



Basic introduction to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages



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Language – a key Competence for Europe

A Conference on Teaching and Learning Languages



Overview

- Some basic considerations
- Basic principles of the CEFR
- An outline of its content
- CEFR and ESP
- The CEFR in Austria





The basic questions

How do I know that my Level B1 is your Level B1? (J. Charles Alderson)

How can we protect the Framework from its users? (John Trim)





Council of Europe – Language Policies

- to protect and develop the linguistic heritage and cultural diversity of Europe as a source of mutual enrichment
- to facilitate personal mobility and the exchange of ideas
- to develop a harmonious approach to language teaching based on common principles
- to promote large-scale plurilingualism



What is the Common European Framework of Reference? (1)

publication of the Modern Languages Division of the Council of Europe
destined for professionals in the field of education

result of a long development process



What is the Common European Framework of Reference? (2)

a common basis

for the development of curricula,
assessment concepts and teaching
materials

for the description of objectives,
target competences and teaching methods

an instrument

that increases the transparency and
validity of language courses, curricula
and qualifications

that facilitates mutual (cross-national)
recognition of qualifications and supports
international mobility





Intended functions of the CEFR

- Planning language education programmes
definition of entry and target levels
- Planning of assessment and certification
content, criteria of evaluation
- Planning autonomous learning
self-awareness, self-definition of learning targets,
selection of materials, self-evaluation



Familiarisation with the CEFR

- the aims and objectives of Council of Europe language policy
- communicative activities
- communicative strategies
- competences
- domains
- common reference levels






The aims and objectives of Council of Europe language policy

- to achieve greater unity among its members by the adoption of common action in the educational field
- “ ... to protect and develop the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe ... ”
- “ ... to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding ... ”






Language use and the language user/ learner (1)

Communicative language activities

- ◆ production
- ◆ reception
- ◆ interaction
- ◆ mediation






Language use and the language user/ learner (2)

Non-verbal communication

- practical actions
- paralinguistics
- paratextual features





Language use and the language user/ learner (3)

Communicative strategies

- planning
- execution
- monitoring
- repair action



The user / learner's competences

General competences

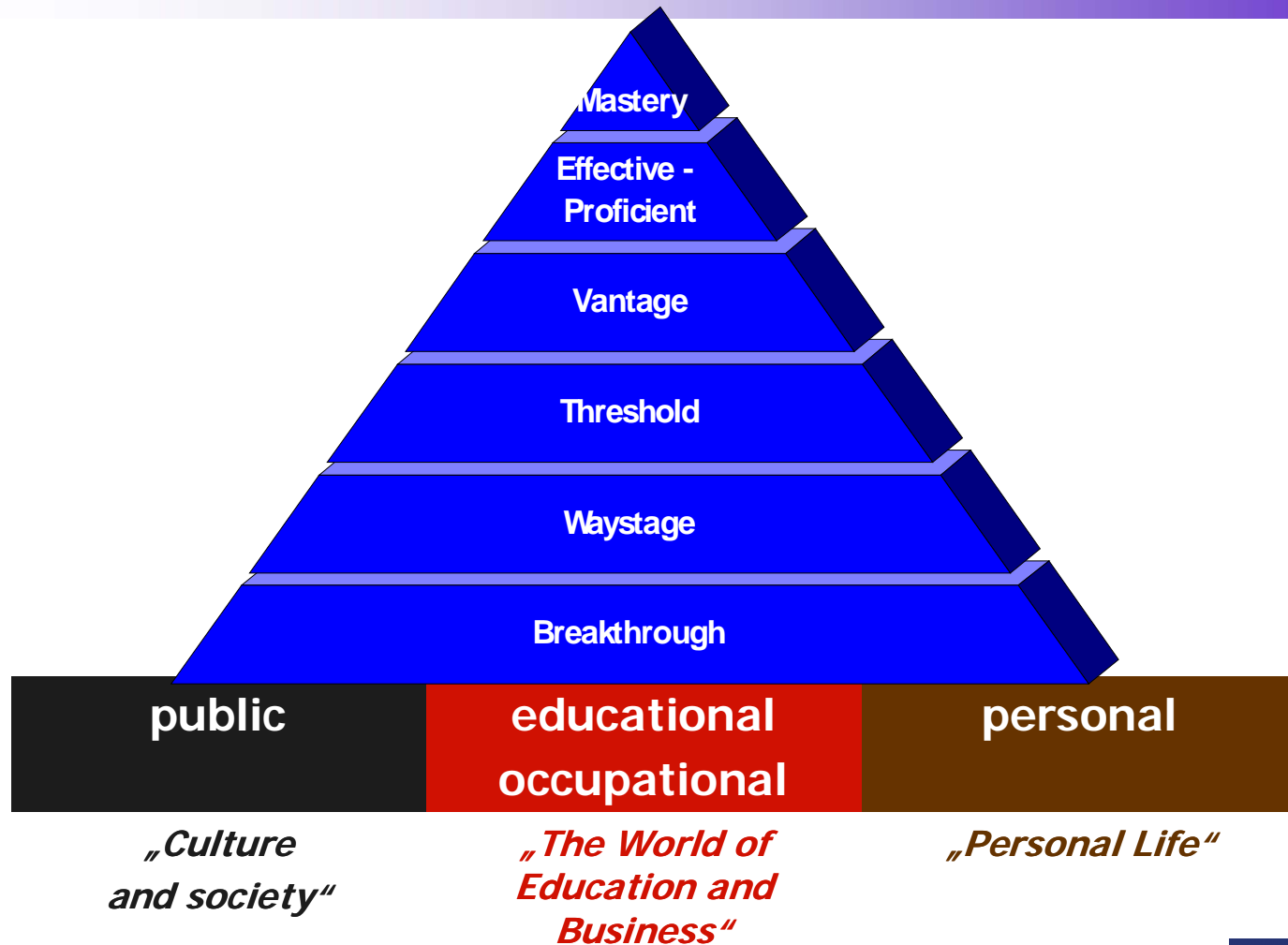
- declarative knowledge (savoir)
- skills and know-how (savoir-faire)
- existential knowledge (savoir-être)
- ability to learn (savoir-apprendre)

Communicative language competences

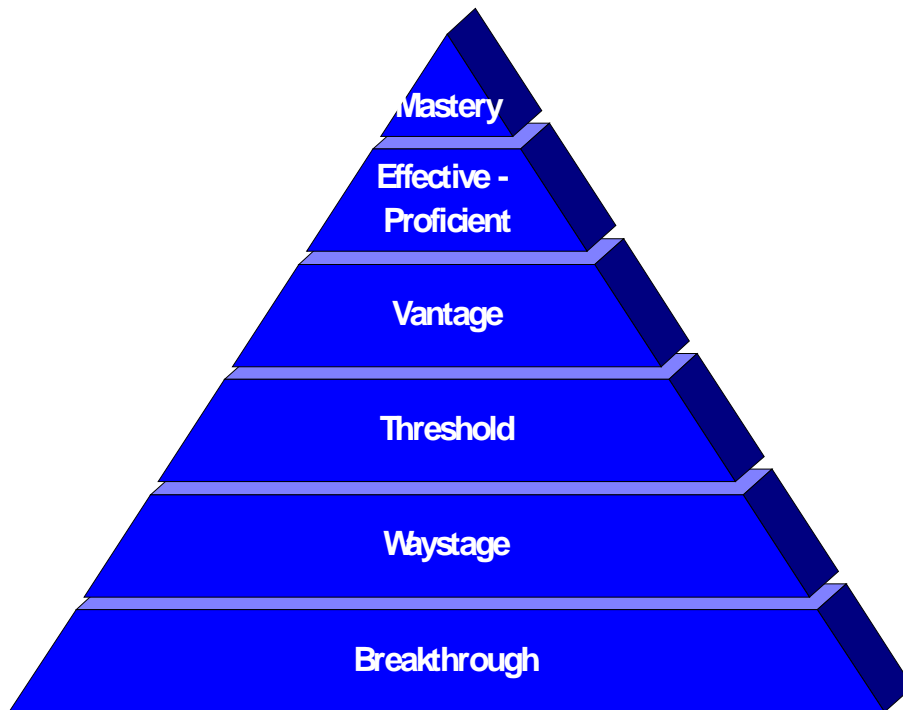
- linguistic competences (lexical/grammatical/semantic/phonological/orthographic/orthoepic)
- sociolinguistic competence
- pragmatic competences (discourse competence, functional competence)



Language competences and domains



CEFR – User Profiles



C2
Competent user

C1

B2

Independent User

B1

A2

Basic User

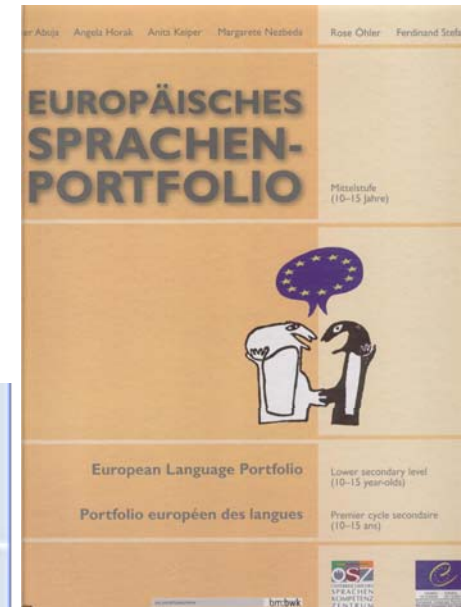
A1



The CEFR in Austria

The following documents already refer to the CEFR:

- Curricula for Modern Foreign Languages Upper Secondary Level
- The national versions of the “European Language Portfolio”
- The so-called “National Standards for Languages”
- A number of language courses and certificates (e.g. Language Centre of the University of Vienna, VHS; Cambridge ESOL Certificates)





Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen



Europäisches
Sprachenportfolio

ESP

Mittelstufe

ESP

15+

Bildungsstandards
BHS - Englisch





Steps towards implementation – an example

1998/99 familiarisation with CEFR of a certain number of teachers of “HLW” (upper secondary level, vocational sector) at national teacher development seminars

target levels based on descriptors are agreed on

2003/04 new curriculum introduced for this type of school; content and target levels based on CEFR

October 2003: Language Conference for about 300 teachers from the vocational sector; topics: CEFR, Intercultural Awareness, New Technologies





Steps towards implementation – an example

April 2005: national language contest for students in the vocational sector; assessment criteria based on CEFR; made known to wider public through webvoting

October 2006: Language Conference for about 300 teachers from the vocational sector; topics: Planning, Teaching, Testing

2006/07 Pilot version of ESP15+ (national version of ELP) piloted in about 50 schools





2007

higher awareness of the value of the CEFR

all new curricula refer to the CEFR

national ELP (ESP15+) will be available for schools in autumn

more focus on CEFR-related topics in teacher training

national standards for English at upper secondary level (vocational sector) nearly finished; will be illustrated by examples





Major topics in the CEFR

- Learner autonomy
- Plurilingual approach
- Common description of levels
- Language competence + general competences





Challenges

- ◆ CEFR leads to change – resistance
- ◆ CEFR should be seen as a guideline, not as a set of rules
- ◆ CEFR is not an easy read – facilitation necessary
- ◆ CEFR might be reduced to assessment purposes

- ◆ in-service training and development are not compulsory
- ◆ access to seminars is restricted for financial reasons
- ◆ target group now inhomogeneous – some know the CEFR quite well, others don't





Possible solutions

- Co-ordination among teacher trainers needed
- Modular approach to teacher training and development
- CEFR to be shown as a document that helps teachers
- Levels and assessment should not be the main focus
- Full potential of the CEFR to be exploited
- Connection between CEFR, Curricula, ELP and National Standards should be made clear
- Examples that show what implementation of the CEFR means in classroom practice are needed





Possible solutions

In-service teacher training and development should focus on

- learner autonomy
- plurilingualism
- balanced development of all skills
- professionalisation with regard to assessment
- role of linguistic competences as a part of general communicative competence





Main Documents

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Strasbourg: Council of Europe 2001.

Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Manual. Preliminary Pilot Version. Strasbourg: Language Policy Division, September 2003.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Language Examining and Test Development. Strasbourg: Language Policy Division, October 2002.

www.coe.int/portfolio

