Time for a new CEFR?
Recommendations from the field

Jozef Colpaert, Margret Oberhofer, Ann Aerts
University of Antwerp
Linguapolis – Institute of Information and Education Sciences (IOIW)
Background

- Partner / coordinator in over 20 European projects: EuroCatering.org, Precolt, iTILT.eu, Teaching Languages to Caregivers etc.

- National calls for project proposals (CEBIR, AKOV, ZorgTaal)

- Host of international conferences:
  - Antwerp CALL: Research Challenges in CALL (07/2014)
  - Linguapolis Summer School: A Toolbox for Design-Based Research
  - Linguapolis Master Class: Educational Engineering
Star(t)ing point

- Competence and performance
  What is the link between ‘can do’ performance statements and areas of linguistic knowledge? To what extent can or should the levels be made more explicit in terms of required vocabulary and grammar?

- Degree of difficulty of the levels
  How can we make sure that our examinations are measuring at the CEFR levels we claim they are? What evidence do we have to support our claims?

- Test purpose
  Why are we testing? What kind of decisions will be made on the basis of information collected via the test? What will be the consequences of these decisions?

- Practicality
  How do we link our tests to the CEFR? How practical, applicable and operational is the CEFR for concrete language testing situations?
Conference

- Language Testing in Europe: Time for a New Framework?
- International Conference hosted by the University of Antwerp
- 27-28-29 May 2013

Organising committee:

- Jozef Colpaert, Linguapolis and Institute for Education and Information Sciences (Chair)
- Ann Aerts, Linguapolis (Conference Manager)
- Mathea Simons, Institute for Education and Information Sciences
- Margret Oberhofer, Linguapolis
Conference format

Interaction with delegates
- Pre-conference survey
- Reflection and discussion
- Post-reflection: Time for a New Framework?

Keynote speakers

Paper presentations
Speakers

- **Keynote speakers:**
  - Lyle Bachman, Professor Emeritus, Department of Applied Linguistics, University of California, Los Angeles
  - Waldemar Martyniuk, Executive Director European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe

- **Invited speakers:**
  - Etienne Devaux, Screening methodologist, SELOR (Belgian public personnel selection and certification agency)
  - Jan Hulstijn, Professor of Second Language Acquisition, Universiteit Amsterdam
Preconference survey

- Survey 1
  - Sent to participants May 20th
  - Return 115 (64.7%)

- Survey 2
  - Sent to colleagues in CALL database (May 20th)
  - Posted on L-test listserv & LinkedIn Groups
  - Return 235

Results in mailbox (+ open answers)
Preconference survey

- In my job I mostly use the CEFR as follows...
- When I use the CEFR in my job, I use it to...
- When I use the CEFR in my job, I do this because...
- I evaluate the CEFR on the following points as...
  - Applicability
  - Practicality
  - Usefulness
  - Authenticity
  - Clarity
  - Detailedness
- I evaluate the CEFR levels and descriptors as...
  - Difficulty degree
  - Definition
1. In my job I mostly use the CEFR as follows:

(one possible answer)
2. When I use the CEFR in my job, I use it to:

(more answers possible)
3. When I use the CEFR in my job, I do this because:

(more answers possible)
4. I evaluate the CEFR on the following points as:

- **Applicability (Can I use it as such in my situation?)**
  - Very negative: 16.2%
  - Rather negative: 57.7%
  - Rather positive: 23.4%
  - Very positive: 2.7%

- **Practicality (How easy is it to make CEFR based tests?)**
  - Very negative: 34.5%
  - Rather negative: 56.4%
  - Rather positive: 0.9%

- **Usefulness (Does it help me in my job?)**
  - Very negative: 0.9%
  - Rather negative: 50.5%
  - Rather positive: 39.3%
  - Very positive: 3.7%

- **Authenticity (Does it correlate with real-world language use tasks?)**
  - Very negative: 13.8%
  - Rather negative: 61.5%
  - Rather positive: 22.0%
  - Very positive: 2.8%

- **Clarity (Is it easy to understand/remember?)**
  - Very negative: 33.0%
  - Rather negative: 53.2%
  - Rather positive: 11.0%

- **Detailedness (Does it include what I need?)**
  - Very negative: 4.6%
  - Rather negative: 36.7%
  - Rather positive: 45.9%
  - Very positive: 8.3%
5. I evaluate the CEFR levels and descriptors as:
Post-reflection: Time for a new framework?
1. Presentation of the results of the session ‘Reflection and discussion’:
   - Which aspects of the CEFR are amenable to improvement?
   - Who should do what and how?
   - Try to formulate 2-3 tweet-like statements per person/group.

2. Suggestions of the keynote speakers

3. Determine together the priorities (n=3) using our voting system
- Return: n = 53
- Suggested improvements: n = 151

**Used methodology**

- Transcription of the paper versions
- Keywords
- Definition of possible improvements (n = 35)
- Quantification
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Describe vocabulary and grammar discretely</td>
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<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)</td>
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<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Adapt to specific contexts: different professional contexts and specific purposes (e.g. academic English)</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Raise critical awareness of actors/CEFR is not the Bible/ Manage expectations</td>
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<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Define the used terminology (e.g. verbs, adjectives, adverbs)/ less subjective - avoid vagueness</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Make the CEFR more understandable + ownership for all actors (learners, teachers, non-specialists)</td>
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<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Adapt to 21st century skills</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>Adapt to 21st century knowledge (new semantic fields; text types)</td>
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<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another/ further subdivisions needed?</td>
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<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>Provide better structured information on the official website (for all target groups)</td>
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<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td>Provide objective and well defined criteria/ clearer/ more consistent descriptors in order to distinguish</td>
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<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td>Provide a platform for the exchange of good practices/ evidence</td>
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<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td>Control the use that is made of the CEFR in real educational contexts (by policy makers; institutions)</td>
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<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td>More detailed information on phonological control More descriptors for pronunciation</td>
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<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td>Separate linguistic proficiency and socio-/intercultural skills</td>
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<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td>Knowledge (lexis, grammar) should be described in more detail</td>
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<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td>Provide a revised version based on the latest findings/ compile and analyse research produced on 'weak'</td>
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<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td>Provide language-specific descriptors</td>
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<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td>Take into account multi- and plurilingualism</td>
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<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td>Define in more detail specific skills (e.g. listening)</td>
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<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td>Provide more examples for course designers, teachers/ operationalised descriptors (e.g. Tasks)</td>
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<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td>Involve all possible stakeholders when defining the descriptors (learners, employers etc.)</td>
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<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td>Elaborate on the lowest/highest levels and beyond</td>
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<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td>Maak dat alles public domain blijft (also commercial-owned improvements)</td>
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<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td>Give and share practical developments for all languages, not only for English</td>
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Selection of most frequently chosen improvements....
Priority 1

1. Provide objective/clearer/more consistent descriptors
2. Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)
3. Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)
4. Provide more examples for course designers/teachers
5. Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/evidence
6. Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/Manage expectations
7. Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another
8. Fill the gaps in the CEFR/missing descriptors
Priority 1

1. Provide objective/clearer/more consistent descriptors (17%)
2. Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners) (5%)
3. Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes) (6%)
4. Provide more examples for course designers/teachers (9%)
5. Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/evidence (19%)
6. Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/Manage expectations (22%)
7. Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another (5%)
8. Fill the gaps in the CEFR/missing descriptors (17%)
Priority 2

1. Provide objective/clearer/more consistent descriptors
2. Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g., young learners)
3. Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)
4. Provide more examples for course designers/teachers
5. Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/evidence
6. Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/Manage expectations
7. Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another
8. Fill the gaps in the CEFR/missing descriptors
1 - Provide objective/clearer/more consistent descriptors

2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)

3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)

4 - Provide more examples for course designers/teachers

5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/evidence

6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/Manage expectations

7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another

8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/missing descriptors
Priority 3

1 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors

2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners)

3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes)

4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers

5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence

6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations

7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another

8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors
Priority 3

1 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors 20%
2 - Adapt to specific groups of learners (e.g. young learners) 4%
3 - Adapt to specific contexts (professional contexts; specific purposes) 7%
4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers 18%
5 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence 9%
6 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations 16%
7 - Explain how transitions are to be made from one level to another 15%
8 - Fill the gaps in the CEFR/ missing descriptors 11%
Summary

1 - Raise critical awareness of all stakeholders/ Manage expectations

2 - Provide objective/clearer/ more consistent descriptors

3 - Provide a platform for exchange of good practices/ evidence

4 - Provide more examples for course designers/ teachers


CALL 2014 Antwerp: Research Challenges in CALL

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www.jozefcolpaert.net