COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF REFERENCE

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Abstract. This article discusses the concept of the CEFR, its goals and objectives. The main purpose of this article is to discuss and determine the methods of use of CEFR in a broader content.

Key words: CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), curriculum, syllabus, objective, descriptor, scale.

As a language learner or as a language teacher we have heard about CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) too many times. What is it ? why does it matter for English language learners and teachers?and how to use it? Who can use it ? for what purposes? Different people have different answers and ideas to these questions. Some say that this is a test. Some say that this is a curriculum. Some people say that this is a syllabus. So, what is it and why do we need it? We shall try to find answer in this article.

Actually the answer is very simple. Different learners of language have different levels of language ability but opinions about their language level can be subjective. Some people may think that ones English is good but some may think it is not. One can be good at some skills than others, for example he/she may be able to read better than to speak. We need a clear objective way to describe language skills that everyone can agree on. This is what the CEFR provides.

Common European framework of Reference has six levels, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The starting point A1 describes very basic language level. As a language learner we may move up and reach the proficiency by reaching C2 level, which is really advance level. By describing what you can do in reading, writing, speaking and listening the CEFR will tell you where you are on the journey from beginner A1 through to Proficiency C2. The levels of CEFR go under the following grouping. A1 and A2 are basic users of language, B1 and B2 are independent users of language and finally C1 and C2 are considered as proficient users of language.

A	B	C
Basic user	Independent user	Proficient user
A1 A2	B1 B2	C1 C2
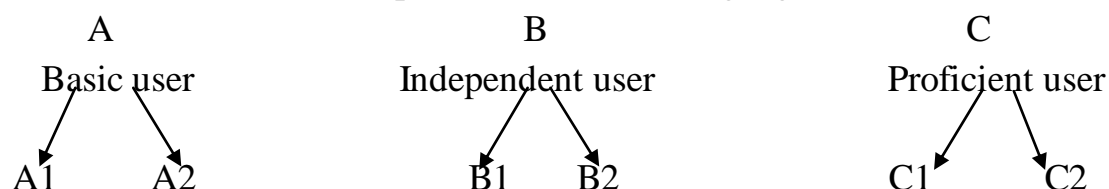
If to be more specific, and describe each level, they have the following naming.
- A1: Formulaic proficiency
- A2: Waystage specification
- B1: Threshold specification
- B2: Vantage specification

– C1: Advanced proficiency

– C2: Full proficiency

These levels show what the candidate can do with the language. The most important issue is to say that CEFR is not a test, it is not a curriculum, and definitely not a syllabus, as some people may think. It is a tool/reference which can be aligned with standards. The question arises here. What is standard? Standard is a level of students' achievement in educational process. Standards show where students should be at the end of the course, and which level of language they have to master. Thus, CEFR shows what they should be able to do with language. CEFR is a tool which helps:

– to set standard

– to achieve standard

– to develop tests

– to make assessment

– to set syllabus objectives

The CEFR has different forms of scales and grids, which provide us with descriptors and give clear and objective information about how does the candidate mastered the language skills (reading, writing, listening, spoken production and spoken interaction).

The CEFR has been developed by the Council of Europe with extensive support from the University of Cambridge ESOL examinations. People from all over the world use the CEFR to explain what level of English they are at and what level of English they need. It is used by learners, teachers, universities, governments and employers. Let's see broader how and by whom CEFR can be used. The CEFR is used by:

Curriculum/course developers

– It helps to decide on the course objectives for language learning

– It helps to decide on content of language learning

Test developers

– It helps to decide the assessment criteria

– It helps them to decide on the content of the exam

Learners, through self –assessment

– It helps to decide their assessment criteria

– It helps to decide the content of the exam

Textbook writers and material developers

– By helping them to decide on the types of texts and tasks that need to be included in materials

All the mentioned above people can use CEFR as a tool to refer in order to come and agree on one definite objective way of teaching, learning, assessing and designing materials in language learning. However, one very important thing to mention is that CEFR does not recommend us any approach or technique in learning and teaching

foreign language. It does not provide us with any specific methodology. It presents some options so that teachers, textbook writers, curriculum developers, can make choices according to their learners' needs and work on the context of the material. CEFR specifies what we need to develop, but does not specifies by using which technique or methodology. This is the choice of individuals.

To sum up all the mentioned above, should say that CEFR is good starting point to refer as a language learner, to see where we are in the journey of foreign language learning process.

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