

East Asia Assessment Solutions Team

Linking speaking test tasks to the CEFR

Presenter: Jonathan Dixon

Overview

In this workshop, we will...

- *reverse engineer speaking test items*
- *gain insight into how to develop speaking tests for your classrooms.*



True or False?

- *CEFR = Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* ✓
- *CEFR is a famous English language test* ✗
- *There are 6 main levels in the CEFR, ranging from A1-C2* ✓
- *C2 means you are the same level as a native speaker* ✗
- *The CEFR can be used as a syllabus for a language learning program* ✗
- *CEFR can support teachers to become more effective* ✓

CEFR Levels



*The CEFR defines
language proficiency at
six levels arranged in
three bands:*

Basic User

Independent User

Proficient User

CEFR Scales

The CEFR consists of a series of scales containing descriptors indicating what a learner can do in that context...

1) Common Reference Scales

Very general view of language abilities at each CEFR level
(Including Global Scale, Overall Scales, Self-assessment Grid, and Qualitative Features of Spoken Language)

2) Narrow Scales

Language abilities in various sub-skills/areas of competence
(including different language activities, skills, genres, and linguistic, pragmatic, and socio-linguistic competences)



C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

CEFR Self Assessment Grid

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		A1 Basic User	A2 Basic User	B1 Independent user	B2 Independent user	C1 Proficient user	C2 Proficient user
Understanding	Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
		I can understand familiar names, words and phrases in oral communication.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can understand simple everyday advertisements, menus and timetables and short simple texts.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerning familiar subjects in my area of interest.	I can understand texts and complex texts on unfamiliar subjects.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of written language.
Speaking		I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say	I can interact in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can manage in social exchanges, but usually with hesitation and need to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations that arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can manage in unprepared conversations on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms
		I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.
Writing	Writing						

Qualitative Features of Spoken Language

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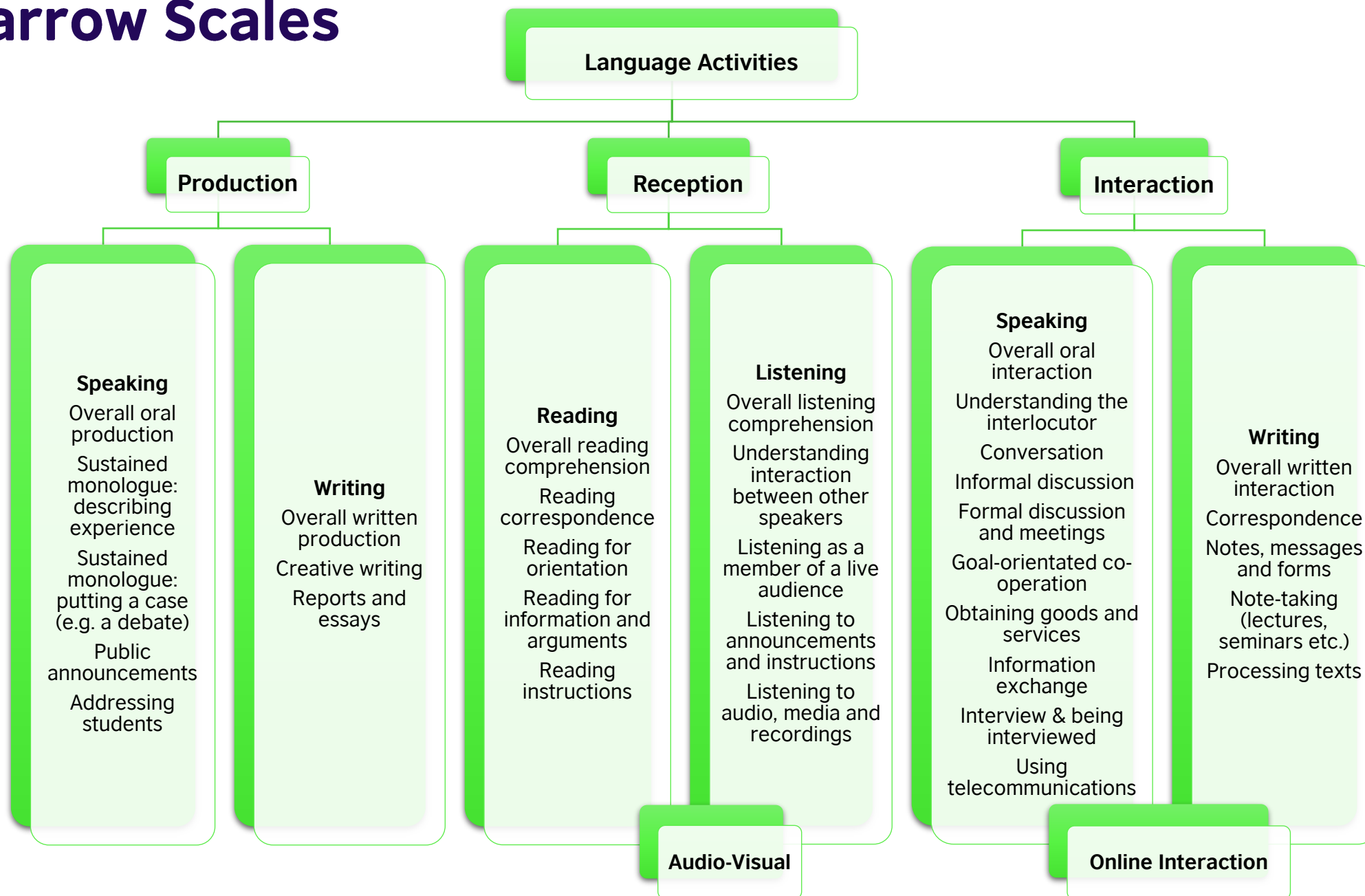


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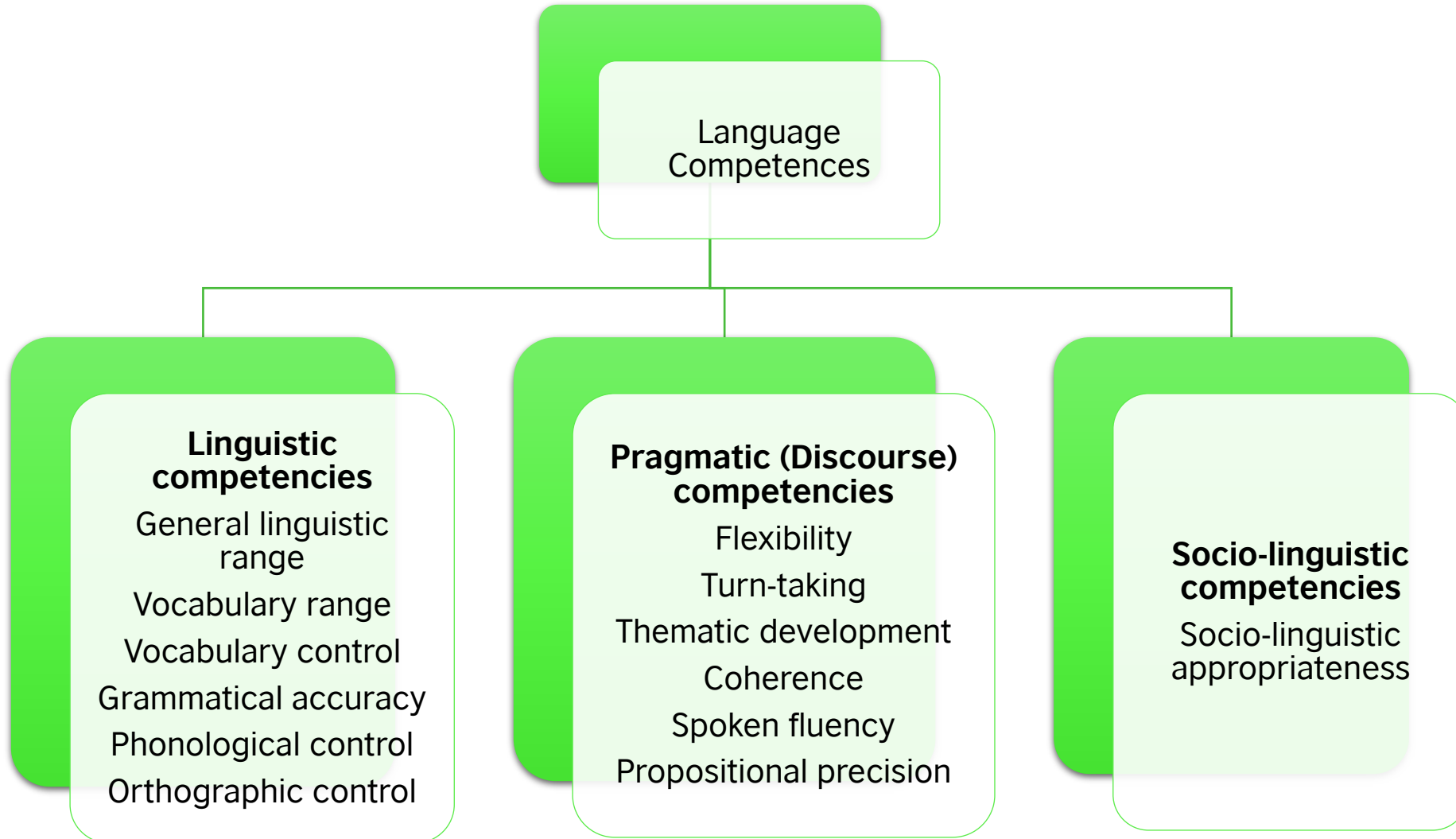
	RANGE	ACCURACY	FLUENCY	INTERACTION	COHERENCE	PHONOLOGY
C2	Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.	Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions).	Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.	Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse	Can create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organisational patterns and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.	Can employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with a high level of control – including prosodic features such as word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation – so that the finer points of his/her message are clear and precise. Intelligibility is not affected in any way by features of accent that may be retained from other language(s).
C1	Has a good command of a range of language forms to select from to express him/herself with appropriate style and register in a range of general, professional or technical contexts without having to search for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.					Can employ the full range of phonological features in the TL with sufficient control to ensure intelligibility throughout. Can articulate virtually all the sounds of the TL; some features of accent retained from other language(s) may be noticeable, but they do not affect intelligibility at all.
B2+						
B2	Has a sufficient command of language to be able to describe, explain and discuss on most general topics without much conspicuous errors, using some sentence forms.					Can generally use appropriate intonation, place stress correctly and articulate individual sounds clearly; accent tends to be influenced by other language(s) he/she speaks, but has little or no effect on intelligibility.
B1+						
B1	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.	Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.	Pronunciation is generally intelligible; can approximate intonation and stress at both utterance and word levels. However, accent is usually influenced by other language(s) he/she speaks.

B2

Narrow Scales



Narrow Scales



How can the CEFR be useful for teachers?

1) *Use the CEFR for PLANNING learning*

Teachers can use the descriptors to:

- benchmark your students' language ability in terms of use
- set goals for your students and your teaching outcomes
- guide you on what topics and content to use in your classrooms



How can the CEFR be useful for teachers?



2) Use the CEFR for MEASURING learning

Teachers can use the descriptors to:

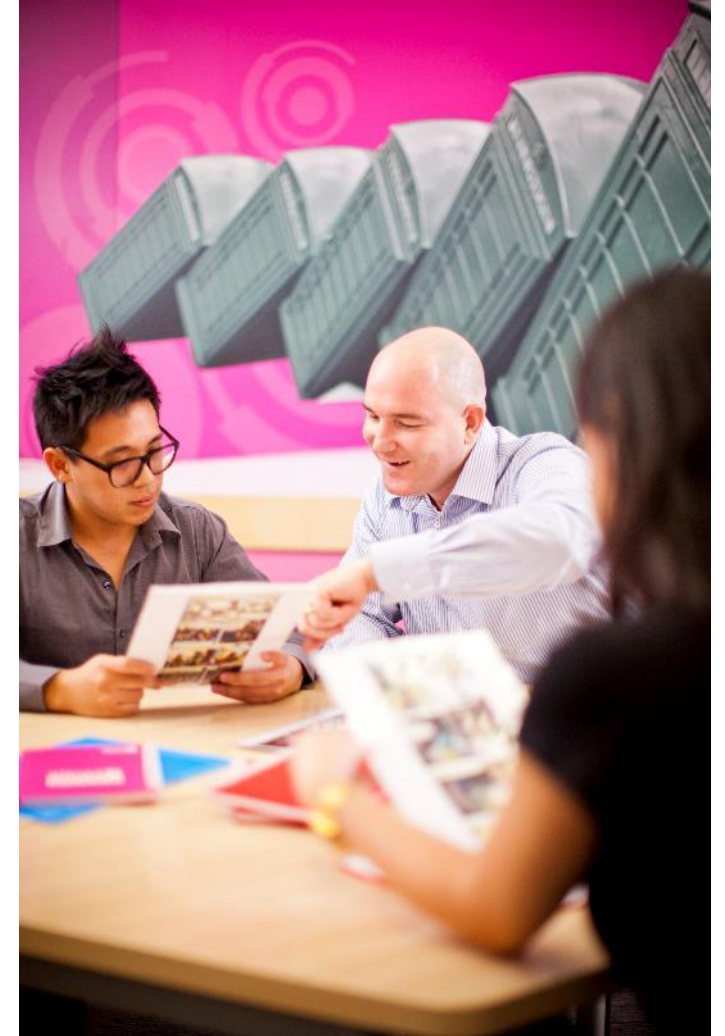
- set clear and transparent criteria by which students are assessed
- formulate assessment in positive terms rather than deficiencies (CAN-do)
- focus on language use rather than language knowledge in evaluating ability
- select the content and task types to be used in tests and quizzes

How can the CEFR be useful for teachers?

3) Use the CEFR for SELF-DIRECTED learning

Teachers can use the descriptors to:

- raise your students' awareness of their current levels of proficiency
- help your learners seek out appropriate and relevant materials and learning resources
- support your students to set realistic goals and to self-evaluate whether they have met these goals
- teach students how to use the self-assessment descriptors to become independent learners



What is self-assessment?

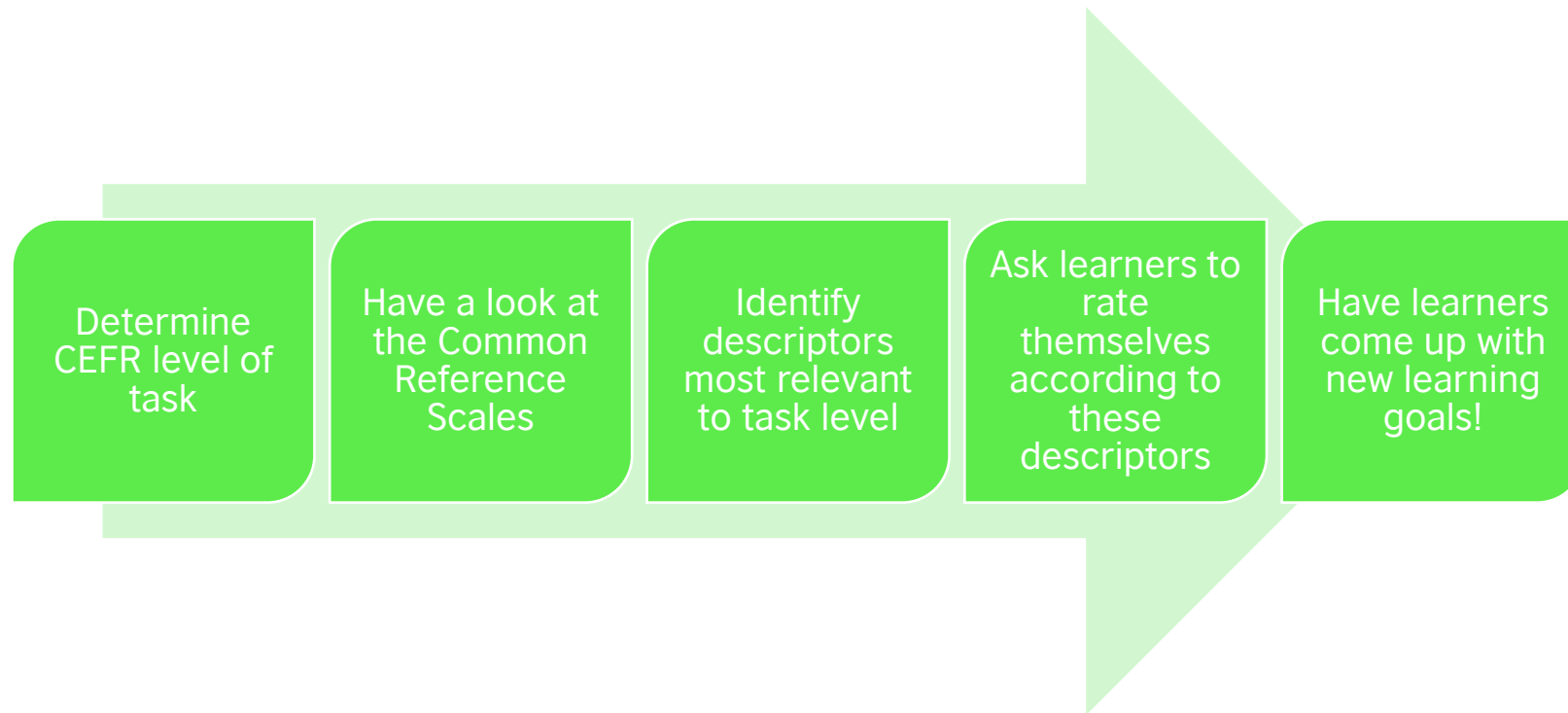
*Students are involved in **self-assessment** when they look at their own work in a reflective way, identify aspects of it that are good and that could be improved, and then set personal learning targets for themselves.*

Students need to learn for themselves how they move up to the next level ... they need to internalise the process. Learning cannot be done for them by the teachers.

(Mary James)

CEFR and Self-assessment

The CEFR provides standards that illustrate to students how to recognize success and how their work will be assessed



Speaking Test Task: EXAMPLE



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p. 183-185








Which of these two sports do you think is more enjoyable and why?

How important is it to do some kind of sport or exercise?

What CEFR level is this task targeting?

B1

CEFR Self Assessment Grid (B1)

		A1 Basic User	A2 Basic User	B1 Independent user	B2 Independent user	C1 Proficient user	C2 Proficient user	
Understanding	 Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.	
	 Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes & ambitions.• I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.</div>				I can understand long and complex actual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
Speaking	 Spoken interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I am trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.					I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	 Spoken production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.					I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
Writing	 Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.			I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.		

CEFR Qualitative features of spoken language (B1)

- **RANGE:** Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.
- **ACCURACY:** Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations.
- **FLUENCY:** Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.
- **INTERACTION:** Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.
- **COHERENCE:** Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
- **PHONOLOGY:** Pronunciation is generally intelligible; can approximate intonation and stress at both utterance and word levels. However, accent is usually influenced by other language(s) he/she speaks.

Student Goals

Can you:

- connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences? YES or NO
- briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans? YES or NO
- express yourself with sufficient vocabulary, with some hesitation on familiar topics? YES or NO
- use a range of frequently-used structures associated with more predictable situations. YES or NO
- keep talking, even though you sometimes pause for grammatical/lexical planning? YES or NO
- maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar to you? YES or NO
- link a series of short simple ideas into a connected sequence of points? YES or NO
- generally be understood, using some intonation and stress at word and sentence level? YES or NO

Speaking Test Task: EXAMPLE



Which of these two sports do you think is more enjoyable and why?

How important is it to do some kind of sport or exercise?



Did this student meet the goals derived from the Can Do statements? Why or why not?

Student Goals

Could the student:

- connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences? ✓
- briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans? ✓
- express yourself with sufficient vocabulary, with some hesitation on familiar topics? ✓
- use a range of frequently-used structures associated with more predictable situations. ✓
- keep talking, even though you sometimes pause for grammatical/lexical planning? ✓
- maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar to you? ✓
- link a series of short simple ideas into a connected sequence of points? ✓
- generally be understood, using some intonation and stress at word and sentence level? ✓

Self-assessment in the classroom

For individual descriptors:

Descriptor	I can do this no problem	I do OK most of the time	I need help to do this	Very difficult I need lots of help	I can't do this
I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events					

Descriptor	✓✓ (I can do this easily)	✓ (I can do this normally)	! (This is my objective)	!! (This is my priority)
I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events				

Descriptor	+	0	-
	(I can do this easily)	(I can do this normally)	(I struggle with this)
I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events			

Your turn!

The candidate is asked three questions related to a single topic and is given one minute to prepare an answer and take notes. Then the candidate will speak for two minutes.

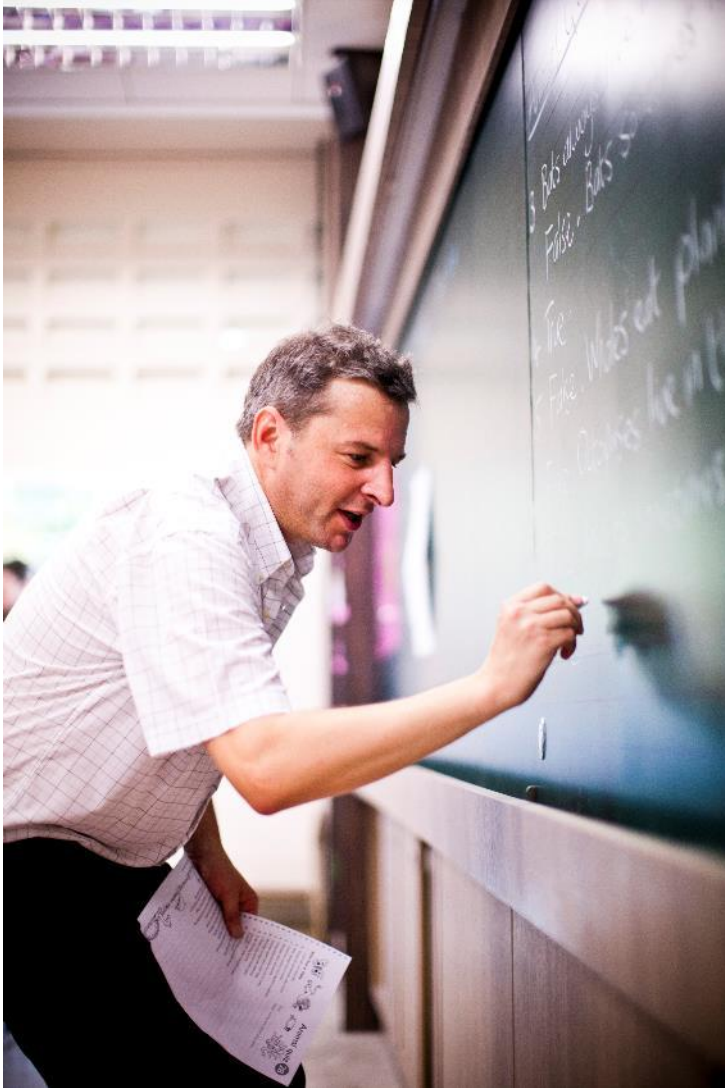


Tell me about a personal achievement or award you have received

How did you feel about this achievement?

Do awards encourage people to do their best?

This is just the beginning!



Today, we used Common Reference Scales to illustrate how the CEFR can be used for self-assessment purposes. Your students could also:

- Use some of the narrow scales*
- Create your own scales!*



COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

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The CEFR Levels

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/home>

Some of the instruments produced within the Council of Europe have played a decisive role in the teaching of so-called “foreign” languages by promoting methodological innovations and new approaches to designing teaching programmes, notably the development of a communicative approach.



CEFR

British Council | EAQUALS Core Inventory for General English

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/british-council-eaquals-core-inventory-general-english-0>



This project may be of interest to anyone involved in curriculum development.

British Council – EAQUALS Core Inventory for General English



A - Z of Content

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N
P R S T W Y

sort descending

A framework for planning a listening skills lesson

A handbook for exploratory action research

A history of IATEFL: The first 50 years of the
International Association of Teachers of English
as a Foreign Language

Action plan for teachers

Action plan for teachers

An investigation into improved primary school

EnglishProfile

The CEFR for English

<http://www.englishprofile.org/>

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The CEFR ▾

English Vocabulary Profile ▾

English Grammar Profile ▾

English Profile – what the CEFR means for English

English Profile helps teachers and educationalists understand what the [Common European Framework](#) means for English. It describes what aspects of English are typically learned at each CEFR level. This tool helps teachers, course-book developers, course-book authors and test writers what is suitable for learning at each level.

This site contains a wealth of information about English Profile, including two innovative online tools: [English Vocabulary Profile Online](#) and [English Grammar Profile Online](#). These are searchable databases that give you free access to what English vocabulary and grammar is suitable for teaching at each CEFR level.

The End!

If you have any questions about today's topic, please feel free to ask!



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Fairer, Greener, Stronger: The Future of Language Assessment

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Greener: Calls on all individuals, institutions and governments to work together to reduce their impact on the environment.

Stronger: Building future-ready, shock-proof educational systems by designing testing systems that are adaptable and resilient.

Dec 10 & 11 - Online



Early-bird registration: Until Oct 31; Regular registration: Nov 1-Dec 9
Standard (15GBP-25GBP) and Complimentary Passes are available

Visit our website to find out more:
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The British Council's annual language testing and assessment conference takes place **ONLINE** on **Dec 10 & 11**

Plenary Speakers

Professor Judit Kormos
Lancaster University



Professor Barry O'Sullivan OBE
British Council



Stevie Spring CBE
British Council



Professor Low Ee Ling
Nanyang Technological University



Dr. Jayanti Banerjee
Trinity College London



Panel Discussions

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Climate Action in Language Assessment

Artificial Intelligence

English Medium Education

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www.britishcouncil.sg/new-directions-2021

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**NEW
DIRECTIONS**

Fairer, Greener, Stronger
The Future of Language Assessment



Best Student Research Idea

Do you have a research idea to share? This year we invite students enrolled in language assessment or linguistics courses to experiment with a new style of communication, a video presentation of their research idea. Attendees and experts at New Directions East Asia 2021 will cast their votes for the Best Student Research Idea award.

#NewDirections2021



Visit our website to find out more: <https://www.britishcouncil.sg/student-research-idea-awards>