

# Introductory Guide to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for English Language Teachers

Martik Prajapati

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Gokul Global University, Sidhpur, Gujrat, INDIA.



[www.ijrah.com](http://www.ijrah.com) || Vol. 2 No. 6 (2022): November Issue

Date of Submission: 09-11-2022

Date of Acceptance: 28-11-2022

Date of Publication: 11-12-2022

## ABSTRACT

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment, abbreviated in English as CEFR or CEF or CEFRL, is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries. The CEFR is also intended to make it easier for educational institutions and employers to evaluate the language qualifications of candidates for education admission or employment. Its main aim is to provide a method of learning, teaching, and assessing that applies to all languages in Europe.

The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) guidelines describe language proficiency of learners on a scale of 6 levels. While the description of CEFR guidelines is generic across languages, the development of automated proficiency classification systems for different languages follows different approaches.

**Keywords-** Language Learning, Teaching, Assessment, CEFR.

## I. INTRODUCTION

First published in 2001, the CEFR was developed to facilitate critical reflection on the various dimensions of language education – curricula, syllabuses, textbooks and examinations – and to promote common understanding across the education systems of Council of Europe member states.

The CEFR's non-language-specific descriptive scheme has two complementary dimensions: (1) the communicative tasks that the language user/learner may need to perform; and (2) the competences on which successful task performance depend. Both dimensions include illustrative scales that use "can do" statements to describe proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2 (basic user), B1 and B2 (independent user), C1 and C2 (proficient user).

In keeping with the Council of Europe's concern for the rights and responsibilities of the individual citizen, the CEFR views the language

user/learner as a social agent: a member of society who has tasks (not exclusively language-related) to perform in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action.

Published by the Council of Europe in 2020, the definitive version of the CEFR Companion Volume updates and extends the illustrative descriptors. It adds new descriptors to the 2001 scales; introduces a handful of new scales and a new pre-A1 level; adds scales for plurilingual and pluricultural competences; offers an extended definition of mediation for which it provides 24 illustrative scales; replaces the 2001 phonology scale by three new scales; and formulates descriptors so that they are gender-neutral and modality-inclusive (and thus refer to signed as well as spoken languages).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Writer, Language expert, teachers & researchers have studied English Proficiency on various

practical purpose such as developing syllabus, creating tests/exams, marking exams, evaluating language learning, designing course, developing learning materials describing language policies, self assessment, teacher training programmes.

The survey was carried out among council of Europe member states on the use of the CEFR in teachers' education, they reform of foreign language curricula and the development of teaching materials but here there is still remain much of work on this topic however present thesis will aim to develop vocabulary and improve accuracy in grammar, to produce word with right accent, improve LSEW skills, Enhance professionalism at work, to conduct interview and observation. More teachers and learners move towards specific levels and specific goals of those levels.

### III. WHAT IS THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE?

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to promote and defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law; its headquarters are in Strasbourg, France. Today it comprises 46 member states stretching from Iceland in the west to Azerbaijan in the east. (The Council of Europe should not be confused with the European Council, which is the committee of heads of state and government of the European Union. All member states of the European Union are also members of the Council of Europe.)

The Council of Europe's key instruments are: The European Convention on Human Rights (1950), The European Cultural Convention (1954) and The European Social Charter (1961, revised version 1996).



### IV. WHAT THE CEFR IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT....

The CEFR is a framework, published by the Council of Europe In 2001, which describes language learners' ability in terms of Speaking, reading, listening and writing at six reference levels.

These six levels are named as follows:

C2	Mastery	Proficient user
C1	Effective Operational Proficiency	
B2	Vantage	Independent user
B1	Threshold	
A2	Waystage	Basic user
A1	Breakthrough	

As well as these common reference levels, the CEFR provides a Descriptive Scheme of definitions, categories and examples that language professionals can use to better understand and communicate their aims and objectives. The examples given are called 'illustrative descriptors' and these are presented as a series of scales with Can Do statements from levels A1 to C2. These scales can be used as a tool for comparing levels of ability amongst learners of foreign languages and also offer 'a means to map the progresses of learners.

The scales in the CEFR are not exhaustive. They cannot cover every possible context of language use and do not attempt to do so. Whilst they have been empirically validated, some of them still have significant gaps, e.g. at the lowest level (A1) and at the top of the scale (the C levels). Certain contexts are less well elaborated, e.g. young learners.

The CEFR is not an international standard or seal of approval. Most test providers, textbook writers

and curriculum designers now claim links to the CEFR. However, the quality of the claims can vary (as can the quality of the tests, textbooks and curricula themselves). There is no single ‘best’ method of carrying out an alignment study or accounting for claims which are made. What is required is a reasoned explanation backed up by supporting evidence.

The CEFR is not language or context specific. It does not attempt to list specific language features (grammatical rules, vocabulary, etc.) and cannot be used as a curriculum or checklist of learning points. Users need to adapt its use to fit the language they are working with and their specific context.

One of the most important ways of adapting the CEFR is the production of language-specific Reference Level Descriptions. These are frameworks for specific languages where the levels and descriptors in the CEFR have been mapped against the actual linguistic material (i.e. grammar, words) needed to implement the stated competences. Reference Level Descriptions are already available for several languages

## **V. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CEFR**

The CEFR is the result of developments in language education that date back to the 1970s and beyond, and its publication in 2001 was the direct outcome of several discussions, meetings and consultation processes which had taken place over the previous 10 years.

The development of the CEFR coincided with fundamental changes in language teaching, with the move away from the grammar-translation method to the functional/notional approach and the communicative approach. The CEFR reflects these later approaches.

The CEFR is also the result of a need for a common international framework for language learning which would facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries, particularly within Europe. It was also hoped that it would provide a sound basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications and help learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate their own efforts within a wider frame of reference.

The years since the publication of the CEFR have seen the emergence of several CEFR-related projects and the development of a ‘toolkit’ for working with the CEFR. The concept of developing Reference Level Descriptions for national and regional languages has also been widely adopted. These developments and their associated outcomes will continue into the future, adding to the evolution of the Framework. In this way the CEFR is able to remain relevant and accommodate new Innovations in teaching and learning.

## **VI. WHY DO WE NEED THE CEFR?**

Even among teachers of the same language in similar contexts there can be a lot of variety in what is meant by terms like ‘beginner’, ‘intermediate’ or ‘advanced’. This variability increases significantly across different languages, in different countries, with different age ranges of learners, etc. The CEFR makes it easier for all of us to talk about language levels reliably and with shared understanding.

## **VII. IS IT JUST ABOUT LEVELS?**

The CEFR has been very significant in language learning and teaching because its impact goes beyond merely describing learner levels. It has underpinned a particular approach to language learning as the one most commonly recommended or expected in language teaching today. This approach is based on the notion of communicative proficiency – the increasing ability to communicate and operate effectively in the target language. The descriptions of levels are skills-based and take the form of Can Do statements, as in the examples below. These descriptions of ability focus on communicative purpose and make for a very practical approach, which looks at what people can do – rather than on specific linguistic knowledge.


## **VIII. HOW TO READ THE CEFR**

The CEFR has nine chapters, plus a useful introductory section called ‘Notes for the User’. The key chapters for most readers will be Chapters 2 to 5. Chapter 2 explains the approach the CEFR adopts and lays out a descriptive scheme that is then followed in Chapters 4 and 5 to give a more detailed explanation of these parameters. Chapter 3 introduces the common reference levels.

Chapters 6 to 9 of the CEFR focus on various aspects of learning, teaching and assessment; for example, Chapter 7 is about ‘Tasks and their role in language teaching’. Each chapter explains concepts to the reader and gives a structure around which to ask and answer questions relevant to the reader’s contexts. The CEFR states that the aim is ‘not to prescribe or even recommend a particular method, but to present options’.

## **IX. WHAT IS IT USED FOR?**

The CEFR is used for many different practical purposes:

 Developing Syllabuses

- ✚ Creating tests/exams
- ✚ Marking exams
- ✚ Evaluating language learning needs
- ✚ Designing Courses
- ✚ Developing learning materials
- ✚ Describing language policies
- ✚ Continuous/self-assessment
- ✚ Teacher training programmes

CEFR LEVELS	Guided Learning Hours
<b>C2</b>	Approximately 1000 to 1200
<b>C1</b>	Approximately 700 to 800
<b>B2</b>	Approximately 500 to 600
<b>B1</b>	Approximately 350 to 400
<b>A2</b>	Approximately 180 to 200
<b>A1</b>	Approximately 90 to 100

## X. PROGRESSING THROUGH THE CEFR LEVELS

The CEFR helps us understand the different levels of language proficiency. It also helps us understand how learners progress through the levels Cambridge English Language Assessment estimates that learners typically take the following guided learning hours to progress between levels. ‘Guided learning hours’ means time in lessons as well as tasks you set them to do. You will notice that it takes longer to progress a level as learners move up the scale. Of course, learners will vary in how long they take depending on many factors.

This means that many learners will follow more than one course to progress from one level to the next. We can also use the ‘+’ to indicate the top half of a level. For example, ‘B1+’ means the top half of the B1 range. You will find this convention followed on Cambridge course books.

We are also working on a project to define in more detail the linguistic knowledge typically mastered at each CEFR level – for English. This programme is called English Profile and there’s more information on this later in this booklet. This more precise information helps teachers get a better idea of how to break down the learning for each CEFR level into different classes within their school or college.

### *CEFR on Global Scale:*

C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read.</li> <li>❖ Can summaries information from different spoken and written sources , reconstructing</li> <li>❖ Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.</li> </ul>
C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer text and recognize implicit meaning.</li> <li>❖ Can express him/her fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions.</li> <li>❖ Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes.</li> <li>❖ Can produce clear, well – structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</li> </ul>
B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussion in his/her field of specification.</li> <li>❖ Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quiet possible without strain for either party.</li> <li>❖ Can produce clear detailed text on a range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</li> </ul>
B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work .school, leisure etc.</li> <li>❖ Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken.</li> <li>❖ Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar or of personal interest.</li> <li>❖ Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hope &amp;ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for onions and plans.</li> </ul>
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. Very basic personal and family information, shopping ,local geography, employment )</li> <li>❖ Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.</li> <li>❖ Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</li> </ul>
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrase amid at the</li> </ul>



	<p>satisfaction of needs of a concrete type.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Can introduce him/her and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows things he/she has.</li> <li>❖ Can interact in a simple way provided other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</li> </ul>
--	--

**Other CEFR Scales:**

But the CEFR is particularly useful because it applies the same set of levels to all the various sub-skills and areas of competence: the basic four skills (speaking, reading, writing and listening), communicative language (e.g. turn-taking, asking for clarification), types of interaction (e.g. obtaining goods and services, interviewing), and more linguistic skills (e.g. vocabulary range, phonological control). It allows you link up skills in each of these areas with the student’s overall level.

This is a list of the 54 different scales available in the Council of Europe document called Structured Overview of all CEFR scales. You can get this from the Cambridge University Press site, or from the Council of Europe.

**Communicative Activities:**

- 🚦 Overall Listening Comprehension
- 🚦 Understanding Interaction between Native Speakers.
- 🚦 Listening as a Member of a Live Audience
- 🚦 Listening to Announcements & Instructions
- 🚦 Listening to Radio & Audio Recordings
- 🚦 Audio/Visual Watching TV & Film

**Overall Reading Correspondence**

- 🚦 Reading for Orientation
- 🚦 Reading for Information and Argument
- 🚦 Reading Instructions

**Overall Spoken Interaction**

- ❖ Understanding a Native Speaker Interlocutor
- ❖ Conversation
- ❖ Informal Discussion
- ❖ Formal Discussion (Meetings)
- ❖ Goal-oriented Co-operation
- ❖ Obtaining Goods and Services
- ❖ Information Exchange
- ❖ Interviewing & Being Interviewed

**Overall Written Interaction**

- ❖ Correspondence
- ❖ Notes, Messages & Forms

**Overall Spoken Production**

- ❖ Sustained Monologue: Describing Experience
- ❖ Sustained Monologue: Putting a Case (e.g. Debate)
- ❖ Public Announcements
- ❖ Addressing Audiences

**Overall Written Production**

- ❖ Creative Writing
- ❖ Writing Reports and Essays

**Communicative Strategies**

- ❖ Identifying Cues and Inferring
- ❖ Taking the Floor (Turntaking)
- ❖ Co-operating
- ❖ Asking for Clarification
- ❖ Planning
- ❖ Compensating
- ❖ Monitoring and Repair

**Working with Text**

- ❖ Note taking in Seminars and Lectures
- ❖ Processing Text

**Communicative Language Competence**

- ❖ General Linguistic Range
- ❖ Vocabulary Range
- ❖ Grammatical Accuracy
- ❖ Vocabulary Control
- ❖ Phonological Control
- ❖ Orthographic Control
- ❖ Sociolinguistic
- ❖ Flexibility
- ❖ Thematic Development
- ❖ Coherence
- ❖ Propositional Precision
- ❖ Spoken Fluency

**XI. ENGLISH PROFILE**

The English Profile Programme involves major research projects that are all working towards a reliable, detailed description of the actual learner English that is typical of each CEFR level. Initially, the focus has been on vocabulary and grammar, and the English Vocabulary Profile is now complete for all six levels, A1- C2. A separate research team is developing a similar resource, the English Grammar Profile, which describes the gradual mastery of grammar across the six CEFR levels.

Cambridge University Press has given teachers around the world access to their research into vocabulary learning across the CEFR. Go to the English Profile website – [www.englishprofile.org](http://www.englishprofile.org) and click on Free Registration English Vocabulary Profile. This will allow finding out which words and phrases – and individual meanings of each word – is typically mastered by learners at each CEFR level. This is a really valuable tool to make decisions about what to teach students as they progress. Cambridge University Press authors and editors make extensive use of this research in developing their course materials.

## **XII. HOW CAN THE CEFR BE USEFUL FOR TEACHERS?**

### ***Understanding language levels better***

The CEFR helps you to understand a standardised terminology for describing language levels. National, local and school policies are increasingly being described in CEFR levels – and so it's important to understand what they mean.

### ***Seeing more clearly what learners need to work on***

The CEFR describes what learners need to be able to do to reach the next level. You will find it particularly useful in showing how different component skills are described at each level. You have an idea of what a B2 student is like, but what should they be able to do in terms of listening to lectures/speeches, or writing correspondence, or spoken fluency? The CEFR helps you see what is needed for different aspects of learning English.

### ***Assessment grids***

The CEFR scales are also very useful for creating your own assessment grids. These use the descriptors in the scales and can help teachers with assessing their students during and at the end of a course. They can also be used for self-assessment by the learners – though usually necessary to simplify them for this purpose, or even translate them in some situations.

### ***Curriculum plan***

If you are responsible for working out what is going to be taught in a class – just your own or for the whole school – it is very helpful to use the CEFR as a broad framework. Look carefully at the descriptors for the levels you need – not just the Global Scale, but component scales as well where relevant. What do you want your students to achieve in each course on their path to the target level? This can be further elaborated by looking at the information coming from English Profile.

Of course, most teachers do not need to create their own curriculum. By choosing a course book that is aligned to the CEFR, you have a syllabus created by experts – which you may then choose to adapt for your own circumstances.

## **XIII. CONCLUSION**

English is an important attribute in today's professional world. It is a capacity to be acquired in parallel with education. Most of us have learnt English in school, but still lack of the confidence to converse in English. In addition to English, We also need to acquire certain other skills like creating good first impression and the ability to talk politely, to create a good impression on others. This thesis is intended to help all members of the language teaching profession to make full use teaching and assessment. With globalization the world has become very close and with this the knowledge of English is very much required as English has become the only world language. Moreover learning language means developing four core skills – Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. As teachers of English we must know what each of these skills means and how to teach them effectively that can be followed to help learners develop the four skills under the English Proficiency Test. Hence I try to efforts Nature and Function of Language on basic scale.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1] University of Cambridge ESOL Examination: Using the CEFR Principal of Good Practice: Oct 2011
- [2] Cambridge University Press: Guide to CEFR.
- [3] Aligning Language Education with the CEFR Hand Book – April 2022