

Curriculum Design and Evaluation in ELT

Özcan DEMİREL

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To my grandchildren...

Preface

“Curriculum Design and Evaluation in ELT” is particularly prepared for English Language Teaching (ELT) students taking the course at graduate level in Cyprus International University. It covers the summary of curriculum development process and evaluation based on Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

This book consists of seven chapters that provide to understand the curriculum development process and syllabus design in language teaching, and also types of curriculum evaluation models. The book ends with an application of an assessment of a current ELT curriculum in schools and develop a model curriculum based on CEFR, in other words, principles and standards in the CEFR.

The author wishes to thank most warmly his students who have contributed to the development of this book through their valuable discussions of topics. The author will be very happy if the students find it useful and practical in their academic lives.

Prof. Dr. Özcan DEMİREL

Şubat, 2020

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Chapter 1

Language Policy and CEFR

Objectives

After studying Chapter 1, you will be able to:

- Comprehend the importance of the language policy for a nation, countries and international institutions,
- Develop a global understanding of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in language teaching,
- Recognize the European Language Portfolio (ELP) in language teaching,
- Comprehend the usage of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) in EFL classes.

Introduction

In this chapter, language policy, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) topics are summarized to provide an overview.

Language policy

It is estimated that there are five or six thousand languages (may be more) spoken all over the world. It is difficult to give an exact number of languages due to the diminishing of some languages year by year. UNESCO celebrates International Mother Language Day (IMLD) on February 21 every year and informs the diminishing languages in that day. At least, twenty or thirty lesser-used old languages are diminishing year by year.

Each country and nation, even international organizations have language policies. Language policy is concerned with official efforts to affect the relative status and use of one or more languages. In a monolingual society, language policy is usually concerned exclusively with promoting an approved, standard grammar of the common language and they use only one official language in that society. But in multilingual societies like Switzerland, Belgium and Canada, people use more than one language and their policies are to promote to learn more official languages in that country.

Many international organizations such as the United Nations, European Union and the Council of Europe, have language policy and use only predetermined languages. For instance, there are only six official and working languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish) in the organization of the United Nations, and two languages (English and French) in the Council of Europe and 24 working languages in European Union. On the other hand, language policy division in the Council of Europe promote to learn more European languages to be more European and live in multilingual societies in the member states of European Union.

Language policy division in the Council of Europe is responsible for language policy in Europe. Member states of EU and CoE agree on following this policy in their countries. CEFR, ELT and CLIL developed by this Unit are the language projects to support this policy. You may find an overview aspects of these projects stated as follows.

The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE) was founded in 1949. It is an intergovernmental organization with 47 member states at present, all of which are in the continent of Europe. Turkey is a founder member of this organization and has actively taken part in all its initiatives to date since 1949.

Turkey has enjoyed close relations with the Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe since the 1970s. In those years, the Ministry of Turkish National Education reformed foreign language curricula and started to prepare new textbooks under the auspices of the Council of Europe. Another important event came in 2001. The Council of Europe (CoE) declared 2001 as the “European Year of Languages” and Turkey joined and contributed to the European Year of Languages (EYL) events by organizing and participating in conferences, seminars and local meetings. In the same year, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP) were presented to all European countries. Since then, each member state of the CoE has been involved in the ELP project and has taken up the ideas in the CEFR to improve language learning.

The introduction of the CEFR was conceived as an innovation in language learning. It encourages the dissemination of new ideas, principles and guidelines. The Language Policy Division of the CoE supports and disseminates this innovative movement encouraging European citizens to learn more languages in order to attain the educational objectives of plurilingualism and multiculturalism in the continent of Europe.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

The CEFR is the creation of the Council of Europe. The Council continues to guide and encourage the use of the Framework. The CEFR has a number of aims. One of these is to foster plurilingualism. Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism are terms used by the Council of Europe to refer to individuals who are able to use and relate to more than one language or culture. The Council uses multiculturalism and multilingualism to refer to society's usage of more than one language or culture.

The CEFR is described fully in a book from CUP (Council of Europe, 2001). If we focus on one aspect of the framework, the Common Reference Levels, we can see many possibilities for encouraging the teaching and learning of languages. When teachers of English list what makes good teaching and assessing, here they usually come up with factors such as clear purpose, teachers and students understanding that purpose, skills and knowledge are taught and learned, the teaching is personal and rewards success, focuses on real language in use and teaching methods match testing methods. Using the reference levels teachers find the same principles at work.

When teachers and learners meet and apply the self-assessment scale themselves, they find they are easy and motivating. After carrying out familiarization tasks, teachers find that they can place themselves and others quickly and easily on the scale. One can also judge the level of teaching and testing tasks in the same way. The framework, however, is not a panacea. It is not going to provide instant and easy solutions to the challenge of teaching and learning foreign languages. It does represent a practical and positive way forward. The next question we need to consider is how to apply the framework in our own situation.

Teachers and institutions can use the common reference levels to provide a clearer idea of what learners really can do. This is particularly useful for test users such as university departments receiving students from schools of Basic English. It is also useful for parents and students to know what their levels mean.

If tests are related to the framework, however, reliable and valid tests are a prerequisite. This takes time and resources, but there are many examples of reliable and valid tests. If you are looking for guidelines in developing such tests, take a look at Alderson, Clapham, & Wall (1993).

If we are sure that the test or assessment system is reliable and valid, we can match it to the framework. We do not necessarily need to write a completely new test or a completely new curriculum, but it may help to make revisions in the light

of research. It is probably possible to fit most existing curricula into the framework, and the Council of Europe provides a number of guidelines to assist this process.

What is the Common European Framework?

The following introduction is taken from the 2001 version of the CEFR:

The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency, which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis.

The Common European Framework is intended to overcome the barriers to communication among professionals working in the field of modern languages arising from the different educational systems in Europe. It provides the means for educational administrators, course designers, teachers, examining bodies, etc., to reflect on their current practice, with a view to situating and coordinating their efforts and to ensuring that they meet the real needs of the learners for whom they are responsible.

By providing a common basis for the explicit description of objectives, content and methods, the Framework will enhance the transparency of courses, syllabuses and qualifications, thus promoting international cooperation in the field of modern languages. The provision of objective criteria for describing language proficiency will facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and accordingly will aid European mobility (CEFR, 2001, p. 12).

The Framework itself is a formidable document, describing as it does the complexity of language learning, language use and language proficiency, and drawing the implications for language pedagogy. Not surprisingly, a "Guide for Users" of the Framework has been developed alongside the Framework, to help users to interpret and adapt the Framework for their own uses.

However, even as the Framework was being drafted in its original form, interest throughout Europe was such that efforts were made in many countries and institutions to implement aspects of the emerging Framework in a variety of domains -in teacher training, in syllabus design, in materials development and, lat-

terly in particular, in assessment, not only in formal tests and scales of assessment but also in portfolios of achievement in modern European languages.

Partly as a result, a wealth of experience has been developed throughout member states of the Council of Europe in applying and developing the Framework. On the occasion of the European Year of Languages 2001, the revised Framework was published, and this sister volume was also produced, containing accounts of the use of the Framework across Europe, both in order to publicize the case studies in their own right, but also in order to encourage others to use the Framework in a variety of different ways and contexts.

This volume thus is addressed at potential users of the Framework, ranging from syllabus designers, materials developers, publishers, teacher trainers, students and teachers on pre-service and in-service courses to language testers, ministry officials and applied linguists in general.

How was the Framework developed?

The 2001 version of the Common European Framework represents the latest stage in a process that has been actively pursued since 1971 and owes much to the collaboration of many members of the teaching profession across Europe and beyond. In particular, many colleagues and institutions across Europe responded, often with great care and in concrete detail to the request for feedback on the First Draft, circulated in the autumn of 1995. Well over 1000 copies of the First Draft were sent out for comment and more than 200 questionnaires were returned. A Second Draft was issued in 1996 and submitted for scrutiny and approval to the Final Conference of the Modern Language Project in April 1997, which recommended that the Framework should be trailed in use in the next stage of development.

Feedback on the use of the Framework in practice was gathered from a representative sample of specific users, and in addition, other users were invited to communicate to the Council of Europe the results of their experiences in using it for their particular purposes. The feedback received was taken into account in revising the Framework and User Guides prior to their adoption on a Europe-wide basis, and the publication of the Framework by Cambridge University Press and Didier in 2001.

A detailed account of the early origins of the Framework itself is contained in Brian North's first chapter in this volume, entitled *Developing Descriptor Scales of Language Proficiency for the CEF Common Reference Level*. In this chapter, North outlines the history of the project, and the development of the levels and scales that accompany and operationalize the Framework.

What is the point of the Framework?

The Framework itself was written with the following two main aims:

1. to encourage practitioners of all kinds in the language field, including language learners themselves, to reflect on such questions as:
 - what do we actually do when we speak (or write) to each other?
 - what enables us to act in this way?
 - how much of this do we need to learn when we try to use a new language?
 - how do we set our objectives and mark our progress along the path from total ignorance to effective mastery?
 - how does language learning take place?
 - what can we do to help ourselves and other people to learn a language better?
2. to make it easier for practitioners to tell each other and their clientele what they wish to help learners to achieve, and how they attempt to do so (CEF, 2001, p. 7).

The authors of the Framework are emphatic that they do not wish to tell practitioners what to do, or how to do it. Rather “we are raising questions, not answering them. It is not the function of the Common European Framework to lay down the objectives that users should pursue or the methods they should employ”.

The intention in publishing the Framework is to encourage all concerned with the organization of language learning to base their work on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners.

This means answering questions such as:

- what will learners need to do with the language?
- what do they need to learn in order to be able to use the language to achieve those ends?
- what makes them want to learn?
- what sort of people are they (age, sex, social and educational background, etc.)
- what knowledge, skills and experiences do their teachers possess?

- what access do they have to course books, works of reference (dictionaries, grammars, etc.), audio-visual aids, computer hard - and software, etc.?
- how much time can they afford (or are willing, or able) to spend?" (op cit, p 7/8)

What does the Framework look like?

The contents of the CEFR are as follows:

Chapter 1. The Common European Framework in its political and educational context

Chapter 2. Approach adopted

Chapter 3. Common reference levels

Chapter 4. Language use and the language user/learner

Chapter 5. The competences of the user/learner

Chapter 6. Language learning and teaching

Chapter 7. Tasks and their roles in language teaching Chapter 8. Linguistic diversification and the curriculum Chapter 9. Assessment

Appendix A: Developing proficiency descriptors

Appendix B: The illustrative scales of descriptors

Appendix C: The DIALANG scales

Appendix D: The ALTE "can do" statements

Readers and users of the Framework will find the following summary of various chapters useful.

Chapter 1 defines the aims, objectives and functions of the proposed Framework in the light of the overall language policy of the Council of Europe and in particular the promotion of plurilingualism in response to European linguistic and cultural diversity. It then sets out the criteria, which the Framework should satisfy.

Chapter 2 explains the approach adopted. The descriptive scheme is based on an analysis of language use in terms of the strategies used by learners to activate general and communicative competences. These strategies and competences are engaged to carry out the activities and processes involved in the production and reception of texts and the construction of discourses dealing with particular