# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CEF ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

At the SFL General Assembly held on January 5, 2006, Prof. Enginarlar mentioned that the Curriculum Commitee had agreed to look into the CEF as a long term project and he stated the following:

- Initial, essential background reading was under way.
- Two committee members would go to a CEF conference in Hungary in February.
- In late February or early March there would be cooperation with 1-2 universities which had started the process.
- The committee would hold a roundtable to come up with a roadmap on how to go about CEF work in the near future.

This document has been prepared to make public the discussions and outcomes of the roundtable held on March 3, 2006.

Participants:

Prof. Dr. Hüsnü Enginarlar (Director, SFL)
Naz Dino (Asst. Director, SFL)
Yeşim Çöteli (Asst. Director, SFL)
Serdar Yıldırım (Advisor to the Director, SFL)
Ayçe Barışık (Chairperson, DBE)
Nihal Cihan (Chairperson, DML)
Necmiye Türkan (Asst. Chairperson, DBE)
Şahika Tarhan (Asst. Chairperson, DML)
İrem Soyuer (TEDs Unit)
Münire Vecdi (Researcher)
Banu Köker (Researcher)
Esra Music (Researcher)
Duygu Güntek (Researcher)
Asst. Prof. Gölge Seferoğlu (External Advisor)

**CEFR ROUNDTABLE PROGRAM**

# March 3, 2006

09:30 – 09:35   :   Opening Remarks by Prof. Dr. Hüsnü Enginarlar

09:35 – 10:20   :   Insights from the Budapest Conference

      **To be presented by  Şahika Tarhan & Necmiye Türkan**

10:20 – 11:20 :   Review of and Discussion on the Proposal for Mapping the SFL Curriculum onto the CEF

      **To be chaired by Naz Dino**

11:20 – 12:30 :   Workshop on Formulating Descriptors for DBE Elementary Group, Span 1

      **To be conducted by Asst. Prof. Dr. Gölge Seferoğlu**

12:30          :   Closing Remarks by Prof. Dr. Hüsnü Enginarlar


Place    :    Department of Basic English

      D Building, TEDs Room

I.  The first part of this roundtable was dedicated to the presentations by Şahika Tarhan and Necmiye Türkan on their insights from the CEF Conference in Hungary titled *Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR)*.

As they stated, the conference focused on the key issues in foreign language education and assessment, and what endeavors there are in Europe to create standardized language assessment and certification. During the conference, the route taken in different countries to relate language examinations to the CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – were described. Moreover, the importance of Specification, Standardization and Empirical Validation during the process of linking an examination to the CEFR was emphasized. Besides a brief overview of the benefits of ELPs - English Language Portfolios -, the INTO EUROPE series, prepared by the British Council Hungary to help students prepare for modern European examinations based upon the Common European Framework of the Council of Europe were presented.

Their PowerPoint presentations can be found at the link under 'the studies carried out so far' in the CEF ALIGNMENT STUDIES Web page of the SFL.

IIThe second part of the roundtable focused on reviewing and discussing the *Proposal for Mapping the SFL Curriculum onto the CEF* prepared by Naz Dino. The full document is available at the link under 'the studies carried out so far'; in the CEF ALIGNMENT STUDIES Web page of the SFL.

This document was prepared mainly with reference to both the essential background reading mentioned at the SFL General Assembly – *Common European Framework of References for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*; CUP; 2001 (CEFR) and *Insights from the Common European Framework*; OUP; 2004 (ICEF) – together with relevant SFL documents.

In his article in *Insights from the Common European Framework*, Frank Heyworth refers to the book (CEFR) as densely written and opaque; Hanna Komorowska, reflecting on her experience during her teacher training sessions in Poland, defines the Framework as extremely difficult to read and understand. The discussions in this part of the roundtable aimed at enabling the participants to share what they had understood from what they had read so far so that they could start using a common language when referring to the CEF. The expected final outcome of the discussions was an action plan that would guide the SFL in working on the CEF and starting to use it in:

- designing courses and implementing them
- carrying out assessment
- conducting teacher training

The discussions were held in two parts: introductory discussions (see the PowerPoint presentation and/or Table 1 below) and the discussions based on highlights from the *Proposal for Mapping the SFL Curriculum onto the CEF*, especially the boldface portions of it (see the PowerPoint presentation and/or Table 2 below).

The PowerPoint presentation of this section can be found at the link under 'the studies carried out so far' in the CEF ALIGNMENT STUDIES Web page of the SFL.

The discussion topics and their outcomes have been listed in the following two tables:

**TABLE 1**

| Introductory Discussion Topics | Contributions from the Participants |
|---|---|
| Why use the CEF? What are some benefits to it? Will there be any drawbacks? | <ul><li>EU membership prospects – as Turkey is in the process of accession, such studies will have to be carried out.</li><li>Instruction will become realistic in terms of levels. (Students should be brought to varying levels in different skills.)</li><li>Higher levels of awareness in the issues of language learning, teaching and assessment will be achieved through work on the CEFR.</li><li>The quality of instruction / efficiency in learning will rise.</li><li>There will be benefits as regards community services – more demand from the public (the language portfolio).</li><li>Modifications might have to be made to content, methodology, assessment and teacher training will be needed at all levels.</li><li>Substantial formal / informal teacher training will be needed at all phases to negotiate diverse opinions.</li></ul> |
| How much of what we are doing presently matches the CEF in terms of language learning programs/content, methodology, assessment, teacher training? | <ul><li>There is limited speaking.</li><li>30% - 40% of the assessment is fine.</li><li>content, assessment, methodology and training have to be cross-checked.</li></ul> |
| Which areas will require the most work? | <ul><li>Drawing up level descriptors (the descriptors will have to be adapted to the educational domain where necessary.)</li><li>Speaking</li><li>The can-do statements</li><li>Self-assessment</li><li>Teacher and student training</li></ul> |

**TABLE 2**

| The participants were asked to comment on the following highlights from the document, concentrating on the parts in boldface | Contributions from the Participants |
|---|---|
| **Highlight 1**<br><br>The CEF is a descriptive framework, not a set of prescriptive suggestions, recommendations, or guidelines. Teachers, course designers, curriculum developers, and examination boards can engage with the CEF as **a way of describing their current practice**, **not in order to compare it in a neutral way with practice in other contexts, but in order to critique it in its own terms, and to improve it by drawing on ideas and resources set out in the Framework**. (Morrow, ICEF) | • Look at the curriculum, syllabi and materials and try to improve these.<br>• Define what improvement is. (Look at components of instruction in a combined way – materials, teacher training, assessment – always trying to calibrate tasks, descriptors.)<br>• Evaluate the work done in each improvement phase during the process and make necessary refinements and tuning.<br>• Speaking emerges as a gap. |
| **Highlight 2**<br><br>Learning programmes can be **global** (all dimensions of language proficiency and communicative competence), **modular** (proficiency in a restricted area for a particular purpose), **weighted** (higher level in some areas of knowledge and skills than others) or **partial** (only for certain activities and skills – eg. reception only). (CEFR) | • Performance levels expected from our students could be weighted differently for different skills (eg. C1 for one skill, B2 for another).<br>• The weighting of academic and social English should be considered.<br>• Foundation level is very important.<br>• Autonomy of the student and self-assessment will be important. |
| **Highlight 3**<br><br>The use of the Framework is threefold – planning language learning programmes (**needs**, **objectives**, **content**), planning language certification (**content syllabus of examinations** and **assessment criteria**) and planning self-directed learning (**raising learner awareness of present state of knowledge**, **self-setting feasible and worthwhile objectives**, **selection of materials and self-assessment**). (CEFR) | • See what content we have and see if the content is serving the objectives.<br>• Send assessment and syllabus materials to the Council of Europe (CoE) (Accreditation by EAQUALS – The European Association for Quality Language Services) for calibration and accreditation.<br>• Self-assessment is a central issue in the CEFR: both students and teachers need to develop awareness (a possible research project: a small scale survey could be carried out on both students and teachers on their perceptions of self-directed learning.) |

**Highlight 4**

The rationale for the goals and objectives of the SFL curriculum is that students build language competence through **realistic classroom tasks** which **reflect the ones they will encounter in their academic and professional lives** or which **build the necessary skills for tasks they will encounter in their academic lives**. Therefore, meaningful learning gains importance through the teaching methods applied and the learning tasks employed. In other words, **language skills are to be integrated** and **to be purposefully treated** towards the **achievement of process learning, in which relevant skills and knowledge are transferred across tasks**.

**Critical thinking skills**, **learner autonomy (strategies)**, **motivation**, **integrated skills**, an understanding of ethics and cultural diversity, and use of current technology are assumed as integral components of the relevant teaching and learning processes to be employed at the SFL, METU.

(SFL Curriculum Document)

- Social communication should be included to a certain degree; the academic and professional domains are currently in the foreground.
- The environment is unnatural for social communication.
- The rationale behind the SFL curriculum devised in 2003 closely correlates with the philosophy of the CEFR.

**Highlight 5**

All the statements in the descriptors are positive: **even 'low' levels of language learning have a value and worth**.

The descriptors are based on 'reception', 'production', 'interaction' and 'mediation' rather than the 4 skills, encouraging us to **look at the skills as being integrated rather than isolated**.

The Framework sees language as being **action-based, not knowledge-based** and, it **broadens and makes systematic what is involved in learning, teaching and assessing**, but it is not prescriptive: it can be used as a source of material for reflection and teacher development activities.

The common reference levels are key elements towards the achievement of **a common vocabulary and set of standards for talking about language knowledge, skills and achievement**.

**Self-assessment is a central feature**. The self-assessment grid has been adopted as a key feature of the European Language Portfolio, and the development of self-assessment checklists to accompany the grid are seen as a way of stimulating learner motivation and involvement providing a means for learners to set learning objectives.

Heyworth, ICEF

- Full accuracy could be required at higher levels.
- The integration of skills is important.
- A new way of looking at the approach to language teaching (action-based) and materials (task-based).
- In both the receptive and productive modes, the written and/or oral activities of *mediation* (translation, interpretation, paraphrasing, etc.) make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly.
- Learner autonomy is emphasized in the SFL curriculum document. Self-directed learning comes up as an important issue in the CEFR, too. (a possible research project: a small scale qualitative study on what it means for teachers and students.)
- For low levels, the self-assessment criteria should be drawn up in Turkish as well.

**Highlight 6**

The authors suggest that users of the Framework consider and where appropriate state:

on **which theory of grammar** they have based their work;

which **grammatical elements, categories, classes, structures, processes and relations** are learners, etc. equipped/required to handle.

the **basis on which** grammatical elements, categories, structures, processes and relations **are selected and ordered**;

**how their meaning is conveyed** to learners;

**the role of contrastive grammar** in language teaching and learning;

•   the relative **importance attached to range, fluency and accuracy in relation to the grammatical construction of sentences**;

•   the extent to which learners are to be made aware of the grammar of (a) **the mother tongue** (b) **their contrastive relations**.

•   how grammatical structure is a) **analysed, ordered and presented to learners** and (b) **mastered** by them.

CEFR

- The adoption of an approach to dealing with grammar (the curriculum evaluation studies indicate that teachers are confused as to this point.)
- We should try to develop and adopt a systematic approach to the selection of grammar items and their teaching.
- Recent approaches seem to de-emphasize grammatical accuracy at initial stages.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Highlight 7**<br><br>**THE SUGGESTED ROAD MAP**<br><br>Using the CEF **at all levels** of instruction and starting with **oral interaction for all levels.**<br><br>Matching the **CEF levels (A / B / C) with SFL levels (DBE & DML) for each instructional span/course.**<br><br>**Matching the objectives of each instructional span/course with CEF descriptors**<br><br>**Specifying expected learning outcomes and drawing up DBE/DML descriptors by adapting CEF descriptors so that DBE/DML objectives reflect what the learners can do/ their level of performance as regards the skills, strategies and linguistic as well as lexical knowledge as indicated within the curriculum document.**<br><br>**Specifying the domain in which the learners will need to perform activities. (personal, public, educational, occupational?)**<br><br>**Drawing up course content**<br><br>**Specifying the task types to be incorporated into the syllabus.**<br><br>**Modifying / Selecting / Producing the course material.**<br><br>**Revising the achievement (and proficiency) assessment tools, and if necessary making the necessary modifications.**<br><br>**Introducing self-assessment tools.**<br><br>**Carrying out teacher training.** | DBE<br><br>- Speaking should be worked on.<br>- However, we cannot get away with only speaking, we have to consider the curriculum as a whole (all skills).<br><br>DML<br><br>- Should start work after DBE studies are completed.<br>- Should start work on other languages immediately. |

III. During the third part of the meeting there was a brief hands-on session on writing can-do statements for the speaking component of a certain DBE instructional span.