In general, how are learners expected to learn a second or foreign language (L2)? Is it in one or more of the following ways?

a) by direct exposure to authentic use of language in L2 in one or more of the following ways:

- i. face to face with native speaker(s);
- ii. overhearing conversation;
- iii. listening to radio, recordings etc.;
- iv. watching and listening to TV, video, etc.;
- v. reading unmodified, ungraded, authentic written texts (newspapers, magazines, stories, novels, public signs and notices etc.);
- vi. using computer programmes, CD ROM, etc.;
- vii. participating in computer conferences on- or off- line;
- viii. participating in courses in other curriculum subjects

which employ L2 as a medium of instruction.

b) by direct exposure to specially selected (e.g. graded) spoken utterances and written texts in L2 ('intelligible input' Slide6

c) by direct participation in authentic communicative interaction in L2, e.g. as a conversation partner with a competent interlocutor;

d) by direct participation in specially devised and constructed tasks in L2 ('comprehensible output');

e) autodidactically, by (guided) self-study, pursuing negotiated self-directed objectives and using available instructional media;

f) by a combination of presentations, explanations, (drill) exercises and exploitation activities, but with L1 as the language of classroom management, explanation, etc.;

g) by a combination of activities as in f), but using L2 only for all classroom purposes;

h) by some combination of the above activities, starting perhaps with f), but progressively reducing the use of L1 and including more tasks and authentic texts, spoken and written, and an increasing self-study component.;

i) by combining the above with group and individual planning, implementation and evaluation of classroom activity with teacher support, negotiating interaction to satisfy different learner needs, etc.

First, the option of learning by simple exposure to authentic language is presented, then by interaction with competent speakers, then auto-didactic study, then in f) to i) the various forms of classroom teaching from the more traditional teacher-centred forms using the mother tongue as the medium of interaction to those emphasising the use of the target language and the development of autonomy.

Further options concern: the roles of teachers, learners, instructional media and texts, the development of learners' strategies and competences, and attitudes to error. The options presented for teacher and learner roles should prove sufficiently controversial to provoke lively discussion among course participants, since they raise questions of authoritarian vs. learner-centred approaches and the promotion of learner autonomy, which still arouse strong emotions!

A separate chapter is devoted to the role of tasks in learning and teaching. The chapter on curriculum development considers the options for the organisation of language teaching in schools in the light of the development of plurilingualism, the enlargement of an individual's overall communicative competence to include integrated competences in a number of languages. The essential difference between this concept of plurilingualism and the more familiar multilingualism is that languages are not seen as simply existing side by side, quite separate in the mind, but as interacting to form one integrated competence upon any part of which a user may draw to meet the demands of communication. This makes for much greater flexibility in real situations and can be brought to bear on new learning. We should, I think, agree that we cannot be sure when educating a child what language or languages he or she will actually need in adult life. One of our responsibilities in teaching the first foreign language is to enable the learner to develop the skills needed to learn, or at least deal with, further foreign languages as necessary in later life. This is one reason why the general competences are relevant, and communicative awareness, knowledge of the world, including socio-cultural awareness, general phonetic skills as well as study and heuristic skills all have a part to play. Their development over a period of years should be planned for and cultivated rather than left to chance. I should like to see Spanish children given the confidence and ability to read a simple text in any Romance language. If they spend some years learning English, then on the one hand

they are well placed to exploit to the full its Romance component, taken from French and Latin, and on the other to use its Germanic component to be able to make sense of simple texts in Dutch and in German. You may wonder how such abilities, often in respect of particular competences (e.g. reading comprehension, say), can be recognised and attested in a qualification system which is organised on the basis of single discrete subjects tested one by one on a four-skills basis. I would point in reply to the European Language Portfolio. It is specifically designed to record this kind of experience, which I feel sure would be valued by prospective employers.

I am very much aware that this rapid tour of the Framework leaves more unsaid than said. I have given rather less attention to the scaling of proficiency, because that has received most attention elsewhere and I wanted to convince you of the relevance of the general body of the document to your concerns. But there is too little time.

To summarise: the actions and competences of a fluent mature speaker are complex, Some can be transferred from MT to FL as they are,.Many involve new learning or restructuring. To become a fluent mature user of a FL is a long and demanding process, which has to be planned and carried out over many years. The Framework gives an overview of the process as a whole. Educational authorities can and should use it for long-term strategic planning of language learning aims and objectives. It is for a teacher responsible for any one stage of the process to make use of it to reflect on the contribution he or she has to make to the development of pupils in its various aspects under the given conditions. It is then for teacher trainers to empower teachers to make full use of the resources which the Framework offers them. I know of a number of teacher trainers who already use the Framework as the backbone of their courses. The Guide for Users published by the Council of Europe contains a chapter contributed by Barry Jones based on his experience in doing so at Homerton College, Cambridge.

One final word; the Framework is an ideologically neutral document. It makes no recommendations, but provides all those involved in language learning, teaching and assessment at any level with a tool to facilitate reflection and communication and, if they so wish, to co-ordinate their efforts and calibrate their objectives. But I - and I believe all those engaged in the language programmes of the Council of Europe and

the European Union - have clear policy objectives. We want to see a new generation of Europeans equipped with the knowledge and skills they need for communication at a more than superficial level; well-informed and open-minded in their relation to people from other cultures; flexible and able to benefit from freedom of movement across our continent; independent but responsible in thought and action, able and willing to participate in public life and to enjoy the rights and duties of democratic citizenship. We believe that the language teaching profession has a central, indispensable role to play in helping this new generation to develop its full potential in a world with much promise yet beset by great dangers. Everything we do and produce is meant to help the profession rise to this challenge. I trust that teacher trainers will do all in their power to help it do so.